ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE LIFE OF HONOR: INDIVIDUALITY AND THE COMMUNAL IMPULSE IN ROMANTICISM

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For most scholars of Romanticism, honor is a traditionalist value. It underwrites Edmund Burke's defense against revolutionary radicalism; it is the code of medieval crusaders and tribal highlanders in Walter Scott's novels; and it is a quality reserved for nobles such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, who relies on honor to assert her privilege in the face of the rising middle-class. Despite these conservative connotations, *The Life of Honor* shows that early-nineteenth-century writers did not simply consider honor a reactionary ethos. Rather, they saw how honor could be progressive and egalitarian—a modern virtue that allowed them to grapple with the dilemmas of emerging liberal society. A personal sense of communal obligation, the modern honor ethic balanced the individualism emphasized by the republican political movement with the demands of a rapidly changing social order. Reading texts from a variety of authors and genres—Godwin's Jacobin novel, Wordsworth's autobiographical poetry, Scott and Austen's historical fiction, and the brutal slave narrative of Mary Prince—I demonstrate how this ancient civic virtue was reinvigorated in response to some of the most pressing cultural questions of the day, conflicts between the self and society that could not be resolved through the operations of sympathy or the power of the imagination.

Because this modern form of honor emerged from post-revolutionary life, it was associated with a new political order: liberalism, a set of civic norms that began to thrive in the late-eighteenth-century and that still prevails in Europe today. While the Romantic honor code drew upon the liberal commitment to universal dignity and individual merit, Romantic honor simultaneously illuminated the conceptual problems of liberalism—its propensity to rank independence over obligation; to connect private commercial success with public virtue; and to abstract social predicaments from identity categories like race and gender. Responding to recent scholarship on the liberal disposition in Romantic pedagogy and nineteenth-century Realist aesthetics, *The Life of Honor* reveals the paradox of a civil society built around the pursuit of individual esteem and thus the wager of Romanticism's political commitments.

THE LIFE OF HONOR:
INDIVIDUALITY AND THE COMMUNAL IMPULSE IN ROMANTICISM

By

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For

Kirk Childress, “On the banks of this delightful stream / We stood together.”

&

Katherine Stanutz, “My heart leaps up…”

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Honor and the Problem of Romantic Politics

"Honour's a very common word,
By all and ev'ry where prefer'd.
But what's its meaning,—where's the Key,
That will unlock the Mystery?
It seems to change in ev'ry street,
And with each person that we meet."
—William Combe, "The Duel" (1815)

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Consider these two contrasting visions of honor in the Romantic-era. The first one comes from Coleridge, who writes the 1791 poem "Honour" from the perspective of a loutish (and hungover) young man.[1] Reminiscing on the previous night's activities, the speaker spurns the "laurels" of public recognition—and even his own private self-respect—that had at one time been the reward for living an honorable life:

To such poor joys could ancient Honour lead
When empty fame was toiling Merit's meed;
To Modern Honour other lays belong;
Profuse of joy and Lord of right and wrong,
Honour can game, drink, riot in the stew,
Cut a friend's throat;—what cannot Honour do?[2]

In the modern age, honor is nothing but a virtuous cover for wanton behavior and an excuse for egotism. As a radically-inclined undergraduate, Coleridge also presents honor as an unearned privilege of the contemporary aristocracy, whose values come from inheritance and not from the "toiling Merit" that was associated with the middle-class.

By 1809, however, Wordsworth was making a vastly different claim about the role of honor in modern life. In his sonnet "Say, what is honour," Wordsworth answers the framing question straightaway:

> Say, what is Honour?—'Tis the finest sense
> Of *justice* which the human mind can frame,
> Intent each lurking frailty to disclaim,
> And guard the way of life from all offence
> Suffered or done. When lawless violence
> Invades a Realm, so pressed that in the scale
> Of perilous war her weightiest armies fail,
> Honour is hopeful elevation,—whence
> Glory, and triumph. Yet with politic skill
> Endangered States may yield to terms unjust;
> Stoop their proud heads, but not unto the dust—
> A Foe's most favourite purpose to fulfil:
> Happy occasions oft by self-mistrust
> Are forfeited; but infamy doth kill.[3]

Far from being an empty signifier used to justify unscrupulous behavior, honor is the chief virtue of civil society. Faced with the threat of French invasion—and the possible spread of "lawless" Jacobinism—Wordsworth's sonnet draws heavily on Edmund Burke, whose contemporary revival of British chivalry tried to guard against the "lurking frailty" of national disrepute, a fate that in the cultural conflicts of the revolutionary age could register as worse than military defeat. But while honor seems deeply conservative—portrayed as hierarchical and militant ("Honour is hopeful elevation,—whence / Glory and Triumph"), as well as baldly patriarchal in its ambition to protect the feminine nation and "*her* weightiest armies"—it is also inflected with republicanism.[4] In an odd juxtaposition with the Burkean language of chivalry, Wordsworth defines honor as the

"finest sense/ Of *justice* which the human mind can frame," a description that evokes William Godwin and the egalitarian values he put forward in *Political Justice* (1793).[5] Here, honor seems caught between aristocratic and radical principles, between nobility and equality, between one's individual esteem and the civic duty he has to others. This is also to say that for major Romantic writers, honor could not simply be relegated to the past. It was a major part of the moral idiom of the age.

One could admittedly see this modern revival of honor as traditionalist—or even reactionary—in nature. For many Romanticists, honor underwrites Edmund Burke's defense against revolutionary radicalism; it is the code of medieval crusaders and tribal highlanders in Walter Scott's novels; and it is a quality exclusive to nobles such as Lady Catherine de Bourgh in *Pride and Prejudice*, who rely on honor to assert their privilege in the face of rising bourgeois supremacy. But despite all of these conservative interpretations of honor, this dissertation will suggest that Romantic writers did not view honor merely as an antiquated ethos in the years 1789-1832. Rather, they saw how honor could be progressive and egalitarian—a modern virtue that allowed them to grapple with the dilemmas of emerging liberal society.[6] (Indeed, Wordsworth's poem reveals as much: it may be conservative in tone, but it is indebted to all sorts of progressive topoi—from the Godwinian rhetoric of universal justice, to its invocation of a "hopeful" future, a descriptor that suggests the utopian possibility at the heart of revolutionary political movements).

In *The Life of Honor*, I argue that honor is best defined as the private awareness of public responsibility, a seemingly straightforward formulation that actually embodies a number of contradictions in the social life of the Romantic period.[7] As a personal sense of

one's obligation to the collective, honor balanced the emphasis on individualism and self-creation that had grown out of the republican tradition with an increasing demand for social-consciousness, one that could address the dramatic changes in many areas of society—from the contentious political disputes of the 1790s, to the new mores of the literary marketplace, the tumult of the national financial system, and the resurgence of the abolitionist movement. As it pertained to these issues, it is clear that the Romantics did not just free honor from its ancient connotations. They also applied it to the dilemmas of modernity.

Because this modern form of honor emerged from post-revolutionary life, it was associated with a new political order: liberalism, at once civic philosophy and a collection of norms that began to thrive in the late-eighteenth-century and that still prevails in Europe today.[8] Responding to Romanticists like Frances Ferguson and Jerome Christensen—who have had a long interest in the development of liberalism as it related to the ideologies of Utilitarianism and Political Economy—and Victorianists like Amanda Anderson—who has recently investigated the liberal disposition in nineteenth-century Realist aesthetics—I show how the particular civic virtue of honor highlighted the theoretical problems inherent in liberalism: its propensity to value independence over obligation, to connect commercial success with moral worth, and to abstract social problems from their material realities.[9] Throughout this dissertation, I demonstrate how Romanticism reveals a conceptual dilemma in this emerging political order. Honor—an ethic of individual dignity crossed with communality—frames neatly the paradox of the society committed to liberal values: how could individuals maintain and cultivate private esteem while retaining a strong sense of public duty?

One way of understanding how Romantic honor related to liberalism is therefore not to see honor as a reaction against liberal values—a response that could make it seem like a purely partisan development—but to conceive of it as a supplement to the array of liberal tenets emerging in civic life. Romanticists are probably most familiar with Derrida's notion of the supplement as a semiotic device that attaches itself to an existing concept as an addition or substitution (or both), which subsequently confirms and/or betrays the "natural" existence of that concept. Like Derrida's supplement, honor throws into relief the contradictions between public and private life that liberal discourse tried to naturalize through all sorts of ideological strategies—the rhetoric of natural law, the blending of economic and environmental discourse, and the joining of affect to political procedure. Slavoj Žižek also captures this idea of the supplement (though in an expectedly Lacanian fashion) when he invokes the "obscene supplement"—an ethics or set of cultural practices omitted from the self-representations of a political system, but that are required for its function nevertheless.[10] According to Žižek (who draws on Adorno) liberalism is not necessarily a set of coherent or profound moral values, as much as it is a practical machine—an array of institutions and juridical procedures that necessitates an ethical nucleus to give it deeper legitimacy.[11] In this way, Honor could also be seen as an ethos that gave liberalism the moral freight it might not have had on its own. Highlighting liberalism's contradictions and its ethical gaps, the sense of honor that developed in the Romantic era would go on to influence the ethics of later literary periods. Such a value, I claim, can help clarify the impulse by mid-century Victorians to reform classical liberal tenets associated with utilitarianism and *laissez-faire* economics, and even illuminate the compromise between the individual and the state that was a

hallmark of European social democracy, a system whose ideas have been linked to the cultures of High Modernism in the early-twentieth-century.

The conversion of an ancient value into a modern one was not without ideological conflict. Alert to the dramatic transitions in history happening all around them, Romantic authors from a variety of different genres and social positions underscore in their writings a dialectic between older "hierarchical" ideas of honor and newer "egalitarian" models, those forms of honor that would later prove crucial to the development of human rights and the protection of individual dignity as a cornerstone to civil society. Each of the following chapters thus portrays a historical shift in the meaning and significance of this virtue, showing the dialectical movement between what Raymond Williams called the "residual" ideas of culture—its traditions, habits, and indisputable norms—and its "emergent" ideas, those "new meanings and values, new practices, new relationships and kinds of relationships" that begin to achieve a kind of practical consciousness during the period.[12] A literary history of value centered on the formal complexity of the language of honor and shame, *The Life of Honor* demonstrates how British Romantic writers became some of the first Western cultural figures to view honor as a phenomenon applicable problems of a world that did not simply look back to its past, but was more actively obsessed with its present and perhaps its—and our—future.

The early-nineteenth-century conception of honor touches upon three themes, each of which plays a significant role in the following chapters. The first is the relationship of honor to the public and private spheres. Recently, scholars like Jeremy Waldron and George Kateb have argued that the meaning of honor changed in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century, moving from a public conception of social

status and hierarchy to a more private idea of inherent dignity and inner worth.[13] I demonstrate, however, that in the early nineteenth-century honor could register both communally and individually, often at the same time. As I have previous indicated, the second theme is the place of honor in the development of liberalism. Although the political historian J.G.A. Pocock has written about the connection of civic virtues like honor to the rise of the liberal-capitalist society in the eighteenth-century, many Romantic writers actually reacted against a form of honor that was tied to bourgeois customs and the institutions to which they were connected, showing that the idea of honor might cut across the various political ideologies that arose out of modernity.[14] Finally, the Romantic idea of honor is connected to affect, perhaps the predominant theoretical paradigm in literary criticism today. As a deeply felt moral value—and one that was long associated with dueling and feminine chastity—honor retained its emotional qualities well into the nineteenth-century. And yet, there is an important counter-discourse developed by Romantic writers that shows honor to be anti-sentimental—allied more to sober, communal solidarity than to the vicissitudes of sympathy. After addressing each one of these three themes in greater detail, I will discuss my methodology, and the way in which this project intervenes in contemporary criticism on the politics of Romantic literature.

Private and Public

When one steps out onto the early-morning heath for a duel, it is a public affair. First, a duel of honor occurs between two people (almost always men—although Robert Baldick notes duels amongst women, children, and, strangely, domestic animals).[15] It also

involves "seconds," or those companions of the duelists involved in overseeing the fairness and procedure of the event. And despite a general wish to keep the duel isolated and out of sight of civil society, many duels had audiences—members of the populace who either heard about them through rumor or because they were tipped off. (Prime Minister William Pitt's famous duel with George Tierney in 1798 is a great example—highly publicized, an audience had gathered at Putney Heath to witness the potential death of arguably the most powerful figure in the world). Not only does dueling convey the very public nature of the honor ethic—an ancient practice meant to maintain one's social reputation—but so does the array of titles, peerage, and entailment associated with the aristocracy. An "externalizing" of a moral quality, honor is literally something that can be attached to your name—the public form of identity—and economic position, of which your local community would be well aware (as Austen reminds us when her characters obsess over Darcy's income of £10,000 a year).

And yet, it was during the Romantic era that honor also began to be regarded as an internal virtue, something that was not inherited or even earned through great or heroic deeds, but that was provided to you by way of your inherent humanity. This is the alternative, private form of honor. Although the idea of the "innate dignity of man" had been conveyed by numerous evangelical sermons prior to the revolutionary age, Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) is one of the more influential texts to discuss honor as a private phenomenon.[16] Even before Kant defines the categorical imperative, he considers the concept of *Würde*, which literally translates to "worth" or "value." A better interpretation, however, is "intrinsic worth" or "dignity"—the quality that Kant says is "infinitely above all value, with which it cannot

for a moment be brought into comparison or competition without as it were violating its sanctity."[17] Using pecuniary language here, Kant confronts directly the ancient understanding of honor as a virtue connected to class power and economic status. As a universal marker of inherent worthiness, honor did not need to be advertised by one's financial wellbeing or their public reputation. This burgeoning idea of private honor was not just found in German metaphysics, but it was also adopted in the pamphlets and treatises of English radicals like Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft. Employing a slightly different idiom than Kant, Paine and Wollstonecraft refer to the private idea of honor as the "natural" or "native dignity of man."[18] Here, they modify an older, evangelical sense of dignity by fitting it to the dictums of natural law to which they were sympathetic. A part of early republican discourse, this progressive, universalist understanding of honor and dignity has had a broad and lasting impact: as the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah notes in his most recent book *The Honor Code* (2010), "[h]onor, in the form of individual dignity, powers the global movement for human rights."[19]

And yet, this shift from public to private—from an external, hierarchical sense of honor, to an internal, egalitarian version—was not as smooth transition as some scholars of honor imply. Michael McKeon has shown that the very distinction between these categories is a feature of modern life: "The modern separation out of the public and the private is therefore…a disembedding of figure from ground, an 'explication' of what tacitly had always been there."[20] Located in both public and private spheres, the Romantic honor code reveals the very categorical divisions that were emblematic of modernity itself.

Throughout *The Life of Honor*, I suggest how new ideas about honor in both public and private life developed from political contention, oftentimes adopting contrasting features of different post-revolutionary political ideologies. Thus, while one's honor could be seen as private, universal, and partaking of the "leveling principles" associated with radical figures like Kant, Paine, and Wollstonecraft, because of the heterogeneous outcomes of the revolution, it could also retain the public and communal connotations associated with Edmund Burke. This phenomenon is exemplified by William Godwin's idea of "true honor" addressed in chapter one: motivated by the same fear of post-revolutionary social dislocation as Burke, Godwin designs a virtue that eliminated the sentimentalism and obsession with rank that characterized Burkean chivalry, but that would maintain a sense of the general good throughout the radical's quest for universal private liberty. Exemplified by these two major political figures in Romanticism, this new version of honor indicates an even larger recalibration of individualist and collectivist styles of governance, suggesting a style of civic commitment that could occur beyond the mediations of the traditional, Habermasian public sphere, where private citizens coalesce around supposedly egalitarian structures like the capitalist marketplace or the free press.[21]

If modern honor could not be premised solely on the transcendent sovereignty of the individual—the private "[a]utonomy [that] is the basis of the dignity of human and of every rational nature," as Kant puts it—than it could also not fit neatly into categories around which the public traditionally oriented themselves; the culture of sensibility, nationalism, and the commercial society, amongst them.[22] As the private awareness of

public responsibility, honor announces the paradox that the modern political subject faced in the early-nineteenth-century.

Liberalism

Private dignity; egalitarian recognition; an overturning of the old hierarchies of rank and station—this is not just the language of modern honor, but also the language of liberal politics. And despite the persistent identification of honor with a regressive or medieval past, recent scholars have shown it to be a vital liberal norm, alongside freedom, privacy, and a regard for the rule of law. In her *Liberalism with Honor* (2002), the political theorist Sharon Krause identifies a "modified form" of honor that became "available to modern democracy" even after the revolution. Krause recognizes specifically the need of the modern liberal *polis* to rely on the "heroic qualities at the heart" of that virtue.[23] While liberalism has long been connected to these idealisms, it is also related to the rise of the commercial society in the eighteenth-century and to the increasing influence of political economy on everyday life. Given the renewed attention of literary critics of the nineteenth-century to the development of the liberal society, a commonly-made point must be reiterated: the emergence of liberalism is at the same time the emergence of the bourgeois capitalist order, with each side drawing from the same idiom to describe their moral values. Hence, the freedom of choice is also the freedom of trade; the vaunted sense of individualism can be traced in part to the breaking away of the burghers from their former, feudal obligations; and the primacy of legal frameworks and documentation to organize society is also the contractualism used to protect economic interest. For example, William Blackstone is regularly cited as the forefather of Western

liberal jurisprudence—and his maxim about letting "ten guilty go free rather than let a single person suffer" is often quoted in the most sincere way by Romantic writers.[24] However, in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1775) Blackstone also advocated for the expansion of game laws that would keep the peasantry from encroaching on gentry lands, coerce them into other, non-self-sufficient forms of labor, and ultimately corral their weapons in order to avoid armed insurrections.[25]

A prominent historian of the long-eighteenth century, J.G.A. Pocock sees honor as a tangible economic factor in the rise of the bourgeois liberal order. Focusing on the development of the republican tradition throughout the long-eighteenth-century, Pocock demonstrates how one's honor—or their *virtu*—was associated less with the economic indices of the aristocracy and more with the manners of those in the commercialist classes, citizens whose public conduct in a growing international marketplace gave rise to a "commercial humanism." As Pocock puts it, "a rights to things became a way to the practice of virtue, so long as virtue could be defined as the practice and refinement of manners."[26] Given the increasing influence of the bourgeois on cultural arrangements, one of the few modern ways to practice a civic virtue like honor was to become a part of the commercial society that legitimated it.

In short, Pocock's thesis about the rise of bourgeois liberal society meant that virtues like honor were mediated by property relationships. As Scott's *Rob Roy* (1818) demonstrates, something like credit starts to become a trusted measure of one's honorable responsibility in the early-eighteenth-century, perhaps more trusted in the public sphere than words or actions. (I read Scott's novel as a touchstone for this shift from honor to credit in my third chapter). Romantic writers, however, challenge this eighteenth-century

phenomenon, revealing how the liberal bourgeois version of honor that had been reserved for commercial gentleman was a deeply problematic way to capture civic virtue and the feelings of responsibility that individuals felt towards their collective society. Thus, opposed to *Rob Roy*—which mostly defends the "decent honest[y]" of credit, that commercial form of honor—is a text like Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816), which remains highly skeptical about specious financial representations of honor like credit, and seeks to replace them with a moral vocabulary derived from unmediated, face-to-face interactions.[27] However, if novels like *Emma* seem to defy the tenets of bourgeois liberalism, this does not mean that Romantic writers wanted to reverse the wheels of history to a time before the revolution, an event that had conclusively legitimated bourgeois values from that point on. (Seeing in *Emma* a desire for a pre-revolutionary time happens to be one of the more traditional ways to read the novel; as a conservative text that promotes the traditional mores of an idealized old England, and therefore celebrates Britain's recent victory against Napoleon at Waterloo). Instead, I suggest that texts like *Emma*, *The Prelude* (1805), and even Godwin's supposedly Jacobin novel *Caleb Williams* (1793) ultimately imagine alternative sociopolitical futures for post-revolutionary England, and center the moral lives of those future on their own hypotheses about honor, a virtue that might address a major contradiction in the incipient liberal project.

What was this contradiction? On the one hand the liberal ideology associated with the Revolution promised to bestow universal rights and individual sovereignty to all members of the *polis*—making society fairer, more egalitarian, and more liberal in the most charitable sense of the word. On the other hand, the capitalist interests upon which

much of the revolution was based meant a continued or even intensified stratification of the classes, a reinvigorated sense of cultural hierarchies, and growing fault lines in social cohesion. In other words, the egalitarianism of the revolutionary project could never be truly realized until it addressed the systemic inequality that was built into the very bourgeois model from which it was derived.

Such a paradox did not go unaddressed—even by the figures most associated with perpetuation of liberal ideals. While major pre-revolutionary figures like Rousseau in his *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) excoriated the private property relations upon which the bourgeois system was based, even a radical like Thomas Paine—who waxed in 1791 that commerce was "capable of carrying mankind"—advocated for a system of social insurance to which all members of a landed society would contribute.[28] Paine's early vision of the welfare state in *Agrarian Justice* (1795) was intended to be an institutional solution to a system that seemed to undercut its own ideological claims to equality and personal freedom. But Paine also realized that it would take more than a structural change in the market to check the inequality that naturally occurs in a capitalist society. It would take a moral imperative, "a revolution in the state of civilization" Paine says, "[to]…give perfection to the Revolution of France."[29] Another way of putting this is that in terms of its own self-representation the liberal project had to find an ethical foundation if it was going to do justice to its highest ideals. The Romantics, I argue, were the cultural figures that first responded to this paradox in liberalism, and honor was one of the major virtues to which they turned in order to account for its conflict between individualism and communality. In doing so, these writers also tried to revise a bourgeois, individualist idea of honor that had been developing since the eighteenth-century, and that was becoming a

cornerstone of the liberal society. They hoped that the communal side of the virtue might limit liberalism's potential to turn citizens into chilly utilitarians—rational calculators of their own private advantage.

The growth of the liberal society has been a popular concern in recent literary criticism, undoubtedly owing to the tumultuous path that liberalism has taken since the fall of the Berlin wall and the infamous proclamation of the "end of history." What this disruption has entailed is both various and profound: a swift reorientation from an industrial to a financial economy, the rise of global ideological conflict, a dramatic capitalist collapse, and—even as I write this—the uncovering of an extensive, almost preposterous, digital surveillance apparatus born and raised in supposed bastions of freedom. In writing about the long development of liberalism's mores and institutions, critics have also seen a way to connect discrete literary periods together that have long been separated by convention. For instance, in her recent book *Genres of the Credit Economy* (2008), Mary Poovey discusses the growth of the British financial system from the late-seventeenth-century through the mid-nineteenth-century, and links the creation of new literary genres to the rise of paper money, stocks, and speculative instruments.[30] Other critics like Jerome Christensen and Stephanie Kuduk Weiner have premised their studies on the widespread influence of republicanism before the tumult of 1789, establishing it as the dominant political ideology in Europe well before the Bastille. (Indeed, this scholarship corresponds to a shift in the interpretation of the politics of the French Revolution by historians, many of whom followed Francois Furet's famous "revisionist" thesis in claiming that the revolution was not a sudden uprising of the bourgeois against the aristocracy, but an ongoing insider struggle about the shape that

liberalism would take in Europe). Christensen bases much of his argument in *Lord Byron's Strength* (1993) on Pocock's ideas of virtue and commerce—implying the continuity of eighteenth-century liberal commercial practices in Byron's time—while Weiner's *Republican Politics and English Poetry* (2005) looks at a slightly later period in English history, addressing the relationship between republican politics and literature from 1789 to the 1874.[31] In their focus on commercialism, the growth of republican politics, and the incremental development of institutions oriented around the rising middle-classes, all of these texts imply the continuation—or even flourishing—of a late seventeenth-century bourgeois ideology into the Romantic period.

I do not debate the predominance of this particular type of bourgeois thinking during this time—indeed, the premise of the *Life of Honor* is that the liberal project is intimately linked to Romantic literature and culture. But Romanticism does not just enshrine the values of this bourgeois genealogy. It also reacts against them. As Immanuel Wallerstein points out, the French Revolution—that seminal break in history—inspired not one but three predominant modern political ideologies: conservatism, liberalism, and Marxism; all of which are in a dialectical relationship with one another. If we take Wallerstein's thesis to heart, then the Revolution is an event that does not just allow for the fulfillment of an ideology based on commercial and personal freedom in-development since the late-seventeenth-century, but it also challenges the very foundations upon which those values were based.[32]

Affect

If honor as a civic virtue could inhibit the development of an unemotional, instrumental society, what was honor's relationship to the passions? In other words, did Romantic writers want the light of Reason to be accompanied by the warmth of honor?[33] Honor—having been long associated with dueling, physical chastity, and one's deeply-felt reputation or "character"—is seemingly inextricable from emotion, fervor, and the body. For the Romantics, these affective parts of honor were in part a remnant from the classical age. In Pope's translation of *The Iliad* (1721), Nestor exhorts equivocate Greek warriors to "be men: your generous breasts inflame / With mutual honour, and with mutual shame!"[34] Such a physical feeling of honor was not just tied to masculinity or the military enterprises. Women's honor was habitually thought of as a private, physical quality that was susceptible to injury—especially through sexual misconduct or harm. Yet, for all of its deeply personal associations, a woman's honor was at the same time externalized and public, a social measure of her reputation that was largely out of her control. This is one of the legendary double standards of the honor ethic: while men could conceivably recover their dignity through their own heroic acts and deeds, women would have to rely on the shifting tides of public opinion to restore a sense of their good character.[35] Well-known novels like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740) and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782) highlight this phenomenon in their narrative structure, using the epistolary form to emphasize the sociality of the protagonist's honor or virtue—code of course for her chastity.

And yet, since the mid-sixteenth-century, the sensation of honor and shame was also seen as an especially unreliable way to regulate cultural norms. In *1 Henry IV*, for

instance, Falstaff provides a very famous critique of honor during the battle of Shrewsbury: "[W]hat is that honor," Falstaff asks himself, "Air. A trim reckoning!"[36] Mere ornamentation without function, honor is an empty word. In a society increasingly committed to the use of "public reason" the impassioned concept of honor was seen as capricious, unreliable, and, perhaps worst of all, meaningless.

In the wake of the revolution controversy of the 1790s, however, honor and its affective criteria were infused with widespread cultural credibility. Responding to what he perceived as the dislocating and decadent selfishness of the Jacobins, Burke called on British citizens to cultivate a "delicate sense of honour" as a cultural defense against the radicals of the French Revolution, who decried stale customs and the hegemony of historical precedent.[37] Burke sets against the heartless individualism of the revolutionaries this civic form of honor. For him, it is precisely the emotional qualities of honor—its "manly sentiment" and "sensibility of principle"—that had harmonized the collective social world in the past.[38] Not merely a revival associated with conservative thinking, feelings of honor and dignity also become important to Romantic authors across the political spectrum. In *The Cenci* (1819), for example, Percy Shelley connects sympathy to the dignity of certain types of art; and twelve years later in her *History*, the escaped slave Mary Prince argues for the enduring dignity of the body as a way to reclaim her honor. Occupying a range of moods and emotional states, the embodiment of honor and shame in the Romantic era could also be politically progressive. Austen, for instance, demonstrates how Romantic women writers move honor away from its chauvinistic roots to advance a proto-feminist message; and Prince returns repeatedly to

national shame—in some ways the opposite of honor—as a way to instill visceral revulsion in the slave trade.

However, in the *Life of Honor* I contend that this civic virtue contained a double-gesture. Although the Romantics continued to promote the feeling of honor as a way for citizens to connect with each other on a local level, many recognized the perils of a larger political culture based entirely on the sentiments. Even while viewing the emotions as an indispensable part of the era's concept of social relations, these writers were critical of the paradigm of sensibility and its over-application to collective problems. They saw how the age's "structures of feeling" could obscure systemic injustices, keep networks of power firmly entrenched, and divert citizens from the best solutions to communal predicaments.[39] Thus, honor simultaneously propagated and reacted against a political culture committed to sensibility and affect. This double-gesture is illustrated by William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, a text that critiques Burke's sentimental version of modern honor because of the way it blinded progressive reformers to the structural biases of contemporary institutions. But, instead of trying to the eliminate idea of honor—an approach taken by legions of humanists from the sixteenth-century onward—authors like Godwin and Burke attempted to apply it to the divergent political projects of modernity: while Burkean conservatism used the idea of honor to emphasize the innate morality of intimate social connections, Godwin's anarchism linked it to a broader idea of innate social responsibility, one that could be divorced from the culture of sensibility and the artificiality of contractual obligations. The famous slave narrative *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) also emphasizes this binary. On the one hand, the slave narrative detaches British honor from its usual context of normative white masculinity and embodies it

within the exotic figure of a black woman, showing how feelings of honor could encourage identification with others who were seen as foreign or wholly different. On the other hand, the text also hints that feelings of sympathy encouraged a state of passivity that obstructed the political action required to abolish the slave trade once and for all.

All of these texts begin to theorize a new ethical paradigm that could respond to the problematic role of the sentiments in liberal thought, which, as Daniel Gross notes, has a history that extends all the way back to the British republican movement following the English Civil War.[40] Instead of just indicating a certain mood or social feeling, honor was increasingly regarded as one's duty to others, regardless of the emotional connection you had with them, or the sympathetic links you shared. In other words, one didn't necessarily have to feel for a person or a group in order to act honorably towards them. Another word for this virtue is solidarity—a unity of popular interests that is greater than the individual affections people share with one another.

It is not usually Romanticism but Anglo-American Modernism that is credited as the first literary movement to fuse anti-sentimentalism with social commitment. Following the First World War, circles of Modernist luminaries like the Bloomsbury group turned against the sentimentalist idiom of previous decades, even as they adopted and expanded the proto-socialism of the late-nineteenth-century. What they were gestating was in fact a new approach to the liberal society: social democracy, a system that merged the values of liberal autonomy with socialist collectivism, but also taught the left to value solidarity over sympathy in its struggles going forward.[41] One of the aims of *The Life of Honor* is to suggest a prehistory to this narrative by showing how Romantic writing emphasized collective solidarity instead of popular sentimentalism more than a

century before the rise of Anglo-American literary High Modernism. If in 1913 solidarity was for the socialist organizer Eugene Debs "not a matter of sentiment, but of fact, cold and impassive as the granite foundation of a sky scraper," it owed much to what William Godwin called "true honor" in 1793, a virtue that "refuse[d] any danger or suffering by which the general good may be promoted".[42] Even in the Age of Sensibility, those in civic life had an intensely complicated, even skeptical, relation to affect.

Current criticism has seemed much less skeptical about the place of affect in literature, culture, and politics. "The Affective Turn" has been an extremely influential movement in literary criticism over the past twenty years and has a dialectical relationship with the rising interest in bourgeois liberalism. Obviously, this political system has always relied on emotion to serve its aims. Take, for instance, the moral sentiments that supported the logic of political economy in the eighteenth-century, or even, as Sara Ahmed points out, the post-9/11 rhetoric of fear that made possible illicit foreign intervention and an expansion of Anglo-American world power.[43] Emotions of course also rely on political organization for their development. In this vein, Joel Faflak and Lauren Berlant have written compellingly about how modern liberal democracy essentially invented the feelings of happiness and optimism.[44]

Romanticists have long been aware of the place of emotion in the history of political thought.[45] Prominent in their criticism—and also discernible in the contours of affect theory—is a focus on sensibility, a communal awareness of certain feelings and sentiments that can bind private lives to a larger social consciousness, or, as Raymond Williams famously articulated, to a "structure of feeling."[46] Evoking Williams, Thomas Pfau recently coined the term "Romantic mood" in reference to the various affective

states that capture the aesthetic qualities of certain historical divisions in the Romantic period. "As the presupposition for maintaining any cognitive or…emotive relationship to the world whatsoever, 'mood,'" Pfau says, "is ontologically anterior to the realm of what may be logically verified and discursively represented as knowledge. It is in the nature of "mood" not to be reflexively aware but, as the substratum of conscious awareness and representation, to resist discernment, particularly where attempts are made to positively consciously fix it in representational form".[47] Though the "Romantic mood" is not a political category per se, there is still a working assumption that feelings precede thought.

Indeed, this is one of the effective premises of affect theory. Feelings have a kind of *a priori* veracity—an innate truthfulness that, by extension, substantiates their moral value. The equation of truth with emotion—the reason of passion—also fulfills a longtime ambition of many writers at the turn of the nineteenth-century: to square the feelings with the intellectual pursuits of public life; to define the political imagination as reason in her most exalted mood. Following the lead of the Romantics, current philosophers like Martha Nussbaum call the emotions "essential elements of human intelligence…[and] part of our reasoning capacity as political creatures," and cultural critics like Ahmed show how a sense of national feelings illustrates the "emotive nature of publics."[48] Even if certain emotions can delude individuals and distort public arrangements, one has merely to strip away those "bad" layers of feeling in order to find more amenable sentiments. Thus, while Berlant criticizes the false optimism produced by "affective structure[s]" of attachment, her appeal is for not less but more optimistic desire "to distort the present on behalf of what the present can become."[49]

Indisputably, these critics reveal how much modern politics relies upon affect. But we might question whether *more* affective connection is the key to resolving sociopolitical problems. Recently, literary critics from a range of fields have started to challenge this proposition. Vivasvan Soni investigates the shortcomings of the eighteenth-century moral sentiments in his *Mourning Happiness* (2010)—keenly noting that "[s]ympathy, then which promised to serve as a bridge between self and other, betrays its promise and leaves the self embroiled with its own emotions, which it imagines to have come from the other."[50] And, writing in the wake of global economic crisis of 2008, Walter Benn Michaels argues for the impotency of "affective images" to effect mobilization against neoliberal capitalism.[51] Following these critics, *The Life of Honor* explores how post-revolutionary British literature confronted the problematic of affect-oriented politics. I demonstrate throughout how the new civic form of honor theorized by Romantic literature allowed writers to be of two minds about affect. On the individual level, the rhetoric of feeling and sympathy was often paired with honor in order to make the civic virtue more egalitarian and applicable to traditionally marginalized identities. On the communal level however, these same Romantic writers preferred to use honor as a sober replacement for the sentiments, skeptical about the ability of feeling to address broader, more pervasive cultural problems.

Although this seems like a paradox, the connecting together of these two notions is not totally outlandish—indeed, it is one of the foundational oppositions of Romanticism. Despite the popular opinion that the Romantic era was driven almost entirely by the temperaments, a key part of early-nineteenth-century discourse was also the unreliability of feeling to serve as a panacea for social turbulence. Indeed,

Romanticism does not just show how "irrational" energies and desires became legitimate influences on politics—and how sensibility was ultimately recognized as a key part of civil society—but also registers a backlash to those energies. Orrin N.C. Wang has recently called this the sobriety of Romantic discourse, a "renunciation or policing of the senses" that is just as much a part of Romanticism as its stereotypical excesses.[52] Not just applicable to life between the years 1789-1832, Wang's theorization of Romantic sobriety also applies to today's critique of affect—in particular, how emotions might obscure the conditions of political crises. In the words of one of affect theory's most influential critics, Brian Massumi, "the media-borne affective conversion circuit upon which political power increasingly relies for its legitimation obscures the actual dynamics of [crisis]."[53] Massumi could just as well have been talking about the conservative contributions to the pamphlet wars of the 1790s, which radicals like Paine and Wollstonecraft critiqued as melodramatic and overwrought, deceptive in their sensationalism. There is a dark-side to affect, and it is written into the civil discourse of modernity.

Methodology and Chapter Descriptions

In the following chapters I rely for the most part on formal textual analysis, tracking discrete changes in the language associated with the honor ethic in order to illustrate its development over time. It might appear that terms like "honor" and "dignity" are used interchangeably, or that one indiscriminately replaces the other throughout the course of an argument. This is not philological carelessness as much as it is an intentional strategy. The slipperiness of diction is due to the indexical relationship language has to

changes in culture(s). The early-nineteenth-century is a particularly fruitful period to witness these changes, and it is replete with what Raymond Williams famously called keywords—language that "record[s], investigat[es] and present[s] problems of meaning in the area in which the meanings of culture and society have formed."[54] Almost all of my chapters investigate the tension created by these semantic variations. This is also to say that while my chapters follow each other in a regular chronology—and are even constructed with a straightforward narrative—they are not strictly historical. That is, they do not appeal solely to the authority of empiricism nor do they rely on the singular concept of "history" as a methodological foundation. (After Nietzsche, who can really do either?) Instead, my impulse is to find in Williams's formalism—and its investigation of semantic "problems of meaning"—a path to the speculative enterprise of criticism itself; to see formalism as a way to recognize the historical possibilities inherent in any contestation of meaning, rather than use it to uncover definitive historical transformations.

Although my formalist approach to literary history has a long lineage—owing to cultural historians like Williams, traditional historians like Pocock, and even New Historicists like Marjorie Levinson—my research also incorporates a new formalism born out of the digital humanities.[55] The mining of massive amounts of text, the visualization of broad thematic relationships through digital applications, and the ability to engage easily with lesser-known influences on a primary work through online archives are all formalist in nature, technologies that make up what Franco Morretti has called the practice of "distant reading;" using aggregated data to perform more comprehensive literary analysis.[56] My critique of *Emma* in chapter three, for example, blends these old

and new critical practices. While I rely on Google's NGram viewer to visualize spikes and dips in the frequency of the word "credit" throughout a large archive of texts from 1750-1815, my analysis on the moral dimensions of credit turns on the venerable practice of close-reading, giving Austen's contextual cues and character quirks their full due.

This combination of old and new formal practices—with its Romantic suggestion of an interlaced temporality—leads to a more conceptual methodological ambition: a reconsideration of the concept of civic virtue in light of the sociohistorical diversity of Romanticism. Above, I invoked Immanuel Wallerstein's idea that the French Revolution gave rise to not one but three major political ideologies in modernity: liberalism, conservatism, and Marxism. Although the modern notion of honor has been attached to the development of liberal society, I emphasize throughout this dissertation how much honor owed to the two other major political formations to which Romantic modernity gave rise. Thus, while honor sounds conservative on the surface—and brings to mind the old sentiments of chivalry, the protocols of the aristocracy, the rituals of the land-gentry, the mythos of Burke or Scott—it also communicates the liberal belief in individual self-worth and universal dignity, what Wordsworth called "the native and naked dignity of man" in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802).[57] And if the discourse of honor in the Romantic era reflects both progressive and traditionalist positions, then it also has proto-Marxist elements. Rather than being a metaphysical—or deontological—virtue, the modern honor ethic could be premised on a critique of bourgeois institutions and the way in which they shaped English culture. The social relations produced by the British financial system, the Atlantic slave trade, and the literary marketplace were all thrown into relief by the revival of honor in literature and culture. Because it was part of the post-

revolutionary firmament, the Romantic notion of honor reflects the diverse features of these three emerging political ideologies. It was communitarian like Burkean conservatism, abstract and individualist like Enlightenment liberalism, and like Marxism, its very definition was premised on a critique of the bourgeois social dynamic.

The Life of Honor explores the interconnection of these three modern political ideologies by locating key concepts from each of them within a single virtue. In this way, it tries to avoid historicizing Romantic literature through the lens of a single post-revolutionary politics, whether it is republicanism, proto-socialism, or even reactionary royalism.[58] Thus, not only do I follow A.O. Lovejoy's observation that there is not one but many different Romantic movements, but the example of the Romantic New Historicism, which attested to the sociopolitical heterogeneity of the Romantic era.[59] Texts like Marilyn Butler's *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* (1981), for example, set the aristocratic traditionalism of German Romanticism alongside the defiant radicalism of many English and French Romantics; and much of Jerome McGann's criticism replicates the political complexity of the Romantic era by blending Marxist ideology critique and liberal pragmatism.[60] While this study is indebted to Romanticists over the last thirty years who have engaged history and historiography in their scholarship, it also uses this engagement to frame a new—and exigent—set of questions: can there be such a thing as a political commitment that subtends the many ideologies that Romanticism provided to modern life?[61] Does the rupture of a stable political order preclude the possibility of a single civic virtue uncoupled from affect, nationalism, or an imagined pluralism? Or does such a rupture make it that much more necessary?

Chapter 1 theorizes the emergence of a modern sense of honor by focusing on one of the most famous ideological quarrels of the 1790s, the conflict between Edmund Burke and William Godwin. Prompted by the anarchic tendencies of the Jacobins and what he believed was their lifeless, utilitarian philosophy, Burke's *Reflections on the Revolutions in France* (1791) proposed a revival of honor for the modern age, a virtue derived from the time-tested principles of chivalry, hierarchy, and above all from the shared sentiments that bound together the social order. Well-known for being a radical take on conservative politics, William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* represents the potential outcome of living under such a sentimentalist honor code: a relentlessly skeptical protagonist—cut in the mold of radical British dissenters—is cowed by the emotional demands of chivalry, ultimately unable to think about anything but the psychic bond he has with his master. Instead of trying to eliminate a sense of honor from public life, however, Godwin offers an alternative version within the novel itself. Motivated by the same fear of post-revolutionary social dislocation that afflicted Burke, Godwin presents what he calls "true honor," a virtue that would grant citizens a universal sense of dignity and instill in them an awareness of the general good—even while it eliminated the sentimentalism and obsession with rank that characterized Burkean chivalry. A short coda focuses on Percy Shelley's closet drama *The Cenci* (1819). By applying Godwin's principles to a portrait of his degraded heroine Beatrice, Shelley suggests that aesthetics may project a sense of dignity similar to Godwin's "true honor." However, because art has the ability to moderate and direct the passions, Shelley's play seems to revive the sentiments that Godwin wanted to excise from honor almost thirty years earlier.

Located somewhere in between Burke's traditionalism and Godwin's radical philosophy, Wordsworth develops a modern sense of honor early in his career. Chapter 2 presents this development in a biographical reading of Wordsworth's "great decade" from 1798-1808. Addressing chronologically a variety of different texts—the Advertisement to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), the Preface to the second edition (1800), the ballad "Michael" (1800), the "Residence in France" sections of the 1805 *Prelude*, and the hawkish treatise *The Convention of Cintra* (1808)—this chapter addresses Wordsworth's early career as a struggle between two types of honor: a conservative value of hierarchy and status that continued to function in the day's literary market for "dignified" literary productions, and a progressive value of egalitarianism and equity, one that would allow poetry to appeal to the "native and naked dignity" inherent in all mankind regardless of their commercial well-being. Against readings that claim Wordsworth's became increasingly conservative as his career progressed, this chapter shows how he in fact models a classic paradox inherent in liberal politics: the conflict between market distinction and social equality.

If the second chapter focuses on the associations between honor and cultural capital, chapter 3 focuses on the relationship of honor to real capital. The rising civic importance of British finance capitalism in the early eighteenth-century meant a greater emphasis on the moral dimensions of economic language. Honor and disrepute were thus increasingly synonymous with terms like credit and debt. This is no more evident than in Walter Scott's *Rob Roy*, an adventure whose young protagonist ventures into the thick of the 1715 Jacobite rebellion in order to rescue errant bills of credit and redeem the honor of his father's stock-brokerage. However, if Scott supports the ethics of the modern

international credit system—and a utopian vision of infinite financial expansionism that might prove to be, as Berlant describes it, cruelly optimistic—Jane Austen remains unconvinced of credit's moral rectitude. *Emma* (1816) offers a subtle critique of credit as a moral concept, and posits a solution: replaces the dubious morality of finance with a more substantial ethos of honorable trust in the other. This move from the financialized world-system in Scott's novel to the quaint affairs of Austen's Highbury prefigures the proposals of many contemporary critics of liberal capitalism: a move from global to local politics. The coda to this chapter investigates how two popular film remakes of these novels—*Rob Roy* (1995) and *Clueless* (1995)—represented honor in the hyperactive credit economy of the neoliberal era.

Emma suggests that a modern honor ethic could revitalize a sense of communality within limited, Burkean social circles. The text in my fourth chapter, however, shows how a national sense of honor and shame could motivate the entire British public against an international institution: the Atlantic slave trade, an enterprise within which every citizen was implicated either directly or indirectly. Known for its brutal descriptions of punishment—and the indomitable heroine that resists them—*The History of Mary Prince* (1831) is usually seen as a slave narrative that advances the affective arguments for abolition in a particularly forceful way. Its explicit set-pieces of violence and sexual humiliation were meant to appeal to the sentiments of British readers and to provoke in them an instinctual repulsion towards slavery. Unfortunately, this tactic meant that slaves would be regarded as permanently degraded, and that their humanity could be acknowledged only in spiritual or abstract ways. Mary Prince and her editor Thomas Pringle, however, challenge this subtle debasement of slaves by connecting the concept

of honor and dignity to Prince's physical body. In doing this, the *History* addresses the prejudice concerning the wantonness of the black female body long-held by both abolitionists and colonialists, and demonstrates how the late abolitionist movement played a large part in reimagining traditionalist versions of British honor—with all of its militarism, chauvinism, and whiteness—to make the virtue more egalitarian and inclusive. In a concluding section, I show how the text's invocation shame—in some ways the opposite of honor—converts the public injustice of slavery into a private, visceral mood that would be unavoidable to the laymen British reader.

If the sociohistorical heterogeneity of Romanticism makes impossible the very idea of a single civic virtue, is honor thus the representative ethical sign of the early-nineteenth-century—an imperative that exceeds political categories? And if its excess is also temporal—not merely touching upon the institutional foundations of the liberal project, but also the teleologies upon which it was based—does this mean that honor might still apply to our own tempestuous day?

NOTES

[1] Epigraph from William Combe, "The Duel," in *The English Dance of Death: From the designs of Tomas Rowlandson* (London: Methuen and Co., 1903), 248, ll. 1-6.

[2] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Honour," in *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Hartley Coleridge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), 24-6, ll. 35-40.

[3] William Wordsworth, "Say, What is Honour?" in *Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty* (London: Isbister and Company Ltd., 1897), 59; hereafter "Say, What is Honour?"

[4] "Say, What is Honour?" ll. 3, 7-9; my emphasis.

[5] William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, 1798); hereafter *Political Justice*.

[6] Jerome Christensen, David Duff, and Michael McKeon have all called attention to the place of honor in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century life. See Jerome Christensen, *Lord Byron's Strength: Romantic Writing and Commercial Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993); hereafter *Lord Byron's Strength*;

David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994); Michael McKeon, The *Secret History of Domesticity*: *Public, Private and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007); hereafter *Secret History.*

[7] My title is an homage to Kwame Anthony Appiah's 2009 Page-Barbour lecture on the topic at the University of Virginia. While Appiah has a long view of honor across the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century, in this dissertation, I hope to give a more concentrated reading of the honor ethic as it was shaped by the cultural and social pressures of Romanticism. See Kwame Anthony Appiah, "The Life of Honor." Paige-Barbour Lecture, University of Virginia, 4/2/09.

[8] This is not to say that liberal thinking begins during the Romantic period, but that institutions and practices dedicated to carrying out familiar liberal goals—like the protection of private property, the universal rights of man, and the valorization of individual initiative—start to become normative at this time.

[9] *Lord Byron's Strength*; Frances Ferguson, "Educational Rationalization / Sublime Reason," *Romantic Circles Praxis: The Sublime and Education* (August 2010). www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/sublime_education/ferguson/ ferguson.html. October 2013; Amanda Anderson, "The Liberal Aesthetic." In *Theory after "Theory,"* Derek Attridge and Jane Elliott (eds.) (New York: Routledge, 2011), 249-61; hereafter "The Liberal Aesthetic;" "Character and Ideology: The Case of Cold War Liberalism," *NLH* 42.2 (2011), 209-229; hereafter "Character and Ideology;" *Bleak Liberalism* (forthcoming); hereafter *Bleak Liberalism*.

[10] See Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997); "Denial: The Liberal Utopia," www.egs.edu/faculty/slavoj-zizek/articles/denial-the-liberal-utopia/ (2009). September 2013; hereafter "Denial: The Liberal Utopia."

[11] Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso, 2010), 218; hereafter *End Times;* Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (NY: Continuum, 1973); hereafter *Negative Dialectics*.

[12] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), 122-7; hereafter *Marxism and Literature*.

[13] George Kateb, *Human Dignity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2011); Jeremy Waldron, *Dignity, Rank, and Rights* (London: Oxford UP, 2012).

[14] J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985); hereafter *Virtue*, *Commerce, and History*.

[15] Robert Baldick, *The Duel: A History of Dueling* (NY: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1965).

[16] Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Riga: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1786); hereafter *Grundlegung*; "Sermons on the Dignity of Man, and the Value of the Objects Principally Relating to Human Happiness. From the German of the Late Rev. George Joachim Zollikofer, Minister of the Reformed Congregation at Leipsick," *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature* 36 (1802), 422; hereafter "Sermons on the Dignity of Man."

[17] Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott (MD: Manor, 2008), 53; hereafter *Metaphysics of Morals*.

[18] Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man* (London: J.S. Jordan, 1791), 55; hereafter *The Rights of Man*; Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (London: J. Johnson, 1790), 23; hereafter *Vindication of the Rights of Men*.

[19] Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 2010), 195; hereafter *The Honor Code*.

[20] *Secret History* xix.

[21] See Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger (Boston: MIT Press, 1991); for the Romanticist engagement with the public—and counterpublic—sphere see the entire edition of *Studies in Romanticism* 33.4 (1994); see also William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), and Andrew Franta, *Romanticism and the Rise of the Mass Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009).

[22] *Metaphysics of Morals* 53.

[23] Sharon Krause, *Liberalism with Honor* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), xii; hereafter *Liberalism with Honor*.

[24] Blackstone's phrase has been invoked in some very popular works in the Romantic canon. See Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1995), 55; William Wordsworth, *Yarrow Revisited* (NY: R. Bartlett and S. Raynor, 1835), 332.

[25] For Blackstone's role in the advancement of political economy, see Michael Pereleman, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation* (NC: Duke UP, 2000), 45-6.

[26] *Virtue, Commerce, and History* 50.

[27] Walter Scott, *Rob Roy* (London: Oxford UP 2008), 233; hereafter *Rob Roy*.

[28] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality*. Trans. G.D.H. Cole (1782). www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq.htm. September 2013; hereafter *Discourse on Inequality*; Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man: For the Use and Benefit of All Mankind* (London: Daniel Isaac Eaton, 1795), 65.

[29] Thomas Paine, *Agrarian Justice*. Reprinted in *The Writings of Thomas Paine: Vol. 3*, ed. Moncure Daniel Conway (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1895). www.gutenberg.org/files/31271/31271-h/31271-h.htm. September 2013.

[30] Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[31] *Lord Byron's Strength*; Stephanie Kuduk Weiner, *Republican Politics and English Poetry, 1789-1874* (NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

[32] Immanuel Wallerstein, "The French Revolution as a World Historical Event," in *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity*, ed. Ferenc Fehér (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 117-30.

[33] My usage of the terms affect, emotion, feeling, and sentiment tend to be somewhat synonymous—they are, of course, categories of thought that oftentimes blended together in the work of Romantic writers. (Eve Sedgwick also merges the concepts of feeling and touching in her final book). However, some affect theorists have made important distinctions between affect, feeling, and emotion. See for instance Brian Massumi, "Translator's Forward: Pleasures of Philosophy" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), ix-xv; Eric Shouse. "Feeling, Emotion, Affect," *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005). journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php. September 2013. For the problems inherent in the sharp discriminations of affect theory see also the entire exchange between Ruth Leys and other critics of affect in *Critical Inquiry* 37.3, 37.4 (2011). Finally, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (NC: Duke UP, 2003); hereafter *Touching Feeling*.

[34] Alexander Pope, *The Iliad of Homer* (London: Cassel and Company Ltd., 1909), 289, ll. 796-7.

[35] See McKeon's reading of Delarivier Manley's *Rivella* (1714) for an analysis on how woman might recover her honor through the manipulation of her public, textually-mediated self; *Secret History*, 598-615.

[36] William Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*. "Henry IV, Part I Complete Text," ll. 2761. *Open Source Shakespeare*. www.opensourceshakespeare.org/views/plays/play_view.php?WorkID=henry4p1&Scope=entire&pleasewait=1&msg=pl. October, 2013.

[37] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: J. Dodsley, 1790), 203; hereafter *Reflections*.

[38] *Reflections* 112-3.

[39] *Marxism and Literature* 132; for critical works that acknowledge the vicissitudes of the culture of sensibility see Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (NJ: Routledge, 1993); hereafter *Radical Sensibility* Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Orrin N.C. Wang, "The Other Reasons: Feminist Alterity, Feminist Romantic Studies, and Mary Wollstonecraft" in *Fantastic Modernity: Dialectical Readings in Romanticism and Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996), 107-43; hereafter *Fantastic Modernity; Romantic Sobriety: Sensation, Revolution, Commodification, History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2011); hereafter *Romantic Sobriety*.

[40] Daniel M. Gross, *The Secret History of Emotion: From Aristotle's Rhetoric to Modern Brain Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), xiv, 102-42.

[41] See, for instance, Jennifer Wicke, "*Mrs. Dalloway* Goes to Market: Woolf, Keynes, and Modern Markets," *Novel* 28.1 (1994), 5-23; Jameson also remarks that Postmodernism—literally the movement that succeeds Modernism—is marked by an end to social democracy, thus implying Modernism's allegiance to it. See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (NC: Duke UP, 1991), 1; hereafter *Postmodernism*.

[42] Eugene V. Debs, "A Plea for Solidarity," *The International Socialist Review* 14 (1913), 534; William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 1977), 99; hereafter *CW*.

[43] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (NJ: Routledge, 2004), 62-82; hereafter *Cultural Politics of Emotion*.

[44] Joel Faflak, "The Persuasion of Happiness." Talk. Washington Area Romanticists Group, College Park, MD. May 4, 2013; Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (NC: Duke UP, 2011); hereafter *Cruel Optimism*. I'm also compelled to mention Claudia Johnson's remarkable essay on the bourgeois dynamic of happiness in *Pride and Prejudice*. See Claudia Johnson, *Jane Austen: Women, Politics, and the Novel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 73-93; hereafter *Jane Austen*.

[45] See, for instance, *Radical Sensibility*; Adela Pinch, *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion from Hume to Austen* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1996); Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (London: Oxford UP, 1998).

[46] *Marxism and Literature* 132.

[47] Thomas Pfau, *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, and Melancholy, 1790-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), 10, n. 39; hereafter *Romantic Moods*.

[48] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 3; *Cultural Politics of Emotion* 14.

[49] *Cruel Optimism* 263.

[50] Vivasvan Soni, *Mourning Happiness: Narrative and the Politics of Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2010), 309.

[51] Walter Benn Michaels, "The Beauty of a Social Problem," *The Brooklyn Rail* (October 2011). www.brooklynrail.org/2011/10/art/the-beauty-of-a-social-problem. June 2013; hereafter "The Beauty of a Social Problem;" "Meaning and Affect: Phil Chang's Cache, Active," *Nonsite.org* (March 2012). nonsite.org/feature/meaning-and-affect-phil-changs-cache-active. June 2013; hereafter "Meaning and Affect;" "Formal Feelings or The Death of a Beautiful Woman," Lecture, University of Maryland. 4/4/12; hereafter "Formal Feelings."

[52] *Romantic Sobriety* 1.

[53] Brian Massumi, "The Half-Life of Disaster," *The Guardian*, April 15, 2011. www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/apr/15/half-life-of-disaster (April 15, 2011). June 2013.

[54] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), 13; hereafter *Keywords*. Italics omitted.

[55] See *Keywords; Virtue, Commerce, and History* 1-34*;* Marjorie Levinson, *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems: Four Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2009); hereafter *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*.

[56] Franco Morretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013).

[57] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems* (London: T.N. Longman & O. Reese, 1802), xxxiii-iv; hereafter *3LB*.

[58] Social commentators like Christopher Hedges have dubbed the structures of liberalism a "release valve" for the pressures of radical or reactionary forces. See Christopher Hedges, *Death of the Liberal Class* (NY: Random House, 2010). One can also turn to Adorno for an explanation of why liberalism has the ability to bring other traditions into its orbit: liberalism's speculative premise—it's ability to create a gap between ideal and real conditions—means that it always have room to incorporate other political ideologies. See *Negative Dialectics*; Deborah Cook, *The Culture Industry Revisited: Theodor W. Adorno on Mass Culture* (MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996); see also *End Times* 146.

[59] A.O. Lovejoy, "On the Discrimination of Romanticisms," in *Essays in the History of Ideas* (NY: Capricorn Books, 1960), 228-53.

[60] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background, 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982); Jerome McGann, "An Interview with Jerome McGann." In *Byron and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002), 256-65; hereafter *Byron and Romanticism*.

[61] For a theoretical take on the historiographic impulse of Romanticism (and Romanticists) see amongst others Clifford Siskin, *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988); hereafter *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse*; *Fantastic Modernity*. See also James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); hereafter *England in 1819*.

Chapter One
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Soliloquies in Praise of Chivalry: Burke, Godwin, Shelley and the Performance of Honor

I.

On May 27, 1798, the Prime Minister of England shot at another member of parliament from a distance of thirty feet. William Pitt the Younger—the Tory leader who had presided over the government for nearly fifteen years—had been called out on the floor of the House of Commons by the Irish MP George Tierney.[1] When Tierney objected to Pitt's proposal to increase naval spending, Pitt claimed that Tierney was willfully obstructing the defense of the country. A short exchange between the two men proved ineffective at quelling their disagreement, and they met days later for a duel on Putney Heath complete with "seconds," those men charged with overseeing the procedure and fairness of the duel, a practice by now almost universally frowned upon by society. Upon missing each other with their opening shots, Pitt fired his pistol into the air signaling an amenable end to the conflict. Honor had been restored and the two men were satisfied.[2] However, many sources report that the pistols had never been loaded by the seconds: although the sensationalism of the event remained in-tact, death or harm was never a real possibility. Other sources report that a small audience had been tipped off as to the duel's secret location and that they had gathered to witness one political party's spectacular demise. These accounts are not just frivolous details.[3] Not only do they prove how important honor was to the political life of the tumultuous 1790s, but such accounts show how melodramatic the ethic of honor could be. Affective and theatrical, the duel of honor in this instance was a civic performance with invited spectators. This is to say that

for Pitt and Tierney, the duel was not just about private retribution but public recognition on the great stage of history, a time whose predominant metaphor was a "theater of revolution."

Pitt and Tierney's duel is just one example of the public role played by honor, a virtue undergoing a significant revival during the Napoleonic era, but one that was also changing its moral outlook following the profound democratic developments across Europe: no longer reserved for the aristocracy alone, there were hints that honor could soon be available to every ordinary citizen by way of merit, reputation, and civic responsibility. In an effort to take seriously this changing culture of honor in the 1790s—and to better understand its nature as a phenomenon of modernity instead of antiquity—this chapter turns to one of the decade's most famous gothic texts, William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), a novel whose characters cannot help but be taken-in by displays of honor. Demonstrating the importance of this virtue to both Britain's conservatives and her dissenters in the aftermath of the French Revolution, I begin by tracing a familiar late eighteenth century politic debate between the conservative Edmund Burke and the dissenter Godwin in order to see how a modern honor ethic took shape during the post-revolutionary era. A subsequent reading of *Caleb Williams* shows two distinct forms of honor at play in the contemporary life of Britain's citizens—what Raymond Williams may have called a "residual" form and an "emergent" form of cultural mores. For most readers the first form of honor has been obvious: *Caleb Williams* is centered on a pernicious version of chivalry. Ostensibly a decent moral sentiment, the "residual" form of chivalric honor is portrayed by Godwin as an archaic, martial ideology to which even the most enlightened, modern subject must submit. But Godwin also offers an

"emergent" version of honor that could be an indispensable part of the contemporary subject and his self-realization. In other words, while *Caleb Williams* shows the old, chivalric honor as a practice based on passionate antagonism, it a new, more democratic type of honor as an ethos that upheld burgeoning notions about human dignity, a notion that has now become fundamental to contemporary understandings of social justice and universal human rights.

Revealing the charms and pitfalls of chivalry in the age of Burke, *Caleb Williams* represents the honor ethic on the precipice of historical change. While the novel continues a longstanding historical critique of honor, instead of doing away with Burke's discourse of honor, Godwin attempts to transform it by playing Burke's sentimental language game. The next section investigates affected, performative culture of honor in the late-eighteenth century and the political reactions it provoked during the revolutionary controversy. Adding to the fine historicist work on revolutionary-era chivalry from critics like David Duff (and to J.G.A. Pocock's influential model of bourgeois modernity based on "Virtue, Rights, and Manners"), I trace the radical political reaction specific to Burke's performative language in the *Reflections*—those "soliloquies in praise of chivalry" that troubled Godwin's contemporaries Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft.[4] But unlike Paine and Wollstonecraft—who denounce Burke's chivalry as outmoded and archaic and proclaimed the eventual disintegration of the honor ethic by way of reason— Godwin presents a disconcerting parable of the reasoning, political figure caught-up in performances of sentiment. Caleb's infatuation with the sentiments of honor demonstrates a disconcerting fusion between private feelings and public practices, one that might serve more generally as a challenge to our own recent fixation with the

primacy of affect in literary studies and political theory. With regards to Gary Handwerk's and John Bender's own political readings of *Caleb Williams*—and to Amanda Anderson's new work on the individual "character" of liberalism—this fusion would also proves especially problematic to the emerging liberal political subject called to separate public procedures from private beliefs, to separate, in other words, the mechanisms of justice from the contingencies of feeling.[5]

But *Caleb Williams* doesn't just wallow in the moral chasm created by Burke's account of modern chivalry. Instead, it finds a solution to the problems presented by this public, sentimentalized honor code, the moral sentiment that binds Caleb to his antagonist Falkland in a "morbid" version of intersubjectivity. Without eliminating honor altogether or contending that it be completely contained within the subject as a form of inherent dignity, the novel shows the virtue to be a form of private self-regard that can, paradoxically, only be thought of communally. As a novelist and political philosopher, Godwin precipitates a movement away from chivalry—where individuals defended their own private reputations in public—to what might now be called a human dignity, a foundational principle for contemporary human rights and, as of late, philosophical cosmopolitanism. Widely regarded as having a deeply pessimistic take on modernity, ~~it~~ *Caleb Williams*, then, can be read as simultaneously advancing modernity's cause, transforming honor—the ~~Burkean~~ ancient concept of public recognition—into dignity, a moral idea of private worth that does not have to rely totally on the premise of universal benevolence and sentimental affinity that was so fundamental to Godwin's early political philosophy.

A coda takes us twenty-five years into the future to investigate the legacy of honor within the larger Godwin circle. Tied to Godwin by marriage and shared reformist politics, Percy Shelley recovers in *The Cenci* what Godwin calls "true honor" throughout *Caleb Williams*. Shelley, however, nuances "true honor"—and its stoic responsibilities towards the common good—by reviving certain private and sentimental features that were pernicious in Godwin's novel, features that, for Godwin, would ultimately overwhelm and destabilize an individual's responsible, public character. Similar to Caleb himself, Shelley's heroine Beatrice Cenci is subjected to a system of brutal honor practices that seem insurmountable, and, much like Caleb, Beatrice attempts to stand against the cruel public performances of patriarchal honor that are used to annihilate her. But *The Cenci* does what *Caleb Williams* cannot do by ultimately redeeming its protagonist, a redemption that is enabled by Beatrice's removal from the gothic bounds of the play and made possible by Shelley's own act of sentimental identification with Beatrice's portrait, and its "simplicity and dignity."[6] Shelley argues that the passions must continue to play a role in the development of the modern political subject, and that an aesthetic appreciation of "dignified" objects across social lines may be one way to redeem the pernicious sentimentalism associated with Burke. When paired with each other, Godwin and Shelley show the development of one of Britain's most prominent virtues as it stretched across a major period in history and incorporated a spectrum of political ideologies; from the public sentimentalism of Burkean chivalry, to a more private "rights-based" concepts of radical, individual dignity, to a reformist hope in the redemption of another individual's self-worth through collective, oftentimes aesthetically-motivated, recognition.

II.

Addressing both the ethical and affective turns in literary studies, critics in recent years have focused on the moral sentiments. But while joy, anger, and even the more heterogeneous moods have been used to thematize late-eighteenth-century politics and society in particular, honor has been given little direct attention, despite its blending of affect and morality and the major role it played in the culture and society of Britain in the 1790s.[7] Yet, honor has figured in diverse academic conversations about contemporary ethical life and speaks to many of our own cultural concerns today: heightened political antagonism (although we no longer duel), the importance of public reputation in an age of internet scrutiny, the possibility of universal dignity in a world of different cultures and identities, and the assurances of an increasingly unsteady financial system based on credit—that fiscal form of honor that in late capital has come to define the character of a nation state.[8] Finally, the notion of honor and dignity has played a major role in the work of public intellectuals like Charles Taylor, Martha Nussbaum, and Kwame Anthony Appiah over the last twenty years.[9] As Appiah reminded us in his book *The Honor Code* (2010), "[w]e may think we have finished with honor, but honor isn't finished with us."[10]

With honor commanding the attention of its characters in a nearly compulsive way, *Caleb Williams* seems to take Appiah's remark literally. Proclamations regarding nobility and reputation are abundant throughout the text, and many follow a kind of performative logic, where the language of chivalry has acute material effects on the present day.[11] "The slightest breath of dishonor" is said to "have stung [the despotic squire Tyrrel] to the very soul;" the villainous Ferdinando Falkland insists on a written

confession from Caleb Williams that will clear his reputation; Caleb himself exclaims, "I honour you! I conjure you!" to his beloved Laura (a speech act that is followed, coincidentally, by a description of a speech act or a "conjuration" out of thin air).[12] Full of what J.L. Austin called the illocutionary part of performative utterances—promises, oaths, and curses that speak to the ability of language that "do things" to the world—the novel also dramatizes the effects of these utterances, especially as they relate to the feelings and sentiments generated by honor. In other words, the *affect* of chivalry is intimately tied to what Austin dubbed the perlocutionary *effect* of performative language, and the result it has on the impulsive, sometimes fickle sentiments of the listener.

The affect associated with these "honor performatives" are most associated with the novel's memorable villain, Ferdinando Falkland, a perfectly despicable honorable gentleman long connected by historicist critics to Edmund Burke. Falkland's connection to Burke is manifested with especial clarity through their similar semantics: Falkland's obsession with maintaining an honorable "character" sounds very much like Burke's lament in the *Reflections* about the modern loss of ancient chivalry, "which has given its character to modern Europe," while Falkland's consistent deferral to the rigid "laws of honor" echoes Burke's deferral of political rule to a prior authority vested by national sensibility, the "native plainness and directness of [British] understanding."[13] Even Falkland's peculiar "habits of sensibility" link him to Burkean sentimentality and antiquarianism. "[I]mbib[ing]…chivalry and romance…[from] the times of Charlemagne and Arthur," Falkland is affected like Burke by the overwhelming feeling of history, "most painfully alive to everything that related to [the mythic past]."[14]

Burke shows himself to be painfully alive to the slights of chivalric honor in the *Reflections*. In a memorable scene, Burke recounts a vision of Marie Antoinette, rising atop Versailles:

> It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the queen of France…and surely never lighted on this orb…a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, —glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendor, and joy. Oh! what a revolution! and what an heart must I have, to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall! Little did I dream that, when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic, distant, respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom; little did I dream that I should have lived to see such disasters fallen upon her in a nation of gallant men, in a nation of men of honour and of cavaliers. I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened her with insult.—But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophisters, œconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. The unbought grace of life, the cheap defence of nations, the nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprize is gone! It is gone, that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness.[15]

The passage interrupts the *Reflections*' polemic about present-day republicanism by moving into recollection. Although Burke's "delightful vision" seems to recollect the images of Marie Antoinette in a kind of Wordsworthian panorama—moving from the beholder who "saw her just above the horizon" to the beheld now endowed with ethical "life, and splendor, and joy"—it is recollection without much tranquility. The

descriptions of the Queen accumulate as she "decorat[es] and cheer[s] the elevated sphere…glitter[s] like the morning-star," revealing Burke's rising emotions, and the affective nature of royal visions. Soon after, Burke escapes this syntactical pileup with a personal glimpse into the moment of writing, as he exhorts his own heart "to contemplate without emotion that elevation and that fall." The passage moves from a purely descriptive expression of things past, to the performance of Burke's own present act of writing. The historical representation of Marie Antoinette blends with Burke's concurrent self-soothing. While Burke's memory of the queen places chivalry in the past, his reaction creates a chivalric sensibility that exists in the present.

Burke's performativity here is not necessarily made evident by speech acts alone, or illocutionary causes, but by sensations that chivalric honor creates in its hearers, or the perlocutionary effects inspired by Marie Antoinette.[16] The queen is not just an empty set-piece, but the "morning star," or Venus, who rises onto center stage surrounded by attendants.[17] Replicating the familiar iconography of Venus Anadyomene (the birth of Venus), her presence has a powerful ethical legacy: to honor Venus meant honoring both the erotic and celestial versions of love. Burke catches both versions of love in this passage. The queen's celestial "splendor" leads to "distant, respectful love" and shows a dignity "concealed in that bosom." With this in mind, chivalry could signal veneration at a polite distance. But other parts of the passage are anything but distanced, replete with Eros and corporality, implying the direct physical reactions of audience enraptured by Marie Antoinette's beauty and aura. Burke's final list of chivalric "effects"—where civic terms like "principle," "honor," "courage," "nobility, and "virtue" mix with erotic terms like "sensibility," "chastity," "feeling," "ferocity," and "touching"—demonstrates just

how much chivalry turns politics into a sensational art form. With its emphasis on honor's causes and effects, Burke's passage on Marie Antoinette is foundationally performative. For Burke, the modern sense of honor is not just the pronouncement of fealty to ancient custom but the affective connection to chivalry that one can experience in the present day.

Burke's description attempts to evoke nostalgia by taking readers back to the *ancien régime*. But apostrophes (like Burke's instinctive "Oh!") return readers to the present, linking chivalry to direct physical reaction. If Burke can reply so strongly to the glory of monarchy, it seems the age of chivalry might *not* be gone. The phrase that follows is politically resonant, as well, connecting contemporary upheavals to ancient principles of honor. When Burke exclaims, "What a revolution!" he could, of course, be referring to the astronomical motion of the morning star to which Marie Antoinette is compared. But "What a revolution!" is more likely a sarcastic remark on the French disturbance that prompted the *Reflections*—and an implied comparison to the Glorious Revolution in 1688, what Burke believed to be the only successful revolutionary model. Another reading gives more weight to the royalist tradition: the ascension of the queen and her fortification of the contemporary honor ethic may have, in fact, been the *real* revolution, one that already occurred "sixteen or seventeen years" hence. Indeed, after his "delightful vision" of the Dauphiness we might have expected Burke to say "What a revelation," with a kind of religious awe. But through apostrophic moments with distinctively historical connections to the revolutionary era, perfomative rhetoric shows its distinctly political stripes.

By co-opting the word "revolution" to describe Marie Antoinette—and, by extension, chivalric honor—Burke also invalidates republican principles in a formal way, showing that revolutionary modernity, with its dangerous leveling principles, will always carry within it the seeds of a hierarchical honor ethic. The new republicans fail to consider chivalric values because they do not have the abilities to react to these performatives. Their dependence on reason and utility— the theories of "sophisters, œconomists, and calculators"—make them unable to comprehend Burke's experiential paradoxes about honor. They cannot "behold …that proud submission…dignified obedience…[and] subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom."[18]

Progressive figures responded to these and other moments in the *Reflections* in the well-known "pamphlet war" of the early 1790s. Infamous for its dramatic description, radicals noted how Burke's treatise muddled painting with theater, straying from the generic purity of a sober political pamphlet. But another way of putting this is that the *Reflections* blurred the line between representative and sensational language. Thomas Paine attacked Burke's style with especial vigor. He likened the *Reflections* to a "tragic painting," a flat melodrama that did not depict the revolution accurately.[19] According to Paine, the theatricality of Burke's prose annulled the veracity of his argument because such theatrical prose made chimerical history. But Paine was also aware of the way that the *Reflections* may have been received by readers. He believed that the pathos Burke's fabrications might inspire in readers would obscure their ability to reason. Burke's "facts are manufactured for the sake of show," says Paine, "and accommodated to produce, through the weakness of sympathy, a weeping effect. But Mr. Burke should recollect that

he is writing History, and not Plays."[20] Winning hearts and not minds, Burke's prose had the potential to reproduce similarly maudlin readers, those who were too emotional to care about the authenticity of his history. In other words, Paine takes particular issue with the perlocutionary, affective side of Burke's performative pamphlet. He worries about the effects of a type of speech not calculated to convey truth, but to evoke sensation. Not only does Paine indict Burke for getting his facts wrong, but he reprimands Burke for using a type of language that is unconcerned with the representation of facts proper and more concerned with the sentimental performance of political speech.

Also responding to Burke's description, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) noted that many of Burke's chivalric set-pieces were made to elicit "sensual prejudice" and that they "[threw] a graceful veil over vices that degrade humanity."[21] Anticipating Derrida—who asserts that the performative "pass[es] off as ordinary an ethical…determination"—Wollstonecraft shows how the "natural," affective speech act might shroud underlying contexts and systems.[22] Burke's "sensual prejudice" is his sensational language, that which obscure pre-determined ideologies long entrenched by political systems.

Imbedded in Paine and Wollstonecraft's pleas for truth and ideological demystification is a stylistic indictment of linguistic performativity. Paine and Wollstonecraft are clear: political reality should not be falsified by imaginative genres, whether they are painting or drama, nor should political discourse be calculated to produce sensuous effects on readers. Paine also condemns Burke's chivalric pretensions by declaring that recent history shows no sign of an abiding honor ethic. In short, the age of chivalry *is* gone, and has *been* gone. Burke's ethic of chivalry—that which prompted

such contrived performances in the *Reflections*—has been relegated safely to the past, "pass[ing] quietly to the tomb of all other follies."[23] Hence, not only is the performative language of honor a "folly," or epistemologically false, but it is absurdly presentist: *of course* honor is obsolete. While arguing for republican principles, Paine tries to unravel the nationalist tradition of chivalry as both a linguistic fantasy and a dated narrative, and replicates much of the longstanding secular critique against the honor ethic: honor is always passé and to practice it means invoking a history without substantial connections to modern life—it means living in a story of the Old World.

Paine's second point is connected to his first: if one were to practice honor, such a practice would be theatrical fancy. Like Ferdinando Falkland, it would mean performing as if that Old World still existed. Like Caleb Williams, it would mean giving in to quixotic belief and not reason. Radical politics' fight for the future would then mean ceding no ground to such performative "folly." Fellow radical Godwin, however, seems to more accurately represent—and thus more ably critique—Burke's honor ethic. By accommodating the performative rhetoric of honor found in the *Reflections*, the novel *Caleb Williams* shows honor's real, ongoing consequences on contemporary life.

III.

The Rights of Man, Vindication of the Rights of Men and *Caleb Williams* are all well-known responses to Edmund Burke. They criticize Burkean chivalry for its pernicious effects on contemporary life. But where Paine and Wollstonecraft want to either bury the honor ethic as a defunct narrative or lift the "veil" of its theatricality, Godwin's *Caleb Williams* makes a compelling case for the continuing relevance of

honor, and how fanciful performance and performativity inexorably affects the world. In other words, the novel argues that performativity and theatricality are not the bogeys of the real like they are in Paine and Wollstonecraft, but tropes of current and very real political culture.[24]

The novel's introductory scene to the life of Ferdinando Falkland makes honor patently theatrical while speaking to the performative nature of chivalric honor suggested by Burke. Mr. Collins's account of Falkland's early life begins with nothing less than a duel of honor. On a trip to Italy in his "gloss of youth," Falkland intervenes in the romantic proceedings of Count Malvesi, a Roman noble.[25] Malvesi sends a challenge to which Falkland must respond, bound as he is to the rigid "laws of honor."[26] According to the Collins, Italy, is a seat of honorific vengeance whose cavaliers "[believe] that an indignity cannot be expiated but with blood, and…that the life of a man is a trifling consideration in comparison of the indemnification to be made to his injured honour."[27] Driven by a similar love for ancient chivalry and nobility (and the honor ethic that motivates them), Falkland immediately bonds with the young noblemen of Italian society. But although he has "imbibed all the peculiarities" of archaic Italian custom, Falkland has no lineage to defend—there is nothing said about his familial past and very little about any noble heritage.[28] Driven by his imagination alone, Falkland finds the manners and customs of earlier stories and romances "something to imitate." A type of tribal honor—where families compel respect through titles and inheritances—fits Falkland much less than a "performative" honor, where the imitation of ancient, romantic honor practices like dueling keep the ethic obstinately current.

Faced with Malvesi's challenge, Falkland nearly takes the field for a duel, but before the encounter occurs, it is diffused by Malvesi's love interest, who describes the situation as a misunderstanding. Malvesi offers a profound apology, which Falkland accepts. But Falkland confronts him. "It was lucky…that in our interview of yesterday you found me alone," says Falkland, "[I]f the challenge had been public, the proofs I had formerly given of courage would not have excused my present moderation; and, though desirous to have avoided the combat, it would not have been in my power."[29] In private, the challenge does not affect Falkland. It is only in the presence of an audience where the rules of honor apply. In his retort to Malvesi, Falkland exposes the duel for what it is: a type of theater requiring an audience.

Falkland's almost detached explanation of honor as a type of theater reflects his unusual relationship to chivalry. Although Falkland is swept up in the imaginative thrill of chivalry and romance—and obsessed with the possibility of their being slighted—Falkland is also strangely distanced from the sentiments associated with them, making honor seem both artificial *and* natural. This difficulty in separating formal customs from "sincere" behavior highlight way in which rote customs—code in the 1790s for Burkean political tenets—could overtake sounder moral judgments. Characterized by its combination of affected naturalism and instrumental formality, the honor code starts to explicitly sound like an ideology, or a constructed public belief system that is made to seem natural or autochthonous.[30] Of course, this scene also resonates with the structural guidelines of Austin's theory of linguistic performativity, which emphasized the rules and procedures that undergird the natural, "ordinary" behavior of everyday life. While Falkland's awareness of honor's overt theatricality (its performance) and its structural

makeup (its performativity) reflects the original radical critiques of Burkean principles—and their melodramatic coloring of sociopolitical life in late-eighteenth century Europe—it also provokes larger questions about the character of ethics in modernity: is the ethical act one's own if it has already been codified? Is the agent truly ethical if he simply recapitulates prior behavior?[31] Doe ethics lean more on public practices (or "custom") or upon private affects (or "nature")? Finally, can one rely on the historical and mythic imaginary of Britain to provide ethical guidance to the public in the wake of a revolutionary fissure in history?

The mythic imaginary is on display later in the novel, this time in the form of a successful—or "felicitous"—public performance of honor, one that demonstrates the pernicious effects that overwhelming chivalric sentiments could have upon a wider populace. During the history of Falkland's early years, Falkland and his rival Barnabas Tyrell sit at a small-town meeting in front of the resident poet, Mr. Clare. Having become something of a local celebrity known for his mannerly behavior and, Clare is exhorted by a crowd to read Falkland's poem "Ode to the Genius of Chivalry." When Clare recites it,

> The beauties of Mr. Falkland's poem were accordingly exhibited every advantage. The successive passions of the author were communicated to the hearer. What was impetuous and what was solemn were delivered with a responsive feeling, and a flowing and unlaboured tone…[The hearers] were for the most part plain, unlettered, and of little refinement. Poetry in general they read, when read at all, from the mere force of imitation and with few sensations of pleasure; but this poem had a peculiar vein of glowing inspiration. This very poem would probably have been seen by many of them with little effect; but the accents of Mr. Clare carried it home to the heart. He ended: and, as the countenances of his auditors had before sympathized with the passions of the composition, so now they emulated each other in declaring their approbation.[32]

Although it is Mr. Clare who reads it, the "Ode to the Genius of Chivalry" seems to be a perfect performative utterance for Falkland, directly inspiring effects in its audience. Indeed, Godwin's account allegorizes the function of the performative utterance, in that his description concentrates on the "successive passions…communicated to the hearer," what the poem *does* instead of what it *is*. Like Burke's paean to Marie Antoinette, the effects of the honorable imagination are "carried…home to the heart" of those attending to its glory.[33] In this sense, the title of Falkland's poem is apt. The "genius" is chivalry's animating daemon and the spirit that brings widespread inspiration to those who practice it. Falkland's poem could just have easily been called "An Ode to Chivalry." Yet, as a fantastical figure, "genius" locates the honor ethic in the imagination. Falkland's imaginative poem does not just contain a series of empty representations of honor—examples from "chimerical history" as Paine might call them.[34] Because the poem acts so palpably on its contemporary audience, the "genius of chivalry" also communicates the ability of the ethic to function in modernity, a metaphysical figure that produces real effects on the sentiments. The poem captures the power of Falkland's honor code, showing that honor is as functional as it is fanciful. As a poem without a text—like honor without a code—"Ode to the Genius of Chivalry" insinuates that all honor needs is a convincing performance to make it real.

Here, the focus is on the whole circuit of performative transmission: the illocutionary act of the poem itself, and the perlocutionary effects of its utterance. Oddly, the actual content of the poem is omitted. Like the "contents of the fatal trunk" which stand to reveal the narrative of Falkland's ethical lapse later in the novel, the contents of the Ode might reveal an actual design for an ethical life.[35] But a plan is never revealed.

Much like Caleb, the specific ethical nature of the poem's contents "are of little moment" to how that ethic affects others.[36] Caricaturing Burke's performative "soliloquy in praise of chivalry" through a poetic monologue, Godwin hints at how the ideological structures of the performative utterance—appropriate context, suitable speaker, receptive audience, materialized effects—are obscured by the sentimental reactions to it.

Additionally, Falkland's poem can tell us about the duplicitous way such an ethos operates upon the novel's public institutions. As a conventional performance in a town square, the poem of honor has a universal effect on all those listening, touching "a peculiar vein of glowing inspiration" in even the most "unlettered" interlocutors.[37] Much like a "felicitous" performative utterance, the effects of the honor ethic are realized by ordinary people instantly. They have Burke's "just prejudice." But the performance of the ethic also cows the audience into obedience. Instead of rising in unadulterated applause, they "[emulate] each other in declaring their approbation."[38] As interlocutors, the audience finds honor both affective and ideologically pacifying. Incarnating and spreading chivalry through a space of "public meeting," like a circulating political pamphlet, the ode hints that honor is no longer strictly the ethos of the aristocratic court.[39] Clare's ability to evoke sympathy from an audience who is "plain, unlettered, and of little refinement" turns him into another Burkean voice espousing the hierarchical principles of chivalric honor to a common assembly—the widespread reaction to the "Ode" broaches the possibility that chivalric honor transcends class, as the people join the poet in "proclaiming their approbation" for its ideals. Yet, the audience's mere "emulation" of approbation, and their marked separation from the "cultured" Clare throughout the rest of the passage, implies that the possibility of such transcendence could be a mere salve for

the real class differentiation that the ethic of chivalric honor reinforces (Falkland's "mentoring" relationship with Caleb has the same feel: the servant Caleb aspires to the nobleman Falkland's moral rectitude, even as that rectitude proves to be Caleb's oppressor).

Mirroring the townspeople's reactions to Falkland's "Ode on the Genius of Chivalry," Caleb also becomes caught up in the performative effects produced by Collins's narrative in the first book of the novel. Upon hearing Falkland's back-story of honor and retribution, Caleb says his "veneration was excited for Mr. Clare…[and] I found a thousand fresh reasons to admire and love Mr. Falkland."[40] Like the townspeople, he identifies with honor's perlocutionary effects of veneration and unrequited love, re-constituting the chivalric honor ethic presented in the opening narrative and carrying it into his own present situation. But unlike the townspeople, Caleb has been warned about the folly of honor by Collins himself in a narrative that challenges and condemns chivalric honor in public life. For instance, in the opening narrative Clare warns Falkland about honor's fatuousness after the ode is read, the brutish squire Barnabas Tyrrel is shown to represent feudalism's cruel exploitations, and Collins exhorts Falkland to be passive in the face of public slander and challenges to duel.[41] Instead of considering this opprobrium seriously, however, Caleb reacts to it with romantic reverence, confirming that he is deeply affected by the honor ethic even after being exposed to its detrimental social outcomes.

This is especially disturbing given the revolutionary nature of Caleb's insights: he *could* be the perfect candidate to reveal the ideological perils of chivalry. With his (almost pathological) curiosity about the history and legitimacy of power established

early in the novel—and a fateful trip to a Bastille-like prison later on—Caleb has an historical affinity with Jacobin revolutionaries and English dissenters, many of whom were being tried by the British government during Godwin's composition of the novel. But while Caleb seems like a progressive crack in the bedrock of the social conservatism dramatized in the text, he stands steadfast in support of chivalric honor, further proving the hold the ethic has on modernity and adding another complication to the sociopolitical dangers that it might present to contemporary life. Despite all of the early evidence of honor's rending the fabric of society, Caleb has a deep-seated attraction to the affect of honor—its sentimental nature provokes admiration, veneration, and excitation.

Unlike Falkland, whose honor ethic is more often than not an instrument of public coercion and personal reputation, Caleb's honor becomes a measure of his own private chivalrous rectitude. In this way, Caleb and Falkland respectively caricature the public and private aspects of Burke's modern honor ethic. While Falkland represents the supposed communalism of chivalry that hides a hierarchical power structure, Caleb stands for the pleasing sensations of chivalry that inoculate us from the truth. Caleb and Falkland's relationship to one another is also a sort of diabolical reflection of Burke. If Burke claimed that chivalry holds society together in shared belief—a sort of voluntary ideology—then Falkland and Caleb's chivalry will not allow them to escape one another. It binds them together in a kind of morbid intersubjectivity. Beyond illuminating a problem of modern identity, Godwin's focus on honor highlights two important theories of subject-formation in political modernity: Caleb is at once a subject of Althusserian interpellation, where the citizen is fashioned entirely through the ideological apparatus of the state (or, in Caleb's case, through the embodiment of an omniscient public in

Falkland), as well as an extreme version of liberal privacy, where one is free to hold beliefs despite those beliefs' irrationality or detriment to society.

One way to articulate Caleb's impasse is to return to the perimeters of performative rhetoric. Caleb is stuck between the theoretical poles of such rhetoric, between the performative utterance itself and the contextual history which allows it to function. On the one hand, Caleb knows that Falkland's honor ethic has a dark, secretive history. The murder of Tyrrel and the conspiracy against the Hawkins's were expunged by way of Falkland's gentry status. Pursued by Falkland's various henchmen and plots, Caleb finds the world abetting Falkland's reputation: "[t]he whole country in arms against [him]," Caleb fears that his story will never overcome the ideological power of Falkland's position, or a society calibrated to favor that position.[42] He has unveiled the real systemic supports of an ongoing honor ethic, the felicitous historical contexts of the utterance. On the other hand, Caleb remains under Falkland's personal spell. Bewitched by Falkland's imagination and the implacability of his character, Caleb believes that sheer intention is the only thing needed for Falkland's affective performances.

As Falkland's sensibility and persistence work on Caleb, he starts to conflate Falkland's cultural advantages with pure performative strength—his history with his affect. Falkland moves from being a figure revered by Caleb for his gentility and manners, to a figure revered for his omnipresent nature. To use Caleb's words, he is "astonished at the super-human power Mr. Falkland seemed to possess, of bringing the object of his persecution within the sphere of his authority."[43] Because of his Caleb's own overinvestment in the chivalric imaginary and its performative sentimentalism, Caleb keeps Falkland's secrets, even to great despair. He has developed a diabolical

version of what Burke called "sensual prejudice." For the progressive reader in 1794, the most terrifying moment in *Caleb Williams* might not be Caleb's incarceration or the internalization paranoia caused by constant pursuit and persecution. It may, in fact, be Caleb's final tribute to Falkland: even while disavowing the "poison of chivalry" which corrupted Falkland's character, Caleb uses the same archaic rhetoric of chivalry to consecrate him, turning the everyday pronouns "you" and "your" into the elevated "thy" and "thou."[44] This final scene marks the moment where Godwin's critique of honor truly goes gothic, where Caleb turns from Falkland's antagonist into his unequivocal, performative double.

If *Caleb Williams* remains a well-known Jacobinical exposé of the social iniquity underpinning supposedly disinterested modern institutions, institutions extending Burke's "just prejudice" of honor and chivalry, then the novel is also seemingly more complicated than old-fashioned ideology critique. Instead of capturing the first wave of Western political radicalism in modernity, in some ways Caleb seems to be more of a contemporary radical who has been made cynical by a prolonged fight against injustice: he knows all of the institutional biases, and yet refuses to act on them. This sort of quiescence resonates with a claim made by Slavoj Žižek, who says that the *post*-enlightenment subject can recognize systemic biases, and then cynically denounces his agency: "he knows very well, but…" By the end of the novel, Caleb knows very well that the honor ethic is not some ethos of natural sensibility and manners, but he still persists in honoring Falkland.[45] While Daniela Garofalo also has Žižek's cynical subject in mind in her recent reading of the novel, she reads chivalric honor as a failed ancient ethic (what she calls a "flawed law") that must be supplemented by Caleb due to its contemporary

impotence. This is far from the case, though: replicated by Burke and Falkland and smuggled into modern life by way of performativity, it is clear that honor is an all-too potent ethic in Romantic era.[46]

But Garofalo does recognize the inherent intersubjectivity of honor, a practice that binds together two or more individuals. In fact, one's honor is such a public perception—regulated as it is by social custom and publicity—that it might be said to be in the hands of others. The novel's initial anecdote about Falkland, the Italian noblemen, and the averted duel establishes this fact: Falkland admits that honor needs an audience. Honor is an ethic (and not an inherent moral) precisely because it presupposes the involvement of others.

Caleb Williams takes this phenomenon to the extreme, connecting any sense of individuality to the public recognition of one's own status. Although Caleb and Falkland struggle to assert the innocence of their respective characters shows how essential honor can be to a notion of the private self, Falkland and Caleb's sheer reliance on one another shows how much the self is based on public recognition. Caleb articulates this paradox in one of his famous last lines. After finally asserting his innocence and triumphing over Falkland in their second courtroom encounter, Caleb feels a deep emptiness. No longer acknowledged by another subject—even another subject who slanders his reputation—Caleb cites a strange lack of self. "I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character," Caleb says, "I have now no character that I wish to vindicate."[47] Combining hero worship and dejection, Caleb's closing statement is a complicated moment. Although Falkland as the ideological effigy that gives Caleb's life meaning, this meaning is at the expense of any private subjectivity that Caleb may have had. Once honor does

not need to be asserted (or performed), Caleb feels an evacuation of his "character." At the very moment Caleb vindicates his own subjectivity he finds it negated. This is troubling not just because it shows a figure who willingly vacates his own subjectivity, but because it deconstructs any kind of sociopolitical *vindication* (with all of the reformist imperatives surrounding that word during the 1790s). Caleb fights hard to defend a subjectivity that is, in the end, determined only by that fight.

Here, there is the chilling implication that all ethical encounters risk moving from a governance of the self around others, to the repudiation of self due to superfluous concern with others. Caleb and Falkland both embody this concern, sharing an obsession with reputation. They are co-dependent subjects. They create one another's "character." They are morbidly intersubjective.[48] In fact, Caleb and Falkland's morbid intersubjectivity presents a salient challenge to a legacy of philosophy that has assumed the mutual benefits of intersubjective practices. Whether those benefits come in the form of phenomenological empathy (for Husserl), or in the form of a discursive foundation that supports a thriving, rationalist public sphere (for Habermas), Godwin's portrayal of public honor practices focuses instead on the social pathology of such intersubjectivity: it is precisely the phenomenological binding of Falkland to Caleb that erodes any empathic identification Falkland might have with his former servant, and it is precisely the degree to which Falkland manipulates the public systems of civil jurisprudence and mass printing that determines the irrational characterization of his enemy. With its many scenes of public confrontation and its purchase on contemporary technologies that can make "bad publicity" rapid, *Caleb Williams* prefigures an age of internet slander, where the populace not only has a forum for sharing and comparing truth claims, but media for

disseminating misinformation instantly. Thus, while the novel dramatizes the already-hazardous effects of the honor ethic in the 1790s, it also suggests the potential for honor-practices to contaminate contemporary public life today. *Caleb Williams* not only represents "things as they are" during the Anti-Jacobinical turn in the early 1790s, but seems to presage the widespread moral traditionalism that swept through British society during the Napoleonic wars and might still resonant today—things as they will be.

IV.

But Godwin did not give up on honor entirely in 1794. Located within *Caleb Williams* is another version of the honor ethic, one that might counteract the dangerous effects of chivalry upon the modern institutions and public perception. Because of the book's textual strategy—which disseminates narrative across a field of different voices, genres, and episodes— such a revision of honor can be lost under the many layers and textual mediations of Caleb's narrative. (And for this reason, one could even say *Caleb Williams* makes futile *any* private values). However, it is this very pluralism of voices that implies an important change to the original version of chivalric honor found throughout the novel: that while honor and dignity may be experienced by each person individually, they can only be practiced communally. Godwin does not so much prioritize private morality over civic or public virtue—an assumption fairly made about the original architect of anarchism—as much as he restructures Burke's understanding of private and public experience when it comes to modern honor and dignity.[49] The revision of honor and dignity taking place in *Caleb Williams* also seems to have influenced Godwin's moral philosophy. If the first edition of *Political Justice* that preceded *Caleb Williams*

relied upon ideas of universal benevolence and the moral sentiments underpinning an individual's civic obligation, then this new version of honor seems to respond more realistically to the dangers of such affects—those contingent and irrational sentiments that drive contemporary public life—while offering a rejoinder to our own current critical fascination with the affective component of politics.

A discourse on "true honor," as Godwin puts it, comes from an oftentimes overlooked figure in the text, Falkland's caretaker Mr. Collins, who suggests to Caleb early in the novel that honor might be "in [one's] own keeping" and immune to the intersubjective pitfalls of "reputation" or chivalric pretension.[50] Collins's at first seems to reframe the virtue as a radically private form of integrity—instilled by reason and bolstered by the essential laws of justice.[51] This moment echoes Godwin in *Political Justice*, where, despite repeatedly censuring courtly practices and audacious titles and etiquette, the term "honor" is preserved. Eliminating its public and performative elements, "[t]rue honour," Godwin writes in *Political Justice*, "is to be found only in integrity and justice."[52] With connotations of liberal self-governance—or the private moral imperative associated with Kant—Godwin suggests that one's honor might be located deep within the individual. Private honor would have no need then for retribution or even intersubjective recognition but would be closer to a categorical imperative—or a principle unto itself. This incipient liberal viewpoint (where morals are rooted in a private, personal sovereignty) could serve as a counterpoint to the sinister intersubjectivity embodied in Caleb's paranoia, the sense that a public always has access to his most private deeds.[53]

But "true honor" is more complicated than this. From a closer reading, it is clear that Collins's definition does not connote a totally private, internalized principle—a stoicism for the modern age. Instead, "true honor" means prioritizing the public good to one's own internal reputation or sensibilities. In an early scene, Collins advises Falkland against dueling, and in the process exemplifies "true honor":

> "Dueling is the vilest of all egotism, treating the public, who has a claim to all my powers and exertions, as if it were nothing, and myself, or rather an unintelligible chimera I annex to myself, as if it were entitled to my exclusive attention. I am unable to cope with you: what then? Can that circumstance dishonour me? No; I can only be dishonoured by perpetrating an unjust action. My honour is in my own keeping, beyond the reach of all mankind. Strike! I am passive. No injury that you can inflict, shall provoke me to expose you or myself to unnecessary evil. I refuse that; but I am not therefore pusillanimous: when I refuse any danger or suffering by which the general good may be promoted, then brand me for a coward!"[54]

Not only is dueling or any performance to restore one's private honor "the vilest of all egoism," but it results in the addition of a chimerical double that can only give "exclusive attention" to the self.[55] (This is also an early premonition of Falkland and Caleb's "morbid" intersubjectivity, the extreme focus on the other that is actually a pathological form of individualism). But Collins's remedy is not simply to make one's honor "beyond the reach of all mankind," or to dedicate it to the higher laws of "just actions"—to make it, in a sense, more private, more sovereign, and more legalistic. Instead, it is to promote the "general good" over and above personal offense—to recognize the larger claims of public stability despite of private injury. Although Collins does not eliminate the possibility of private honor or dignity, he suggests that such honor comes from a

responsibility to eliminate communal danger or suffering, not from a public defense of one's own character.[56]

In Collins's description, one finds a more socially-conscious honor code gesturing towards modern doctrines of human rights—with their emphasis on personal dignity and the obligations to eliminate suffering. But although these doctrines of rights have in some ways been modeled on the French *Declaration of the Rights of Man* (1789) with which Godwin would have been familiar, Collins's description here suggests a different foundation for rights in political modernity, one that might speak to citizens of our own era whose dignity seems to go increasingly unrecognized by a liberal state. Instead of resting human rights on the foundations of freedom or property—familiar liberal concepts that are dependent upon individual sovereignty—Collins seems to suggest that their foundation could be honor, or a sense of private dignity that provides a person with an instant obligation to a larger public or "general good."[57]

Indeed, Collins's own story can be read as an allegory of the sociopolitical movement away from such a private sovereignty based on property and liberty and towards a communal conception of dignity based on the recognition of others.[58] Starting off as a steward and caretaker of Falkland's property, Collins upholds the proprietary foundation of sovereignty characteristic to liberal rights, and thus tacitly supports Falkland's ideological use of honor as a means for public repression.[59] However, when Collins returns years later from his management of Falkland's West Indian plantation, he is the shadow of his former self.[60] While Caleb attributes Collins physical decline to a disagreeable climate, Collins's harrowing condition could be the result of years of disillusionment with proprietary structures that underwrite conceptions of honor and

virtue in liberal modernity—in this case, this structure is the illiberal institution of slavery, the most glaring hypocrisy of enlightenment ideals. Even though Collins's disillusionment parallels Caleb's own cynicism towards liberal institutions throughout the novel, unlike Caleb, Collins dissociates himself from Falkland and his property, and administers his own conception of honor by validating Caleb and what remains of his dignity. Indeed, Caleb's final request to Collins to make public his extended confession embodies of such an honor code, to "refuse any danger or suffering by which the general good may be promoted."[61]

Such an allegory might even extended to Godwin's complex relationship with Rousseau, who was a major influence on Godwin's political development, but one whose influence Godwin was reassessing at this point his life.[62] While Godwin allies here with Rousseau in the *Discourse on Inequality* (1754) regarding the social dislocation created by private property, he seems to reject two major components of that treatise: the "natural" superiority of compassion and sympathetic relationships in the social order that, in the context of *Caleb Williams*, are often a cover for ideologically-motivated power grabs; and the place of honor itself in civil society, which, according to Rousseau, was nothing but pure egoism.[63] "True honor" may make Rousseau's "natural compassion" irrelevant to ethics, but it also dissolves the excessive focus on the self in modern society with which Rousseau was concerned. In addition, it can clarify some major conceptual differences in Rousseau's and Godwin's ideas of the political order, especially as they relate to early liberalism. While "true honor" is imbedded in the individual subject that is valorized by liberal politics, its emphasis on the individual's inherent responsibility towards "the greater good" avoids the obvious pitfalls of a society governed by self-

interest—pitfalls that were mitigated, at least in Rousseau's case, through a social contract, a medium of which Godwin was highly skeptical.[64] As a positive civic virtue instead of a prohibition to the ego, Godwin's vision of honor strikes a salutary balance between the individualist and communalist strains in his own political outlook while participating in the larger conversation surrounding early liberal governance.

The proponent of "true honor" in *Caleb Williams*, Collins can be seen as a gruff, even unsavory character in Godwin's novel—to contemporary readers, a precursor to the liberal subject hardened by excessive disinterestedness and ultimately concerned with the protection of private property across a burgeoning empire. But Collins's redemption might be found in the way that he re-conceives honor for modernity, moving it out from the archaism of the public duel, removing the affective and sentimental components that can prove dangerous when manipulated by men like Falkland, and separating honor from modern liberal insinuations like procedural law and private property, both of which are represented as socially corrupting in Godwin's novel. In Collins theory of honor there might even be found a nascent version of cosmopolitanism (albeit Collins is someone whose harrowing colonial experience gives the global aspect of cosmopolitanism a darker, more gothic tinge). Just as Kwame Anthony Appiah finds in his own conception of cosmopolitanism as an "ethics in a world of strangers," Collins finds in honor something that takes seriously the individual dignity of others—as Appiah says, "the value not just of human life but of particular human lives"—even while regarding a large, abstract, perhaps unfamiliar public, or "common good," as the foundational principle for justice.[65] If Collins truly does live up to his principle of honor at the end of the book by abandoning his master Falkland and his plantation, he might also serve as an elliptical

rebuttal to a longstanding criticism of cosmopolitanism as an ultimately bourgeois practice of living that is available only to those who can afford it.[66] Left harrowed by an ethos underwritten by property and ownership—and perhaps even penniless after his abdication—Collins nonetheless returns as "uncommonly judicious," invoking his own ideas of honor against Falkland, the very figure who upheld the chivalric honor ethic to begin with.[67]

As a virtue that can manage contingencies (like insults and personal slander) and prizes public stability, Collins's honor ethic underscores what many scholars have seen as Godwin's own movement from an individually-rooted ethics espoused in the first edition of *Political Justice*, to a more communitarian engagement with ethics at the end of the 1790s.[68] The fictional companion to *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams* gave Godwin the imaginative license "study" (as he put it in his original title) whether a moral philosophy predicated on metaphysical reason would square with the passions of everyday life. And indeed, as critics have noted, most of *Caleb Williams* rejects outright the major premises of *Political Justice*, transcendent rationalism and innate human benevolence. But if "true honor" does not admit of these premises, it acknowledges the possibility of a more permanent moral framework that can withstand the shocks of societal disorder, irrational personal antagonisms, and biases created through affective states and sensations. In what is one of the novel's many instances of gothic doubling Godwin's progressive version of honor here starts to sound like Burkean chivalry. For both writers the honor ethic can be a way to refocus people on the stability of the greater good after the violent aftershocks of the revolution both at home and abroad. But this doubling also transfigures Burke: where Burkean chivalry operates from the inside-out—from the private sentiments of honor to

its performative, public affects—Godwin's "true honor" operates from the outside-in, from a responsibility to the commons that in turn can bequeath dignity to the private subject.

Even if Godwin became more amenable to affect, sentiment, and the "irrational" passions as his career progressed, this new ethic of honor seemed to counteract the many impassioned political manifestations of the decade—from dueling to conservative nationalism–with its own medicine. Indeed, Godwin's critique of honor throughout the novel may serve as a kind of reply to our own critical moment, where individual sentiment and affect are seen to increasingly determine all manner of political action and ethical practice—like *Caleb Williams* this is also, perhaps, much to the obfuscation of systemic biases and injustices within political arrangements.[69] This does not mean that ceding the social order to feelings and the passions is a recipe for mass delusion or ideology with an empirical face. The quest for the neurological basis of intention; the quantification of morality in the political subject; the artistic appeals to the emotions of state and institutional protestors—all of these recent examples in scholarship align with Godwin's conviction in a continuing enlightenment and search for liberating wisdom, especially on the level of the individual.[70] But the portrayal of honor within *Caleb Williams* proves that affect does not exactly *have* to mean delusion or ideology: the sentiments of chivalry do not delude Caleb as much as they obfuscate history and context, they do not blind Caleb as much as they captivate him. Instead, chivalry might be thought of less as an ideology than what Raymond Williams called a "structure of feeling"—that which ties the thoughts, codes, and contexts of social life to an immediate present, a "practical consciousness of a present kind."[71] The stoic nature of Collins's

"true honor," however, checks impetuousness of affect to which Raymond Williams alludes. In his turning away from impulsive dueling, Collins refuses to perpetrate "unjust action" caused by the "powers and exertions", and replaces it by considering the larger, and more storied social affairs of the "general good."

Collins's speech to Caleb is one of the few instances of direct, normative ethics in Godwin's text, one that allows the "fictitious adventure" of the gothic novel to be simultaneously taken as a "valuable lesson."[72] In the midst of its chivalric atavism, *Caleb Williams* suggests—if only for a moment—that honor may yet emerge as valuable to the progressive modern subject, and that it might not just inflict its residual harm upon him.

V.

Connected to one another by philosophical and political pedigree, *Caleb Williams* and *The Cenci* also have similar moral outlooks. Both gothic works critique honor as an ethos supported by a patriarchal ideology (although honor takes the form of chivalry in *Caleb Williams* and papacy in *The Cenci*). And, like Godwin's novel, *The Cenci* account for honor through performative language—a rhetorical category seldom explored in the criticism of *The Cenci* itself, but one perennially associated with Shelley. Finally, Shelley's famous closet drama of 1819 revisits familiar political questions of the 1790s by resurrecting Godwin's conflict between the idealization of the private self and the necessity of enduring, public relationships.[73] But, in a more sincere effort to restore the dignity of the persecuted figure at the center of the play, Beatrice Cenci, Shelley's drama breaks from away from Godwin's portrayal of a "cynical" post-enlightenment subject like Caleb. Instead of viewing honor as a form of sentimental, Burkean conduct, or as a

disinterested set of principles represented by "[men] of true discernment," Shelley suggests that honor might be provided to the subject who is moved by feeling. Exemplified by the "simplicity and dignity" of Beatrice's portrait, Shelley attributes to aesthetic beauty a singular form of honor that contrasts with the play's structure of ethical "casuistry"—or the legislation of a cruel honor code through warped laws and procedures.

Written with an eye on Godwin's ideas on moral necessity and justice, Beatrice Cenci has long been recognized as an ethical link between *Caleb Williams* and *The Cenci*.[74] But the two works also share a key value: a deviant honor system arranges most of the relationships in *The Cenci*, as well. For instance, Count Cenci's monstrous acts are framed by his sense of patriarchal honor; the judgments of the Pope are similarly tied to an uncompromising, hierarchical loyalty to canon law; and Beatrice experiences a distinct sense of shame and disgrace—honor's antithesis—for the crimes visited upon her and for the ones that she engages in. Brutal patriarchy, zealous papacy, and unjust laws all inform *The Cenci*'s tribalistic honor codes, and each owes something to Godwin's earlier investigation of honor in *Caleb Williams*. As much as he was inspired by the introduction of an eminent, resilient central character in the day's closet dramas (from Coleridge's Ordonio in *Remorse* to Byron's eponymous protagonist in *Manfred*), Shelley also derives from Godwin a key narrative device: the singular individual outcast from society by certain intractable social or political structures. This gothic paradigm is framed by the political turbulence of Godwin and Shelley's respective heydays (1794 and 1819), periods well-known for the threats of despotic authority upon smaller, marginalized groups.[75]

Both texts also depend on performative rhetoric.[76] Loaded with unspoken insinuations, implied utterances, and indignities that are never voiced—actions too shocking for words—Shelley's drama also abounds with vows, curses, and pacts, performative utterances that supposedly establish the ethics of the characters: as the prelate Orsino says, "[w]ords are but holy as the deeds they cover."[77] This comment on the obfuscatory power of words can be taken, however, as a self-referential remark about the structure of language throughout the entire play. Unlike *Caleb Williams*, where performative utterances of honor and chivalry seem natural to everyday life, *The Cenci* seems to expose the artifice of performativity by showing how speech acts can be made to obscure deeply immoral acts (another covert dig on the supposed "naturalness" of Burke's performative honor ethic). Much of the compulsion to obscure deeds with words has to do with a sense of underlying menace throughout the play. Cenci's frequent invocation of a patrilineal curse—which is a sinister inversion of the biblical, paternal blessing—is used to justify his maniacal behavior; Catholic confession is not a speech act that effortlessly unburdens of the soul to a divine representative, but that is coerced by the threat of violence. And, in the most famous example of performative menace, Beatrice refuses to utter the "word…one little word" that would bring Cenci's crime of incest to light.[78] Here readers see that *The Cenci*'s performatives (made up of oaths, curses, and confessions) are overtly artificial, speech acts that cover over behavior instead of constituting it.

By denaturalizing the performative speech act in these instances, Shelley hints at the unsoundness of performative rhetoric itself, the verbal structure upon which the play's entire patriarchal honor system relies. Caleb's reflections, of course, never lead

him this far. While Falkland's "naturally affected" performances of gentlemanly honor obscure the ideology of aristocracy and feudal tyranny, Caleb is bound to the fantasy of chivalric honor precisely *because* of its affective, naturalizing qualities. By contrast, Shelley's speakers—in lyric poems and closet dramas alike—are much more reflexive about the limits of performative language and the "felicity" of its effects on the others. In Beatrice's case, this means that oaths, promises, and other professions of honor often fail to cause any remarkable change in the behavior of different agents or upon the material conditions of the world in which they inhabit. These illocutionary professions of honor lack perlocutionary effects, or, if they do have a perlocutionary component, they are not the correct or "felicitous" effects that one would expect to attend patrimonial veneration and esteem. For Beatrice, to honor the father through professions of loyalty is precisely *not* to feel the reciprocal affect of chivalry, what Burke called "that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom."[79] In other words, to honor is simply to profess fealty without feeling any positive, or "exalted," effects of servitude—it is to live under the ideological conditions of a patriarchal honor system without having any of Burke's comforting, if delusional, sentimentalism to allay the injustices and brutality that chivalry might present.

In a purely formal sense, then, *The Cenci* expands Godwin's radical fight against the "just prejudice" of chivalric custom by undermining its foundations in performative rhetoric and sentiment. This denaturalization of chivalric language corresponds with recent arguments made by James Chandler and Mary Finn, who see *The Cenci*'s transposition of purely formal procedures into ethical action as a type of casuistry; that is, an ethics applied by written precedent alone, without regard for the "spirit of the law" or

the emotional outcomes that judgment might entail.[80] Chandler and Finn's arguments about the casuistic nature of depraved papal laws and household rules can be seen as another instance of the play's distorted performativity: while illocutionary speech acts are rampant, they are often infelicitous and perverse. Thus, casuistry is not just a type of case-law used to imprison and condemn Beatrice—the ethical apparel clothing unethical judgments—but it is also an example of the vexation of performative language itself, that customary, "ordinary" speech that obscures the ideological conditions of its context.

Like Burke's original "soliloquy in praise of chivalry" the performative utterances in *The Cenci* keeps the old world of honor alive, even if they propagate none of its comforting mythos: Cenci's curse does not die with his body. In a memorable moment, Shelley conveys the near supernatural power of the performative—speech which creates real conditions. When the assassins Marzio and Olimpio set upon Cenci the moment before they slay him, Cenci is sleeping: he is, for all intents and purposes, ethically dead, unable to commit deeds or misdeeds. But Cenci suddenly speaks in his sleep, words that remind Marzio of a "father's curse."[81] Even without the power of intentional speech, this scene shows how performative ethics haunt the play. Part of its very textual subconscious, ethical acts in *The Cenci* are not just legislated top-down, but transmitted from some of its deepest places.[82] In other words, the patrilineal honor ethic does not just stand for simple tyranny but an entire structure of domination. Shelley contorts Burke's presentist form of chivalry into a gothic menace, a ghost of political regression that always haunts the present.

Thus, part of Beatrice's redemption comes from her understanding that speech acts are legislated by certain ideologies, authorities, and systems—and that by refusing to

pay fealty to them in spoken performances of respect and esteem, patriarchal honor can no longer function. Shelley even reveals the artificiality of such performativity in a metacritical moment in the preface, when he calls Beatrice's role an "impersonation on the scene of the world," linking rhetorical performativity and theatrical performativity. Making Beatrice's very existence an aesthetic phenomenon, Shelley offers a larger, nearly Nietzschen criticism about the constructedness of all ethical paradigms: not only do ethics stem from language and all of its underlying contingencies and ideologies, but moral identity itself is an consequence of one's aesthetic. Indeed, Shelley claims to move beyond good and evil in the preface, when he says that he "sought to avoid the error of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind."[83]

Like Godwin, Shelley explores the connection of performativity and ethics, analyzing the old, patriarchal honor system that found new life due to the conservative triumphalism after Waterloo. Yet, in keeping with his radical forebear, Shelley does not dismiss honor as totally regressive, brutal, or patriarchal. While the honor ethic still has a place in his conception of character, Shelley revises Godwin's more stoic version of honor to accommodate an "artistic sentimentalism" that preserves feeling, sympathy, and the other forms of affective sociality. In his preface to the play, Shelley offers a version of honor that recalls Collins's declaration in *Caleb Williams* that "honour is in [one's] own keeping." Directly following Shelley's admission that, unlike poetry, drama is not the appropriate medium for a "moral purpose," Shelley makes an ethical judgment about

Beatrice's portrait in the Colonna Palace, one that he views as "one of the loveliest specimens of the workmanship of Nature:"[84]

> "Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another…In [her] whole mien there is a simplicity and dignity…The crimes and miseries in which she was an actor and a sufferer are as the mask and the mantle in which circumstances clothed her for her impersonation on the scene of the world."[85]

For Shelley, the patriarchal, public honor in *The Cenci* is, in literal terms, a façade—nothing but the cloak of power. His claim that "no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another" seems to confirm it, and his references to mask, mantle, and impersonation portend to the larger critique of artificial, performative ethics that follow in the melodrama. This aesthetic interpretation of morality is common in Shelley. While the "workmanship of Nature" looks like a conventional Romantic conflation of nature with art, the "mask and mantle" of real conditions prefigures one of the central maxims of Shelley's "Defence of Poetry" (1821). Here, poetry is said to "[lift] the veil from the hidden beauty of the world…and the impersonations clothed in its Elysian light stand thenceforward in the minds of those who have once contemplated them as memorials of that gentle and exalted content which extends itself over all thoughts and actions with which it coexists."[86]

However, the preface from *The Cenci* is not just a nascent version of Shelley's more famous aesthetic and ethical philosophy, but returns to Godwin's earlier notion of "true honor"—a principle of identity accessible to the "man of true discernment"—that puts communal responsibility at the heart of the individual. Although the semantic parallels between Godwin and Shelley run deep—"No person can be truly dishonoured by another," says Shelley, simultaneously echoing the indomitable Mr. Collins from

Caleb Williams and reviving the concept "true honor" from *Political Justice*—the moral theory that Shelley offers in the preface modifies Godwin's "true honor" in crucial ways. First, it makes the ethic of honor even more radically social than Godwin does, removing honor from the heart of the private subject and putting it into the hands of another. The preface suggest that the other is Shelley himself, who looks upon the portrait of Beatrice Cenci and finds in her a "simplicity and dignity" that would not otherwise manifest itself in the play, which critics have seen as putting Beatrice in an uncomfortable space between condemnation and canonization. Instead of leaving audiences to their own interpretive devices regarding Beatrice Cenci's honor, Shelley intercedes, encouraging the reader to assume the existence of her "simplicity and dignity" preemptively through an iconic, public representation: the portrait in the Colonna palace that is available for all to see. Shelley does not just seem to emancipate Beatrice from her tragic situation, but he also expands the social reach of the honor ethic so that it may include public personas that appear to be beyond all civic redemption. These personas of course include emblematic closet-drama protagonists like Beatrice Cenci—whose vows of vengeance and patricide can be considered "pernicious mistake[s]"—and well-known reformist agitator poets like himself, writing as he was in one of the hottest years of domestic political turmoil in the nineteenth-century.[87]

Beyond its psycho-biographical connections, this new form of honor also realigns the categories of privacy and publicity that troubled Godwin so much *Caleb Williams*. In this case, one's honor is not exactly "*beyond* the reach of all mankind," as Mr. Collins puts it in *Caleb Williams*, responding to Falkland's. The "simplicity and dignity" that Shelley gleans from the portrait in the Colonna palace means that honor is, on the

contrary, in mankind's safe keeping. While this new idea of honor expands the notion of self-worth like Godwin, it is also a response to Godwin: where Mr. Collins says that honor is supposed to keep the "common good" at the heart of private self-worth, Shelley shows that Beatrice's private self-worth is part of public safekeeping and recognition.

The final difference between Shelley and Godwin's vision of modern honor is their relationship to sentiment, affect, and feeling. As I argued above, Godwin is highly suspicious (at least in the 1790s) about the place of affect in sociopolitical life, and in *Caleb Williams* this suspicion manifests itself as a response to Burkean sentimentalism. Shelley, however, roots personal dignity and honor in sentiment. Placing aesthetic feeling ahead of ethical action, Shelley asserts that "[t]he highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind."[88] The tenet that "no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another," appropriately comes afterwards.[89] Hence, for Shelley honor—or "simplicity and dignity"—is not strictly aligned with a "moral purpose," or with a species of benevolence that someone like Godwin thought would be common to society, but with a public "illustration of strong feeling" that can inspire private sympathy and recognition in others. Moral didacticism may have been nearly impossible for such an overtly amoral drama like *The Cenci*. But Shelley avoids contradiction when he argues that art instills moral strength in the viewer by provoking passion and feeling. In other words, the private honor of a representation may be in the hands of another, but it is radically particular in its own way, escaping historical, political, and social contingencies in its ability to provoke feeling. While reminiscent of

Burke's soliloquy to Marie Antoinette, Shelley's reading of Beatrice's portrait is also a moment where the representative takes precedence over the performative: the singular dignity of the image trumps the demand to keep alive the values of the past—which, in Beatrice's case, was defined by injustice.[90]

Well before the publication of *The Cenci*, the values of "simplicity and dignity" had been associated with aesthetics. The next chapter investigates a major Romantic figure that strengthened this association, William Wordsworth. (Indeed, right before Shelley exhumes Beatrice's dignity in his preface, he invokes Wordsworth's famous line about the "real language of men").[91] Although dignity and honor are two of the adjectives that Wordsworth assigns to poetry most often in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, they are not just incidental terms for Wordsworth. Instead, the moral provokes a crisis in Wordsworth's sociopolitical outlook directly following the release of his first major volume of poetry: should honor apply only to those works of literature that aspire to the highest and most noble cultural inclinations, or should it be egalitarian in its nature, found in poetry that appealed to the "native and naked dignity of man?"[92]

NOTES

[1] "May 28: Duel," *Caledonian Mercury* (May 31, 1798), 967.

[2] ibid.

[3] "Review: Gifford's Life of the Right Hon. William Pitt," *The British Critic and Quarterly Theological Review* 37 (February 1811), 110-27. See also Cruikshank's well-known cartoon "THE DUEL – or CHARLEY longing for a POP," illustrating the event.

[4] *The Rights of Man* 46.

[5] See Gary Handwerk, "History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin's Historical Fiction," in *Romanticism, History, And the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming Literature 1789-1837*, eds. Tilottama Rajan & Julia M. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), 64-85; John Bender, "Impersonal Violence: The Penetrating Gaze and the Field of Narration in *Caleb Williams*," In *Vision and Textuality*, eds. Stephen Melville & Bill Reading (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), 256-81; "Character and Ideology;" *Bleak Liberalism*.

[6] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Cenci* (NY: Elston Press, 1903), 6; hereafter *The Cenci*.

[7] See Andrew Stauffer, *Anger*, *Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005); Adam Potkay, *The Story of Joy: From the Bible to Late Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007); *Romantic Moods*.

[8] See political scientist Sharon R. Krause's *Liberalism with Honor*; historian James Bowman, *Honor: A History* (NY: Encounter Books, 2006); critic Alexander Welsh, *What is Honor: A Question of Moral Imperatives* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2008); hereafter *What is Honor*.

[9] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989); *Multiculturalism*, ed. Amy Gutmann (NJ: Princeton UP, 1994); hereafter *Multiculturalism*; Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry* 23.3 (1997), 617-39, "Liberalism, Individuality, Identity," *Critical Inquiry* 27.2 (2001), 305-32; hereafter "Liberalism, Individuality, Identity;" *The Honor Code*; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding From Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (NJ: Princeton UP, 2004); hereafter *Hiding from Humanity*.

[10] *The Honor Code* ix.

[11] See Angela Esterhammer, *The Romantic Performative: Language and Action in British and German Romanticism* (CA: Stanford UP, 2000), 289-329; Andrew Franta, "Godwin's Handshake," *PMLA* 122.2 (2007), 696-710; hereafter "Godwin's Handshake."

[12] *CW* 96, 282, 299.

[13] *Reflections* 113, 133; *CW* 15.

[14] *CW* 10, 122.

[15] *Reflections* 112-3.

[16] Eve Sedgwick might have called this theatrical register of linguistic performativity "periperformativity." Sedgwick defines periperformativity as the "neighborhood of the performative," the rhetorical space that allows for different performative effects. "[T]he rhetorical force (of the periperformative) rarefies or concentrates in unpredictable clusters, outcrops, geological amalgams. Hence the affinity of the periperformative for the mobile proscenium, the itinerant stage, the displaceable threshold." See *Touching Feeling* 74-5.

[17] The comparison to Venus is not entirely hollow. Marie Antoinette referred to herself as Venus—and Louis XVI as Vulcan—when articulating their differences in taste. Marie Antoinette's personal aesthetic also linked her to Venus. Her bedroom featured a large painting of the goddess charming Psyche, and Versailles's famous Temple of Love was constructed in her estate (Weber 55). See Evelyne Lever, *Marie Antoinette: The Last Queen of France* (NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 87; Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (NY: Henry Holt and Co., 2006), 55. Finally, see art historians Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam who point out that "Marie Antoinette was figured as Venus in Augustin Pajou's *Allegory of the Birth of the Dauphin in 1781*;" see Melissa Lee and Jennifer Dawn Millam (eds.), *Women, Art, and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2003), 187.

[18] *Reflections* 112-3.

[19] *The Rights of Man* 24.

[20] ibid [sic].

[21] *Vindications of the Rights of Men* 3.

[22] Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Limited Inc.* (IL: Northwestern UP, 1977), 17.

[23] *The Rights of Man* 114.

[24] Again see *Romantic Moods*; Robert Kaufman, "The Sublime as Super-Genre of the Modern, or Hamlet in Revolution: Caleb Williams and His Problems," *SiR* 36.4 (1997), 541-74.

[25] *CW* 11.

[26] *CW* 15.

[27] *CW* 11.

[28] *CW* 10.

[29] *CW* 15-6.

[30] In addition, the novel's dramatization of political paranoia also highlights the possibility that such rights might be nothing more than artificially imposed public belief-systems—or ideology—a concept introduced into the political lexicon by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy just three years after the novel's publication. See Orrin N.C. Wang, "Ideology," in *The Blackwell Handbook to Romantic Studies*, Joel Faflak & Julia M. Wright (eds.) (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2012), 245-58. See also Emmet Kennedy, "'Ideology' from Destutt de Tracy to Marx," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 40:3 (Jul.– Sep., 1979), 353-68. For paranoia in Godwin—and in the literature of the 1790s more generally—see *Romantic Moods*.

[32] *CW* 26.

[33] ibid.

[34] *The Rights of Man* 24.

[35] *CW* 315.

[36] ibid.

[37] ibid.

[38] ibid.

[39] *CW* 25. Clare's role as a kind of village celebrity gives a kind of aristocratic edge to the proceedings.

[40] *CW* 26.

[41] *CW* 26, 16-23, 98-9.

[42] *CW* 243.

[43] *CW* 153.

[44] *CW* 326.

[45] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 29; hereafter *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

[46] Daniela Garofalo, *Manly Leaders in Nineteenth Century British Literature* (NY: SUNY Press, 2009), 51. Erin Mackie's reading of *Caleb Williams* is also invested in how the novel reveals (and revels in) the codes of aristocracy through ideological critique. About Caleb Williams Mackie Writes, "[the novel] posits only a negative resolution to its ethical and sociopolitical reversals and inversions that finally only double within one another, reproducing guilt and injustice in a kind of endless transfer of ideological illusion." See Erin Mackie, *Rakes, Highwaymen, and Pirates* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009), 179.

[47] *CW* 326.

[48] Another way to frame this concern is to eliminate the agency of the subject altogether, and to concede that ideology itself structures—or interpellates—the self. Althusser's hallmark concept of interpellation resonates with Caleb's famous lines about the priority honor to character. What is interesting about *Caleb Williams*, though, is not how it merely replicates Althusserian interpellation, but how its characters seem to cyclically embody and disembody state ideology, sometimes perpetuating the ideology of chivalric honor and sometimes becoming its unwilling subjects. This doubling and redoubling speaks as much to the performative perpetuation of ideology as it does to the gothic tropes of the novel.

[49] Again, see "Liberalism, Individuality, and Identity" for the interplay between self and society within the burgeoning liberal subject.

[50] *CW* 98.

[51] *CW* 98-9. For a use of the phrase "Every man's honour ought to be in his own keeping…." in a similarly radical political context, see Horne Tooke, *The Speeches of John Horne Tooke* (London: J.Ridgeway, 1796), 8.

[52] *Political Justice* 151.

[53] See again *Romantic Moods*, esp. chapter three, "Paranoia Historicized: The Dialects of Treason and Political Representation in 1790s London" (146-88).

[54] *CW* 98-9.

[55] *CW* 98.

[56] See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989). The private compulsion to eliminate suffering resonates with a latter-day liberal thinker, Richard Rorty. But, along with many others, I am troubled by Rorty's hard distinction between the private self that ironizes language and the public self that attends to social causes. A controversial distinction, Godwin shows that, under the constraints of "true honor," the best public self is at the same time the best private self.

[57] *CW* 99.

[58] See Charles Taylor on the "Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism* 25-74. On human dignity as the foundation of socioeconomic flourishing see Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom (*New York: Knopf, 1999) and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

[59] *CW* 4, 131.

[60] *CW* 280-1, 308-9.

[61] *CW* 315, 99.

[62] Peter Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1984), 104-115; hereafter *William Godwin.*

[63] *Discourse on Inequality*.

[64] "Godwin's Handshake."

[65] *CW* 98-9; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 2006), xv.

[66] See, for example, Bruce Robbins "Comparative Cosmopolitanism," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), 169-186; *Perpetual War: Cosmopolitanism from the Viewpoint of Violence* (NC: Duke UP, 2012).

[67] *CW* 97.

[68] *William Godwin*, esp. chapter 10. For recent commentary on the public/private divide in Godwin's thought, see Robert Lamb, "For and Against Ownership: William Godwin's Theory of Property," *The Review of Politics* 71.2 (2009), 275-302; Mark Philp, "Godwin's Moral Philosophy," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2009), plato.stanford.edu/entries/godwin/. July 2012.

[69] "The Beauty of a Social Problem;" "Meaning and Affect;" "Formal Feelings."

[70] Ruth Leys "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37.3 (Spring 2011), 434-472; Jonathan Haidt *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (NY: Allen Lain, 2012).

[71] *Marxism and Literature* 132.

[72] *CW* 335, 1.

[73] Much of Shelley's work has been seen as negotiating between performative and figural language. An abundance of criticism influenced by deconstruction reveals a slippage between representative and performative language in Shelley's lyrics. For the most prominent example, see Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (NY: Continuum, 1979), 32-61. See Paul de Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979); Tilottama Rajan, *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990).

[74] In *England in 1819*, James Chandler discusses the debt Shelley owed to Godwin's theory of necessity: "The language [used to describe Beatrice's tragedy] belongs to a philosophical idiom strongly associated with…William Godwin…[a recognition of Beatrice as an agent] largely determined by the particular historical situation in which [she] appears" (510).

[75] Critics have taken Shelley's engagement with history to dazzling theoretical heights. James Chandler argues that Shelley used *The Cenci* to "think through a historicist problematic" (500). See *England in 1819*.

[76] See Margot Harrison's "No Way for a Victim to Act?: Beatrice Cenci and the Dilemma of Romantic Performance," *SiR* 39.2 (2000), 187-211. Harrison suggests that we "read *The Cenci* with reference to a proto-Romantic late eighteenth-century debate about performance" (189). She goes on to claim that the ethical tension created in *The Cenci* comes from the problem of representing acting itself, which does not fall under a traditional, expressivist Romantic aesthetic. Informing my argument about performative language, Harrison says that Beatrice's compulsion to act in a "false world" is brought on by the "realities of oppressor and oppressed" (211). The play's publication history also speaks to its reliance on performative rhetoric: the original prohibition placed on Shelley's play due to taboo subject-matter implied the potential for its language to affect the world dramatically. In Austin's terms, *The Cenci* would "do

things" that the world was not ready for. And less than a year after its composition, Shelley had to answer Thomas Medwin's objections to the use of divinity in Count Cenci's famous curse. Paradoxically, this was a moment where the performative utterance was made *too* real by its invocation of metaphysical. Shelley had a particular fondness for Cenci's curse. In a letter to Medwin dated July 20, 1820, he addresses the controversial inclusion, ironizing Catholic convention: "Your objection to the 'Cenci,' as to the introduction of the name of God, is good, inasmuch as the play is addressed to a Protestant people; but we Catholics speak eternally and familiarly of the first person of the Trinity, and, amongst us, religion is more interwoven with, and is less extraneous to, the system of ordinary life. As to Cenci's curse, I know not whether I can defend it or no. I wish I may be able; and, as it often happens respecting the worst part of an author's work, it is a particular favourite with me." See Byron Johnson Rees (Ed.), *Nineteenth-Century Letters* (NY: C. Scribners Sons, 1919), 171-3.

[77] *The Cenci* 2.2.75.

[78] *The Cenci* 2.1.63.

[79] *Reflections* 113.

[80] Mary Finn prompts my investigation of casuistry as one of the primary ethical modes in the play: "Beatrice's particular 'case of conscience,' and…her own rhetoric about this case, are constituted inevitably, and therefore tragically, out of vocabularies belonging to the came collusive system that produced the malignant Count Cenci" (Finn 178). See Mary Finn, "The Ethics and Aesthetics of Shelley's 'The Cenci'," *SiR* 35.2 (1996), 177-97; hereafter "Ethics and Aesthetics."

[81] *The Cenci* 4.3.19.

[82] For a reading that represents Count Cenci as a dominating superego see Jerrold Hogle, *Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 147-67. In lieu of what he calls woman's "defining power," Hogle argues that man "[is] set up [as] a projected superego that is utterly and supremely male. Hence fathers, priests, kings, and the God they use as the supposed source of their power all slip easily into the role of supreme definer. The role is created for such asserters of power to play it, and all that is 'thrown off' by men so that they can be 'thrown under' this presumed law is consequently transferred to woman so that she can be subjected under man and keep his actual underpinnings at afar remove from him. Woman can use this position…to fight man's usurpation by imitating his own power plays, in which case, like Beatrice, she is assuming and assisting the very male supremacy…that she wants to overthrow" (165).

[83] *The Cenci* 7.

[84] *The Cenci* 9.

[85] *The Cenci* 4-5.

[86] Percy Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry and Other Essays*. www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5428/pg5428.html. September 2012.

[87] *The Cenci* 7.

[88] *The Cenci* 6-7.

[89] *The Cenci* 7.

[90] Mary Finn calls Shelley's interpretative act an organizational motif in *The Cenci*. According to Finn, Shelley's ingenious ekphrasis of Beatrice's portrait aligns with other ethical sophistry abundant in the play (we witness some of this same sophistry in Beatrice's trial/confession scene where she reinterprets concepts

of guilt and innocence, confounding the two together). Finn's overarching assertion about the convergence of aesthetics and ethics in the play—and her tacit suggestion that hermeneutics and ethics are always in a dialectical relationship—is strong. But there is an underlying assumption that Shelley brings to bear on this specific interpretation of Beatrice's portrait: that it has singular "simplicity and dignity." See "Ethics and Aesthetics."

[91] *The Cenci* 9.

[92] *3LB* xxxii-iv.

Chapter Two
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An Inheritance New Fallen:
The Dilemma of Honor in Wordsworth's Poetics and Politics

"Mr. Wordsworth has thought too much of contemporary critics and criticism; and less than he ought of the award of posterity, and of the opinion, we do not say of private friends, but of those who were made so by their admiration of his genius. He did not court popularity by a conformity to established models, and he ought not to have been surprised that his originality was not understood as a matter of course. He has gnawed too much on the bridle; and has often thrown out crusts to the critics, in mere defiance or as a point of honour when he was challenged, which otherwise his own good sense would have withheld. We suspect that Mr. Wordsworth's feelings are a little morbid in this respect, or that he resents censure more than he is gratified by praise."

—Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*

"Culture also has its titles of nobility…"

—Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*

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I.

Godwin and Burke shared a similar fear about the communal dislocation that might have accompanied the expansion of radical republicanism—thus Godwin's advocacy for "true honor," an egalitarian virtue that would provide even the most ardent proponents of revolutionary *liberté* a sense of social solidarity.[1] It is also clear that Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft may have inspired Godwin's egalitarian version of honor when in *The Rights of Man* (1791) and the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) they argued for the "natural" and "native dignity of man," a phrase long used in evangelical sermons to denote the universal worthiness of all humans, that was now being pulled into secular political discourse.[2]

But these newer reformed versions of honor did not have to be radically egalitarian. Napoleon's famous military corps the *Légion d'honneur* kept the hierarchy of

ancient honor codes, but inflected them with the modern idea of merit. If honor was not necessarily available to all men by nature of their innate humanity, it could be won by those who participated in careers open to talent. In a similar vein, the rise of Britain's commercial society throughout the eighteenth-century was founded on what Pocock describes as the link between virtue and commerce, where personal emblems of honor were connected directly to one's worthiness in the marketplace.[3] In modernity, climbing the ranks of the honorable elite meant building good credit and keeping up amenable relations with other professionals. This relationship between dignified man and dignified industry was dialectical: to be honorable meant not only conveying trustworthiness in your commercial reputation, but it also meant producing commodities that conveyed a certain aesthetic nobility—goods or services that comported with the bourgeois' notions of rank and cultural capital. Thus, while the rise of the professional classes meant the slow death of the nobility historically, the commercial society continued to thrive on the very hierarchies of value for which the conservative, royalist paradigm had always depended.

This chapter argues that these two, contrasting forms of honor provoke a larger question about civic values in the early-nineteenth century: would honor be egalitarian and widely available to all segments of society, or would it continue to signal exclusivity, denoting ancient rank and hierarchy through the structures of the modern market? Such a conflict, I argue, is illuminated in the work of one of the era's renowned scrutinizers of modern value, William Wordsworth. Over the years, the poetry produced around the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798-1805) years has been fecund for critics largely because it contains such rich conflicts: nature vs. Milton, Rousseau vs. Burke, history vs. imagination, to

name just a few.[4] Here, I suggest that this poetry can also be characterized by a conflict between the two modern versions of honor outlined above: a bourgeois form of "honorable" commercial production that continued to emphasize inherently conservative principles of hierarchy, distinction, and reputation through the operations of the contemporary literary marketplace, and a radical form of honor allied to the republican movement, one that stressed the egalitarian dignity of all persons no matter their economic or sociopolitical status. Not only can a focus on honor deepen nineteenth-century scholars' understanding of one of the major virtues that mediated between private and public life during a period of civic upheaval, but Wordsworth's predicament with these two forms of honor also reveals a larger problem in liberal modernity: the contradiction between distinction and equality, an especially palpable problem to those living in the post-revolutionary era. If this problem has been a concern in Western civic life since Plato, in the early-nineteenth-century such a conflict of value seemed to find a solution in the rise of liberal society. Why was this the case? In short, liberalism tried to synthesize market hierarchy with civic egalitarianism by combining together two discourses: the vocabulary of political economy and the rhetoric of universal rights.[5] And yet for Wordsworth—and for those of us living through the many crises of the *neo*liberal society—the tension between market values and social values remains evident. While new scholarship has demonstrated how Wordsworth balanced Royalist and Republican principles following the revolution, the poet's dilemma with honor also shows him to be a perspicacious critic of the emerging liberal society and its incongruities.[6]

The Advertisement to the *Lyrical Ballads*, its Preface, and the lyric "Michael" stage this conflict between a commercialist, hierarchical version honor and its more

progressive form of egalitarian dignity. Ultimately, however, a section of the 1805 *Prelude* suggests that poetry—like the modern political subject—might distinguish itself without abiding by the inherent hierarchies of the market. A coda addresses Wordsworth's 1809 pamphlet *The Convention of Cintra*, which incorporates the poet's previous reflections on the civic purpose of honor. Even though the pamphlet has been read as verifying Wordsworth's conservative drift, a version of his more equitable version of honor keeps *The Convention* from being an entirely traditionalist document. Because the Convention allows for these two contradictory sociopolitical versions of honor to function without provoking any more debate from Wordsworth, it seems to indicate Wordsworth's acquiescence to the contradictions of liberal modernity at a certain point in history. Such a change, I argue, can reframe our larger understanding of the poet's political trajectory.

While Romanticists such as Jerome Christensen have associated the honor ethic with Byron's commercial persona, honor is also one of William Wordsworth's favorite words.[7] It is used over one-hundred-fifty times throughout his canon, appearing fifty-percent more often than the term "sympathy," and nearly as often as the word "memory."[8] It is significant in many contexts, appearing as a major designation of value—as when Wordsworth invokes the "the honourable characteristic of Poetry" in the opening line of the Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads*—and as the primary concern of poems like "Say, What is Honour," a civic-minded sonnet from 1807.[9] Wordsworth's prolific use of honor throughout his canon implies that the poet recognized both the cultural value and the semantic breadth of the term in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century society. For example, it was at this time that the more modern sense of

dignity—one's immutable, inner worth—started to merge with honor as a variant expression. Although Kant's *Groundwork* (1785) sets the elite notion of honor (*Ehre*) against the egalitarian sense of dignity (*Würde*), Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) runs the two words together in its definition: "Honour, ôń-nŭr. *s.* dignity, reputation, virtue."[10] In short, by the late eighteenth-century both definitions were interchangeable, but also in tension with one another. As Appiah and Elizabeth Anderson point out, much of this tension owed to the revolutionary political climate.[11] Honor and dignity were starting to shed their associations with patrician inheritance, nobility, and rank—their classist connotations—and becoming inherent qualities available to all people. Thus, while Wordsworth's appeal to the defense of national honor against Napoleonic expansion is deeply—almost parodically—Burkean in the 1808 pamphlet *The Convention of Cintra*, other uses of honor show a latent republicanism. For instance, Wordsworth answers the titular question of "Say, What is Honour" straightaway with an homage to Godwin's *Political Justice*: "Say, what is Honour? Tis the finest sense / Of *justice* which the human mind can frame."[12]

While this reliance on honor appears to be a natural part of Wordsworth's thinking and vocabulary (or, as James Chandler has put it, part of his "second nature"), like so much of the poet's ideological development it also belies a deep-seated paradox.[13] In the quote from the epigraph, Hazlitt implies that honor had two specific connotations for Wordsworth that did not necessarily comport with one another. The first sense that Wordsworth had about honor was that it was a signifier of professional reputation and literary dignity—Pocock's version of honor that had become fundamental to bourgeois commercial society, and which Wordsworth defended "in mere defiance…when he was

challenged" by cultural guardians of the literary marketplace. And yet, the second sense of honor that Hazlitt attributes to Wordsworth does not concern the cultural capital of his poetry or its commercial legitimacy, but the radical qualities of its content; the egalitarian—even revolutionary—capacity of poetry to address itself to what Wordsworth called "the native and naked dignity of man," and to disregard those "established models" of canonical decorum Hazlitt identifies in favor of a truly democratic representationalism.[14] How were these two versions of honor to be squared? How could the young, lake country poet produce works that would bring him fame and attention in a discriminating literary marketplace while also addressing people of all ranks and identities?

II.

Honor is the first virtue of *Lyrical Ballads*, evoked even before Wordsworth's well-known appeals to "the deep power joy" or the "sympathies of men".[15] The opening sentence of the Advertisement to the 1798 London Edition reads, "[i]t is the honourable characteristic of Poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind."[16] What is the "honourable characteristic of Poetry"? Why does Wordsworth appeal here to honor as a standard of popular taste—instead of manners, custom, or other traditional forms of judgment?

At first glance, the Advertisement seems to approach honor as an egalitarian virtue. For Wordsworth, poetry is honorable because it touches upon "every subject which can interest the human mind."[17] Following this logic, the "honorable characteristic of poetry" is the ability of poetry to represent the experiences of many different persons

or identities without explicit reference to their rank or station in life—to provide "a natural delineation of human passions, human characters, and human incidents."[18] Such an aesthetic offers a vision of public unity through shared experience, one that would be effective in bringing together the populace in the face of the ideological and civil turmoil of the 1790s.[19] However, despite the appearance of some Burkean referents—the sober "delineation" of social order, the communality associated with a broad appeal to "human[s]," the initial impulse to define honor as a species of chivalry or nobility—this opening line is not as conservative as it at first seems. By connecting honor to the unlimited capability of poetic representation, Wordsworth echoes some of the more radical theorizing about the nature of honor that was emerging at the end of the century: that honor is a universal virtue available to all segments of society, that it is a quality interred in the "human mind" instead of shared bloodlines, and that it is innate—or "native"—instead of inherited.[20] No longer reserved for the aristocracy alone, the honor ethic here starts to fall under the influence of Wordsworth's "leveling muse," and aligns itself with the original experiment in *Lyrical Ballads* "to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure."[21]

And yet, the Advertisement is not just an early declaration of Wordsworth's ethical and aesthetic philosophy—it is also a promotional text. Because honor is invoked in a document intended to announce the cultural and commercial worthiness of Wordsworth and Coleridge's poetic endeavor, the word could also be a synonym for literary capital. Connoting the majesty, gentlemanliness, or elevated virtuousness of poetry, the use of honor is consistent with other hierarchical theories of aesthetic value

with which Wordsworth was familiar, especially Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*, which links the highest species of representation to the most dignified virtues. An astute reader of Shaftesbury, Wordsworth would have also been familiar with his thoughts on judgment—and the Whiggish way in which polite gentleman could cultivate "relish or good taste" through the "open and free commerce of the world."[22] Equating the freedom of personal exchange with the autonomy of markets, Shaftesbury's text provides Wordsworth with a theory of taste rooted in the emerging liberal-capitalist order, and the way it would rely on the old words of distinction to signify the new ideal of merit.

Here, a contradiction appears in one of Wordsworth's first and most prominent uses of the term honor. It exists between the democratic idea of honor that was being propagated by Wordsworth's republican contemporaries—and its application to an "honorable" sort of poetry that speaks to (and for) all citizens—and the continued use of honor as a signifier of noble status and elite literary distinction. The genre of the Advertisement contributes to this paradox because a modern idea of egalitarian honor appears within the very text intended to sell Wordsworth's poetry to a "dignified" literary establishment, under whose authority literary reputations were made.

At first glance, the way that honor signifies both ethics and commerce reflects Pocock's ideas about the rise of the bourgeois liberalism in the eighteenth-century, where ancient civic virtues like honor had a symbiotic relationship with modern market culture, and "the right to things [became] a way to practice virtue[s]" in the public sphere.[23] For Pocock, the democracy of the *polis* was at the same time the democracy of the market, in which anyone (read, any idealized white male subject) could stake their fortune in a society circumscribed by the principles of merit—even while they appropriated for

business relationships the language of esteem and recognition that had at one time been exclusive to the gentry and landed classes. Reflecting this thesis, Romanticists have also recognized a marketing strategy in the language of the Advertisement. Expanding upon Chandler's influential argument about Wordsworth's debt to Burke, Thomas Pfau notes that the Burkean symbolic of courts, public etiquette, chivalric honor, and other "species of courtesy" start to become mediated by a literary market oriented towards bourgeois taste—an imperative that emerges in order to show the superior value of goods and services that are in competition with one another.[24] Additionally, Clifford Siskin argues that the rise of post-industrial labor meant a poetic "experiment" for Wordsworth that would be moved away from aristocratic patronage and reoriented towards middle-class exchange and work.[25] The Advertisement reflects this new, commercialist version of literary evaluation by taking the conferral of dignity and honor out of the hands of critics and their "pre-established codes of decision" and by putting into the hands of readers whose consumption habits would in the end determine artistic merit.[26]

If, as these scholars argue, Wordsworth has accustomed himself to the consumer society, then the tension between the hierarchical sense of honor and the more democratic version seems to be resolved: honor can still connote rank and distinction, but, because it is available to all those participating in a fair, public marketplace supposedly based on merit, it continues to feel egalitarian. Wordsworth can thus have it both ways: he can produce a volume like *Lyrical Ballads* in the hopes of radically democratizing the subject-matter of poetry, even while making conservative appeals to canonical propriety and the chivalric imaginary that would distinguish the volume in the eyes of the book-buying public.

However, would Wordsworth's statement about the egalitarian ability of honorable poetry to address "every subject" also apply to those who are disenfranchised from the bourgeois structures of commerce—a primary subject of the poet's work? In other words, although the literary market leads to the democratizing of a once-aristocratic honor ethic, is it a democratization that Wordsworth sees undercut by commerce's continued perpetuation of social stratification?

It is not clear that Wordsworth accepts the new hierarchies of modern literary commerce uncritically. While readings of the Advertisement have emphasized Wordsworth's hope that poetry will transmit a kind of purified sensibility—an encounter with natural pleasure limited by the sobriety of habit—the text also offers an important diagnosis of the collective biases of taste, one that includes the marketplace within which Wordsworth operated.[27] In order to avoid "that most dreadful enemy to our pleasures, our own pre-established codes of decision," Wordsworth argues that judgments about poetic "dignity" flow from a different lineage, one based upon a "natural delineation of human passions."[28] At first, this seems as if it is a thinly-veiled political statement against aesthetic judgments formed through a conservative—even feudalist—paradigm of value: the worthiness of poetry is determined by its conformity to inherited rules or conventions, and its canonicity established by a certain deference to older masters, instead of appealing to the more "natural delineation" of universal human passion. However, while the Advertisement reflects the political language of the day, Wordsworth's statement must also be read in light of an anxiety over the success of *Lyrical Ballads* in the literary market. Both Wordsworth and Coleridge needed money to finance their trip to Germany later that year, and—even though they were producing "saleable" poems at an alarming

rate—they were having trouble securing a stable publisher.[29] In addition to their financial problems, Wordsworth and Coleridge had larger professional concerns about *Lyrical Ballads* that involved the construction of their reputations. The poets had a legendary uneasiness about the volume's reception by various literary "authorities" (friends like Robert Southey amongst them, who slammed the collection as a "Dutch attempt at German sublimity").[30]

Because the lake poets' were so focused on their own professional identity in 1797-8, Wordsworth's writing about the honor and dignity of poetry can just as well apply to the modern kind of judgments made by a readership influenced by market society. Given this, Wordsworth's trouble with "pre-established codes" does not just anticipate Hazlitt—who saw in the *Lyrical Ballads* a republican critique of aristocratic principles—but also Bourdieu, who argues that in the age of capital, art could only be legitimated (or made honorable) when deciphered through the "cultural code[s]" of the bourgeois. (Eerily reminiscent of Wordsworth's "pre-established codes," Bourdieu's "cultural codes" is in fact the standard English translation of the term used throughout *Distinction*). Not only do these prejudices keep readers from the universal human pleasures that poetry provides, but they circumscribe "the honorable characteristic of poetry"—its ability to address a wide segment of humanity—by invalidating people whose opinions have not been codified by certain commercialized ways of seeing and judging art; the same figures that in Wordsworth's poetry are shown to be left behind at the onset of industrial modernity.

Wordsworth's Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* is the first major text of his to reveal a gap between a commercialist and a more egalitarian sense of honor—one that disregarded

the notions rank and privilege. While the Advertisement offers few solutions to this paradox, in the years to come Wordsworth's dilemma with the honor of poetry grows stronger.

III.

In some ways, an honorable reputation is exactly what Wordsworth sets out to defend in the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. Even though he admits that Coleridge pushed him into writing the text in order to rationalize their poetic endeavor, Wordsworth's other "choice of…purpose" is to spare readers "any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from the most dishonorable accusation which can be brought against an Author, namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it."[31] But while Wordsworth's concern about "dishonorable accusations" made against his professional "duty" appears to project an anxiety about the favorable ranking and honorable reputation provided by those in the book-trade—and by literary friends like Southey—other parts of the Preface reveal a continued discomfort about the institution of literary taste.

Most notable is Wordsworth's reflection on the existence of a modern "contract" between poet and reader that directly follows the remark about "dishonourable accusations:"

> It is supposed, that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association; that he not only thus apprizes the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or

> symbol held forth by metrical language must in different æras of literature have excited very different expectations : for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius and that of Statius or Claudian ; and in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope. I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which by the act of writing in verse an Author, in the present day, makes to his Reader; but I am certain, it will appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted.[32]

The terminology of "formal engagements," "terms of an engagement," and "voluntarily contract[s]" gives the passage both a vocational and a political tone, signaling that in modernity, that "act of writing in verse" is both a political and occupational decision. Not only must modern works accept a contract of arranged rules or risk falling out of the lists of national cultural nobility, but they must also—as Christensen and David Bromwich have argued—choose their inheritance.[33] In other words, poets must preserve in a kind of literary aristocracy the honor and dignity of poetry by employing the bourgeois rhetoric of choice. This rhetorical blend of royalism and contractualism resembles Burke—who, in a similarly formal way, championed the English constitution in order to preserve the inheritance of stable, national culture. But the conservative political message of the passage is also crossed with the more Whiggish language of commerce. Here, propriety and property meet: the "act of writing in verse" is also a professional choice about maintaining an honorable public reputation through the structures of literary commerce.

It is not clear, however, that Wordsworth wants to make such a choice. If anything, Wordsworth's initial language in the excerpt—"it is supposed that"—shows him to be non-committal, perhaps ventriloquizing readers' expectations about the honorable representations that professional poets are supposed to provide, but never

conceding to them entirely. In light of this hesitancy, the passage looks quite different. The "unpleasant feeling of disappointment" that might be felt by readers has to do instead with Wordsworth's conscious abdication of his occupational duty to supply noble cultural material. Although the Preface seems to detail a professional code of honor—one that serves as a contract for vocational conduct "in the present day"—it is not obvious that Wordsworth abides or wants to abide by its "terms of engagement."[34] Indeed, just moments before this passage on literary inheritance, Wordsworth suggests that readers break with lines of poetic entailment, abandon the inherited standards of judgment from the past, and reassess the grounds for what the poet calls the "public taste." This break does not necessarily mean that Wordsworth wanted to retain the dignity of poetry through a new bourgeois model of judgment, where honor could be a sign for cultural capital. Given Wordsworth's cageyness with contracts and vocational agreements, it can instead mean renouncing the very *agreement* that turns honor into bourgeois status—a break with a literary connection to the past that functions in the present day as a professional contract.

Although it is later in Wordsworth's career, the extended Preface from the third edition even echoes Mary Wollstonecraft—and her oft-used radical idiom of the "native dignity of man"—in claiming that poetry is an "homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and moves."[35] Tellingly, Wordsworth places the dignity of poetic production in direct contrast to the work of "a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer [and] a natural philosopher," all of whom have obligations that are unique to their vocations.[36] Here, poetry is honorable not only because it accesses in a universal

way the "elementary principle of pleasure" known to all men, but also because it rejects the limitations of occupational custom. In the modern world of professional distinctions, categories, and ranks, poetry remains a democratic art.

Despite these flashes of progressive rhetoric, contemporary Wordsworthians may be inclined to see moments from the Preface as some of the strongest evidence of Wordsworth's drift towards a conservative worldview, one based on preserving the hierarchies of culture in the face of potential invasion.[37] The Preface, for example, excoriates the "dishonorable melancholy" brought on by "lower" and potentially foreign genres like gothic literature and German tragedies; and there is also its famous reference to the "invaluable works of…Shakespeare and Milton," which become for Wordsworth a form of canonical patrimony in the modern age.[38] (Wordsworth even continues to equate the aristocratic notion of honor to middle-class work in the fifth book of the 1805 *Prelude*, when he calls Shakespeare and Milton "Labourers divine!").[39]

And yet, much of this grandiosity about honorable literary inheritance—and the royalist overtones it conveys—contrasts with the "humble subjects" in *Lyrical Ballads*.[40] "Michael" is one of these subjects. The closing poem of the 1800 second-edition, "Michael" has been read by Mary Jacobus as sanctioning an old, hierarchical form of honor.[41] While Michael's modest sheepfold is lost as an inheritance to his profligate son, Jacobus reads the structures patrimony and ancient entailment in Wordsworth's opening benediction to "youthful Poets, who among these hills / Will be my second self when I am gone." [42] However, if the language in the Preface is any indication, Wordsworth remains ambiguous about his own ideas about patrimony and inheritance, as they are now mediated by market society. A poem representing the encroachment of modern

commercial institutions upon fundamental moral connections, the urban economy in which Michael's son Luke participates in order to save his father's inheritance—to literally save his patrimonial honor—ultimately disrupts the covenant between them. As Pfau points out, however, this disruption is not due to capital does bursting onto the scene within the narrative of the poem, suddenly unleashing its revolutionary energies on the old agrarian world. Modern business has, in fact, already circumscribed the very familial commitments that Michael intended to shore up: Luke goes to the city to pay off debts his family incurred by underwriting a profligate, city-dwelling nephew engaged in the world of buying and selling.[43] In this way, the narrative of Michael's ancient commitment to his family seems already encapsulated by a world of capitalist interest. The old patrimonial link between father and son that Jacobus sees reestablished in the introduction is on the contrary unsettled by the poem's final image: Michael's cabin and sheepfold now commodified as "The Evening Star" inn—an inheritance converted into bourgeois property.

Did Wordsworth believe in 1800 that a he was fighting a battle against the values of the modern commercial society that would be unwinnable? Was there any way for him to assert "the honourable characteristic…in every subject" without its being overtaken by the hierarchies of capital? What Wordsworth needed was to redefine honor itself. In the 1805 *Prelude*, he would.

IV.

The very idea of *The Prelude* conveys the tension between hierarchical values and "leveling principle[s]" in Wordsworth's poetry, and is thus an ideal text to resolve the

conflict between the two versions of honor on display in the poet's early career. This is the case in part because of its hybrid genre. The poem's vernacular content—its everyday encounters, intimate reflections, and personal crises—is mixed with its epic ambitions. In *The Prelude* Wordsworth not only attempts to compete with the loftiest poetry in the modern English tradition, but also tries to elevate autobiography to metaphysical heights, a goal that was in keeping with the bourgeois ideal of self-valorization and promotion. This conflict between hierarchy and egalitarianism in the poem—between vertical and horizontal values—is at the same time a conflict between left and right. *The Prelude* is also a story of political disillusionment, chronicling Wordsworth's shift from republican patriot to reconstructed Tory. Its account of Wordsworth's partisan metamorphosis reinforces the political malleability of honor—a civic virtue that in the post-revolutionary era was used by both Dissenters and Royalists for their own political purposes.

While these formal details are meaningful, even more important to understanding the new sense of honor that emerges in the twelve-book *Prelude* are the biographical developments surrounding its composition. In 1802, Wordsworth at last recovered the thousands of pounds owed to him by Lord Lonsdale, who had died of gastrointestinal distress in May of that year The noble presiding over the Wordsworth family home in Cockermouth, Lonsdale had been indebted to Wordsworth's father John after his passing in 1783, and had in effect held out on the patrimonial inheritance of the entire Wordsworth clan for nearly two decades.[44] (In a poem written in 1795, Wordsworth reflected upon the situation with bitter satire: "Must honour still to Lonsdale's tail be bound? / Then execration is an empty sound").[45] While the Lonsdale affair accounts for a renewed focus in the *Prelude* on honor as a traditional sign for inheritance, another event

gives the honor ethic a less ancient connotation. Later that year, Wordsworth travelled to France to reunite with Annette Vallon and their daughter Caroline. A recommitment to a part of his life that had remained hidden for many years, Wordsworth's renewed obligation to his illegitimate family aligns with the progressive definition of honor that had permeated much of his poetry in previous years: a moral duty to recognize the inherent dignity in all persons—"the honourable characteristic…in every subject"—even if they were illicit or had been ostracized from conventional public life.

The professional credibility of the epic genre; the partisan war of ideas being waged at the turn of the century; a recovery of contested inheritance; a renewed commitment to an illegitimate family—all of these issues converge in a single section of *The Prelude,* which provides Wordsworth with a new way to theorize the ethic of honor for the modern age. With a narrative that touches on thwarted inheritance, troubled patrimony, and shame and redemption, the Vaudracour and Julia episode included in the ninth book of *The Prelude* wrestles with conflicts about financial wellbeing and public reputation similar to the ones that had informed Wordsworth's poetry and poetics over the last five years. However, in the end the episode remodels the concept of honor so that it will emphasize individuals' commitment to one another regardless of status. Despite the political rancor precipitated by the Napoleonic conflict, and a creeping cynicism that attended a society increasingly determined by market relations, the Vaudracour and Julia episode tries to conceive of honor as a pure ethical practice, one that could balance private worthiness with public responsibility.

Out of all the sections in *The Prelude* that deal with the civic ideals of the revolutionary age, book nine has the most to say about honor and dignity. Right before

the story of Vaudracour and Julia, the poem focuses on a conversation between the poet and his compatriot Michael Beaupuy concerning the "true personal dignity" of all persons—a quality of individual worthiness that was not determined by the ruling classes, and could not be tarnished by affronts to one's reputation or the contingencies associated with "language, country, love, and hate."[46] While recalling Paine, Wollstonecraft, and Godwin's radical uses of the terms "honor" and "dignity" throughout the 1790s, Wordsworth also takes direct aim in this passage at Burke and his chivalric revival of honor in the *Reflections*. Parodying Burke's oft-mentioned set-piece of Mary Antoinette arising above her subjects "glittering like the morning star," it is instead the "people [who rise] up / Fresh as the morning star," asserting "in the rudest men" a "sense of right / Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife."[47] Beyond a mere political discussion, Wordsworth and Beaupuy's thoughts about the "true personal dignity" of the common people bears a family resemblance to other anecdotes in the ninth book about the role of honor in modernity: Wordsworth idealizes the merit-based system of honor in his Cambridge days, where for his "brothers all in honour…wealth and titles were in less esteem / Than talents and successful industry;" and, after defecting from the ranks of predatory nobility, Beaupuy devotes himself "[w]ith like persuasion honoured" to the credo of republicanism.[48]

The most complex meditation on honor and nobility, however, can be found in the closing tale of Vaudracour and Julia. A pessimistic retelling of Helen Maria Wiliams's well-known narrative from her *Letters Written in France* (1790), the episode is not uplifting on the surface. Driven from his household by a cruel father, the aristocratic Vaudracour commits his life to his beloved Julia, a maid from the middling classes whose

family was "[u]nhonoured of nobility."[49] During a conflict over his birthright, Vaudracour slays a household guard, flees, and becomes an outlaw. Yet, despite his repeated attempts to build a family with his beloved, Julia ends up being forced by her own family into a convent, leaving Vaudracour to care for their illegitimate child—who dies eventually, sealing Vaudracour's fate to live as a recluse with "an imbecile mind."[50] Because of its gloomy outcome, the story could be read as an anti-Jacobin parable advising readers to abide by tradition and convention: Vaudracour should have listened to his patrician father, which would have allowed him to inherit his birthright; he should have been less rash in his pursuit of true love and avoided the dejection that inevitably comes with unchecked sensibility; he should have shown his offspring more manly distance and thus thwarted his insanity. Due to these missteps, Vaudracour never lives up to his name: he cannot be worthy *(vaudra)* of the court (*cour*).

But the name could also translate into worthy (*vaudra*) heart (*cœur*). Given this interpretation, the episode looks less like a fable warning readers about forsaking aristocratic conventions, and more like a parable about the inherent dignity that can exist beyond one's noble status or material wealth. A closer look at an excerpt from the episode reveals a similar attention to a type of honor based upon a fundamental commitment to others instead of the hierarchies of economic status (which was part of both aristocratic and bourgeois notions of honor). The poet tells how Vaudracour and Julia were connected

> …[f]rom their cradles up,
> With but a step between their several homes
> The pair had thriven together year by year,
> Friends, Playmates, Twins in pleasure, after strife

> And petty quarrels had grown fond again,
> Each other's advocate, each other's help,
> Nor ever happy if they were apart:
> A basis this for deep and solid love,
> And endless constancy, and placid truth;
> But whatsoever of such treasures might,
> Beneath the outside of their youth, have lain
> Reserv'd for mellower years, his present mind
> Was under fascination; he beheld
> A vision, and he lov'd the thing he saw.
> Arabian Fiction never fill'd the world
> With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
> Earth liv'd in one great presence of the spring,
> Life turn'd the meanest of her implements
> Before his eyes to price above all gold,
> The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine,
> Her chamber-window did surpass in glory
> The portals of the East, all paradise
> Could by the simple opening of a door
> Let itself in upon him, pathways, walks,
> Swarm'd with enchantment till his spirit sank
> Beneath the burthen, overbless'd for life.[51]

From this passage a subtle—but major—difference emerges in Wordsworth's sense of honor. The material qualities that could have determined Julia's honorable status are shed: his "present mind under" the fascination of a "deep and solid love," Vaudracour "turn'd the meanest of [Julia's] implements…to price above all gold," and the modesty of Julia's home becomes insignificant, "Her chamber-window…surpass[ing] in glory / The portals of the east."[52] Vaudracour's "endless constancy" to Julia is the higher measure of value here, a private commitment to another person that is worth more than any object denoting class privilege or nobility.

While it can read like amorous tropology—a generic poetic *blazon* on the beloved—this passage is far more profound when read in reference to Wordsworth's struggles with the meaning of honor throughout *Lyrical Ballads*, caught as he was between wanting to make poetry egalitarian but also to "legitimate" his aesthetic productions by conforming to certain codes of cultural distinction. Indeed, what stands out in an episode written for an epic are not the tropes of legitimacy but illegitimacy: Vaudracour's lost inheritance, Julia's thwarted chastity, and their illicit child together are all outside the mores of propriety. Looking again at the passage, however, such illegitimacy appears to be more beneficial than tragic. While the "price above all gold" anticipates Vaudracour's loss of patrimonial security—the inheritance he gives up to be with Julia—the "overbless[ing] of life" points to the illegitimate child that Vaudracour will gain.[53] Trading away his inheritance in order to commit to his child, Vaudracour gives up his fiscal patrimony in order to bestow a blessing that is far more fundamental: paternal care itself. In other words, Vaudracour gives up the financial honor of his birthright for a commitment to another person outside of the traditional structures of entailment; for a new ethic that binds each to each through natural piety. And while his "inheritance of blessedness" may not remunerate titles or economic security, it does provide Vaudracour with greater aesthetic gifts, the ability to make wondrous visions out of the "meanest" substances.[54] Thus, when Vaudracour returns to his father in the hopes of reconciliation, it is the beauty of his illegitimate child that he hopes will strike his father's heart "[s]o that it shall be soften'd" into understanding.[55] Despite the tragic conclusion of his story, Vaudracour's commitment to life no matter its rank is a positive moral choice.

When placed in the context of Wordsworth and Beaupuy's radical conversations about the "true dignity of man"—and in the larger perspective of *The Prelude* as a poem about "the growth of a poet's mind"—the Julia and Vaudracour episode allegorizes Wordsworth's artistic development in relation to the two versions of honor with which he wrestled in the preceding years. Like Vaudracour, Wordsworth realizes that he must forego a traditional inheritance from older poets in order to form new aesthetic visions. This abdication of honor places a "burthen" upon him because he cannot sustain his poetry by relying on inherited tropes or figures that register as dignified in the contemporary literary market.[56] And, like the end of the story indicates, this rejection has the potential to keep Wordsworth's poetry from reaching "the light of common day"—its full recognition by a society of consumers who legitimate certain types of literature.[57] But this renunciation also allows poetry to flourish outside of strictures of the modern commercial order. Like Vaudracour's obligation to his wife and child, the honor of a poem is located in the way it commits to the representation of subjects no matter their perceived status or their legitimacy to contemporary cultural opinion. Because he trades public acclamation in order to depict humbler themes, Wordsworth can go on to imagine an aesthetic project more aligned with the republican vision of equitable representation, where systemic hierarchies are undercut, where "inheritance [is] new-fallen" and the poetic endeavor seems like "when the first time visited, to one / Who thither comes to find in it his home."[58] Wordsworth's near simultaneous return to Annette Vallon and the recovery of his familial legacy supports this allegory: the poet's renewed focus on his illegitimate child means a portion of his patrimony lost; but it also means the renewal of a

private commitment to his daughter Caroline—for such a loss there can still be abundant recompense.

And yet, until the Ernest de Sélincourt edition of 1928, the Vaudracour and Julia episode was never included in the published text of *The Prelude*, removed from its ninth book perhaps as a way to preserve the conservative nature of the epic form. (The narrative poem was however published independently in Wordsworth's 1820 chapbook *The River Duddon*). Without the episode, the 1850 *Prelude* would thus be read as it commonly is today: a story of a young man's journey from defiant revolutionary to sober nationalist. While such a vision would have been agreeable to Victorians reading the epic after Wordsworth's passing in 1850, the decision to avoid details about an illegitimate relationship in an autobiographical poem also protected Wordsworth's professional reputation in the years following the release of the fourth edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1805), when his star started to rise. His honor as a literary gentleman was safe, and by extension, his ability to speak with manly authority about the political honor of England in nationalist polemics such as *The Convention of Cintra* (1809) was preserved. However, this very disavowal of the episode seems to accentuate the message it provides: set outside the grand genre of the epic—and the poetry from 1798-1805 that brought him the most recognition—the intimate folktale of Vaudracour and Julia is one of the poet's most intense and private attempts to find the "honor of poetry…in all subjects" regardless of popular approval. Informed by a long, internal debate about commerce, political ideology, and aesthetic legitimacy, Wordsworth's sense of honor could not be wedded exclusively to the hierarchies of the market or the Burkean categories of rank and station.

V.

This was not just the resolution of a private crisis of values—a way for Wordsworth to alleviate the personal trauma of the revolution by importing some of its "leveling principles" into his poetry and poetics; to navigate the waters of public opinion while staying true to his own moral code. His development of a modern honor system to stand against the dictates of the market and the opinions that were formed therein was also a very public response, one precipitated by the rising influence of capitalism in civic life—especially the way in which industrial-era England started to rely on the prescriptions of political economy (and the language of utility) to organize social relations. As Raymond Williams indicates, this impulse to advance an alternative paradigm of moral value to stand against the social dislocation caused by agrarian capitalism was widespread.[59] It is in Goldsmith, Crabbe, and especially Cowper, whom Wordsworth read with great delight.

However, Wordsworth's new form of honor seems more modern than the ethics of these mid-century poets, who tried to assert old "rural Virtues" against the new "business of destruction" (or, more appropriately, the destruction of business).[60] First, despite the persistent identification of Wordsworth as a champion of the rural dispossessed and their time-tested beliefs, his sense of honor does not endorse a return to the communal virtues of an agrarian past. Instead, Wordsworth's honor ethic tries to account for the development of civic behavior based around the rise of the city and the emergence of the urban marketplace—the place where virtue and capital found their most complete synthesis. In this sense, Wordsworth's reliance on honor was not an anachronistic solution—it was a novel answer to the new problems of modernity.

Secondly, this notion of honor was current because it was informed by two voices that were still at the center of the war of ideas in the early-nineteenth-century: Godwin and Burke. Wordsworth's view that honor should be inviolable, available to everyone, and removed from the prejudice of rank derives in part from Godwin, who while using the idea of "true honor" throughout his canon to indicate the inherent dignity of all people, recognized the need for a communal virtue to check the possibly alienating effects of republicanism, a system that had the potential to put the individual above all else. (Like Wordsworth, Godwin was also shocked by the terror and the dictatorial turn taken by Napoleon). However, despite Wordsworth's wariness of hierarchy, the anti-commercialism in his sense of honor comes from Burke, who famously excoriates the culture of "sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators."[61] Lamenting the loss of ancient chivalry that bound together the *polis*, Burke also presents a fresh critique of the commercial society. For Burke, it was not that commerce was completely bad; it could not be for a politician weaned on the Whiggish ideas of "civilizing" market exchange.[62] It was instead that the increasing mobility and prolificacy of capital—and its incarnation within industrial commodities, paper money, and writs of credit—accelerated the development of a solely utilitarian outlook in citizens, converting sensible, civic-minded burghers into rational calculators of their own private advantage.

Wordsworth's synthesis of these two thinkers into a single virtue—eccentric as it may have seemed in his own day—looks perfectly logical now. The poet saw in honor a way to resolve (or at least negotiate) one of the major contradictions inherent in emerging bourgeois ideology: while Wordsworthian honor holds onto the revolutionary promise of universal dignity—its assurance of widespread *égalité* —the virtue also tries to combat

the stratifying nature of a value system derived from the commercial classes, whose empowerment the revolution had largely based itself upon. He recognized the contradictory role that capital played in a civic order that was supposed to value all of its members—from the lowest wandering peddler to the highest railway industrialist whose "bold hands…triumphs o'er…Space."[63] Another way to put this is that Wordsworth did not simply "turn Tory" when he enters the nineteenth-century, as many of his contemporaries insisted. Instead, the poet became in his moral opinions a visionary critic of the liberal society, which was just starting to convert the language of political economy into the language of ethical righteousness.

To our early-twenty-first century ears, this sounds familiar. The transformation of moral vocabulary that began in the mid-eighteenth-century has been naturalized by neoliberalism, where notions of value in public discourse are now reduced to their financial appeal: "freedom" is the untrammeled operations of the market; "accountability" is one's overweening responsibility to the balance sheet; and even honor—defined as a private responsibility to others—can be quantified as a credit score. Twenty-five years before John Ruskin challenged the economists' assumption that man exists as a "covetous machine" in his introductory essay from *Unto This Last* (appropriately called "The Roots of Honour"), Wordsworth foresaw how the dependence of liberal policies on the vocabulary of political economy would lead to the reduction of men and women to *homo economicus*—and to laws that treated them as such.[64] In his 1835 Postscript to *Yarrow Revisited*, the poet returns to the language of honor and shame in order to excoriate the New Poor Law, which had been passed just a year before. Citing the positive outcomes and "noble quality" of wage relief in the alleviation of

"pauperism," Wordsworth says that "[t]here is not…sufficient cause for doubting that a like sense of honour may be revived among the people…without resorting to the severities which the new Poor Law Act had introduced."[65] The example Wordsworth uses to illustrate his point is telling: a couple "once in prosperity" who are now unable to bury their dead child due to rapid financial misfortune, but who nevertheless cling to a sense of honor that is slowly dwindling. This is Vaudracour and Julia reconsidered. Here, however, honor is no longer something that has to be detached from bourgeois ideas of cultural capital. It must be saved from the whims of real capital.

VI.

As I suggest above, the inherent conflict between bourgeois social values and economic values eventually became undeniable for Wordsworth—and political writing and poetry in the later part of his career especially attests to outright power of capitalism to simultaneously transform landscapes and displace its most venerable inhabitants. However, in this coda, I want to consider a period in Wordsworth's life where he was actually able to mitigate the contradictions in liberal modernity. I take a step back to look at the 1809 political pamphlet, *The Convention of Cintra*, a document written in the thick of the Napoleonic wars and one that shows an uncharacteristically strident Wordsworth arguing about the potential for the loss of Britain's national honor. Instead of showing the poet's rising discomfort with the paradoxes of the modern political system, however, *The Convention of Cintra* shows how the logic of crisis—presented by a threat of military invasion—can allow even the most perspicacious thinker to put aside their critique of a civic ideology. The text, I suggest, represents another antimony of liberalism, one that

started to become obscured in the post-revolutionary period: the incongruity between conservative national protectionism and the spread of progressive republicanism on a global scale. While Wordsworth's pamphlet sheds light on the early credo of the liberal Empire, it is also singular for the way in which avoided the very problem at the core of this contradiction: how does one command the liberation of others by the appeal to a top-down authority? Wordsworth's temporary quietus to this problem can reframe the way in which critics have approached the civic commitments of the poet, which are often described at this point in his career as fully Burkean, evincing an apostasy from the revolutionary republicanism of the poet's youth.

For some critics, there is no debate: *The Convention of Cintra* is a strictly conservative document. Historicists who have tracked the poet's conservatism to a very early stage in his career (as early as 1793), the 1809 political pamphlet finally confirms Burke's sustained influence on Wordsworth for well over fifteen years, and that the poetry of the "great decade" is, by most accounts, an exercise in the priority of Burkean sentiment to metaphysical reason. And even if one is not prepared to accept the thesis of Wordsworth's early conservative leanings, one could easily see *The Convention* as signaling the *beginning* of Wordsworth's apostasy from republican politics. Recent scholarship, however, points out the latent revolutionary principles in *The Convention*: Deirdre Coleman notes that Wordsworth's reliance on liberty is a major—if not crucial—part of the pamphlet's argument for Spanish sovereignty, and, in a paper that synthesizes the two extremes of Wordsworth's political views, Brian Folker argues that *The Convention* "can be regarded as the greatest point of complexity in Wordsworth's ideological journey from Jacobin to conservative."[66]

This political antinomy is captured once again by the virtue of honor. While a hawkish, Burkean version of the honor ethic serves as an ethical foundation in *The Convention*, the pamphlet is also influenced by the other progressive version that had emerging influence in the early-nineteenth-century. Thus, while there are strident moments of elitism in *The Convention*, Wordsworth also reminds readers of honor's broad social-consciousness, the egalitarian "honorable characteristic [found] in every subject" that informed *Lyrical Ballads* and the tale of Julia and Vaudracour.[67] Even as late as 1809, honor mediates between the poet's political fascination with conservative distinction and progressive egalitarianism.

Historicist critics (and Wordsworth's own contemporaries) have argued that the threat of Napoleonic invasion decisively turns Wordsworth away from republican causes. As a result, the conservatism latent in Wordsworth's poetry from 1793-1805 becomes outwardly manifested. For the most part, Wordsworth's writing about honor writing reflects this turn. Although the 1806 sonnet "Say, what is honor" may have taken a cue from Godwin by equating honor with "the finest sense of *justice*," it also sees honor as the final line of national defense, that which "guard[s] the way of life from all offence / Suffered or done."[68] Here, Wordsworth returns to a tribalist notion of honor as external reputation and military prowess, arguing that while wartime defeat may lower a nation's "proud heads, but not unto the dust," national "infamy doth kill." This atavistic militarism is softened in some way by the way in which modern honor separates reputation from sheer physical might, a public version of honor—what Burke repeatedly calls "national character" in his *Reflections*. With its appeals to Britain's military triumphs and to its collective pride, the pamphlet uses honor as a species of distinctively British character.

But the pamphlet also hopes to project British honor outwards to the other nations involved in the Napoleonic conflict. Part of the goal of *The Convention* is to set a sociopolitical paradigm for the other European nations to follow:

> The spirit of Buonaparte's government is, and must continue to be, like that of the first conquerors of the New World who went raving about for gold—gold! and for who rapacious appetites the slow but mighty and sure returns of any other produce could have no charms. I cannot but think that generations must pass away before France or any of the countries under its thralldom, can attain those habits, and that character, and those establishments, which must be attained before it can wield its population in a manner that will ensure our overthrow.[69]

By presenting a universal ethos upon which other nations are judged, Wordsworth seems to return to a version of honor as a hierarchizing formation, one which is close to being theorized as a species of cultural capital in Bourdieu's most basic sense: that which classifies a "socially recognized hierarchy" through intangible habits and manners.[70] In fact, in the passage's comparison of Britain and France, Wordsworth almost literalizes the concept of cultural capital itself, using financial metaphors in his discussion of more intangible national values. For Wordsworth the currency of the British character stands against Napoleon's "rapacious appetite" for gold, expansion, and plunder. With Britain's national morality on guard against French rapine, it is "habits" and "establishments" that ring out with Burkean conviction, the "produce" which "charms" the population into solidarity and resolve. In other words, if Napoleon wants to conquer Europe for sheer material gain, then Wordsworth wants Europe to fall under the sway of Britain's venerable morals and their "slow but mighty and sure returns."[71] Taken as a whole in this passage, values like "national character" seem to occupy the same space as material

worth. Even though Wordsworth chides Napoleon for his materialistic ambitions, the language of virtue and commerce seem to be once again operational, hearkening back to Wordsworth's sense of honor as a marker of bourgeois professionalism, patrimonial inheritance, and other proprietary phenomena. Against these operations of bourgeois propriety, the French have simply turned to plundering.

Yet, even during such reactionary surges in his writing, Wordsworth reminds readers that honor can still be inflected by social egalitarianism, the "honorable characteristic…in every subject" posited in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* and strengthened by the episode of Julia and Vaudracour. Right after praising Spain's military resilience, Wordsworth turns his attention back to British citizens. Describing the ongoing conflict as generating "question[s] of virtue and moral sentiment," Wordsworth proposes to

> [l]et [fellow countrymen] know, there is no true wisdom without imagination; no genuine sense;--that the man, who in this age feels no regret for the ruined honour of other Nations, must be poor in sympathy for the honour of his own Country; and that, if he be wanting here towards that which circumscribes the whole, he neither has—nor can have—a social regard for the lesser communities which country includes. Contract the circle, and bring him to his family; such a man cannot protect *that* with dignified loves. Reduce his thoughts to his own person; he may defend himself,--what *he* deems his honour; but it is the *action* of a brave man from the impulse of the brute, or the motive of a coward.[72]

James Chandler has commented that the "concentric circles" of virtue mentioned by Wordsworth are lifted directly from Burke, an experiential system of relationships that Chandler calls Burke's "love of kind," which is the first principle to Burke's social and nationalist thought.[73] If we hadn't already seen what a complex signifier honor is for

Wordsworth, we might be content to designate this passage as a Burkean echo and nothing more. Here, however, Wordsworth seems to use the Burkean model of collective social relations to posit a version of honor that is strangely progressive. In this passage, instead of moving downward in an archetypical way— descending from the royal "fountain of honour," the early modern trope Burke continued to rely on in his *Reflections*—the "circumference" of honor expands outward to include a multitude of various classes and stations.[74] A form of intersubjectivity, honor grows out of local concerns with a nation's "lesser communities," and is founded on the single person's care for all of their fellow citizens' dignity, not embedded in a sovereign that disseminates honor from a position of superiority. Not only does honor give individuals a sense of national kinship, but it allows them to feel like they are part of an international community: someone who cannot see beyond the grand, public value of national honor is equally someone who "feels no regret for the ruined honour of other Nations."[75] Those without this "genuine sense" cannot ascertain Wordsworth's initial claim about the egalitarian nature of honor made in the Advertisement to the *Lyrical Ballads*, that there is an "honorable characteristic…in every subject" which leads to greater "social regard."

It could be contended that Wordsworth's message doesn't actually depart from Burke. Burke never disregards the egalitarianism of honor—this is, in fact, one of the main points of the *Reflections*. But, in a subtle maneuver, Wordsworth amplifies Burke's egalitarianism in order to modify the standard definition of honor itself, a naturalized "loyalty to rank" and distinction.[76] While the word "honor" sounds unmistakably conservative—and give us that old chivalric feeling—Wordsworth amplifies the democratic possibilities of the term. Concerns for communities of "lesser regard" sounds

elitist and hierarchical, but they are also built upon ever-expanding circles of social awareness; honor still appears to elevate British "national character," but it also binds different nations together. Thus, honor becomes a figure for both conservative and progressive political positions, mediating between egalitarianism and hierarchy, intrinsic worth and extrinsic classification, republican dignity and conservative distinction — sometimes simultaneously articulating those positions without discord.

Not only does *The Convention* allow for the conflicting versions of honor traced in the *Lyrical Ballads* years to function simultaneously, but it also seems to reinforce the gender dynamic in the Vaudracour and Julia episode of the *Prelude*—where honor was divorced from the idea of patrimony. In another metaphoric passage, Wordsworth starts to describe honor as "a benign ordinance of our nature," a phrase that represents nicely Burke's conflation of nature and ancient custom.[77] However, Wordsworth goes on to say that

> genuine honour is the hand-maid of humanity; the attendant and sustainer—both of the sterner qualities which constitute the appropriate excellence of the male character, and of the gentle and tender virtues which belong more especially to motherliness and womanhood.[78]

The "genuine honor" of the nation is not just predicated on traditional models of masculinity or patrimonial legitimacy—the "appropriate excellence of male character." Like Vaudracour's commitment to his child, honor is also figured as a maternal "attendant and sustainer," a form of obligation that acts as "the hand-maid of humanity."[79] Instead of honor's being represented as both father *and* mother (the dual roles Vaudracour plays in the *Prelude)*, the dominant personification for honor is "hand-

maid," a feminine figure that provides humanity both the "sterner qualities" of masculinity and the "gentle and tender virtues [of]…womanhood."

This lone personification is consequential. By making honor a woman, Wordsworth seems to abandon the Burkean idea of patrimony/masculinity as a standard for political legitimation and national recognition. Additionally, by making honor a "hand-maid" and *not* a natural or legitimate mother, Wordsworth seems to suggest that the honor of nations can be formed outside the bounds of the traditional family relationship, that national virtue must be constructed on the affirmation of responsibility regardless of biological connection. Burkean national honor, founded on patriarchal legitimacy and figured by an "entailed inheritance derived…from our forefathers," is replaced by a feminine honor that doesn't distinguish between the legitimacy of persons, and even seems suspiciously constructivist in its makeup.[80] (Of course, the "hand-maid" of honor could just be a nationalist codeword for "motherland," a version of subservient feminine virtue to be defended by Britain's cavaliers, or, as Anne Mellor has pointed out, one of many the maternal personifications throughout the era that rationalized the British imperialist project.[81]) The passage as a whole again emphasizes Wordsworth's political holism when he gets to *The Convention of Cintra*. As a sign rich with signification, honor allows for the coexistence of Wordsworth's royalist conservatism with his residual republicanism without provoking questions about these positions' inherent contradictions.

Wordsworth vision of honor in *The Convention* seems to allow for two contradictory political impulses to function seamlessly. Does this mean that honor is an ideological mystification? Perhaps the notion of honor became more and more formalized

for Wordsworth as the threat of invasion increased, a metaphor that—in the face of another geopolitical trauma—started to lose any dialectical nuance. Such a reading allows for a circumspect return to McGann's Romantic ideology and the broader critical impulses of Romantic New Historicists from the1980s, whose scholarship about Wordsworth often argued for the poet's substitution of actual, social conditions with imaginative tropes and figures.[82] However, Wordsworth's more critical engagement with honor in the years leading up to *The Convention* proves that honor was not always a figure for imaginative escape. If anything, during those years, honor is a touchstone for—not an escape from—Wordsworth's incongruous political positions, and an ethic whose sociopolitical contradictions presented the poet with a genuine dilemma. But why would Wordsworth avoid this critique of value in *The Convention* even though the political paradox between the two modern versions honor still exists? Perhaps, with the trauma of revolutionary violence was still fresh in his mind, Wordsworth acceded to the demands of a country at war, rallying behind old British values with outward displays of nationalism. If this is the case, Wordsworth's politics might be viewed less as an abrupt replacement of political reality with the Burkean imaginary then as an abrupt move towards quietism. The conservatism that is usually attributed to Wordsworth thus takes on a slightly different shade—registering not so much as a political outlook brought on by traumatic break with youthful radicalism, but as an acceptance of the status quo, which is oftentimes seen as necessary during wartime.

When we allegorize honor as a larger story about Wordsworth's politics—as a story about how he temporarily learned to stop worrying and accept the contradictions of liberal modernity—we simultaneously account for two major lines in Romantic

scholarship over the last thirty-years: a McGannian line that sees Wordsworthian Romanticism as a mystification of real social conditions, and a de Manian line that locates in Romanticism a constant, deconstructive will to self-critique and, hence, ideological destabilization. Wordsworth might begin his "great decade" as a de Manian, skeptical about modern honor as a stable political and aesthetic formation. But he ends up a McGannian, comfortable with the contradictions inherent in modernity.[83] However, *pace* McGann and others, it is difficult to think that the idea of honor becomes totally mystified in *The Convention*, given all of the critique it had endured during the *Lyrical Ballads* years. If there is one final glimpse of radicalism that not lost after *The Convention*—an enduring revolutionary instinct in Wordsworth that continues to resist the status quo—it is that such legitimacy is a fragile thing, something that Hazlitt picks up on when he in *The Spirit of the Age* and his reading of Wordsworth's honor ethic that served as my epigraph. As a plea for the poet to re-dedicate himself to private friends and admirers—and not to engage with petty critics—Hazlitt takes to heart the lesson from Wordsworth's "great decade," realizing that modern honor might be less of a submission to authority then it is an affirmed commitment to others regardless of their legitimate status.

Another word for legitimacy is credibility or credit—a concept that binds economics to politics (and, with the resurgence of volatile financial speculation on a global scale, one that it is at the heart of the crises of our own moment). In my next chapter, I turn to the figure of credit in the writing of Jane Austen and Walter Scott. Because of Austen and Scott's focus on manners and chivalry, the two novelists have become constitutive of the honor ethic in Romanticism. Both authors also composed

novels during a major nineteenth-century credit crisis. Austen and Scott expanded upon and reconceived a literary tradition that links honor to finance in two of their best-known works: *Emma* (1815) and *Rob Roy* (1817). Framed by contemporary economic concerns, both novels show how credit becomes an increasingly prolific way to announce one's honor, how it binds characters together in speculative exchange, and how unsubstantiated and insubstantial such connections can be.

NOTES

[1] *CW* 98-9; *Political Justice* 151; epigraph from William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age: or Contemporary Portraits* (London: Henry Colburn, 1825), 250; hereafter *The Spirit of the Age*; Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984), 2; hereafter *Distinction*.

[2] The Rights of Man 55; *Vindications of the Rights of Men* 23.

[3] *Virtue, Commerce, and History* 50.

[4] Geoffrey Hartmann makes the classic argument that "[t]wo powers fought for the soul of Wordsworth…Nature and Milton." See Geoffrey Hartmann, *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1971), 99. For the poet's early ties to Burkean thought see James Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); hereafter *Wordsworth's Second Nature*. W.J.T. Mitchell pens a kind of rebuttal to Chandler by claiming that while Wordsworth was highly influenced by the genre of the *Confessions*, he used Burke as a kind of internal censor to "screen off" its potentially dangerous, Jacobinical content. See W.J.T. Mitchell, "Influence, Autobiography, and Literary History: Rousseau's Confessions and Wordsworth's *The Prelude*," *ELH* 57.3 (1990), 643-64. Finally, Alan Liu makes the well-known New Historicist argument about Wordsworth's denial of history through imagination. See Alan Liu, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1989), 4-5; hereafter *Wordsworth: The Sense of History.*

[5] For the long view of this contradiction in western politics see Sheldon Wolin, *Politics and Vision* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004).

[6] See Brian Folker. "Wordsworth's Visionary Imagination: Democracy and War," *ELH* 69.1 (2002), 167-97; William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth's Political Writings*. W.J.B. Owen & J.W. Smyser (eds.), (Penrith: Humanities E-Books, 2009).

[7] Christensen discusses how Byron used the ethos of aristocracy and nobility in order to shape a career in the modern literary marketplace: ""[B]yronism…was collaboratively organized in the second decade of the nineteenth century by coding the residual affective charge that still clung to the paraphernalia of aristocracy in order to reproduce it in commodities that could be vended to a reading public avid for glamour" (xi). See *Lord Byron's Strength*.

[8] A look at Cooper's standard concordance reveals 153 uses of the term "honour" and its variants (honour, honourable, honourably, honoured, honouring, honours). For comparison, "memory" and its variants (memorable, memories, memory, memory's) are used 173 times, and "sympathy" (sympathetic,

sympathies, sympathised, sympathising, sympathize, sympathy) appears 97 times. These numbers do not account for the numerous times Wordsworth uses the word honor in his non-fiction prose—many examples of which this chapter addresses. Lane Cooper, *A Concordance to the Poems of William Wordsworth* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1911).

[9] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads with A Few Other Poems* (London: J& A. Arch, 1798), i; hereafter *1LB.*For Wordsworth, honor was not just poetic and political, but also personal. In a letter to Thomas Evans, Wordsworth mourns the sudden death of his brother John by listing his great attributes. The highest praise is reserved for John's sense of honor: "In good sense and prudence in simplicity of habits and purity of life and innocence of manners and conversation, in meekness, in courage in firmness of character and entire self command, in talents delicacy of taste and knowledge of the best books and above all in a most refined sense of honour and the utmost tenderness of heart he was all that could be wished for in man." See William Wordsworth, et al., *Letters of the Wordsworth Family* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 579; hereafter *Letters*.

[10] *Grundlegung*; Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: E. Bathurst, et al., 1798), 441.

[11] *The Honor Code;* Elizabeth Anderson, "Emotions in Kant's Later Moral Philosophy: Honor and the Phenomenology of Moral Value," in *Kant's Ethics of Virtue,* ed. Monika Betzler (New York and Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 123-145.

[12] "Say, What is Honour?" ll. 1-2. Wordsworth's emphasis.

[13] Chandler argues that Wordsworth's use of the term "nature" must be understood in a Burkean sense: as a phenomenon connected to human habits and customs that become imperceptibly routine, rather than as an amoral, ecological force. See *Wordsworth's Second Nature* 143-4.

[14] *The Spirit of the Age* 250; *3LB* xxxiii-iv.

[15] *1LB* 203, xii.

[16] ibid.

[17] ibid.

[18] *1LB* ii.

[19] Adam Potkay makes a similar point in a recent article, noting that that Wordsworthian joy is a feeling of egalitarianism and incorporation. See Adam Potkay, "Wordsworth and the Ethics of Things," *PMLA* 123.2 (2008), 390-404. See also Adam Potkay, *Wordsworth's Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2013).

[20] *Grundlegung*; *The Rights of Man; Vindication of the Rights of Men.*

[21] *1LB* i.

[22] Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 404-5; See also Lawrence E. Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness Moral Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994). Klein shows that Shaftesbury was firmly within the tradition of "polite Whiggism," which contained a new Whig ideology of open commerce and social liberalism, but continued to value a conservative tradition of etiquette and "noble" manners.

[23] *Virtue, Commerce, and History* 50.

[24] Thomas Pfau, *Wordsworth's Profession: Form, Class, and the Logic of Early Romantic Cultural Production* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1997), 112; hereafter *Wordsworth's Profession*.

[25] Clifford Siskin, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999), 130-54.

[26] *1LB* ii.

[27] Chandler notes how the Advertisement is the first place where Wordsworth privileges the "sobriety" of oral culture over the "barbarism" of reading, which Wordsworth associates with wanton and unchecked sense of vision.
See *Wordsworth's Second Nature* 143-4.

[28] *1LB* ii.

[29] Ken Johnston also notes that the endeavor shifted the two poets' focus "further away from political action, and toward [a project] that might return profit while allowing time free for writing"—a concern that is sublimated itself into poems such as "The Female Vagrant," "The Last of the Flock," and even "Tintern Abbey," all of which touch on the link between political disenfranchisement and economic destitution. See Kenneth R. Johnston, *The Hidden Wordsworth* (NY: W.W. Norton and Co., 2001), 389, 414, 431; hereafter *The Hidden Wordsworth.*

[30] Robert Southey, "Review of 'Lyrical Ballads, with a few other Poems,'" in *The Critical Review, or Annals of Literature* 24 (October, 1798), 201.

[31] William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads: With Other Poems in Two Volumes* (London: T.N. Longman and O. Reese, 1800), x; hereafter *2LB*.

[32] *2LB* ix.

[33] See Jerome Christensen, "Like a Guilty Thing Surprised: Deconstruction, Coleridge, and the Apostasy of Criticism," *Critical Inquiry* 12.4 (1986), 769-87; hereafter "Like a Guilty Thing Surprised;" David Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1989).

[34] *2LB* ix.

[35] *Vindication of the Rights of Men*; *3LB* xxxiii-iv.

[36] ibid.

[37] Michael Gamer, for instance, traces the nationalist and sociocultural connotations of the Preface in his fine study. See Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000), 90-126.

[38] *2LB* xix.

[39] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind; An Autobiographical Poem* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), V.165, hereafter *Prelude*.

[40] *2LB* xix, xxix.

[41] Mary Jacobus, *Romanticism, Writing, and Sexual Difference: Essays on The Prelude* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989).

[42] *2LB* 201, ll. 38-9.

[43] *Wordsworth's Profession* 196-201.

[44] *The Hidden Wordsworth* 13-22, 561.

[45] *Letters* 88.

[46] *Prelude* IX.356.

[47] *Reflections* 112; *Prelude* IX.391-6.

[48] *Prelude* IX.231-6, 429.

[49] *Prelude* IX.567.

[50] *Prelude* IX.933.

[51] *Prelude* IX.570-95.

[52] *Prelude* IX.590-1.

[53] *Prelude* IX.558, 595.

[54] *Prelude* IX.560.

[55] *Prelude* IX.807.

[56] *Prelude* IX.593.

[57] *Prelude* IX.928.

[58] *Prelude* X.730-2.

[59] Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973), 79.

[60] Oliver Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village," in *The Poems of Thomas Gray; William Collins; Oliver Goldsmith*, ed. Roger Lonsdale. (London: Longmans, Green, and Company), 675-94, ll. 396-8.

[61] *Reflections* 113.

[62] See J.G.A. Pocock, "The Political Economy of Burke's Analysis of the French Revolution," *The Historical Journal* 25.2 (1982), 331-49.

[63] William Wordsworth, "Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways," in *Poetical Works, 1849-1850* (London: Edward Moxon, 1849-50), 171, ll.12-3.

[64] John Ruskin, *Unto this Last, Munera Pulveris, Time and Tide, with Other Writing on Political Economy 1860-1873* (NY: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1905), 25.

[65] William Wordsworth, *Yarrow Revisited* (NY: R. Bartlett and S. Raynor, 1835), 226-8.

[66] Deirdre Coleman, "Re-Living Jacobinism: Wordsworth and the Convention of Cintra," *Yearbook of English Studies* 19 (1989), 144-61; Brian Folker, "Wordsworth's Visionary Imagination: Democracy and War," *ELH* 69.1 (2002), 167-97, 169.

[67] *1LB*, 1.

[68] "Say, What is Honor" ll. 4-5.

[69] William Wordsworth, *The Convention of Cintra* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1915), 231; hereafter *Cintra*.

[70] *Distinction* 2.

[71] In *The Convention*, Wordsworth also states that "the true welfare of Britain is best promoted by the independence, freedom, and honour of other Nations; and that it is only by the diffusion and prevalence of these virtues that French Tyranny can be ultimately reduced…" (150). Here, we see the continued conflation of the revolutionist rhetoric of "independence" and "freedom" with the rhetoric of ancient virtue in "honour." We also see how the ethic is pitted against French expansionism.

[72] *Cintra* 171.

[73] *Wordsworth's Second Nature* 39.

[74] *Reflections*, 294.

[75] *Cintra* 171.

[76] *Reflections*, 113.

[77] *Cintra* 61.

[78] ibid.

[79] ibid.

[80] *Reflections* 47.

[81] Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2000), 145.

[82] McGann's *Romantic Ideology* is, of course, the watershed book linking Romanticism to ideology. See Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). See also *Wordsworth's Great Period Poems*; *Wordsworth: The Sense of History*; *Wordsworth's Second Nature*. For an essential text that engages the critical and historicist preoccupation of Romanticism see *The Historicity of Romantic Discourse.* The Romantic imagination has also been seen as destabilizing ideology itself, ceaselessly disrupting its conflations of nature and language. See Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996). See also Forest Pyle's synching deconstruction and historicism in *The Ideology of Imagination (*Stanford: Stanford UP, 1995*).*

[83] A special thanks here to Orrin N.C. Wang for his thoughts about the implications of Wordsworth's political acquiescence, and how it may be situated in the recent developments of Romanticist criticism.

Chapter Three
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Full Faith and Credit:
Finance, Honor, and Social Trust in *Rob Roy* and *Emma*

We trust with perfect security that the freedom of trade, without any attention of government, will always supply us with the wine which we have occasion for: and we may trust with equal security that it will always supply us with all the gold and silver which we can afford to purchase or to employ, either in circulating our commodities, or in other uses.

—Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*

The peculiarity of this philosophy of avarice appears to be the ideal of the honest man of recognized credit, and above all the idea of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital, which is assumed as an end in itself. Truly what is here preached is not simply a means of making one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethos.

—Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

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I.

Since their publication, the novels of Walter Scott and Jane Austen have been synonymous with manners, customs, and "honorable" behavior. In fact, if honor is mentioned at all in conjunction with Romantic literature, we're most likely to think about Scott and his passion for maintaining chivalry and antiquarian moral codes—when Scott's most famous protagonist Waverley calls the fearsome highlander Fergus McIvor a "'chief thief-taker of the district,'" he is quickly corrected by his love interest Rose Bradwardine, who dubs McIvor "'a gentleman of great honour and consequence.'"[1] While Austen's novels tended to modernize these moral codes—updating for Regency life what Scott called the "romantic cast of the sentiment[al]"—honor inflects her work in a variety of ways as well.[2] In Austen, the honor ethic is most often constitutive of gentlemanliness (as it was for Falkland in my first chapter) and professional distinction

(as it was for Wordsworth in my second). But honor is also an important ethos with regards to the patriarchal structures of Austen's novels. For instance, the sexual peril in which Willoughby puts Marianne in *Sense and Sensibility* is repeatedly referred to as a breach of honor and feeling, while by the end of *Northanger Abbey* Henry Tilney is bound "in honour [and] in affection" to Catherine Morland, that traditionalist code of conduct between man and woman that Austen ironizes in the novel's send-up of gothic and chivalric pretense.[3] Whether or not it is ironized or taken seriously, the ethic of honor in Austen and Scott can be seen as conservative, resting as it does on a foundation of sentiment, chivalry, and patriarchy largely connected to Burke, whose principles continued to influence the counterrevolutionary years of the early nineteenth-century. According to Burke, venerable codes of honor are what bind society together as a "trust in the hands of all those who compose it."[4] Here, honor stands for a type of social trust that is rooted in the past, and it is an ethos vital to conservatism during times of international upheaval and domestic discord. Although shades of radical thought have been attributed to Scott and Austen by major scholars such as Ian Duncan, Marilyn Butler and Claudia Johnson, there is still a sense that a Burkean foundation of social honor and trust adheres in the work of both novelists.[5]

However, the last twenty years of literary criticism have broadened our sense of the political and social paradigms used by both novelists. With the predominance of the New Historicism, critics have read both Scott and Austen in the light of cultural institutions. An especially popular institution has been the state-backed credit economy propagated by the New Whigs, which saw increasing influence in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth- century (and one that Burke rails against in the *Reflections*).[6] Following

historians such as Pocock—who argue that the rise of bourgeois modernity can be traced to a blend of civic virtue and market commerce—these critics have shown how finance and political economy provided novelists with a new, comparatively progressive, vocabulary for ethics and social binding.[7] Thus, these last two decades have also produced a variety of readings that seem to place both novelists on a broad spectrum of modern political economy, from Smithian global capitalism to proto-communist revolution. There is a Scott whose idea of the "gentile" feudal societies can be esteemed by Marxist theorists and an Austen whose heralding of "tact and propriety" and the imaginary sympathies required of those participating in a finance economy would be heralded by classical liberals. In other words, Scott and Austen's allegiances to nineteenth-century progressivism are displayed through a multitude of commercial contexts like the credit economy, an institution based on a classically Whiggish confidence in the future, where people who never meet are bound together through mutual exchange and the hope for a good, stable future.[8]

Instead of totally supporting these new progressive readings, however, I want to argue that Scott and Austen oftentimes show the larger problems associated with fantastical investments in progressive, public life, what Lauren Berlant has brilliantly called a "cruel optimism…when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing."[9] Berlant's diagnosis resonates particularly well with Scott and Austen's novels. Not only are these texts informed by early-nineteenth century ideas of political utopianism—like the promises of revolutionary modernity, or the organization of a fiat currency based on fantasies of limitless prosperity—but each novel tends to critique these "optimistic" formations. Another way of putting this is that Scott and Austen have always

seemed tantalizingly unsettled in their ideological commitments to political history, writing characters whose buoyant optimism about its progress is oftentimes mixed with a sober evaluation of its outcomes.

Relying on honor once again, this chapter~~essay~~ problematizes both of the established models of reading the ethics and social values of Scott and Austen—the old Burkean model based upon the manners and virtue inherited from the past, and the newer utopian model that dotes upon the future that will confirm our collective hopes. Using Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817) and Austen's *Emma* (1815), I show how the honor ethic—once associated entirely with ancient chivalry and manners—mediates between these two competing political outlooks post-Waterloo.[10] As another version of the Romantic honor ethic that I have been tracing, honor in this chapter comes to stand for one's private awareness of public responsibility that can be based on the demands of the present—not upon a sentimental past or a utopian future.

While my previous chapters critique the problems encountered in the Romantic-era when moral life is dominated by archaic, Burkean structures of honor—an ethics based on a bygone era—this chapter uses the credit economy to critique one of those ubiquitous ways that honor and social trust have been connected to the future. Indeed, credit is by its very nature predicated on fantasies of unlimited gain in the future (and a good example of Berlant's "cruel optimism," one of which we have become well aware after the global financial downturn).[11] As was mentioned above, credit has been a focus of Romanticists for some time. While Christensen's *Lord Byron's Strength* used individual credit to signal the move from Byron's aristocratic honor to his prestige in a literary marketplace, more recent books from critics such as Robert Mitchell have read

the credit economy as a phenomenon against which Romantic-era writers reacted by intensifying their sympathy with one another in the face of an unknowable future.[12] But if Scott and Austen also react against credit—as Mitchell posits about many Romantic writers in his *Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era* (2007)—I argue that they do so on an ethical as well as affective level. Set against a backdrop of eighteenth-century political economy that put public credit at the heart of bourgeois modernity, *Rob Roy* and *Emma* show how the phenomenon can be a naïve and fantastical ethical practice that fails to account for trustworthy behavior between persons.[13] Even though a tradition of Whig political economy lies behind Scott's honorable man of credit in *Rob Roy*—and behind Emma's own repeated accreditations of others—the novels are ultimately skeptical about the interpersonal connections created by the credit system. They illuminate how relationships based upon fantastical speculation break down when faced with contingencies, history, and direct shocks of reality.[14]

Of course, these local problems with the ethics of credit speak to larger concerns in the Regency about the preservation of trust in the British state and the continuation of its values into the future. Although those values had been facing challenges for over twenty years through a radical politics associated with Jacobin "outsiders," the critique of a government-backed credit system had been a decidedly more focused affair in the years of the Napoleonic conflict. While conservatives such as Burke railed in 1793 about the social precariousness created by a credit system without stable value, by 1815, radicals such as William Cobbett were worrying about the looming collapse of the state if writs of paper credit could not be paid.[15] Instead of aligning themselves with either the conservative or radical position, however, *Rob Roy* and *Emma* seem to dramatize the

anxieties of a nation whose sociopolitical trajectory pointed in two different directions at the same time—backwards to the old, chivalric heritage of the landed gentry whose values were stabilized by property, and forwards by way of a faith in the unmitigated "good" of ever-expanding financial gain. The anxiety about credit thus represents a larger anxiety about the temporal stance that British politics would take following Waterloo—an event that simultaneously evinced the superiority of England's conservative, cultural legacy over the impoverished theories of the Jacobins and kept in place modern, contemporary structures like a robust paper currency and an income tax, both of which were necessitated by the Napoleonic wars.

I start with Scott's *Rob Roy*, which literally connects commercial credit to ancient chivalric honor. While the novel's protagonist Francis Osbaldistone narrates the events of the gallant 1715 Jacobite rebellion, he does so from a perspective fifty years in the future, securely positioned in a successful London speculation firm during the height of Scottish political economy.[16] Notwithstanding various contingencies connected with the uprising, Osbaldistone eventually recovers his family's honor by trusting those who are involved in the world of credit. Given this narrative and Scott's own support of the speculative financial system in the nineteenth-century, we could read *Rob Roy* as establishing a strong belief in credit and its utopian outlook. But instead of evincing the protagonist's moral constancy, credit is shown to be riddled with Osbaldistone's sentimentality and naïve fantasies.[17] In doing so, the novel dislocates ethical virtue from commerce. Alternatively, the mythic highlander Rob Roy Macgregor represents a different system of trust and social commitment, outlawed and ostracized as he has been from the "legitimate" practices of the emerging financial system in eighteenth-century Britain.

Instead of participating in the contemporary world of exclusively private gains, Rob Roy dedicates himself ~~In my first section, then, I claim that~~ to public causes that are outside of his own self-interest and practices a version of honor rooted in his tribal past. In the end, however, Rob Roy's honor code seems powerless in the face of a modernity obsessed with financial gain and the utopian promises made by a commercial system. For Scott, neither Rob Roy's highland honor nor Osbaldistone's commercial credit can fully recapture the type of sociopolitical trust that England yearned for at that time.

Austen is also skeptical of credit's ability to represent trust and social virtue in modernity. But in the next section I argue that *Emma* offers a viable solution to the problem of sociopolitical trust during this moment of British history, a problem that in Scott seemed to be stuck between old honor codes and the new credit system. Unlike *Rob Roy*, *Emma* outlines an honor code that works for modernity; a private commitment to public life that can function in the present day. As a self-proclaimed matchmaker, Emma's own identity is based on trust, and, like the credit system, she brings diverse types of people together her own style of whimsical speculation, betting on their prospective happiness. This speculation is, of course, Emma's own fantasy of future gain—and not a staid measurement of risk and reward. But where Emma begins the novel believing in the ability of credit to signify moral conduct of others in the future, eventually she learns to distrust its application to others. Emma abandons the "fantasy" of speculation but uses her imagination to generate a new form of social trust that doesn't have to be based on future projections or the desire for private esteem. Mediating between the moral imagination and the demands of reality, the novel demonstrates Austen's reconciliation of competing visions of sociopolitical modernity—between the

conservative calls for stabilized values and the progressive bids for imagined ones. When based on this new form of honor and responsibility, Emma's own social politics can actually be seen as a kind of Burkeanism-without-Burke. Emma abandons credit (as Burke would have wanted), but also relies on the demands of the present instead of the traditions of the past; if she continues to hold a Burkean affection for local community, such a desire does not mean her subjugation to a patriarchy, whether by inheritance or marriage.

A coda turns to the 1990s, our own recent decade of easy credit and hyperactive commercialism. Addressing the ethics of credit today, I look at two Hollywood adaptations of Scott and Austen's novels that were released within four months of each other, Amy Heckerling's *Clueless* (1995) and Michael Caton-Jones's *Rob Roy* (1995). Even though they were produced in the neoliberal era—a time that proves the ascendency of commercial speculation begun well before Scott and Austen's time—these two films nicely capture both writers' doubts about the moral validity of credit and its capacity to stand for honorable behavior.

II.

In *Rob Roy*, the pursuit of credit is a personal adventure. In a plot based on an ancient archetype—the quest to recover familial honor—Scott has his protagonist Francis Osbaldistone trek across northern England, Glasgow, and the Scottish highlands to recover his father's writs of mercantile credit—government securities which have been intercepted by Jacobite rebels just before the 1715 uprising. Osbaldistone stands to inherit one of the first speculating houses on London's "Stock Alley." There is, of course, a

major personal problem to overcome: just off a "Frenchified" liberal education that he acquired in Bordeaux, Osbaldistone is more committed to the verses of Ariosto than he is to business, arithmetic, or any other pursuit allied with "common-sense." (In fact, the name "Frank" has this very tension built into it, synonymous as it is with a French culture of affectation *and* with direct, plain-speaking).[18] When his father reviews Frank's finance homework early in the novel, he finds that it has devolved into Spenserian imitations. "Why, Frank," says the elder Osbaldistone, "'you do not even understand the beggarly trade you have chosen.'"[19] With commerce and romance set at odds the protagonist realizes that "'[he] must soon lose the charms of literary society for the drudgery of commerce, and the coarse every-day avocations of the world.'"[20]

However, this antithesis between commerce and moral sentiment soon synthesizes in *Rob Roy* and plays a major role in the novel's ideological development. Specifically, Osbaldistone's Romantic imagination starts to convert the uncontrollable vicissitudes of modern exchange into a kind of moral providence. *Rob Roy* is not then just a novel about a young man who accepts the commercialized future by surrendering to its inevitability; not simply a text about someone who grows up, learns the lessons of his mercantilist father, and finally buys into a modernity wholly organized by finance.[21] It is also a text about a young man who learns to believe in the morality of that finance economy and to trust that its outcomes will be favorable in the future—a guidebook of sorts showing how one comes to have faith in credit.

How does Francis Osbaldistone connect virtue and commerce together? In some ways, he is already enthralled with the merchant's lifestyle. At the outset of the novel Osbaldistone imagines commerce to be a thrilling quest, and conceives of fluctuating

mercantile speculation as "something captivating to the adventurer, even independent of the hope of gain."[22] This "spirit of enterprise" has a visceral appeal to the young man steeped in chivalric romance, and offers him the comparable narrative extremes of choice and destiny, "whether prudence shall overcome fortune, or fortune baffle the schemes of prudence."[23] But Osbaldistone also shows himself to be a realist about trade early on. He knows that commerce can be haphazard and arbitrary, a contingent enterprise as well as a spiritual one. In the same breathe, Osbaldistone calls the finance economy a "fickle sea" (while Scott hints at the South Sea Bubble of 1720, which occurred just five years after the history represented by *Rob Roy*), and says that it features a "mixture of necessary attention and inevitable hazard …[that] has all the fascination of gambling without its moral guilt."[24] The merchant's life may be captivating—with its constant testing of *fortuna* and discretion—but it lacks the systemic order and regulation of morality, the ethics provided to Osbaldistone by those same romances that gave him his sense of adventure.

If the tropes of literary romance and adventure are one of the ways Osbaldistone attaches meaning to commerce, then the protagonist can also be seen to unwittingly replicate his father's sedulousness and religious austerity as his journey commences (although he rejects his father's opinions on the profession of poetry and the "lighter exertions of literature").[25] Portrayed as a "dour [protestant]," Osbaldistone also describes his father "…as a religious man, and of the dissenting persuasion, he considered all such pursuits as equally trivial and profane...."[26] Frank may disavow his moral bond to his father, but, in the great tradition of the *bildungsroman*, he still has a psychic connection to him, what Judith Wilt has called "a destiny of choice" in her fine Scott study *Secret*

Leaves (1985).[27] Whether we read this destiny of choice as the inadvertent fulfillment of Burkean inheritance or the psychoanalytical compulsion to replicate the father, what Osbaldistone seems to desire in the beginning of the novel is the ethos behind the speculative profession, the spirit behind capitalism. It is not that he is against the purposelessness of commerce, but that he has not yet found a way to feel such purpose deeply.[28]

But when his father's writs of commercial credit are pilfered a sense of commerce's higher calling emerges in Osbaldistone. What he once thought of as merely random contingencies in finance become an opportunity for Osbaldistone to recreate the chivalric quest to recover an honorable—or creditable—reputation. In recognizing this romantic opportunity, Osbaldistone now imbues credit with a sense of meaning beyond its empirical representations:

> "I grieve not for the loss of the money, but for the effect which I know it will produce on the spirits and health of my father, to whom mercantile credit is as honour; and who, if declared insolvent, would sink into the grave, oppressed by a sense of grief, remorse, and despair, like that of a soldier convicted of cowardice or a man of honour who had lost his rank and character in society."[29]

Osbaldistone's use of similes and creative comparisons mark the sentimentalizing of fiscal credit, a transubstantiation of mere paper commitments into romantic signs of chivalry and virtue. Here, Osbaldistone projects his own imaginative sentimentality upon his father ("grief, remorse, despair") to legitimate the quest for honor in his own way. Although this sentimental display indicates Osbaldistone's growing trust in his own private inheritance, it also makes credit the covering sign for sincerity and trustworthiness for larger social relations within the novel. In *Rob Roy*, the private man of

commerce and credit can also become the protective soldier and the authentic, public man of honor.[30] While Osbaldistone acknowledges early on that commerce "'connects nation with nation'" and structures the "'general commonwealth of the civilised world,'" here he imagines that credit signifies intersubjectivity and community, an emblem for the ethics promised by the ideology of political economy that his father has been pushing on him.[31] In this act, Osbaldistone rejects his original ideas about the randomness of finance—which are also the contingencies of the history into which he's written—and starts to make fiscal credit a sign for trust and reputation. Credit becomes a faultless, enduring representation of ethics in part because Osbaldistone neglects to mention the empirical causes that determine credit in the first place—the drudgery of calculation and common sense that had been so important to his father. Instead, Osbaldistone concentrates on the effects credit can have on people in the future, its ability to determine the character and self-worth of "[men] of honour."[32] If it was once a sign for moral worth determined randomly by the "fickle sea" of commerce and empiricism, credit is now the perfect, transcendent symbol of virtue upon which the romantic quest can be based.[33]

In addition to his character development, Scott's narrative choices play a major role in framing credit positively—even sentimentally. Because Osbaldistone narrates his story fifty years after it occurs—around 1765, in the halcyon days of Scottish political economy—*Rob Roy* can be read as Scott's well-timed palliative to fears in 1817 about the randomness and promiscuity of the credit economy. The novel makes an elegant maneuver by responding to a British public that was increasingly skeptical about the connection of credit to value—and increasingly suspicious of the dramatic changes in the economy due to wartime tribulations: it represents the contemporary phenomenon of

credit as an old, trustworthy sign for cultural stability and ancient honor. The novel might thus be read as championing an ethics promised by global commerce from the eighteenth-century onward, while walking the fine line between the chivalric nationalism advocated by the Tories and the global expansion promoted by Whig political economy.[34] In other words, Scott attempts to secure British readers' trust in the cultural stability of finance by creating a teleology where credit must pay off. In his hands, the Whig institution of public credit suddenly becomes a stable, conservative concept.

And yet, because Scott provides enough insight into the impassioned nature of his protagonist—his moralizing, his rash decision-making, and, crucially, his sentimental imagination—he also hints that the connection of credit with honor might be both impulsive and blindly ideological. Associating the journey with passionate attachment, Osbaldistone accepts his quest for credit (almost literally) at the hands of his love-interest Diana Vernon, who has already set his "smouldering heart-burning:"[35]

> "Take this packet; do not open it until other and ordinary means have failed. If you succeed by your own exertions, I trust to your honour for destroying it without opening or suffering it to be opened;—but if not, you may break the seal within ten days of the fated day, and you will find directions which may possibly be of service to you. Adieu, Frank; we never meet more—but sometimes think of your friend Die Vernon."
>
> She extended her hand, but I clasped her to my bosom. She sighed as she extricated herself from the embrace which she permitted—escaped to the door which led to her own apartment—and I saw her no more.[36]

Does Diana Vernon sigh because she feels the same passion as Osbaldistone—because she too is involved in her own sentimental quest? Or does she sigh because she is off-put and slightly embarrassed by Osbaldistone's ardor, quickly "extricat[ing] herself from the

embrace which she permitted?"[37] Both reactions are possible, but the latter seems more likely given the stoicism and masculine traits that Vernon displays in the novel. Like Vernon, readers sense the uncomfortable simulacra of sentimental romance established by Scott (and his narrator proxy Osbaldistone). All the vows made in the name of credit are hackneyed conventions; from the "trust [placed] in [Osbaldistone's] honour" concerning the pivotal object of the story, to the final goodbye that is not really final, to the extended hand clasped to the heart—a hand presumably containing the financial documents that will resolve the distress of the Osbaldistone countinghouse, literally drawing the documents towards the heart of the protagonist. Given all of these conventions, Osbaldistone's conception of credit may not simply be an important category of social binding, but the primary symbol of a youthful imagination that yearns for romantic escapades and chivalric conviction.

The larger point here is that Scott dramatizes the protagonist's faith in credit in such a deliberately heavy-handed way that readers may have remained skeptical about credit as a faultless sign for virtue and public trust. Here, Scott's protagonist performs what Robert Mitchell has called a Romantic reaction to the contingencies of finance, turning unforeseen events into occasions for public sympathy and the creation of new, affective identifications between people.[38] But Scott troubles this thesis with his portrayal of a mawkish, impulsive youth as the savior of the finance economy. In other words, if Mitchell illuminates the way that eighteenth- and nineteenth- century writers "romanticize the topic of state finance" in order to establish social systems of unity and order, then Scott allows us to see just how constructed and naïve such a romantic reaction can be.[39]

In *Rob Roy*, Scott's most ardent supporter of credit and its ethics is not Osbaldistone, but Bailie Nicole Jarvie. Unlike Osbaldistone, Jarvie is -not beholden to romantic flights of fancy (although he is garrulous)~~is not a romantic imaginist~~, -nor does he make sentimental claims about the chivalry of commerce. Jarvie is instead an established professional in Glasgow, someone who stands for the sober discourses of law and finance that supposedly hold together modern society. He also represents the urbanity of the Scottish lowlands and—given his arithmetical prowess and amazing factual memory—exemplifies the emerging discourse of Scottish common sense.[40] Therefore, the established expectation is that Jarvie will be sensible and empirical about finance in the ways that young Osbaldistone is not. And yet, Jarvie also has a set of assumptions about credit that amounts to speculative faith in its perfect, virtuous outcomes.

At one point in the novel, Frank Osbaldistone returns to Jarvie's apartment after a duel to seek his counsel. Here, Jarvie differentiates ancient honor from modern credit explicitly:

> "Upon all these matters I am now to ask your advice, Mr. Jarvie, which, I have no doubt, will point out the best way to act for my father's advantage and my own honour."
>
> "Ye're right, young man—ye're right," said the Bailie. "Aye take the counsel of those who are aulder and wiser than yourself, and binna like the godless Rehoboam, who took the advice o' a wheen beardless callants, neglecting the auld counsellors who had sate at the feet o' his father Solomon, and, as it was weel put by Mr. Meiklejohn, in his lecture on the chapter, were doubtless partakers of his sapience. But I maun hear naething about honour—we ken naething here but about credit. Honour is a homicide and a bloodspiller, that gangs about making frays in the street; but Credit is a decent honest man, that sits at hame and makes the pat play."

> "Assuredly, Mr. Jarvie," said our friend Owen, "credit is the sum total; and if we can but save that, at whatever discount"—
>
> "Ye are right, Mr. Owen—ye are right; ye speak weel and wisely; and I trust bowls will row right, though they are a wee ajee e'enow…"[41]

For Jarvie, credit is the new, civilized version of honor, a kind of domestic constancy that "sits at hame and makes the pat play."[42] It speaks to the steady work ethic of decent, honest men, and it is the bourgeois answer to aristocratic excess and irrational bloodshed—a marker of virtue that can be arrived at independently and that is available to everyone.

But if Jarvie allows credit to have a humble, commonsensical place in modern life—a marker and maker of honest breadwinners—the way that Jarvie discusses credit is exclusive, theistic, and supernatural. His advice to Osbaldistone is accompanied by a reference to the Old Testament story of Rehoboam, who disregarded the experience of old councilors in favor of advice from the young and the foolhardy. Here, Jarvie's anecdote about Rehoboam provokes a larger epistemological question about credit itself: is credit an ethical sign of experience or a sign of faith and speculation? After this digression, Jarvie is even more explicit in his trust of the perfect virtue of credit. When the financier Owen interjects with empirical facts and figures, Jarvie interrupts him, allaying his anxiety about the "sum total" that would constitute good credit. Instead of coming up with a similarly arithmetical response for Owen, Jarvie says that he "trust[s] bowls will row right, though they are a wee ajee e'enow."[43] Much like Osbaldistone, Jarvie replaces the contingencies of commerce with a certain credulousness about its favorable outcomes. If domestic credit is to replace bloody honor in modernity, it will still require the faith that religion demands.

Credit becomes a sign for trustworthiness that must be supplemented by faith and sentiment. In many instances throughout the novel, Scott legitimizes Jarvie's stance on credit by making him the forerunner to two major modern intellectual movements with roots in Scotland: the "common sense" tradition and the protestant work ethic (whose tenets are derived largely from Calvinist dogma). Surrounded by dour Calvinist creditors at their central church in Glasgow, and overseeing the city's debtor prison "tollbooth" with joviality, Jarvie embodies an energetic spirit of capitalism that happens to function in early eighteenth-century lowland Scotland, complementing an amoral commercial empiricism with spiritual rectitude about credit and its virtuousness—a figure right out of Weber.[44] Even more historically-sound is Scott's anticipation of mid-eighteenth-century Scottish rationalism, which is both prophesied by Jarvie in 1714, and fully realized at the time of Osbaldistone's narrative in 1765. Indeed, Jarvie's financial acumen, his free-market ideology, and his sympathetic identification with others highlight the Smithian philosophy that inflects much of *Rob Roy*.[45]

However, much like he does with Osbaldistone, Scott undermines Jarvie's connection of commerce to virtue. In fact, the Bailie's own experiences with commerce repeatedly contradict his faith in credit.[46] For example, the Bailie abandons all fealty to credit when it comes to his old kinsman, Rob Roy—the title character who undermines the rather consistent ideology of commerce presented in the novel. As a smuggler and blackmailer, Rob Roy represents the underground markets that conflict with the official economy in which Jarvie operates. In addition to these illicit practices, Rob Roy supports the pilfering of Osbaldistone's writs of credit that would have pacified the Jacobite revolution of 1715. A wily smuggler and thief, the highlander is exactly the type of real

contingency that believers in the credit economy wanted to disregard through their faith in the stable outcomes and future prosperity of commerce. But even when Jarvie disparages Rob Roy's illegal enterprises—and his clan's old, agricultural vocation—he can't help but express admiration for the integrity that the highlander maintains outside the world of credit.[47] When Rob Roy defaults on his debts owed to Jarvie—who is a creditor in his own right—the Bailie affirms the honorable value that Rob Roy represents outside the world of finance. At one point, Jarvie makes collateral out of Rob Roy's history and exploits, stories "[he] like[s] better to hear…than a word o' profit."[48] And shortly after, Jarvie commends Rob Roy's consistency and trustworthiness by referring to an oath given to his kinsmen: as Jarvie puts it, "I canna deny but he keepit his word—a' men allow Rob keeps his word."[49] Thus, while Rob Roy is exactly the type of aberration that advocates of the credit economy would like to be able to suppress as unethical and inconsistent, Jarvie sees him as a model of moral constancy. Unlike the writ of credit, Rob Roy's "keeping his word" is a spoken oath of honor, a kind of performative that is not built upon an unwavering faith in gain. The opposite of credit—which is a future guarantee of reciprocation—Rob Roy's oath is based on the past, bound up with obligations towards a Highland society that is fading rapidly. (The failure of 1715 Uprising is one of the many ways in which these obligations can be said to lapse into antiquity). To Jarvie, Rob Roy represents honor that can be confirmed by undeniable history, exploits, and kinship. Old honor is also the ethos that binds together Rob Roy and Jarvie, who are split between the highlands and the lowlands, between the agrarian and the credit economy, between ties to antiquity and faith in modernity. In the Burkean sense, then, honor is the ethic that continues to instill in both men a larger sense of the

public and a responsibility to community that exists outside of one's immediate social circle.

Commercial credit, of course, makes a similar claim— but instead of relying on a local space to solidify social relations, credit spreads its influence globally (which is perhaps why Burke would indict credit in the *Reflections* as "add[ing] infinitely to the dissociation, distraction and confusion of these confederate republics, both with relation to each other, and to the several parts within themselves").[50] In this sense, credit does not just present temporal problems to the sociopolitical bonds between British citizens, based as it is on speculation and utopian optimism, but it presents spatial ones as well, dissociating exchanges of virtue between persons. If the sheer geographical scope of trade and capital in *Rob Roy* presages Great Britain's global imperialism later in the nineteenth-century, then the novel also seems to disrupt the universal values associated with a single, totalizing financial apparatus that necessitated it.[51] While Burke never decries the *idea* of such universal social values associated with political economy, he and Scott seem to recognize the functional difficulties in implementing them across an empire. Indeed, the very reason Rob Roy engages in blackmail is to provide support for highland families who have been dispossessed by British legal and economic expansion. Surprisingly, Jarvie agrees with this practice, stating that blackmail "'[is] clean again our statute law, that must be owned…but if the law canna protect my barn and byre, what for suld I no engage wi' a Hieland gentleman that can?'"[52] Here, even a champion of the emerging system of global finance understands at a basic level the ethical imperatives towards aboriginal communities and old, family connections. [53]

Scott distinguishes between agrarianism and finance capital in a grander historical way by showing the shadowy credit system at work behind the 1715 Jacobite uprising. Scottish Lords, the novel dramatizes, were bribed out of fomenting Jacobite agitation by accepting writs of credit from England on a continual basis.[54] But Rob Roy seems immune to this kind of economic arrangement, content as he is in an agrarian highland village.[55] Even though Rob Roy is involved in the 1715 uprising which seems to be a result of the "mercantile transactions of London citizens" and speculators like the elder Osbaldistone, Rob Roy offers an alternative ethics of commitment to the rebellion, honoring the public cause of Jacobitism while skirting the private pay-off that had been used to pacify the Scottish lords in the past.[56] Though it never offers Rob Roy any opportunity for direct, personal gain, Jacobitism puts Rob Roy at the center of the sociopolitical matrix of the book and leads him to interact with Englishman, lowlanders, and highlanders alike.

As the narrative progresses, Rob Roy's ethos seems to inspire fellow Highlanders to renounce the longtime appeasement of rebellion through credit: "'D—n my creditors,'" the highland chieftain Galbraith says to Jarvie at one point, "'and you if ye be ane o' them! I say there will be a new warld sune—And we shall hae nae Cawmils cocking their bonnet sae hie, and hounding their dogs where they daurna come themsells, nor protecting thieves, nor murderers, and oppressors, to harry and spoil better men and mair loyal clans than themsells.'"[57] In addition to his highland kinsmen, Rob Roy also inspires loyalty in proto-capitalists like Jarvie. When Jarvie reflects on his connection to Rob Roy all of his dedication to commerce and credit becomes subservient to familial allegiances. "'My mother was a MacGregor—I carena wha kens it,'" Jarvie proclaims, "'[a]nd Rob

had soon a gallant band; and as it grieved him (he said) to see sic hership and waste and depredation to the south o' the Hieland line…Rob engaged to keep them scaithless.'"[58] Not only does Rob Roy's redistribution of wealth, his stealing of private property, and his participation in blackmail run counter to the ethics of the credit economy, but his commitment to his clan and to old Jacobitism reestablishes a more public ethos of honor—an honor code that binds people together without the intercession of private, commercial self-interest.[59]

By juxtaposing two representative figures in the eighteenth-century—the modern man of commerce in Osbaldistone and the archaic man of honor in Rob Roy—Scott demonstrates how historical deeds might back up one's commitments more forcefully than credit, a system whose ethics are shown to be predicated on naïve sentimentality, gullible rationalism, and utopian presumption about limitless material advancement. Through his title character, Scott also disrupts the private ends for which the credit economy fundamentally stands. Rob Roy's commitment to public goals and to clan kinship distinguishes his version of honor from that of credit, which, in the end, focuses on individual benefit alone. Thus, even though the novel's protagonist assures us that global commerce "'connects nation with nation…and contributes to the wealth of all,'" another method of intersubjectivity and social binding is latent in the novel.[60] Although Rob Roy's method of social binding resembles another Burkean version of public honor in its unrelenting loyalty to monarchy and loyalty to smaller social circles, Rob Roy actually seems much more worldly and cosmopolitan than Burke's landed and established nobility, moving effortlessly through metropolis, town, and country on his quest. In other words, Rob Roy is less the landed, traditionalist Burkean gentleman, than

the ethical shadow of ultimately amoral global free trade, relentlessly tracking its expansion.

A practical question about ethics remains, however: would *Rob Roy* offer readers a new moral message in the wake of Waterloo? Could Rob Roy's honor code still function in that new modernity? Or would it remain part of the highland tradition, a culture that was itself exoticized in the Romantic era? Due to many of the temporal complexities in the *Waverley Novels*, Scott offers no easy solutions to these questions.[61] Almost all modern critics have argued that Scott is fundamentally committed to history regardless of its ethical exigency to contemporary life—what Nietzsche called a mode of "antiquarian history."[62] Kathryn Sutherland argues that Scott's fiction is based upon a philosophy of historical determinism—intellectual models inherited from mid-eighteenth-century Scottish philosophers and anthropologists.[63] Therefore, even if Scott glorifies Rob Roy for his integrity, the novel—along with several of Scott's others—makes a strong case for the futility of such integrity in the face of advancing modernity. In the end, the novel seems to side with the ascending finance economy and its particular ethos. Indeed, the fact that finance happen to underwrite every part of the narrative—including the seminal historical event of the 1715 uprising—can only confirm what Sutherland has also called the inevitability of the "universal norm" of global commerce that Scott brings to his novels.[64] As Georg Lukács noted over 75 years ago, "[h]istorical necessity in [Scott's] novels is of the most severe, implacable kind."[65]

Because of this historical necessity—Scott's obligation to the diverse narratives of the past—there can be no single ethical prescription in the novel: history both disrupts and supports the problematic honor code produced by credit. History disrupts the ethos of

credit because it proves how honor and trust can only truly be accounted for by confirmed exploits and deeds—by a historical record of fact—instead of by supposition and speculation. But history—especially in the form of a historical novel told retrospectively by the main character—supports the ethos of the credit economy by showing how unavoidable such a system will be to modernity itself. In short, it is the teleology of the historical novel that ultimately supports a messianic belief in credit, a narrative strategy that expresses Scott's surprising Whiggishness (or the assurance of the inevitable progress of modern society).

The inability of Rob Roy's ancient honor code to affect modernity highlights a more general ethical problem produced by Scott's historicism: it is not that people will *forget* the ethical lessons of history—like highland honor—but that such lessons will be uncomfortably relegated to a past that no longer applies to an age fixated on future outcomes and utopian possibilities. Indeed, this is Burke's problem ("The age of chivalry is gone!") as much as it is Fredric Jameson's ("...this mesmerizing new aesthetic mode itself emerged as an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way").[66] Both Burke and Jameson impeach the looming age of "oeconomists, and calculators," those persons who seem to replace the lived ~~, ethical~~ encounter with history with a flattened, sentimentalized representation of it.[67] *Rob Roy* dramatizes this very predicament, when finance capital runs up against a historically authentic highlander and his antiquated, but functional honor ethic.[68] Even more striking is the anxious compromise that Scott has to broker between new credit and old honor—an anxiety that speaks to the unsure political outlook at the time. Could citizens be made to trust one another in 1817 through a utopian system

of public credit, or would they come together through a commitment to historical propriety? Civic modernity for Scott is decidedly not a comfortable balance of old virtue and new commerce.

Emma, however, demonstrates a move away from the credit system and towards a version of honor that actually functions in modernity—and may still function today. Like Scott, Austen is skeptical about credit. In her novel she shows how imaginative speculations lead to faulty assumptions about future relationships built on honor and trust. But if *Rob Roy* sets the deeds of history (however futile they may seem) alongside a speculative idea of the future, Austen argues for the way in which imagination allows characters access to their own flawed suppositions in the present. Although the whole ethical apparatus of Highbury is based upon the speculation of its residents, in my next section I argue that new visions of honor and trust eventually allow a style of social cohesion that is more stable than any brought about by global finance.

III.

Far from being Austen's least historical novel, *Emma* allegorizes the pervasive skepticism that characterized the sociopolitical climate in England after Waterloo. Time and again, the characters in the novel perform the guesswork of many of Austen's contemporaries in 1815, British citizens who faced a temporal disjunction created when an erratic credit economy struggled to guarantee a prosperous future and a (literally) disturbed monarchy tried to conserve the past. The skepticism of the characters within *Emma* is, however, juxtaposed with *Emma*'s tranquil setting. Set in the village of Highbury, Austen stages a drama replete with interpersonal speculation inside an idyllic

locale, conveying the uncertainty of a contemporary British populace who, despite the tumults of modernity, were still striving to believe in the mythologized space of solid, old England. Hence, in his *The Historical Austen* (2003), William Galperin identifies the world of *Emma* as a dystopia, but one that is bounded-in by a commitment to its own perfect normativity, to regulating an "increasingly partial idea of Englishness…on behalf of specific class and ideological interests."[69]

Emma is thus an ideal novel in which to explore the values of modernity because it so gracefully demonstrates how one can both accept and doubt the functions of contemporary institutions (like the fading monarchy and the rising credit system). Like *Rob Roy*, *Emma* is also concerned with the dichotomy between belief and skepticism produced by the credit system. But where Scott makes credit (and the ethics associated with it) inevitable by linking it to the historical certainty of the finance economy, Austen notes the very capriciousness of credit as a concept of value, and thus resists such an inevitability. In other words, if Scott represents credit as a system of honor and virtue upon which we will all rely, Austen shows that the idea of credit will always be vexed due to its inherent contradictions. The utopian guarantees of the credit economy made possible by the teleological narrative of *Rob Roy* are simply unavailable in the world of *Emma*: when you are a resident of Highbury, accrediting others and speculating about them almost always means imagining a moral judgment that will prove faulty eventually.[70]

Austen's text does not just deepen Scott's critique of credit as a virtue, however. Rather, she offers an ethos of honor and trust that Scott relegates to the past (through Rob Roy's ancient oaths of honor). Instead of consigning a reliable code of honor to a

departed era or to one yet to come, *Emma* suggests a form of public commitment available to the present; where trust in others does not have to be based on judgments of prior esteem or hopes for your own future reward. Although Emma herself relies on the figure of credit throughout the novel, at its conclusion Emma begins build an idea of social trust around a private satisfaction with public commitments—an inward sense of public constancy to the present that abandons the expectation of recompense. Ultimately, this new sense of trust intervenes in familiar critical arguments that Emma is rudely chastened by the shocks of reality or ideological interpellation—usually in the form of Knightley's reprimand after the Box Hill episode—leading her to "better" ethical practices based on patriarchy or conservative norms. Instead of being subservient to Knightley, Emma can be seen to incorporate Knightley's traditional honor practices into her own ethics, even while shifting away from a set of values rooted in speculation and utopianism.

~~the ethics of credit being just one version of a "horizon of possibility" to which his argument might apply. In my reading, then, skepticism is vitally important to *Emma* in that it makes way for new models of honor and trust that are not just based on future possibilities or utopianism, but upon lived practices. While Galperin argues that *Emma* forecloses utopian possibility by the end of the novel, the novel also shows how such a foreclosure might be a necessary intercession into the British political milieu that, in 1815, found utopianism to be an increasingly unreliable proposition.~~ In a recent article, Robert Miles discusses the novel's engagement with agricultural speculation and the finance economy—proxies for what he calls Austen's textual interests in "fictitious system[s] of value."[71] As suggestive as this analysis is, Miles's interest in speculation and

credit raises more ethical questions about Austen's text: how, for example, might Austen's "fictitious system[s] of value" divest people of more valid connections with one another in her work? Is the concept of "validity" even possible in *Emma*? (Miles would probably say it isn't). If not, how can its characters signify honor and trustworthiness, the possibility of deep traits that simply cannot be approximated through financial transaction or contractual compulsion? These questions ~~I want to~~ allow readers to see the novel outside of the perimeters of strict historicist allegory (which might include the emergence of the credit economy, the ongoing debate about the gold standard, or the fictitious nature of monetary value in the early-nineteenth-century).

Another way to avoid such an allegory is by turning to the ethical connotations of the word "credit" itself. In his article, Miles points out the frequency of key words in *Emma* like "credit, stock, resources, realize, schemes, speculation, improvement, interest, profit, rich—words belonging, semantically, to the same economic or quasi-economic field."[72] Beyond just an economic meaning, most of these keywords possess a moral hue. Scheme, speculation, improvement, interest, profit, and rich are predicated on a sense of individual perfectibility and the idea of future, personal fulfillment, and individualized "good"—bourgeois referents all.[73] But credit is an especially important ethical term to note, because of the way in which credit crystallizes the demands of human social interaction. Although the English term for credit has been synonymous with "trust," "faith," "honour," or the even more general "belief" since its rise in the late-sixteenth- and early- seventeenth-centuries (dates that coincided with financial modernity), it is actually not until the late-eighteenth-century that the word credit is used to denote a transaction between two agents, a definition that signals a linguistic awareness of credit

as a form of mutual, ethical exchange and not simply as a moral quality associated with a single individual. To illustrate this point, the OED lists the phrase "to do credit to" or "to give a person credit for something" as arising in the late 1760s, and marks its first usage in the Junius Letters, anonymous and popular polemics printed in the *Public Advertiser* with which Austen would have been familiar.[74] In addition, the OED lists 1816 as the first date when credit can be given "for sincerity" (this usage occurs in Scottish poet John Wilson's collection *City of the Plague*), and the Google nGram viewer traces a steady climb in the frequency of the phrase "credit for feeling" from the 1780s to its peak around 1840.[75] Thus, not only does the word credit function in a more transactive way in the early-nineteenth-century than ever before, but credit also seems to be increasingly associated with moral paradigms constitutive of the Romantic era: sensibility and the reciprocation of manners.[76]

Taken as a whole, then, these data indicate a growing figural understanding of the term credit. They point to credit's increasing association with paradigms like sensibility and proper conduct (two categories perennially associated with Austen and—extraordinarily—Burkean conservatism). Overall, there seems to be a rise in the intersubjectivity highlighted by the definitions of credit—something that Margot Finn has said aligns with our increasing understanding of modernity as a contractual proposition.[77] If credit had denoted private honor and trustworthiness from the sixteenth-century on, then in the Romantic era—and the Regency especially—credit begins to denote more explicitly exchanges of esteem and worthiness between persons. It might even be said that at this time moral judgment became inseparable from the fiscal phenomenon of credit.

If by the end of Austen's novel the ethics of credit have been reevaluated, at its beginning Emma seems to personify the ties of credit and virtue, a matchmaker who repeatedly gives and seeks credit for "sensible" feelings. Not only is Emma a locus for credit in her society, but her quickness to accredit people of different statuses makes her an embodiment of the figure of public credit—the government-backed debt endorsed by early-eighteenth-century Whigs that allowed for the development of an increasingly mobile bourgeois. In keeping with Austen's ostensible allegiance to Burke, others have noted that Emma could be less a salutary representation than a Tory caricature of the Public Credit Goddess, an archetype usually represented as an equally naïve and frivolous young woman who wantonly distributes esteem to others based on imperfect knowledge of their reputation.[78]

As a matchmaker, Emma plays upon this Whiggish ideology of credit, the institution that binds together people from across the socioeconomic spectrum and attempts to insure their trust in one another. In fact, the protagonist relies upon the very language of accreditation when she contemplates the supposed intimacies of her first intended match between Mr. Elton and Harriet, subjects from two different classes. When trust and familiarity between two people turn out to be the fabrications of Emma's own imagination, the epistemological problems of credit start to become apparent. Hence, in the portrait scene between Emma, Mr. Elton, and Harriet, Emma takes note of an exchange between the two supposed lovers, hypothetically giving credit where it is due:

> The sitting began; and Harriet, smiling and blushing, and afraid of not keeping her attitude and countenance, presented a very sweet mixture of youthful expression to the steady eyes of the artist. But there was no doing any thing, with Mr. Elton fidgeting behind her and watching every touch. She gave him credit for

> stationing himself where he might gaze and gaze again without offence; but was really obliged to put an end to it, and request him to place himself elsewhere.[79]

The entire scene allows Emma to observe and record the familiarities between Mr. Elton and Harriet, providing a factual basis about their supposed courtship. An assessment of two peoples' commitment that can be made with "steady eyes," the scene is also inflected with the language of disinterestedness.[80] When Emma's judgment has been satisfied, credit is the reward that she bestows upon Mr. Elton "for stationing himself where he might gaze and gaze again without offence."[81]

And yet the credit that Emma gives Elton is not the result of a fair assessment but rather fancy acting upon judgment and vision. More specifically, Emma's act of accreditation is destabilized by speculation. The whole conceit of vision, judgment and possibility—the specular, the speculative and the spectral—is well arranged by Austen in this scene, who invokes credit as a value literally surrounded by flawed epistemology and misreading.[82] For instance, Emma gives credit to Mr. Elton only because she believes that he looks out towards Harriet, to "gaze and gaze again" upon her beauty. But Mr. Elton actually stands behind Emma in order to watch her "every touch."[83] Because Mr. Elton is literally out of her sight, Emma has no objective basis on which to accredit his courtship of Harriet. She can only guess at the propriety of his actions—which are, to the reader's eyes, less than honorable. This is where credit appears, standing in for Emma's lack of sight and fair judgment. A quick, easy substitute for honor and trust, credit becomes the way that Emma can bind people together in her own mind without actually authenticating the bonds they may have with one another. Indeed, Emma's misreading of this scene between Mr. Elton and Harriet encapsulates the larger social problems that an ethos of credit presents in the novel: while credit should allow for the development of esteem and

trust across the different communities in Highbury, here it is shown to stand for the speculative imagination and for the naïve desires of the private individual.

While readers can easily see the misreading that happens in the portrait scene, Austen is also canny enough to make Emma herself skeptical about its dynamic of judgment. In doing so, Austen hints that Emma—and, by proxy, the entire social dynamic of Highbury—might need different ways to structure trust in others, ways that are not predicated on private fantasies of esteem, status, or future rewards like credit. Emma's skepticism about credit comes through when Mr. Elton "fidget[s] behind [Emma]…watching every touch."[84] At first, Emma "[gives] him credit" for putting himself in the position of a decorous lover, someone who can look upon his beloved "without offence."[85] But Emma is, almost instantaneously, "really obliged to put an end to it, and request him to place himself elsewhere."[86] Although Emma at first accredits Mr. Elton for his coy flirtation with Harriet, Emma also realizes subliminally that Mr. Elton's affection is for her, prompting her to ask Mr. Elton to "place himself elsewhere."[87] This anxiety about Mr. Elton occurs at the same time that Emma gives him credit for honorable behavior. Hence, the moment that Emma uses credit to solidify a social bond between persons is the same moment that Emma undercuts credit's ability to signify that bond. Emma is starting to become skeptical—albeit subconsciously—about the capacity of credit to represent a connection between the right people. Here, credit does not successfully bind together groups of people from disparate social classes (as the institution of public credit intended), as much as it stoke the desires of the individual with the exclusive power to judge.

As the novel progresses, Emma starts to see the social problems with credit more overtly. One such example takes place towards the end of the novel, when Emma visits Jane Fairfax in an attempt to atone for ill treatment:

> When Emma afterwards heard that Jane Fairfax had been seen wandering about the meadows, at some distance from Highbury, on the afternoon of the very day on which she had, under the plea of being unequal to any exercise, so peremptorily refused to go out with her in the carriage, she could have no doubt…that Jane was resolved to receive no kindness from her. She was sorry, very sorry. Her heart was grieved for a state which seemed but the more pitiable from this sort of irritation of spirits, inconsistency of action, and inequality of powers; and it mortified her that she was given so little credit for proper feeling, or esteemed so little worthy as a friend: but she had the consolation of knowing that her intentions were good, and of being able to say to herself, that could Mr. Knightley have been privy to all her attempts of assisting Jane Fairfax, could he even have seen into her heart, he would not, on this occasion, have found any thing to reprove.[88]

In this passage, Emma recognizes that credit might not be such a reliable sign of trustworthiness and honor amongst Highbury's residents, a suspicion that was merely latent in her accrediting of Mr. Elton and, at times, Frank Churchill (someone whose own imaginative improvisations provide him with faulty credit and esteem on numerous occasions).[89] When Emma becomes conscious of that fact that she too can be implicated in the faultiness of credit—that she can also be "given so little credit for proper feeling, or esteemed so little worthy as a friend"—the artifice of credit becomes manifest to her.[90] No longer a system that solidifies public relationships between those with an "inequality of powers," Emma starts to see credit as a fickle instrument for estimating private worthiness and esteem. Even if Emma relies upon her imagination to fabricate Jane's discrediting—and to make herself feel better about being snubbed—this scene still proves

how much Emma has divested herself from the ideology of credit as a form of social commitment.

Given this critique of credit, can Emma change her ways and influence the ethical ideals of Highbury? Or will she continue to be bound-in by its normative institutions? I want to argue that two scenes at the end of the novel show a practical shift in Emma's ethics, away from speculation—and the utopianism that proves to be problematic for her as a matchmaker and arbiter of social trust—and towards an ethos rooted in a private awareness of public responsibility that can function in her present day. I propose that such an ethical redirection encodes a larger message from Austen about the necessity of open civic engagement that might better serve an England torn between the unreliable structures of the past and the untenable promises of the future. The first scene is the one with Jane Fairfax mentioned above, where Emma finds that social duty might be its own reward. The second scene has to do with Emma's last visit to the Bates's, where she makes a personal commitment to civic life that seems to be both private and public at the same time—that seems discreet in its practice while remaining transparent in its aims.[91]

When Emma tries to visit Jane Fairfax to apologize for her speculations, she uses a small phrase that reflects a larger change in her ethos. Instead of relying upon the future hope of gain to solidify her social bond with Jane Fairfax, Emma announces the "consolation of knowing that her intentions were good."[92] An admittedly minor expression, Emma's "consolation of knowing" conveys her recognition of a connection to the denizens of Highbury that doesn't revert to the future politics that credit must speak to, and that doesn't have to account for the cultural capital that credit tries to certify throughout the novel. The epiphany that Emma experiences here brings her closer to the

ethos of other, less prosperous residents of Highbury, including the well-meaning but bereft Miss Bates, who—with an unlimited capacity to trust others without a personal agenda—is provided the consolation of good intentions again and again.[93]

Like Godwin and Wordsworth, Austen begins to posit a better honor code out of an existing critique, a change in the individual subject that stands as a private awareness of their public responsibility. The introduction of Knightley and Jane Fairfax in this passage also suggests Emma's acknowledgement of public interconnectedness for the sake of the individual themselves. After her "consolation of good intentions," Emma "say[s] to herself, that could Mr. Knightley have been privy to all her attempts of assisting Jane Fairfax, could he even have seen into her heart, he would not, on this occasion, have found anything to reprove."[94] Sometimes read as a moment of guilty self-negation or penance, Emma's thinking about Knightley might actually signal a breakthrough in her realization of intersubjectivity, a foundational part of ethical awareness that Paul Ricoeur has called seeing oneself as another.[95]

This introduction of Knightley into Emma's ethical thinking has presented an ideological problem to critics, which is also at the heart of my own argument here: what if an ethics based on a renewed commitment to the present is actually a reversion to the past, one that Knightley represents in his own fixation on propriety and patriarchal authority? This passage can be read as an ultimately conservative renunciation by Emma of her own social agency, and not as a pivotal moment of self-awareness amongst her society. In keeping with this pessimistic reading, critics might claim that Emma's renunciation of credit here is akin to the recovery of a stable, Burkean principle of ancient honor that Knightley stands for and an abandonment of a financial rhetoric associated

with the wanton femininity of the credit goddess.[96] By repudiating public credit's "fictitious" system of value and social relations, Emma reinforces the critique of values leveled against the New Whigs by the Tory patriarchy.

And yet it is not clear that Emma's shift is due to ideological domination by Knightley—and the restitution of a patriarchal frame of mind—as has so often been alleged. Although a long line of critics have asserted that Emma is reigned-in by Knightley's normativity, the line between Knightley's domination of Emma and Emma's willful incorporation of Knightley into her own ethical outlook is not clear. While Emma's turn to Knightley's fussy moralism in this passage might sound like a compulsive way in which Emma disciplines her own wishes in favor of a dominant patriarchal ideology, we should note that Knightley might not be Emma's superego alone. He is a primary figure of desire for the protagonist, over whom she has a modicum of amorous influence—Knightley does, after all, see into her heart and not her mind. Therefore, while Emma sheds her desires for personal gain and benefit when she abandons credit, she maintains a personal, even passionate, investment in the public belonging and honorable behavior that Knightley has come to represent for her.[97] Instead of being the victim of some sort of patriarchal interpellation by Knightley, when Emma envisions Knightley "see[ing] into her heart," it could be a sign of her growing attachment to public life mediated through affection, what Lauren Berlant might call a "more livable and intimate sociality" that signifies our affective commitment to politics. In other words, Knightley can be thought of less as an internalized monitor who can now foreclose Emma's imagination from the inside out, than as a representative of

communality that Emma idealizes and fixate upon in order to come up with better ways of relating to others in her world. [98]

Berlant posits a "more livable and intimate sociality" as an affective condition. Yet Emma seems to move beyond the mere conditions of affect in the novel, and actually acts upon that sense of "intimate sociality" that Berlant posits.[99] In a second scene towards the end of the novel, Emma goes to visit the Bates's once again in an attempt to apologize to Jane Fairfax. Instead of attempting to regain esteem, credit, or public status, Emma announces that she will visit the Bates's residence "as a duty and a pleasure…It would be a *secret* satisfaction; but the consciousness of a similarity of prospect would certainly add to the interest with which she should attend to any thing Jane might communicate."[100] Although Emma visits Jane satisfied already with the ethical "duty" she is performing, she is now aware of the genuine equitability of their "similarity of prospect."[101] What's important is that Emma keeps such satisfaction to herself, "a *secret* satisfaction."[102] Thus, a new commitment to others seems to become part of Emma's private ethos. She at last seems to avoid speculating on the motives of other by focusing on moral satisfaction.

This "secret satisfaction" is not just another version of self-congratulations we might associate with Emma's character—a change in habit that is not really a change at all. As the scene moves on, a sense of the larger significance of this ethos emerges, especially as it relates to the larger civic life of Highbury, which is nearly defined by its citizens' speculative judgments about one another (also known as *rumor*, a key form of rhetoric in the novel on which scholars have focused).[103] When Emma encounters Mrs. Elton in the Bates's residence, she ironically reminds the protagonist of the importance of

discretion and private trust. Discussing Jane's upcoming governess position while stopping just short of details, Mrs. Elton remarks, "'I mentioned no *names*, you will observe—Oh! no; cautious as a minister of state, I managed it extremely well.'"[104] To herself, "Emma could not doubt. It was a palpable display, repeated on every possible occasion."[105] The exchange is obviously ironic, primarily because Mrs. Elton is speculating and spreading rumors that are couched as non-rumors, gossiping about events while simultaneously calling herself a serious head of state. (Austen's own dig at the hectic developments of the monarchy is not lost here). Emma, of course, picks up on this non-rumor as a "palpable display" intended to advance speculation and gossip "on every possible occasion."[106] But buried within this irony there is a kind of sincerity: although Mrs. Elton is not a conscientious head of state—she constantly disrupts Highbury's social bonds where she hopes to cement them—there is something to be said for the private caution that she knows is crucial to functioning civic relations, something that Emma can now start to recognize. Akin to the civic duty that Emma announces as a "secret satisfaction," it is a sense of internalized social commitment maintained by those who would actually be "minister[s] of state," instead of matchmakers and speculators.[107]

But perhaps more important than its commentary on Emma's role as a kind of minister of Highbury's state, is how this statement about "everything that is decided and open" speaks to a public consensus on facts, reality, and verifiable conditions upon which the citizens of Highbury can base their civic behavior.[108] An acknowledgement of the power of facts and contingencies counters the speculative logic that had governed social relations in Highbury originally, where trust in one another was based upon a speculative system of credit that deferred trust into the future—a system that signifies a larger

problem with a utopian ideology based on the assurances of inevitable progress and happiness. In this scene, it is especially important that Emma comes to this awareness with Jane Fairfax, the character who falls victim to the speculative logic of others most frequently in the novel, including Frank Churchill, Mrs. Elton, Mrs. Weston, and Emma herself. (In her ability to effect the reform of a civic ethos, Jane Fairfax is not, then, just a character who wants to escape from the seemingly pessimistic world of Highbury as fast as she can. Instead, she can be seen as a fundamental part of Highbury's attempts to reform itself from the inside.) ~~I would like to close by~~ This disruption of fantasy, however, does not by nature deny the power of the imagination to devise better social arrangements. If Emma's imagination does not operate in exactly the same way as it would within an "imagined community"—developing a sense of national boundaries through the conception of shared subjectivity—then the final reconciliation with Jane Fairfax feature two separate ethical minds coming together to agree on civic habits that might be "decided and open." In other words, the honor of each woman is not premised on the radical truth of a "real" situation. Rather, it is based upon a private commitment to responsibilities that can be illuminated or clarified by a consensus on the real—Jane and Emma's eventual agreement on the conditions of Jane's engagement to Frank Churchill is another good example of this phenomenon.[109]

By focusing on Emma's relationship with Jane Fairfax, Mrs. Bates, and others—and intimate sense of civic duty made possible through Austen's emphasis on the importance of open, decided conditions—readers might see a solution to the disruption of Highbury's social relations caused by speculation and credit. Framed by the politics of 1815, this solution also suggests a negotiation in Austen's politics between a Tory

nationalism that wanted to pull England back to a regressive, chivalric past, and a Whig progressivism based on naïve utopianism. That middle-way is a civic ethos that can also be called honor—a virtue that makes private and intimate one's sense of public responsibility, while meeting the demands of the present day. It is worth noting that this formulation continues to play out in Austen's following novel *Persuasion*, where, as Claudia Johnson has pointed out, the ethos of professional naval officers runs up against an old feudal establishment.[110] Although some critics have read *Persuasion* as an indication of Austen's increasing pessimism about the ability of social relations to navigate the heterogeneous civic values of the Regency, the novel, like *Emma*, seems to offer a solution to the rift between modern credit and feudal honor: in the end, Austen reestablishes through marriage the equilibrium between a debt-ridden feudal society represented by Sir Walter Elliot and a credit-rich future signified by modern professionals like Captain Wentworth. In other words, the novel concludes with a literal reconciliation of the values by merging together the economic models of the past and future. More importantly, however, is the ethics subtending this reconciliation: when Wentworth finally admits his intimate "true attachment and constancy" to Anne Eliot—and, by extension, redeems her family's honor—this is another manifestation of the private awareness of public responsibility.[111]

A civic attitude predicated on practice, an improvement of moral character, and a sober recognition of reality mixed with just the right amount of hope sounds like a prescription for the liberal subject—which, given the work of David Kaufmann and Amanda Anderson, is a plausible characterization of nineteenth-century figures even before the widespread institutionalization of liberalism in the Victorian Era.[112] And yet,

Emma's reformed sense of honor does not so much prefigure the emergence of the liberal subject as much it demonstrates what I might call an adulterated conservatism, a kind of "Burke-without-Burke." What does this mean? While Emma replicates parts of Burke's critique of credit—realizing the importance of operating within limiting structures or with contingencies and shunning the fantastical ideology of speculation—she seems to reject the hierarchy implicit in Burke's politics.[113] And, while Emma's commitment to others as a "duty and a pleasure" seems to return to the political sentimentality of Burke, this intimate "duty and pleasure" does not seem to be subservient to the patriarchy that Burke espouses: Knightley does not so much dominate Emma as he provokes in her a desire to act differently to those around her. Another way to put this is that Emma develops a theory of trust that might have been inspired by Knightley's chivalric honor code, but she ultimately goes beyond him by solidifying social relations without the intercession of property to which Knightley (and Burkean society in general) finds himself tied as a landlord.[114] If political historians like Pocock have shown liberal modernity to be premised on private property and the expansion of the credit system, *Emma* demonstrates how one might do away with these financial foundations even while preserving the emerging philosophical norms of liberalism: skepticism, practice, and moral improvement.

This political formulation of "Burke-without-Burke" has institutional implications, especially given how much Romantic New Historicists relied upon Burke to deepen the scholarly conversation about history, sentiment, and the imagination. Essential to the ideology-based readings of the New Historicism was the imagination, which was oftentimes read as a phenomenon that Romantic writers invoked to escape

from the problems facing a newly industrializing England.[115] And yet, Emma's ethical imagination is not a solipsistic space, but a domain of private sentimentality that can also be communal. Austen is indebted in some ways to Burke for this formulation. But her memorable protagonist also disregards Burke's fealty to historical tradition and patriarchal ideology. The present day is not laden with constraints, but with the possibility of renewed commitment to others, regardless of their status.[116]

IV.

In the last twenty years *Emma* and *Rob Roy* have had Hollywood afterlives. Riding a wave of enthusiasm for the Scottish period piece, Michael Caton-Jones's *Rob Roy* appeared just a month before—and was overshadowed by—Mel Gibson's hyperbolic best-picture-winner *Braveheart* (1995). Amy Heckerling's *Clueless*, however, was quite popular. It captured a certain 90s fervor for consumer-culture and innocuous adolescent drama. Though both films are products of their time—coming out within three months of one another—they maintain and even expand upon analysis of political values begun in Austen and Scott's novels. If Scott and Austen envision the ethics of an emerging liberal subject without liberalism's proprietary foundations, then Caton-Jones's and Heckerling's adaptations describe the neoliberal subject; someone implicated in a sociopolitical system based entirely on economic values. Informed by the decade's optimism about unregulated global commerce, both *Rob Roy* and *Clueless* show how credit and finance bind together different social groups.[117] Far from apologizing for values of finance capitalism, however, ~~But here I claim that~~ I argue that these two films ~~actually~~ amplify the problems of fiscally-based values established in the original novels.

Due to the accelerated pace at which capital seemed to be organizing social relations during the Clinton-era, both adaptations make even more relevant the novels' messages about the moral perils of the credit system and its fantasy of unlimited private gain.

At first glance, Michael Caton-Jones's film *Rob Roy* meets all the requirements for the big-budget Hollywood epic. It has a recognizable cast, extended shots of the sprawling Scottish Highlands sheathed in fog, and a script that does away with most of the political and economic niceties in Scott's novel. It is also a prequel to Scott's original text, and represents a purportedly more honest period in Rob Roy McGregor's life before the 1715 Jacobite rebellion. Here, the highlander is a law-abiding sheep farmer instead of a famous freebooter and Jacobite agitator. And unlike the novel, the film is less fatalistic about Rob Roy's place in history. Instead of being relegated to antiquity at the end of the movie, Rob Roy triumphs over the foppish modern villain Archibald Cunningham in a climactic sword fight. All of this conventionalism reinforces the viewer's faith in the inevitably happy ending of the film. It is tempting to conflate such narrative assurance with the same kind of faith we might have had in the inevitable payoff of the strong financial markets of 1995. Disregarding peril or contingency, we trust in a Hollywood teleology to remunerate our ~~cruelly?~~ optimistic expectations.

The film's central source of conflict is even more explicit about romanticizing the unfettered commerce of the 1990s: Rob Roy's attempt to expand his sheepfold by taking out a loan from an aristocratic creditor. The loan is of course stolen, and the highlander sets out to restore his reputation, bound as it is now to the fickle credit economy. It is here that Jones's version of *Rob Roy* remains faithful to Scott's original. By equating the honor of its protagonist with the institutions of financial exchange, it partakes in the

entrepreneurial spirit of the late-twentieth- and the early-eighteenth-century. This is to say that the film simultaneously represents Romantic era political economy and its contemporary revival in neoliberalism, where promises of private gain are underwritten by public confidence in loans, speculation, and global free trade, a fantasy of unlimited financial progress. Thus, if the film swaps the historical intricacies of Scott's novel for Hollywood conventions, its structuring thematic is the same as Scott's own: a pervasive reliance on finance to announce the social relations between different groups of people. Representing the commercial subtext of both Romanticism and postmodernity, the adaptation almost fulfills one of Bailie Nicole Jarvie's prophesies in *Rob Roy*; that economics will eventually determine all aspects of culture and society.

But in spite of these connections to eighteenth-century finance and twentieth-century neoliberalism, Caton-Jones's adaptation condemns credit more overtly than does Scott's novel. When it comes to Rob Roy's honor—or his private sense of public dependability—financialized codes of conduct are set in stark contrast with the Highlander's familial integrity. In a telling example, Caton-Jones moves right from a scene where Rob Roy discusses loans made to him by British investors, to a philosophical excursus on honor itself. The first scene about credit has Rob Roy climbing up an idyllic hillside with his wife and explaining the financial contract he has just signed with unscrupulous lenders—a metaphor, perhaps, for his ascension into their entrepreneurial ranks. But when Rob Roy reaches the summit of the hill in the next scene, he abandons all talk of finance. Instead, he offers a lesson about honor to his sons. The top of the metaphoric hill is not about financial success in the future, but passing along a tradition of ethical integrity.

Rob Roy goes on to tell his two sons that "honor is something that no man can give you and none can take away."[118] With its play on the rhetoric of financial exchange, this line rebuffs the commodified version of honor that Rob Roy discussed with his wife just minutes beforehand (and suggests once again Kant's idea of *Würde*). In this adaptation, highland honor is not "'a homicide and a bloodspiller'" like it was in Scott's original novel, but "a man's gift to himself" that "will [not] mistreat a woman or malign a man, nor stand by and see another do so."[119] Rob Roy's speech here modifies the ethics of credit: honor is still related to an award or a gift, but unlike credit, it cannot be given by another. However, honor is still a part of subjectivity that is linked to social life, a private awareness of one's public responsibility. By making public his private convictions to his sons, Rob Roy in fact performs this very formulation of honor.

By putting a conversation about the shallowness of financial credit next to Rob Roy's theory of honor, Caton-Jones and Sharp's adaptation ~~reads~~ represents the discourse of honor and credit in a fashion similar to ~~I do in~~ Scott's novel: honor is an internalized commitment to the public that stands against the ultimately private ends of the new credit economy. But this message is all the more striking precisely because it appears in a Hollywood epic that evacuates history and amplifies the consumerist zeitgeist of the 1990s—Fredric Jameson meets brogues and broadswords. Such a trade makes it easier for the viewer to see Rob Roy not as a historical figure whose values can be relegated to the past, but as a contemporary subject participating in, and ultimately rejecting, the monetized system of honor that easy credit provides.

Cher Hamilton, on the other hand, is a contemporary subject who is completely caught up in the commodity culture of the mid-90s. Cher is a reimagining of Austen's

Emma Woodhouse as a mall-hopping, SoCal valley girl, and she is the protagonist in Amy Heckerling's *Clueless*. The film's entire conceit is based on commodification and garish displays of capital, examples of which are plentiful in the film: Cher's father is a tough corporate lawyer instead of a valetudinarian; if Cher doesn't have Emma's artistic abilities, she does have a keen fashion-sense; and Cher's primary mode of social expression and self-soothing is to go shopping at the mall. Heckerling's film is, of course, a great send-up of showy adolescent consumerism, and a satire on its dominance in mainstream culture. ("Ew!" says Cher about the counter-cultural grunge kids skateboarding around the quad).

However, like *Emma*, *Clueless* is also a satire that offers a strong critique of the social value of credit. In this adaptation, of course, such a critique is magnified by the setting and its hyperactive consumerism: the contemporary economic optimism of the 90s is translated into a kind of teenage naiveté, a faith in the consumer economy symbolized by the sacred mall, the "sanctuary," Cher tells us, "where I [can] gather my thoughts and regain my strength."[120] Much like *Emma*, however, credit in *Clueless* is still a "fictitious system of value" whose ethics are predicated on projections of honor and esteem, and it can still—supposedly—create social trust between different types of people.[121] At first, the fictitious value of credit is unproblematic, even extolled. When Cher winds up garnering extra-credit "totally based on [her] powers of persuasion," her litigator father responds that he "couldn't be happier than if they were based on real grades."[122] Additionally, the scene establishes the relationship between finance capital and the modern legal structures that legitimized—the credit goddess and her lawyer dad.

But the hope that credit guarantees trust between different persons eventually breaks down. One moment in particular literalizes the specious nature of credit as a form for social trust: a scene where Cher and her friends play the party game "suck and blow," passing a credit-card in between one another's lips without using their hands.[123] A mediating device, the credit card is the public instrument that binds the participants' private desires together. And yet, it is also a prophylactic to these desires, the boundary to real interpersonal engagement that Cher and her society will not transgress. As in *Emma*, credit is the fantasy of sociability that is actually a block to that sociability (a cruel optimism indeed). When the credit card finally gets passed to Cher, Elton drops it intentionally and kisses her. Cher recoils, repulsed by Elton's presumption, much like Emma had been with Mr. Elton, when he "[makes] violent love to her" in the carriage.[124] Cher's repulsion of course has as much to do with Elton's act of desire becoming overtly public as it does his mishandling of the situation. Credit is a phenomenon that purports to create a relationship of trust, but ultimately it cannot mediate between private desires and public behavior.

When Cher and Josh (Mr. Knightley) confirm their amorous feelings for one another at last, Cher acknowledges the superficiality of relationships built around credit. "Go out and have fun, go shopping," says Josh, to which Cher replies, "you think that's all I do, I'm just a ditz with a credit card."[125] Here, Cher acknowledges that credit, shopping, and relationships formed on monetized types of honor and esteem, are problematic and obfuscatory—and, given the authentic kiss that follows *this* invocation of credit, there are surely better methods of following through own private desires. In all of these instances, Heckerling's film literalizes the ethics of credit—through credit cards,

extra credit, and other social mediums of contemporary teenage life—in order to disrupt it. She pays homage to the excessive representationalism of 1990s commodity culture and to Austen's own critique. Both adaptations confirm the original Romantic author's argument about credit almost two centuries later: while credit attempts to guarantee trust between different groups, it ultimately ends up fulfilling private desires at the expense of those relationships. Because they also incorporate the neoliberal ethos and commodity culture of the 90s into their polemic on the ethics of credit, *Rob Roy* and *Clueless* are even more striking in this regard.

NOTES

[1] Walter Scott, *Waverley* (NY: Penguin Books, 1985), 127. It's no coincidence that one of the most recent books on the concept of honor comes from Alexander Welsh, a long-time Scott scholar. See his *What is Honor*; *The Hero of the Waverly Novels* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1963).

[2] Walter Scott, "Review of *Emma*," *Quarterly Review* 14 (1815), 192.

[3] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey and Persuasion…In Four Volumes* (London: John Murray, 1818), Vol. 2, 320.

[4] *Reflections* 69.

[5] Georg Lukács's inaugurates a leftist criticism of Scott with his *The Historical Novel*, a study that reads Scott's novels as forebears to dialectical materialism. For Lukács, Scott's figures embody a neutral "middle-way" between two social dynamics in crisis at the time. See George Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 32-3; hereafter *Historical Novel*. For a recent look on Lukács, Scott, and Marxist readings of the *Waverley Novels* see Stuart Ferguson, "At the Grave of the Gentile Constitution: Walter Scott, Georg Lukács and Romanticism," *SiR* 44.3 (2005), 423-37; hereafter "At the Grave of the Gentile Constitution."

[6] Burke goes on lengthy diatribes in the *Reflections* on paper money and the debilitating effects it might have on society. See especially 180-5, 276-84, and 336-49.

[7] See *Virtue, Commerce, and History.*

[8] There is a wealth of criticism featuring progressive or even revolutionist political interpretations of Scott. See, for example, "At the Grave of the Gentile Constitution". For interpretations resting on classical Smithian economics, or even neoliberal globalization, see Kathryn Sutherland, "Fictional Economies: Adam Smith, Walter Scott, and the Nineteenth-Century Novel," *ELH* 54.1 (1997), 97-127; hereafter "Fictional Economies;" Ian Duncan, "Primitive Inventions: *Rob Roy*, Nation, and World System," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 15.1 (2002), 81-102; Ayşe Çelikkol, "Free Trade and Disloyal Smugglers in Scott's *Guy Mannering* and *Redgauntlet*," *ELH* 74.4 (2007), 759-82; hereafter "Free Trade and Disloyal

Smugglers in Scott's *Guy Mannering* and *Redgauntlet.*" For both interpretations merged together, see Alex Dick, "Walter Scott and the Financial Crash of 1825: Fiction, Speculation, and the Standard of Value," *Romantic Circles Praxis: Romanticism, Forgery and the Credit Crunch* (February 2012). www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/forgery/HTML/praxis.2011.dick.html. February 2012. For Austen as a proto-classical liberal, see David Kaufmann "Law and Propriety, Sense and Sensibility: Austen on the Cusp of Modernity," *ELH* 59.2 (1992), 385-408; hereafter "Law and Propriety, Sense and Sensibility." For a take on the modern credit system in Austen see Robert Miles, "'A Fall in Bread': Speculation and the Real in *Emma*," *Novel* 37:1/2 (2003-4), 66-85; hereafter "A Fall in Bread;" "*Emma* and Bank Bills: Forgery and Romanticism," *Romantic Circles Praxis: Romanticism, Forgery and the Credit Crunch* (February 2012). www.rc.umd.edu/ praxis/forgery/ HTML/praxis.2011.miles.html. February 2012; hereafter "*Emma* and Bank Bills." For a text that hints at Austen's revolutionary possibilities see William Galperin, *The Historical Austen* (PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); hereafter *The Historical Austen.* Finally, for a general scholarly work of Romanticism that shows the links between state finance and interpersonal sympathy, see Robert Mitchell, *Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era: Systems, State Finance, and the Shadows of Futurity* (London: Routledge, 2007); hereafter *Sympathy and the State*.

[9] See *Cruel Optimism* 1. A fair amount of Austen criticism mediates between conservative and progressive political frameworks. In some ways, Marilyn Butler sets the tone for contemporary political readings of Austen by showing the influence of conservative and radical thought throughout the novels. See Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975). Claudia Johnson argues for an Austen who is neither Whig nor Tory, but who draws from a larger tradition of feminine political novels that had a variety of political allegiances. For essential work on Austen, see Claudia Johnson's *Jane Austen*. Informed by this tradition, I want to show not just the Tory reaction to Whig politics in the novels, but how Whig politics themselves can undermine their own goals.

[10] As I note above, conservative and utopian readings have also characterized critical analyses of both novelists**.**

[11] The credit economy and its perils have been important to scholarly discussions lately, engaging such Romanticists as Robert Miles, Robert Mitchell, Matthew Rowlinson, and Alex Dick. It has been the preoccupation of English historians like Mary Poovey for over a decade. See Mary Poovey, *The Financial System in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003); *Genres of the Credit Economy*. For recent Romanticist work on finance and literature, see Matthew Rowlinson, *Real Money and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010); Alex Dick, *Realms of Gold: Money, Romanticism, and the Formation of the Disciplines* (forthcoming). In his own study, Patrick Brantlinger argues for the figure of credit as integral to the development of historical and national identity, what he calls an essential, if vexed, "fiction of the state." Brantlinger's claims resonate not only with the nascent nationalism found in Austen and Scott's novels, but also with the fantastical finance economy that both *Rob Roy* and *Emma* in part fetishize. See Patrick Brantlinger, *Fictions of State: Culture and Credit in Britain, 1694-1994* (NY: Cornell UP, 1996). Finally, Margot Finn discusses the intersubjective foundation of lifestyles built around credit and debt and shows the importance that credit and debt had to the formulation of modern identity and social binding. See Margot Finn, *The Character of Credit: Personal Debt in English Culture, 1740-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003); hereafter *The Character of Credit*. My own chapter extends and complicates this ongoing conversation about credit's historical significance and its relationship to subjectivity in the nineteenth-century by focusing on the question of ethics in Scott's and Austen's novels.

[12] See *Lord Byron's Strength*; *Sympathy and the State*.

[13] In *The Machiavellian Moment*, Pocock discusses the new bourgeois ideology as a "civic morality for market man" based in part on its being able to ground volatile, "fictional" credit in customary behavior, and legal regulation (432). See J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (NJ: Princeton UP, 2009). Pocock goes on to discuss the (surprisingly robust) balance struck by bourgeois virtue and commerce in the latter half of the eighteenth-century in *Virtue, Commerce, and History*. See especially his fifth chapter, "Modes of Political and Historical Time" (91-102).

[14] Another word for this break down is, of course, deconstruction. During his ethical turn Derrida diagnosed the epistemological and ethical dislocations of credit as the "madness of economic reason." See Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), esp. Chapter 2 "The Madness of Economic Reason: A Gift without Present." Derrida uses contemporary exchange as a way to investigate the ethics of giving and receiving. Derrida argues that the gift (or the credit) must be held in a liminal space between the giver and the receiver (or the creditor and the debtor) in order for it to remain truly ethical. Once the gift has been received or requires a counter-gift, however, then the ethos of the gift has been disrupted. Thus if one accredits, one can never ask for anything in exchange if they are to remain ethical. The Levinasian underpinning of Derrida's thought is evident here. According to Derrida, credit is the bond made between others that can never function in the present. But Derrida sees accreditation as a positive act of faith, a suspension of exchange between two people that guarantees their trust in one another.

[15] See again Burke's sections on credit in the *Reflections*; *Genres of the Credit Economy*, especially the section on William Cobbett and the radical arguments against writs of paper credit (174-96).

[16] For the connection of Scottish political economy to *Rob Roy* see Ian Duncan's wonderful introduction to the Oxford Classics edition. See *Rob Roy*.

[17] Judith Wilt remarks that the psyches of Scott's characters correspond to the structures of accreditation. See Judith Wilt, *Secret Leaves: The Novels of Walter Scott* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 51-70; hereafter *Secret Leaves*. Michael Gamer makes the connection between eighteenth-century "object narratives" and the protagonists in multiple Scott novels, including Osbaldistone. Analyzing a piece on Scott from the 1817 *Quarterly Review*, Gamer observes that "[h]eroes like Waverley are 'insipid' because they are incapable of making themselves 'a prime agent of the scene.' Amiable but passive, they are always acted on, whether by historical events or by the twists and turns of plot, which then produce an inevitable 'sacrificing [of] the character of the hero' to the agency of history." See Michael Gamer, "*Waverley* and the Object of (Literary) History," *MLQ* 70.4 (2009), 508-9. I share Gamer's—and the *Quarterly Review*'s—opinion on the passivity of Scott's heroes, but here I want to show how these heroes come to believe in their own agency. Finally, again see *The Historical Novel* and Lukács's commentary on "The Classical Historical Novel in Struggle with Romanticism" (63-88).

[18] I'm indebted to Neil Fraistat for this reading. On Frank Osbaldistone's frank style of narration, see Jane Millgate, "*Rob Roy* and the Limits of Frankness," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 34.4 (1980), 379-396.

[19] *Rob Roy* 78.

[20] *Rob Roy* 167.

[21] Judith Wilt's psychoanalytical reading of the *Rob Roy* is based on the patriarchal structures to which I'm referring. Wilt claims that "so often in the Waverly novels full legitimacy…requires not only the choice to be, finally, one's father's son, not only the achievement of male adulthood, but also domesticity…" (63). I see a residual Romanticism and sentiment in Osbaldistone, even at the end of the novel when he has finally achieved domestic legitimacy and taken over the family's modern countinghouse.

[22] *Rob Roy* 67.

[23] ibid.

[24] ibid.

[25] *Rob Roy* 77.

[26] ibid; Much like Ferdinando Falkland, Osbaldistone can be seen as another parody of the Burkean gentleman—obsessed with manners, sentiment, and preserving the culture of an inherited past. Given this connection, *Rob Roy* can be read as a *bildungsroman* structured around two competing impulses—the utilitarian and the sentimental—that eventually coalesce in the protagonist.

[27] *Secret Leaves* 49.

[28] The protagonist had always known about his father's religious devotion to business. Hints concerning the positive moral value of commerce come from Frank's father early in the story, who shows a steadfast dedication to maintaining the "honour of [his] bills." A devotion to representing his own financial trustworthiness, credit substitutes for the built-in honor of peerage that he had been denied by inheritance (72). But all of this fiscal zeal at first seems to be of minor concern to Osbaldistone, who has no devotion to business before his father's credit is imperiled.

[29] *Rob Roy* 222.

[30] ibid.

[31] *Rob Roy* 75.

[32] *Rob Roy* 222.

[33] *Rob Roy* 67. Again, see *Sympathy and the State*; "Walter Scott and the Financial Crash of 1825;" "Free Trade and Disloyal Smugglers in Scott's *Guy Mannering* and *Redgauntlet.*" Following Çelikkol's reading one could argue that the freebooter Rob Roy is himself a proponent of free trade, breaking down borders and marketing goods without regulation. However, Rob Roy's ethical duties seem to lie elsewhere in the end.

[34] For global commerce's promises of greater communal identification and sympathy, once again see *Sympathy and the State*.

[35] *Rob Roy* 171.

[36] *Rob Roy* 223.

[37] ibid.

[38] *Sympathy and the State* 5; see also *The Character of Credit*.

[39] *Sympathy and the State* 5-6, 20-1; "Walter Scott and the Financial Crash of 1825."

[40] *Rob Roy* 243, 282.

[41] *Rob Roy* 297.

[42] ibid.

[43] ibid.

[44] *Rob Roy* 243-4, 256. Here, Jarvie begins to substantiate Pocock's thesis about the conflation of virtue and credit in modernity, but eventually reverts to sentimentality and ancestor worship. Like Osbaldistone, Jarvie inherits virtuousness from his father (in this case, the gone—but never forgotten—Deacon Nicole Jarvie). With regards to commerce and the moral imagination, Osbaldistone and Jarvie seem to mirror each other: Osbaldistone supplements his father's mercantilism with his own imaginative moralism, and Jarvie keeps the religious piety of his father alive with his utter devotion to modern commerce.

[45] "Fictional Economies."

[46] Scott himself had a positive outlook for Jarvie. Described by the author in an 1819 letter as "admirable national portraiture," Scott recognized that Jarvie would possess a dual appeal for readers. Jarvie could speak to the British public's impressions of exotic, Scottish gaiety and to their hopes of everyday stability in the volatile finance economy. (And Jarvie resonated with readers for years after the publication of the novel as, perhaps, the most popular character in the book). See Walter Scott, *Letters of Sir Walter Scott* (London: Constable, 1932-37), 5-307.

[47] *Rob Roy* 303.

[48] *Rob Roy* 304.

[49] *Rob Roy* 303.

[50] *Reflections* 280.

[51] Many well-known Romanticists have traced the imperialist undertones of Scott's work. For example, see Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (NJ: Princeton UP, 1997), esp. the chapter "National Character, Nationalist Plots: National Tale and the Historical Novel in the Age of *Waverley*, 1806-30" (128-57); Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998), esp. the chapter "*Waverley* and the Cultural politics of Dispossession" (70-99); Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (NJ: Princeton UP, 2008), esp. the chapter "Modernity's Other Worlds" (96-116).

[52] *Rob Roy* 303.

[53] Robert Mitchell addresses the problems of commercial dispossession in Romantic literature by arguing that the spatial diffusion and temporal contingencies associated with the system of public credit prompted the Romantics establish a greater sense of national identity and sympathy, combating such dissociation through affective ties. According to him, a feeling of intersubjectivity could in fact expand as a response to the broadening reach of the finance economy—especially as it projected itself into the future and spread across the globe. While this argument broaches the affective dimensions of speculative credit, it doesn't necessarily concentrate on the actual ends of the credit system: to empower individual property ownership. *Rob Roy*, however, clearly distinguishes between the individualized, profit-seeking end of the credit economy and its means to connect the public together. For the ability of public credit and paper money to structure their own sorts of imagined communities, see *Sympathy and the State*. For a reading of the eighteenth-century politics of public credit, see Terry Mulcaire, "Public Credit; Or, The Feminization of Virtue in the Marketplace," *PMLA* 114.5 (1999), 1029-42.

[54] *Rob Roy* 304-7.

[55] *Rob Roy* 397.

[56] *Rob Roy* 307.

[57] *Rob Roy* 334.

[58] *Rob Roy* 304.

[59] I try not to aggrandize Rob Roy's honor too much here. In doing so I risk making generalizations about the "superior" ethics of tribal society that sound. It is, in fact, these very sentimental generalizations that we get from the naïve protagonists of the Waverley Novels. As such, they don't accord with the more

intricate—some would say realistic—ethical panorama that Scott creates in his novels. Again, see "Fictional Economies" on the historical realism of Scott.

[60] *Rob Roy* 75.

[61] Using *Waverley* as his test case, Michael Gamer has remarked that Scott is able to retroactively comment on the early formation of literary history, using a strange "chronological structure …to deal with other contemporary novelists from two vantage points at once, since the fiction of an 1805 composition enables him to convert, where convenient, the hindsight of 1814 literary history into the foresight of 1805 literary prophecy" (501). See "Waverley and the Object of (Literary) History."

[62] Nietzsche's designation of "antiquarian history" comes from his essential essay "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life." See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unfashionable Observations*. Trans. Richard T. Gray. (California: Stanford UP, 1995).

[63] "Fictional Economies" 97.

[64] ibid.

[65] *Historical Novel* 98.

[66] *Postmodernism* 21.

[67] *Reflections* 113.

[68] *Rob Roy* is both historical in Lukács's sense and posthistorical in Jameson's sense: it simultaneously represents historical events and the ability of late capitalist schema to efface history.

[69] *The Historical Austen* 12, 180.

[70] When arguing for Emma's ability to get beyond the flawed ethos of credit—and to provide new modes of trust and social binding towards which critics like Robert Mitchell have gestured—we should return to Galperin. Galperin illuminates the role of the Romantic imagination within the Regency novel by claiming that Austen's works can be read as disclosing a "horizon of possibility" that is "at odds with the representational desiderata of Austen's particular time and station" (5-6). Galperin's tracing of the imagination in Austen is important in showing Austen's capacity to envision an ethics outside the contextual limits of the Regency era in which she was writing—an extension of the sociopolitical "horizon of possibility" that transcends the limits of the merely probable. But Galperin is particularly pessimistic about the world of *Emma*, suggesting that none of these imagined possibilities can ever come into being within the limited bounds of Highbury. Any such move from the probable to the possible is stunted by characters who attempt to preserve Highbury's status quo—mainly by those appropriately-named brothers John and George Knightley, defenders of England's honorable dominion and her monarchy (182-3). To keep the dialectic going between the probable and the possible, Galperin goes on to say that the horizon of imagined possibility can only be projected in the reader's experience of re-reading *Emma*. ~~Drawing on the~~Reformulating ~~-~~Galperin's dialectic of the probable and possible, my reading of ~~I argue that~~ Emma's honor ethic can be thought of as a mediation ~~is created by the intersection~~ between the real and the imagined—between the contingencies (or probabilities) that create a sudden breakdown in Emma's speculative vision and the ability of her private, ethical imagination to persist even after it has been shocked by these real events. But instead of seeing Highbury as a bleak space resistant to change and moral improvement, ~~I see~~ Emma's shift towards a new ethos of honor ~~as~~ can be thought of as a major sign of a ~~major~~ change in Highbury. Additionally, while Galperin's thesis implies that Highbury's culture of skepticism and rumor give Highbury a dystopian character, it is precisely skepticism that disrupts an ethics of credit predicated on the future— the ethics of credit being just one type of futurism supported precisely by the "horizon[s] of possibility" discussed by Galperin. Skepticism is vitally important to *Emma* because of its ability to disrupt future possibilities or utopianism, making way for newer models of honor and trust

that can be lived and practiced by Highbury's residents, not just envisioned. Thus, while Galperin argues that *Emma* forecloses all utopian possibilities within Highbury by the end of the novel, Austen also shows how such a foreclosure might be a necessary intervention into the British political life that, in 1815, found utopianism to be an increasingly unreliable proposition.

[71] "A Fall in Bread;" Miles has new work on the "social imaginary" of the financial system in Regency England that has been valuable to my argument (and it corresponds well with Robert Mitchell's thesis on state finance and citizen's shared identification with one another). See "*Emma* and Bank Bills."

[72] "A Fall in Bread" 71-2.

[73] Innate perfectibility is most often associated with Godwin. But Godwin rarely talks about perfectibility's connection to commerce or credit. He never mentions the credit economy specifically in *Political Justice*, perhaps due to the fact that the first three editions revised by Godwin were amended before any major domestic outcry about the dangers of the credit economy (the third edition was released in 1798). But Godwin does mention the contractual system of credit and debt as an example of a "necessary evil" in his chapter "Of Promises," noting that it is just one example of the unavoidable contracts of modern life that we may be obliged to create: "[i]t ought never to be called forth but in cases of the clearest necessity." See *Political Justice* 209. See also the chapter "Of Self Love and Benevolence" for another anecdote about the evils of the credit contract. Perhaps, then, in *Political Justice* Godwin tacitly argues against a turn in language that would allow the public to view credit as a structure for perpetual improvement.

[74] See the Oxford English Dictionary entry on "credit. n.," esp. entry seven and thirteen, which deal with the "intersubjective" character of credit (accurate as of February, 2012). The OED also lists the first instance of "to give a person credit for something" with a citation from a Junius letter, in 1769: "They…gave you a generous credit for the future blessings of your reign" (xxxv. 155).

[75] Google's nGram viewer confirms a rising trend in the usage of the phrase "credit for feeling" into the nineteenth-century. Google's first archived item featuring the phrase is from a 1793 edition of *The British Critic*, in a review of Barbauld's *Sins of the Government, Sins of the Nation*. See books.google.com/ngrams. Within the Google Books library, 1839-40 seems to be the period with the most mentions of the phrase—years of financial crisis where credit may have been back in the popular lexicon. Results are accurate as of February, 2012.

[76] This fact adds in a semantic and metaphoric way to what Robert Mitchell has called Romanticism's larger systemic "sympathies" that had developed in response to state finance. See *Sympathy and the State* 19-21.

[77] *The Character of Credit* 2.

[78] See "Public Credit; or, the Feminization of Virtue in the Marketplace."

[79] Jane Austen, *Emma* (NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999), 29; hereafter *Emma*.

[80] ibid.

[81] ibid.

[82] Again, see *The Historical Austen*, especially the chapter "Nostalgia in *Emma*," for how representation (the specular, or mirroring of real life) intersects with potential (the speculative, or the possibilities of the future). By spectral, I mean the phantasm of ethics that points towards the future. For the messianism inherent in such a "spectral ethics," see Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (London: Routledge, 2006). For a deconstructive ethics without the promise of a messianic future, see Simon Critchley, *Ethics, Politics Subjectivity: Essays on Derrida, Levinas, and Contemporary French Thoughts* (London: Verso, 1999), esp. the chapter on "The Hypothesis,

the Context, the Messianic, the Political, the Economic, the Technological: On Derrida's *Spectres of Marx*;" hereafter *Ethics, Politics, Subjectivity.* For the spectral nature of Romanticism itself, see Orrin N.C. Wang, "Ghost Theory," *SiR* 46.2 (2007), 203-25.

[83] *Emma* 29.

[84] ibid.

[85] ibid.

[86] ibid.

[87] ibid.

[88] *Emma* 257.

[89] *Emma* 139-42.

[90] *Emma* 257.

[91] An argument for a presentist ethics based on honorable necessity gets back to Galperin's claim that utopia is impossible in *Emma*. But a utopian drive—symbolized in this case by the credit system—might actually be at the root of the social problems in the novel. Such a foreclosure of utopian possibility, however, does not mitigate the fact of real, positive change in the novel. Thus, instead of coming to a "sobering recognition that substantive change [in *Emma*]…is entirely a matter of theory rather than actual praxis" a less pecuniary ethics might be found in Emma's social commitments to Highbury's residents through practices that do not blunt her imagination nor bind her to a patriarchal system (209).

[92] *Emma* 257.

[93] Galperin also reads Miss Bates differently than I do, arguing that she is not so much a disinterested, well-meaning figure, but someone who has had a vexed personal history with Mr. Knightley. Due to this vexed history, Knightley urges others to be kind to Miss Bates—not out of the sense of civic responsibility that she inspires, but out of his residual own sense of protection, care, or even guilt. However, even if we abide by this reading, we might note that civic responsibility and individual ethos don't have to be mutually exclusive. Indeed, an emphasis on character, desire, and the conciliation of individual characteristics with larger social responsibilities is precisely my argument, and it intersects, in part, with the work of Victorianist theorists of liberalism like Elaine Hadley and Amanda Anderson. See Elaine Hadley, *Living Liberalism: Practical Citizenship in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); hereafter *Living Liberalism*; *Bleak Liberalism*.

[94] *Emma* 257.

[95] Paul Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). Peter Melville's work looks at Romanticism and the intersubjective nature of privacy and moral thinking. See Peter Melville, *Romantic Hospitality and the Resistance to Accommodation* (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2007).

[96] Yet another interpretation might align Emma with the radical William Cobbett, who had been advocating the abandonment of state-backed paper-money in order to stave off a government collapse. While Cobbett had been voicing these concerns for many years in the *Weekly Political Register*, his argument culminated in the popular volume *Paper Against Gold* (1815), which was published the same year as Austen's novel. In his recent *The Secret History of Domesticity* (2005), Michael McKeon argues that the relationship between the credit goddess and those who court her was often represented in the eighteenth-century as being reciprocal: "Lady Credit's suitors seek from her the confidence needed to increase their financial

assets; she seeks from them the peace and quiet necessary for that confidence to flourish" (446). Austen can either be seen to uphold this pattern in *Emma*—where the "handsome, clever, and rich" protagonist bonds with a suitor who stabilizes her impulses and domesticates her—or to ironize it: Emma ends up abandoning the entire moral apparatus of credit, and domesticates *him*, moving Knightley into her own home by the end of the novel.

[97] See "On the Desire for the Political" in *Cruel Optimism* 223-63.

[98] Again, see Galperin, who argues that the practice of new insights, morals, and ways of living are near impossible in the world of *Emma*. See especially his chapter "Nostalgia in *Emma*." See also A. Walton Litz, "The Limits of Freedom: Emma," in *Emma* 373-81. Although both critics discuss the restraints put upon Emma by, there is a fundamental contrast between the two essays: Galperin says that in our experience of reading and re-reading *Emma* we can see unlimited possibilities, while Litz says that *Emma* gives us a fundamental parable about the limits of possibility.

[99] *Cruel Optimism* 226.

[100] *Emma* 297, original emphasis.

[101] ibid.

[102] ibid.

[103] The rhetoric of rumor in Austen's fiction has undergone major investigation in the last 25 years. See Joseph Litvak, "Reading Characters: Self, Society, and Text in *Emma*," *PMLA* 100.5 (1985), 763-73; Casey Finch and Peter Bowen, "The Title-Tattle of Highbury': Gossip and the Free Indirect Style in *Emma*," *Representations* 31 (1998), 1-18; Frances Ferguson, "Jane Austen, *Emma*, and the Impact of Form," *MLQ* 61.1 (2000), 157-80.

[104] *Emma* 298.

[105] ibid.

[106] ibid.

[107] *Emma* 297-8.

[108] *Emma* 303.

[109] See *The Sublime Object of Ideology*.

[110] See Claudia Johnson's chapter "The 'Unfeudal Tone of the Present Day'" in *Jane Austen.*

[111] Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (NY: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995), 158.

[112] See again Kaufmann's "Law and Propriety, Sense and Sensibility;" and Anderson's "Character and Ideology;" "The Liberal Aesthetic."

[113] Again, see *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, esp. the chapter "The Political Economy of Burke's Analysis of the French Revolution" (193-214).

[114] On the intercession of property and propriety in Austen, again see "Law and Propriety, Sense and Sensibility."

[115] In *The Historical Austen*, Galperin makes a case for the syncretism of Austen and High Romanticism (9). Eric Lindstrom's recent work has also picked up on the links between the traditional discourse of the imagination and Austen. See Eric Lindstrom, "Austen and Austin," *ERR* 22.4 (2011), 501-20.

[116] Over the last thirty years, Romanticists have, in fact, already articulated many different Burkes. See "Like a Guilty Thing Surprised;" "Ghost Theory." On the procession towards ontology—or the subject's eventual acceptance of reality constraints—see Rei Terada, "The Frailty of the Ontic," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110.1 (2011), 37-55; "Hegel's Bearings," *Romantic Circles Praxis: Romanticism and Disaster* (January 2012).www.rc.umd.edu/praxis/disaster/HTML/praxis.2012.terada.html. January 2012.

[117] Michael Caton-Jones (dir) and Alan Sharp (w), *Rob Roy* (United Artists, 1995. Film); hereafter *Rob Roy* (1995); Amy Heckerling (dir & wr), *Clueless* (Paramount Pictures, 1995. Film); hereafter *Clueless*.

[118] *Rob Roy* (1995).

[119] *Rob Roy* 297, *Rob Roy* (1995).

[120] *Clueless*.

[121] "A Fall in Bread."

[122] *Clueless*

[123] I should note that Heckerling intended to use a credit card in this scene, but she admits on the DVD commentary that the card was too heavy to stick to the actors' lips. They replaced it with a business card.

[124] *Emma* 84.

[125] *Clueless.* In a personal conversation, Neil Fraistat points out that the name Cher might be a double pun, one that shows the two sides of her character that I'm tracing in this coda. Not just a way for Heckerling to highlight the influence of celebrity culture in the 1990s, Cher might also be the French "cher" for dear or expensive—an upfront commodification of her identity. However, Cher could also be heard as "share," or the practice of sociability especially as it pertains to material goods.

Chapter Four
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Black in Character as in Complexion: The Honor and Body of Mary Prince

I.

In April of 1831, the editor and publisher Edward Moxon released the first edition of *The Englishman's Magazine*. In its "Monthly Literary Gazette" section, the journal made a curious comparison between two well-known texts of the Romantic era that are not usually grouped together. Examining a large stack of submissions, the anonymous reviewer described the first text as

> a very thin pamphlet…to which we are here led by association of ideas to advert. It is the history of one of the working classes in the West Indies, and exhibits as clearly as Mr. Thackrah could have done for his life, the effects of certain species of taskwork, and the mode of tasking, on human health, happiness, and longevity. It is in truth a melancholy picture of the wrongs that man inflicts upon his fellow; and all who in soberness peruse it will look upon the *History of Mary Prince* as a moral and literary curiosity. It is as absorbingly interesting in its way as *Caleb Williams*.[1]

The comparison is culturally relevant: the new Standard Novels edition of *Caleb Williams* had just been released in April of that year. (And, with textual changes that heightened its focus on slavery and racial difference, a new edition of Shelley's *Frankenstein* would be released through Standard Novels six months later).[2] But Moxon invokes *Caleb Williams* and its "picture of the wrongs that man inflicts upon his fellow" for thematic reasons, as well. Both texts feature protagonists who are pursued across a large expanse by seemingly all-powerful masters: in Caleb's case, it is the aristocrat Ferdinando Falkland—a fictional character who happens to have "a very valuable

plantation in the West Indies;" in Mary's, it is the real Antiguan plantationer John Wood.[3] Both also demonstrate the endurance of the language of "rights" and "wrongs" long associated with Republican politics, a progressive discourse that held strong even after forty years of conservative suspicion about democratic rule and individual sovereignty. It is odd, of course, that the reviewer omits any reference to the moral abomination of slavery itself—and overlooks the abolitionist campaigns that had been incrementally dismantling the Atlantic slave trade for four decades.

Finally, the comparison between *The History of Mary Prince* and *Caleb Williams* is also apt because both texts center on the same set of moral values: honor and dignity, shame and remorse. They are "absorbingly interesting" in a similar way not just because they examine the psychological peril of their protagonists—not just because they paint "melancholy pictures"—but because they investigate what the philosopher Charles Taylor has dubbed a "politics of recognition;" that is, the modern formulation that "our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence."[4] In his essay of the same title, Taylor posits that "a person…can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition can inflict harm and be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, or reduced mode of being."[5]

Taylor's words about the "imprisonment" of the self hold true for both text's narrators, who are held captive by those who refuse to acknowledge their individual dignity and who eventually engage in legal disputes in which they try to justify their own "mode[s] of being." In addition, both protagonists produce confession-style narratives in order to paint a "less contemptible picture of themselves," summoning from the depths a

private "authenticity" that Taylor argues was essential for public recognition in the modern age.[6] Though the lives of Caleb Williams and Mary Prince are separated by genre, political subtext, and even the tenuous border between fiction and reality, what binds them together for the editor of *The Englishmen's Magazine* (and what should bind them together for contemporary scholars of Romanticism) is a focus on the possibility of dignity for all political subjects in modernity. Conversely, each text represents how suffering can be inflicted when this individual identity goes unacknowledged by the public, or when it is thrown back into a patently hierarchical social order that constrains freedom. Remember that in the bleak original ending of Godwin's novel, Caleb realizes his identity is bound to an aristocratic master who has only tried to harm him, and in a moment of existential angst declares, "I have now no character that I wish to vindicate."[7]

As we have seen in previous chapters, the term "character" to which Caleb refers here was usually synonymous with reputation or public status, and it often signified how the politics of recognition operated in Romantic era literature and culture. The entire plot of *Caleb Williams* revolves around the concept of character, as does the compiled text of the *History*, which focuses on the reputations of both slave and slaveholder. Prince's "moral character" becomes a central point of her credibility, contested as it is by Prince's master John Wood and upheld by the Anti-Slavery society. In Prince's own account, however, John Wood is the one with a degenerate character, debasing himself not just through his perpetuation of horrific abuse, but by the shame such conduct brings to his identity and his family. According to Prince, the actions of a master before Wood were also "too indecent; with no shame for his servants, no shame for his own flesh."[8]

Referencing multiple sexual transgressions, Prince's repetition of "no shame" and "flesh" sound like the anaphora and vocabulary found in scripture—no surprise given the Moravian church that provides Prince with her first formal education. But the spiritual language of honor and shame also points to a wider ecclesiastical idea of the "true dignity of man," a concept that had been circulating in various printed sermons throughout the early-nineteenth-century. Appearing in the works various evangelical authors, the "true dignity of man" held that "the end of our Saviour's advent was to release us from…humiliation" and to remake the dignified as a representative of "the gracious purposes of God with regard to man…espous[ing] the cause of truth, of integrity, of freedom".[9] Dignity might here be defined as an innate, irrevocable, and intangible quality of individuality, while its opposing mood of shame takes on an almost auratic quality of fallenness and degradation, a spiritual blight that slaveholders brought upon themselves. (Philosophers might call such a virtue "deontological," or something unbound from worldly phenomena). This rhetoric of transcendental honor and shame in Romantic era slave narratives would not just appear in evangelical sermonizing, but in other major canonical British texts centered upon spiritual redemption and infamy. In a major section in Olaudah Equiano's famous *Interesting Narrative* (1789), for example, the narrator appeals to the "shame and mortification" of slaveholders who "see the partakers of your nature reduced so low." Equiano drives home his indictment with a quote from *Paradise Lost*, where the fundamentally degraded protagonist Satan announces "[u]ntam'd reluctance, and revenge" against those who oppressed him.[10]

Passing through a variety of vocabularies and sociopolitical subtexts in the early-nineteenth-century, the ethical keywords of dignity and shame connected to one's "moral

character" thus preoccupied all types of deontological moral thinkers, from independent, religious reformers like William Wilberforce—who said that "our ultimate end should be to form in ourselves that character which is to fit us for a higher state of existence in a better world"—to pioneering secular humanists like William Godwin, who, as we have seen, converted the old aristocratic creed of honor into a fresh, egalitarian moral code for moral Republicanism.[11] During these years, then, the politics of recognition was often a metaphysical affair. Man's dignity and shame were mostly tied to otherworldly concepts, and if you were to suffer a social dishonor or disgrace here on earth, you might later find redemption in a higher plane of existence.[12]

In Prince's *History*, however, the moral value of honor and shame—and its lexical cognates in dignity, decency, ignominy, and depravity—are not merely spiritual abstractions designed to appeal to the British public; moral *pneuma* that would later find their way later into the more worldly language of jurisprudence and the liberal discourse of human rights. Instead, the *History* suggests that the ethic of honor and its emphasis on the public conception of individual identity are deeply connected to physicality and the materialization of dignity within the body itself. In the main text of the *History* and the controversy that follows in its supplement, Mary Prince's own body becomes a location for honor, a civic virtue that was a major part of the individual identity of British citizens *and* contributed to the changing character of the state, which had emerged victorious in the Napoleonic conflict only to face a new critique of values from domestic reformists. In Prince's case, however, the construction of her public "moral character" through the body is profound: it entails the redemption of private dignity after a lifetime of physical degradation, despite Britain's longstanding conservative ideology of the "falleness" of

the sexed female body and its prejudice about the unrestrained licentiousness of black women in particular. In addition to highlighting the ability of black women to achieve honor and dignity outside of bounds of traditional racial or sexual categories, the text also demonstrates how the feeling of shame could be used to impose national unity on the topic of abolition. In both its primary and supplementary materials, the *History* makes a keen distinction between private shame—which would relegate a systemic problem to a series of individual aberrations—and public shame, a mood that would strike at the very core of collective, national identity.

The place of the shamed, fallen, or dishonored women in British literature had, of course, been well-established by this time. In *The Secret History of Domesticity*, Michael McKeon shows how female honor in particular—or the communal sense of a woman's sexual purity and chastity—became a recurring theme in novels from the seventeenth-century on, and was oftentimes used in narratives to show the arbitrary divide between private and public life—between the ethics of the individual and the community in which they had to live. McKeon also demonstrates how a dynamic between honor and gender reveals an immemorial cultural double standard. As we have seen in the spectacular quest for credit that occurs in *Rob Roy*, a man's honor could be recovered if it was publically squandered. But a woman's honor—internalized from the beginning as chastity—would be irretrievably lost once it was taken. (This is, of course, what happens to Beatrice in *The Cenci*, who is totally condemned—the only real place for her redemption is within Shelley's preface, outside of the boundaries of the narrative).[13] While the "tale of honor lost and regained" might have been an excuse to include lurid subject matter in novels in order to sell copies, McKeon notes that many of the women in these narratives would

have the power to manipulate the pliable categories of public and private life in order to recover their lost honor.[14] They were not always circumscribed by the chauvinistic legacy of chivalry, nor were they completely beholden to the sensational or exploitative nature of these texts.

However, unlike the British women protagonists in McKeon's analysis who would unsettle traditional expectations about gender in order to recover public honor, a West Indian figure like Mary Prince would have another momentous factor with which to contend: her race. Within the ideology that accompanied slavery, all black bodies were believed to be fallen from the start, and female sexuality had no private aspects to begin with: it was either the property of another person, or it was put on public display by way of circulating slave narrative or traveling curiosity shows—sensationalized or sentimentalized for consumption—or it was caricatured to support a racist ideology premised on physical difference. In any of these manifestations, black female sexuality became the public domain of an entire nation of British readers and consumers, regardless of the ethical position they took on slavery. Because this ideology prevented slaves from even *developing* a sense of private, integrity related to their sexuality, it might then seem like Prince would have no sense of womanly honor to even recover in the first place. Even if it was presented to a reading public who was amenable to abolition, the demand that slaves be given interiority, privacy, and dignity along with their freedom would be undercut by the utterly public and oftentimes sensational nature of documents that recorded the physical atrocities they suffered.

And yet, recent interpretations have held up Prince's body itself as a site of private resistance to slavery, as opposed to a canvas that simply records its

abominations.[15] Although the text shows black bodies in moments of overt degradation or sexual indignity in order to stir up sympathy, revulsion, or even sensation in readers, it also features scenes that hint at the possibility of physical dignity—scenes that register a move away from ancient conceptions of corporeal honor based on noble blood and towards a more liberal model predicated on respect for physical autonomy. If the *History* marks the emergence of a form of egalitarian dignity available to all bodies regardless of class or status, it also challenges a conservative version of British honor that tended to homogenize all persons under one ethic. Thus, the emergent version of honor in the *History* seems to ensure that different or exotic identities would not be erased by universality. While the text's balancing of racial identity between community and individuality can be read as an integral part of the prehistory of identity studies, the narrative also gestures towards the place of the body in early liberalism—a politics typically thought to prioritize disembodiment over physicality, detachment over rooted identity, and the psychological over the corporeal.[16] Not only does the *History* complicate the genealogy of liberalism, but I will argue at the end of this chapter that the text offers some solutions to the problems with contemporary liberal politics, especially with regards to the use of individual bodies and physical privacy for coercive purposes—a well-known critique of the current liberal order. Despite its being nearly two hundred years old, Prince's case might model a new type of a liberalism that can be more communal in its thinking, even while retaining the virtues of autonomy associated with classical liberalism and the recognition of minority difference that has been one of the hallmarks of progressive thought for the last forty years.

The following section looks at the *History* as it signifies the ethic of honor through representations of the black female body. After a brief overview of the theory of recognition in scholarship on the Black Atlantic—focusing on recent reimaginings of the Hegelian dialectic between master and slave —I discuss how early scenes link Prince's body to her moral character. Aligning the slave's beleaguered body with western institutions that traditionally instilled virtue and purity, these scenes equate the corruption of the black body with the corruption of venerable ethical establishments. By associating an abused physique with the degradation of childhood and domesticity, Prince becomes a figure of wholesomeness to which others would aspire to defend. Ultimately, however, these moments epitomize conservative patriarchal thinking that urged Britons to protect black people from their inevitable debasement and lowliness, instead of encouraging citizens to respect them for their exertion of propriety, honor, or "moral character."

In sections three and four, however, I argue that Prince confronts this benevolent condescension towards black women by emphasizing her physical dignity, even after it has been degraded by slavery. Prince's challenge, however, does not come from her asserting any sexual distinction or power within the plot—which would be impossible in most slave narratives. Instead, it comes from the way that Prince, her editors, and her amanuenses shape the text of the *History*, artfully omitting scenes of abuse and sexual shame and reconstructing a sense of Prince's purity and honorable wholeness through careful editing. While the finished text stands as a remade body for which to understand Prince as a dignified subject, the practice of textual collaboration reflects the social way in which honor and dignity are derived. The narrative thus performs two ideological maneuvers at once: it combats the long-held chivalric beliefs about the indelible taint that

sexual contact brought to women *and* it shows how changing the dominant representations of black female sexuality could be a collective goal, instead of one based upon individual willpower or authority. (Indeed, this reading also challenges scholarship that has seen the editor of the *History*, Thomas Pringle, as an interloper into Prince's supposed autobiography, stealing and reshaping parts of her subjectivity in order to serve his own professional aspirations).[17]

Section five addresses how the affect of shame in the *History* could stir up social change. The rhetorical opposite of honor in some sense, shame features prominently in Prince's original testimony as an emotion that joins bodies to propriety: to be shameful or indecent is to breach the customary physical boundaries between individuals; alternately, to have a sense of shame is to abide by a tangible, physical feeling that can enforce honor, a moral value that is admittedly abstract. Linking bodies to conduct, the text features a remarkable series of tactics that convert private, physical shame into a larger ethical condemnation of the public institution of slavery itself—including making anonymous the most abusive figures within the text in order to show the widespread, faceless character of dishonorable colonialism. Although the rhetoric of shame had long been associated with slavery—Wordsworth called it "the most rotten branch of human shame"—the text unites the personal shame of the body with the more collective remorse of the body politic, making the public debate on slavery the very private responsibility of the British citizen.[18]

A coda addresses the relationship of dignity and the body to liberalism. If the *History* marks a cultural and legal shift towards recognizing and protecting cultural differences—a movement usually associated with the rise of the New Left in the 1960s—

then it also addresses how bureaucratic structures of modernity might co-opt and manipulate physical sovereignty in a negative way. Prince's legal ambiguity as a citizen-alien, however, might offer a new model for liberal subjectivity in the face of increasingly coercive, corporatist nation-state.

II.

For most literary scholars, the term "recognition" rings Hegelian bells. Arguably the most famous part of Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807), recognition (or *Anerkennung*) is the crucial feature of the dialectic between master and slave, and it has played a central role in all kinds of sociopolitical and philosophical discourses for two centuries.[19] Put briefly, Hegelian recognition is the intersubjective activity through which individuals approach the concept of a singular, universal truth (or as he puts it "*Einheit in seiner Verdopplung*," singularity-in-doubleness).[20] However, the struggle for such recognition is always unbalanced and thus ongoing: for the master, recognition only occurs through his dominant relationship to the slave, and for the slave through her productive labor, which in its creative capacity eventually results in the reversal of their stations. (It would, of course, be easy to literalize Hegel's dialectic through the conditions surrounding Prince's *History*: the text becomes the ultimate product of her labor, a document that provides the rationale for Prince's freedom and therefore her recognition by others).

Contemporary writers have followed in the wake of Marx and Nietzsche's interpretation of Hegel. Instead of seeking metaphysical truth or the abstract machinations of self-consciousness, they approach Hegel through the material conditions underlying the connection between master and slave (and, in recent years, the relationship

between *actual* masters and slaves).[21] Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) is the seminal text in this tradition, claiming that "every ontology [attainable through Hegelian recognition] is made unattainable in a colonized and civilized society."[22] Recent scholarship of the Black Atlantic continues and expands upon Fanon's Hegelian approach. Paul Gilroy's extraordinary chapter "Masters, Mistresses, Slaves, and the Antinomies of Modernity" (1994) argues that a critical section of the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) "rework[s] the encounter between master and slave…[and] inverts Hegel's own allegorical scheme;" Moira Ferguson's essential introduction to the *History of Mary Prince* (1997) shows Prince enacting the Hegelian dialectic in a confrontation with her masters over self-manumission; and Susan Buck-Morss's "Hegel and Haiti" (2000) does penetrating archival work to make the case that Hegel's dialectic was inspired by newspaper and periodical accounts of actual slave revolts in the West Indies.[23]

Where does Taylor's politics of recognition fall in all of this? While it is itself a Hegelian theory that ties together disparate Romantic era texts like *Caleb Williams* and Prince's *History*— and had major impacts on discussions of multiculturalism when it was released twenty years ago—the essay also inspired some well-known responses. Notably, Drucilla Cornell and Sara Murphy's sharp reaction "Anti-Racism, Multiculturalism and the Ethics of Identification" (2002), called for a more "primordial conception of equal dignity" than the one Taylor puts forth—a conception that they argue is based on asserting the impossible authenticity of "already-constituted identities."[24] Even though Taylor invokes multiculturalism throughout his essay, Cornell and Murphy find his version of Hegelian recognition to be troubling, rooted as it is in an old-school Romantic

humanism that effaced difference in order to announce a general quality of "authenticity."[25] Despite its being written during the very age of Hegel and Romantic humanism, the *History* is one of the few nineteenth-century slave narratives that seems to correspond more with Fanon, Cornell and Murphy than it does with Taylor: it shows how a collective ethos like honor might also emphasize cultural diversity, thus destabilizing the renowned Hegelian dialectic between master and slave and its tendency to efface difference under the rubric of universality. As we shall see, however, this radical revision of Hegel is not immediately evident in the text, but exists amongst an assortment of traditional approaches to recognition in the nineteenth-century.

For slaves who wrote narratives of their horrific experiences and for the anti-slavery activists who printed them, one of the most prominent approaches to political and social recognition was, of course, through the influential culture of sensibility and sympathy. Characterized by shared feelings and mutual, visceral reactions, sympathy could make communal the suffering experienced by individual slaves by appealing to a shared physiology. To this end, the *History* is particularly well-suited, featuring as it does a multitude of explicit scenes that appeal to the reader's corporeal faculties. In an overt gesture to the reader after one such scene, Prince claims that

> what my eyes have seen I think it is my duty to relate; for few people in England know what slavery is. I have been a slave—I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows; and I would have all the good people in England to know it too, that they may break our chains, and set us free.[26]

Prince herself is not being abused in this scene, but she is describing what she saw, and, in effect, acting as an interlocutor for British readers. By assuming the place of the reader here—and by placing knowledge next to feeling—she bridges the gap between the

concerned, but perhaps too-complicit people of England and the physical abuses occurring in the West Indies. Prince hopes that British readers' will recognize the humanity of slaves when their bodily sensations overwhelm any rationalization of events happening thousands of miles away.

Passages like the one above show how bodies become one of the central points of identification between slaves and British readers in the *History*. The text, however, does not just report the negative consequences of slavery and forced labor upon bodies to, but offers a sustained argument about the body as a key location of dignity and virtue—oftentimes doing so by appealing to the ideological predisposition of the work's audience. In the initial scenes of the *History*, Prince describes her childhood with the Williams' family, what she calls "the happiest period of [her] life."[27] Treated well and blissfully ignorant of her status as a slave, Prince's familial relationship with the Williams suddenly ends when her mistress dies. The cruel patriarch Mr. Williams subsequently decides to sell Prince in order to raise money for a hasty new marriage, and she is then ripped away from Betsey, their benevolent daughter and Prince's childhood companion. Confronted with this domestic turmoil, Prince physicalizes her anguish: "[w]hen I left my dear little brothers and the house in which I had been brought up, I thought my heart would burst."[28] Although Prince returns to the heart frequently as a metaphor for sympathy (urging white people at many points to enlarge their hearts so that they may feel for those who do not look like them), its "bursting" here speaks to the dissolution of her family, the foundational social unit for Prince's British readers, especially those wedded to conservative maxims that saw the family as the central structure of civilization. The heart reflects the virtuous, nurturing behavior of the

Williams's: Mrs. Williams is a "kind-hearted good woman" and Prince describes her heart "softening" when she thinks back on the Williams children.[29] The converse is also true—absent hearts mean an absence of familial civility. When Prince is sold a second time to Mr. D— (an even crueler master than Mr. Williams), she turns the lack of his heart into a sign of tainted patrimony. "I must say something more about this cruel son of a cruel father," Prince exclaims, "—He had no heart—no fear of God."[30] This moral chain of being—from son to father to heart to God—links together divine and human benevolence through the intermediary of the heart.

There is a more secular way to read this passage. To have "no heart" is not only to be unashamed about one's brutality, but also to show an utter disregard for the family as the foremost site of social decency and the place where one would turn for the earliest validation and recognition of individual identity. Even if the heart sounds like what Donald Davidson might have called a dead metaphor—an extremely common way to denote sensibility and moral rectitude that had long since lost any pointed cultural meaning—Prince seems to use it in a specific way, implying that the heart is connected directly to familial virtue and stability. Repeatedly using the heart as a sign for domestic goodness early on in the *History*, Prince also establishes a larger association between moral value and bodily integrity that will prove key to her representation of status in British culture. When Prince's heart bursts, then, it is not merely a physical allegory for the intense pain of separation, but a metonym for the disrupted family itself, that primary moral institution to which British readers were loyal.

A conservative reading public in 1830 would have especially identified with the trope of the "stable domestic heart," as well as the sentimentality implied by such a

figure—even though numerous critics have shown that "domestic tranquility" was an appeal used to justify colonization and enslavement.[31] Other instances in Prince's childhood, however, contain more intricate arguments for the body as a site for the recognition of public character. After Mr. Williams sells Prince to Capt. I— in order to finance his quick new remarriage, Prince recalls an instance of cruel tutelage at the hands of the Captain's wife:

> The next morning my mistress set about instructing me in my tasks. She taught me to do all sorts of household work; to wash and bake, pick cotton and wool, and wash floors, and cook. And she taught me (how can I ever forget it!) more things than these; she caused me to know the exact difference between the smart of the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow-skin, when applied to my naked body by her own cruel hand. And there was scarcely any punishment more dreadful than the blows I received on my face and head from her hard heavy fist. She was a fearful woman, and a savage mistress to her slaves.[32]

In an unexpectedly sardonic turn-of-phrase, Prince converts the merits of learning domestic chores into a nuanced understanding of pain in all of its different varieties. The passage starts innocently enough with Mistress I— "instructing [Prince] in [her] tasks," "household work" that the young Prince might not yet associate with the forced labor of slavery. The first real training that she has received in her life, Prince's early instruction seems almost beneficial: the teaching begins innocently as a list of chores assigned for household self-sufficiency. However, the content and the tenor of the narrative changes dramatically when Mistress I— shifts from guidance to abuse. The body now becomes the location of a "cruel pedagogy" as Prince learns to discern the differences between rope, cart-whip, and cow-skin. A parody of instruction, this scene quickly converts the

tropes of constructive learning that are appropriate for childhood—tasks which engage both mind and body—into a type of destruction visited upon the body of a child.

Here the body uncovers another kind of cultural mystification that pro-colonial or even British readers agnostic to the abolitionist cause may have held about the enslaved: that the imposition of "good task work" (especially under the auspices of respectable, industrious families) would cultivate the moral character of young slaves. As the slavery apologist James McQueen writes in his defense of Colonial slavery (which also served as another indictment of Prince's character), "the conduct of [colonial families] towards [Mary] partook more of the familiarity and kindness of an alliance by blood than by bondage."[33] If the enslaved would not be seen as fully human, then they might be seen as productive laborers, known for their contribution to British productive power, and recognized as the subordinate kin of the colonists to whom they belonged.

However, Prince's anecdote about the tutelage provided by a "savage mistress" turns McQueen's proclamation (and others like it) upside down, serving as a parable about how slavery, in fact, distorts familial nurturing and care. Under the instruction of this "fearful woman" at the head of Capt. I.—'s family, suffering is conferred upon generations of young slaves instead of knowledge and cultivation, teaching that stood as a perverted form of household inheritance. The brutality of this scene would shock readers who may have been predisposed to viewing slavery as a system of beneficent paternalism, one that molded the identity of slaves into roles salutary to British domestic life. In addition, it would distort longstanding Enlightenment paradigms about the prelapsarian nature of childhood and the ultimately impressionable quality of the young mind. Receiving its only early impressions from various lashes, Prince's body becomes a

grim version of the *tabula rasa*, as the indelible blows mark her first "didactic" moments, and remain to remind her of the brutal experiences she endured: "how can I ever forget it," Prince interjects in the middle of the passage, emphasizing the permanence of her "education."[34]

Moving from a comfortable captivity to a fearful one, Prince and her editors build upon a frame narrative common to confessions: the dramatic loss of childhood innocence and its replacement with labor and other physical burdens. Through its representations of violence and powerlessness, this passage in particular characterizes Prince's blighted innocence and amplifies the postlapsarian quality of Turk's island. The quick alteration in Mistress I.— from helpful instructor to "savage mistress" reflects the swift and total degradation of the environment, from a place of psychological growth to a place of physical terror. If Mistress I.— starts as a pedagogue—stern but comprehensive in her teaching—then by the end of the passage she is nothing more than a physical instrument of punishment, a "cruel hand" or a "hard heavy fist;" a wholly violent body.[35]

What do these early scenes of childhood and education have to do with the construction of Prince's "moral character" throughout the *History*? How does a focus on the body contribute to the legitimation of different identities? Furthermore, how would the text's disruption of sacrosanct social arrangements like the family allow readers to recognize Prince as someone worthy of approbation and dignity? At the beginning of the narrative, Prince's body is not represented as "dignified" by any standard definition. It does not offer up a sense of wholeness, purity, or nobility and it does not heroically resist punishment.[36] Time and again, however, Prince's body is allied to kinship and education, major institutions of Western society that were thought to develop and nurture character.

When linked to the debilitated body of an innocent child, these organizations are portrayed as broken in the most primal sense. Even if readers were not affected by these scenes because they were suspicious of claims made by anti-slavery organizations about the egalitarianism of "true dignity," they would be forced to see slavery corrupting the very social institutions that had long promised to shape the identities of children in beneficial ways. In other words, readers would have to recognize slavery's subtle and pernicious effects on the same indelible establishments that were oftentimes used to justify the practice in the first place. The link between domestic and educational structures and Prince's body—especially to her young body—is particularly important because it also speaks to the "natural" or "innate" qualities that these structures were supposed to have (according to Burke, especially), and to their utter vulnerability under slavery. Conversely, to save Prince and other slave children like her from physical abuse would be to save the bulwark of British social identity and to protect the institutions charged with extending it. Preserving corporeal wellbeing meant preserving an entire ideology built around the enrichment of moral character.

The breaking heart, the "pedagogical" impressions on the body, the postlapsarian effects of labor—the inclusion of all of these recognizable corporeal figures disrupted by slavery makes for a brilliant rhetorical strategy by Prince, her amanuensis Susanna Strickland, her editor Thomas Pringle, and any of the other people involved in the production of the *History*. By focusing on foundational British institutions, the text could reach out to all sorts of different political constituencies; from colonialist sympathizers and Tories who could no longer rationalize slavery through the immemorial greatness of British paternalism, to evangelical reformers who argued for the dissolution of slavery on

the grounds of traditional Western morals, to radical agitators who would see in the *History* the very systemic injustice they had been combating for over a decade.

And yet, all of these political appeals assume a connection between the individual body and old, venerable British ideas about the social body. This is, in fact, a very conservative tactic because it insists that the expectations of traditional British readers are somehow written into the metaphoric logic of the *History*. In other words, the body used to symbolize British social identity is not an exotic one like Prince's, but an amalgam of different tropes common to centuries of Western—and white—culture. Thus, early in the narrative, the dignity of Prince's identity seems to be shaped only through representations that were already legitimate to British readers—or, to borrow from Charles Taylor, representations that would have registered as universal and hence "authentic." Here, the politics of recognition do not begin with the appreciation of difference, but with the perception of sameness.

III.

Later scenes in the *History*, however, address the racialized and sexualized foundations of English character itself, thus challenging how British society might determine honor and dignity. While character might be associated with a "dignified" physical body—and not entirely with evangelical or spiritual notions of the "true dignity of man"—the *History* critiques the common prejudice about the ineradicable degradation of those who lived in the colonies. Especially concerned with the wanton sensuality that was said to pervade colonial life, the text seems to subtly reform a long-held definition of

feminine honor as chastity or sexual purity—what might be called the original moral position of women in chivalry.

These connotations are particularly apparent in the charges leveled against Prince by John Wood—Prince's final master—who argues that Prince was a wanton and licentious woman, degraded by her own actions and unworthy of mutual recognition by the British state in which she gains liberty.[37] Even if Wood acknowledges that English law utterly supports Prince's freedom to courageously "walk out of slavery," Wood uses these allegations in an attempt to ruin Prince's public credibility. Her conduct according to Wood "was, before marriage, licentious, and even depraved…and unfaithful to her husband afterwards."[38] If Wood's claims were to take hold of public opinion, Prince would be thrust into British society as a pariah—legally and metaphysically free, but viewed with social derision and scorn. Edlie Wong has carefully noted that the *History* illuminates this "punitive form of freedom" through Wood himself, who taunts Prince, challenging her to make it on her own in London without any communal support. While liberty in England would be immediately felt by Prince as a loss of social belonging, it is also clear that Wood's testimony would *actively* perpetuate social contempt for Prince even after her escape, adding to the social alienation that she would already feel in being "turned out of doors."[39]

On the surface Wood's claims about Prince's physical depravity is predictable: the object-relationship is the only one he has ever had with his former slave. But Wood also plays upon a larger assumption held by apologists and anti-slavery activists alike about the moral laxity and licentiousness of the colonies, which should be briefly detailed. While the history of this ideology is long and complex, one of its major

touchstones is the famous "Hottentot Venus" Saartjie Baartman, an African woman who traveled from Britain throughout the continent as an exotic curiosity from 1810 to 1815.[40] Not only would white, European viewers view Baartman's body as an example of stark racial difference—fetishizing her body in an aesthetic act of domination—but they would also associate what they perceived as Baartman's exaggerated sexual characteristics with her character. Baartman's identity was thus defined by the perception of her body as a field for rampant sexuality and moral wantonness. As Paul Youngquist reminds us, this (mis)recognition of identity stemming from perceived physical irregularity contributed tremendously to the justification of slavery by supposedly liberal, reform-minded proponents of the continuing Enlightenment. "The norm of the proper body enforces an ideal [black bodies] materially transgress," Youngquist says, "making it possible to affirm universal human rights while denying their applicability to deviant flesh. Bodies, and not rational minds alone, must first qualify for those rights, proper bodies that measure up to the standards of raciology."[41]

While critics like Youngquist and Gilroy have discussed the exemption of black people from the legal and philosophical maxims of modernity due to their foreign bodies and the strangeness of the environments from which they hailed, a similar logic of displacement was at work with regards to the moral status of slaves.[42] Alive and well in the 1830s, this logic appeared in both manifestly racist, pro-colonial documents and in reformist, anti-slavery texts. In February of 1831—the very same month that the *History* was making its initial impact on the public—the popular abolitionist periodical the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* showed how such an ideology could function on the progressive side of the slavery debate. In the "Testimony of Rev. J.M. Trew on Colonial Slavery," Trew

argues for total manumission on the grounds of various religious precepts, including withholding one workday for slaves due to the sanctity of the Sabbath. Two other condemnations, however, specifically link dignity—and the lack thereof—to the body of slaves: the "moral malady…[and]…evil of corporal punishment" and the supposed sexual profligacy of the colonies.[43] Corporal punishment, or the legal sanctioning of lashes, degrades slaves and masters alike but in different ways. For masters, the lash becomes the "gratification of a cruel and merciless spirit" or an outlet for sadism and sheer physical power. For slaves, on the other hand, even the threat of corporal punishment corrupts moral character: "[k]nowing that any infraction, on his part…is to be met by a punishment, corporal in its nature, there will be induced a certain recklessness of character, a desperate heedlessness of consequences, which no floggings, however severe and frequent, can lastingly repress."[44]

The sexual profligacy of the colonies was an even more prevalent belief than the corrupting influence of lashes—the sensationalism of which may have been used tacitly to encourage the sale of the *History* and other narratives like it. In a section detailing the debauchery of the Jamaican colonies in particular, both masters and slaves are alleged to have "'an unblushing libertinism" that extends "among all ranks," and "that from the governor…to the slave, an organised system of open and shameless concubinage has prevailed for generations past, and still prevails throughout the whole mass of society—exhibiting a congregated accumulation of the grossest moral putresecence, that perhaps any place on the whole earth can present to view.'"[45] The excerpt goes on to specify this "concubinage" as a perverted form of domestic relations, that "all in short have every man his "*housekeeper*," (Jamaica parlance) established in open whoredom, living in his

house or attached to it according to circumstances."[46] Appropriate familial relationships are absent in Jamaica and elsewhere according to Trew, and the prevailing system extends to the entire colonial social arrangement—which was for the writer—in the most visceral of descriptions—a "disgusting picture."[47]

This 1831 anti-slavery document demonstrates that the depravity of character attributed to Prince was not simply part of a prejudice felt by colonial sympathizers and apologists, but a pervasive ideology that was held on both sides of the debate. For slavery apologists this meant accepting the discomfiting, but necessary indignity and degraded quality of the entire colonial operation (a presumption that continued throughout much of the nineteenth-century, and continues unabated today under global capitalism). But for reformers, a belief in the "undignified" colonial body was much more pernicious. It meant that slaves (and their masters, for that matter) carried an indelible physical taint that they could only remove by appealing to specific institutions of spiritual redemption—most likely the Anglican Church, with its canon-law on connubial relations and bodily chastity. It also meant that abolitionist narratives would have to perform a tricky double move. In order to convince the public of the righteousness of their cause, the narratives would have to emphasize the virtuous nature of their subjects, but in order to sell these narratives to a broad audience, their content might have to be sensational or even titillating. For instance, when Prince is finally instilled within a community of devout Moravian Christians she says that she "prayed God to forgive [her]" for her inherent sinfulness and for the transgressions forced upon her by cruel masters—which almost certainly included sexual impropriety.[48] These confessional scenes would have stirred up the evangelical sects of the British abolitionist movement—which had been

losing ground to more secularist groups bent on reform during the later 1820s and early 1830s—even while providing a larger public with scandalous media to consume.[49] Thus, if these scenes seem tailor-made for church-going readers and their tenets about spiritual purification, they might also support the widespread licentiousness of the colonial body, simultaneously reinforcing the cultural mission to chasten the colonies, and to plumb them for more lurid testimony.

However, not all of Prince's testimony about her physical identity falls between the extremes of piety and sensationalism. Instead, Prince sometimes distinguishes her all-important "moral character" through acts of physical decency and strength on earth. They contest the religious maxims about the need for Britain to chasten the colonial body, while intervening in a wider ideology that linked female honor and dignity to purity and subservience alone. In addition, they are honorable in the sense that I have been using in previous chapters—as a private awareness of public responsibility. In a moving scene featuring her third master Mr.D—, Prince tries to free the family's daughter from a bout of physical abuse, and in the process puts her own body in harm's-way:

> I was coming up the hill I heard a great screaming; I ran as fast as I could to the house, put down the water, and went into the chamber, where I found my master beating Miss D—— dreadfully. I strove with all my strength to get her away from him; for she was all black and blue with bruises. He had beat her with his fist, and almost killed her. The people gave me credit for getting her away. He turned round and began to lick me. Then I said, "Sir, this is not Turk's Island." I can't repeat his answer, the words were too wicked—too bad to say. He wanted to treat me the same in Bermuda as he had done in Turk's Island.[50]

Prince's "[striving] with all of [her] strength" here is notable for many reasons. Not only is it an example of a slave resisting the brutality of a master, but it is a remarkable

instance of a woman physically resisting a man. Prince's confrontation with her master is also anomalous because it happens in the service of another woman who has authority over her, emphasizing what many critics have seen in the *History* as a pattern of feminine (or even feminist) solidarity that avoids the racial and class hierarchies within British culture.[51] Her invocation of the legal and/or cultural differences between Bermuda and Turk's Island adds a final level of resistance to this scene, one in which the various degradations of slavery are systematically shed: from the abandonment of forced labor when Prince "put[s] down the water;" to the declaration of physical sameness when Prince stands up to Mr. D—; to the powerful assertion of cultural literacy when Prince shows her knowledge of the legal nuances separating the two islands on which she has labored.

This scene sounds like other famous Hegelian struggles between slaves and masters—most notably Frederick Douglass's defiance of Edward Covey that has been made famous by Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic*. But if Douglass's confrontation with Covey is made *through* the body—a sheer physical contest for recognition—then this scene with Prince seems to be a Hegelian struggle for recognition in terms of *the aesthetic quality* of the colonial body itself. After Prince drops her water and runs into the chamber where Miss D.— is being beaten, she details a series of three images of the body. While two of these images speak to the belief about the ignominy of colonial(ist) bodies, one is defiant of that belief, the image of Prince, who exclaims that she, "strove with all my strength to get [Miss D.—] away from him." Prince is on one side of the physical contest, in the center of the altercation is Miss D.—'s body, "all black and blue with bruises," and Mr. D.— attacks from the other side, "[h]e had beat her with his fist,

and almost killed her."[52] Three (not the traditional two) individuals are locked together in conflict here, and they each convey different cultural messages about the moral value of bodies. In the text, Prince transforms Mr. D.— into a single fist (much like she did with Captain. I—'s wife was earlier), representing the ability of colonial brutality to overtake the body and convert it wholly into an instrument of violence. Miss. D.—'s body, on the other hand, is slowly being turned by her father into a degraded vessel reminiscent of abused slaves—her skin color is literally being beaten black. Thus far, the ignominy of colonial abuse shows up on the body of both English father and daughter, reinforcing the notions about the corrupting quality of slavery on the body itself. But when Mr. D.— begins to turn "round and…lick" Prince, the body is no longer equated with moral corruption or degradation, but with outright integrity and potency. While an absence of any physical description after Mr. D.— turns on Prince may mean that the beating has stopped altogether, it is more likely that Prince's body is absorbing a punishment that is ineffectual at debasing her. In other words, while Prince's body has not been chaste, pure, or free of the taint of physical cruelty, it is resilient enough that such assault does not register as degradation. This is not to say that Prince has become inured to all abuse. But in the moment when the suffering of another comes to the forefront, Prince's moral body becomes irrepressible.

The sudden interjection that follows the beating—"Sir, this is not Turk's Island"—is an astonishing reversal in the disciplinary nature of the scene, as Prince replaces Mr. D—'s punitive fist with a quick, almost pedagogical command that stops him cold. In fact, this passage as a whole alternates between ethical messages like these and descriptions of sheer physicality, a pattern that formally connects "moral character" to

embodiment, making it difficult to separate the moral implications of the struggle from the bodies involved in that struggle. Another prominent example of this alternation between corporeal and moral rhetoric occurs when Prince tells the reader that she "strove with all [her] strength to" get Mr. D— away from a daughter he has "almost killed." Prince immediately follows this description of Mr. D.—'s intense, violent physicality by exclaiming that "[t]he people gave me credit for getting her away."[53] Here, recognition—*Anerkennen*— need not be inferred: the general public in Bermuda confers esteem upon Prince despite her infringing upon racial and sexual hierarchies, and for her physical intervention in the struggle they give her credit—a term that, as we have seen in previous chapters, was used extensively as an ethical keyword in the early-nineteenth-century. (Credit and credibility feature prominently in the supplement to the *History*, and are mainly used to denote an individual's reputation for telling the truth). After this interjection, the narrative swings back to a sentence featuring another body—Mr. D.—begins "to lick [Prince]"—only to be followed by a moral declaration, Prince's climactic retort that "this is not Turk's island." This alternation from physical to ethical rhetoric shows the resiliency of Prince's moral bearings even under threat of physical violence, a pattern that continues throughout the *History* as Prince repeatedly refuses to labor or to accept humiliation. But this moment is a special instance of refusal because it merges the corporeal and the moral aspects of resistance: the defense that Prince uses to successfully stop Mr.D.— from beating his daughter actually *is* an ethical argument. As the denouement of a physical conflict, such a response doesn't so much emphasize the separation of the body from the moral being—the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, as evangelical reformers might put it—but their unification.

This unification of ethical and physical rhetoric in the *History* could carry major ideological weight in the abolition debate. Readers on both sides who were predisposed to seeing every single body involved in the colonial enterprise as a location for "moral putresecence," would have to acknowledge that the "creditable" depictions of Prince offered some sort of rebuttal to the permanent degradation of bodies under slavery.[54] While colonial slavery may have corrupted the bodies of people like Mr. D—, his daughter, and those slaves who were coerced into abusing their own kin, it could also give rise to acts of robust confrontation where the body was at the center of moral rectitude and dignity. This is not to aggrandize the body of the slave by turning it into the location for total moral strength and utter virtuousness in the face of oppression. Such an exaggeration merely re-fetishizes black bodies, but rather in a way opposite to those like Saartje Baartman, the "Hottentot Venus" whose exotic physique was for European viewers a sign of her debauchery and licentiousness. Instead, scenes like this showed how Prince and her editors could defy the pervasive belief that the colonial slave trade tainted and debauched the physical decency of all those involved, and that, in response, it would require the purifying touch of religion or civilizing culture (patriarchal solutions on both the left and right side of the debate). These Moments in the *History* insist that the worthiness and dignity of black bodies be acknowledged in terms of the conditions in which slaves lived, and the actions that they might have taken against them, not on the ideological predispositions of British readers.

It should be noted again that the resistance here is not just against corporal punishment but against a reformist ideology that depicted the colonial body as utterly degraded and offering no semblance of "moral character." The inclusion of an idealized

audience in the end of this passage who might recognize Prince's "moral character"—those Bermudians who "gave [her] credit for getting [Miss D.—]" away—meant that British readers would come to see recognition through the eyes of another society, the Bermudean public who had already realized the dignity of Prince's act. And were they themselves to identify with the rectitude of such an act, the British might also come to see Bermudians as humane and decent judges of character, rather then excoriate them as a large, unfamiliar colonial people with wanton social mores. Fittingly, the passage ends with a gesture towards a new, hybrid public—Bermudian and British—as Prince refuses to repeat the series of "wicked words" hurled at her by Mr. D— and wards off the physical embarrassment readers might have felt if confronted with words "too bad to say" and to hear.[55]

IV.

But what about the dignity of Prince's body as it related to her sexuality—especially considering the pervasive prejudice that saw black femininity as unrestrained, or beholden to illegitimate household arrangements like open concubinage (or, as Trew puts it sardonically, "housekeeping")? The earlier scene in which Prince stops the brutal corporal punishment of her master's daughter demonstrates a temporary female bond across the color line, a rare instance of female empowerment in the highly patriarchal colonies. But the scene could also be read as an elision of racial difference, where feminist solidarity erases the real disparity in the way that white and black women's sexuality was treated in the 1830s. Given scenes like this, can there be any positive assertion of Prince's own sexuality in the text? Certainly, the *History* features one of the

more resolute protagonists in the genre of the slave narrative. Critics have pointed to the many instances where Prince shows exceptional resilience by tactfully refusing to labor, by taking advantage of insights as to the legal conditions of her own captivity, and by using the marks on her body to confirm the horrors of slavery in a way that a printed text could not. But is there any instance where Prince affirms her sexuality, a part of identity that was circumscribed by an entire colonial world-view legitimating institutionalized oppression *and* the pervasive domination of nineteenth-century woman in general?

The short answer is no. Despite other prominent associations between "moral character" and the body throughout the *History*, the text seems to confirm Prince's fundamental falleness through her sexual identity. Even if Prince were to find a normative place for her sexuality through marriage a "decent" freeman like her husband Daniel James, this arrangement would be underwritten constantly by the abuses that she suffered—and would continue to suffer—under slavery. Beyond the obvious physical maltreatment, Prince would be limited by an entire array of masculine control and influence designed to stifle any private, feminine identity. These cultural impediments are so strong in the *History* that they suppress nearly any agency she may have in choosing a husband or maintaining her marriage. Directly after Prince describes her marriage to Daniel James, a scene reveals the incapacity of West Indian marriage to redeem "blighted" femininity or to provide a renewed sense of physical dignity for women:

> When Mr. Wood heard of my marriage, he flew into a great rage, and sent for Daniel, who was helping to build a house for his old mistress. Mr. Wood asked him who gave him a right to marry a slave of his? My husband said, "Sir, I am a free man, and thought I had a right to choose a wife; but if I had known Molly was not allowed to have a husband, I should not have asked her to marry me." Mrs. Wood was more vexed about my marriage than her husband. She

> could not forgive me for getting married, but stirred up Mr. Wood to flog me dreadfully with the horsewhip. I thought it very hard to be whipped at my time of life for getting a husband—I told her so. She said that she would not have n— men about the yards and premises, or allow a n— man's clothes to be washed in the same tub where hers were washed. She was fearful, I think, that I should lose her time, in order to wash and do things for my husband: but I had then no time to wash for myself; I was obliged to put out my own clothes, though I was always at the wash-tub.[56]

She might not be on the trading block here, but Prince is involved in a transaction in which she is a totally passive object—she narrates, but she is nowhere to be found in the conversation between the two men. At the top of the passage, Mr. Wood and Daniel James parody the traditional fatherly blessing, a marriage ritual now contorted into an argument over the nuptial rights of freemen. Fearing repercussion from a colonialist like Wood, Daniel James even comes close to discarding Prince when pressed on his rights to marry her. The appearance of Mrs. Wood is an even more disturbing example of feminine disempowerment. Angry that her own domestic sphere could be disturbed by the marriage of one of her slaves, Mrs. Wood orders her husband to flog Prince, articulating her fury through a physical punishment made by a male proxy. Mrs. Wood's subsequent reaction to Daniel James's physical proximity makes even more intense the potential for female dishonor through physical violation: while the mingling of their clothing implies a fear of inadvertent miscegenation, Mrs. Wood also hints at her own powerlessness to resist "foreign" rape—or the mingling of bodies, the ultimate symbolic breach of the distance between colonizer and colonized. When Prince's own voice finally emerges at the end of the passage, she sublimates Mrs. Wood's concerns about violation and turns them into worries about domestic efficiency. According to Prince, instead of fearing the

presence of Daniel James, Mrs. Wood "was fearful, I think, that I should lose her time, in order to wash and do things for my husband." While Prince implies sexual congress with her new husband in this statement—"in order to wash and do things for my husband"—ultimately her final words focus on dismal forced labor, eliminating any implicit sense of desire she may feel for Daniel James and removing any hope she made have had for the creation of her own, private domestic space. In addition to the relative sense female powerlessness that runs throughout the scene, the non-recognition of Prince's own identity runs deep here. Not only does Prince have little influence on the conditions of her own marriage—an arrangement that is apparently negotiated by two men—but she has no say in any of the actions that could give her any self-worth: she is not privy to the conditions of her own marriage, she is not allowed to protest its dissolution, she is not even allowed to care for her own appearance, "obliged," she says "to put out my own clothes" from the wash. By the end of the passage, Prince is literally a body without a subject, at last conceding that she "no time to [do anything] for [her]self."[57]

With the all of the physical domination and repression suggested by this passage, how would British readers ever see Prince as a woman who symbolized the dignity and propriety of the black female body? Could they do anything but sympathize with Prince's fallen condition, which would be the familiar but ultimately limited response to a woman's sexual degradation?

If Prince does find a way to regain a sense of her own private sexual dignity and associate her "moral character" with the body itself, it is not through some redemptive event in the narrative—much like Beatrice Cenci, this would be nearly impossible given the abuse that she suffers and the system of subjugation in which she exists. Instead,

Prince and her editors modify the very textual conditions of her story in order to create an uncontaminated account of her physical dignity, keenly omitting much of the sexual degradation that she faced and giving readers the impression of Prince's own private, inviolable body. Unlike Beatrice Cenci, then, Prince could have some measure of control over the reception of her own identity. This strategy would also allow Prince's public reputation to remain honorable even while it emphasizes the humiliating details of Prince's experiences to illicit "the sympathy of strangers."[58] In turn, Prince could represent the fallen, helpless woman that would stoke British sentiment even while epitomizing a wholesome body worthy of full ethical recognition.

We have already noted how the text may have traded on such sensational content to sell copies, but we should also note how the omission of this content could provide for Prince a virtuous public identity and vindicate her character. Following her intervention in a bout of domestic abuse, Prince refuses to utter Mr. D.—'s "wicked words." An excision of language here allows Prince to adopt the role of public guardian, protecting her readers' ears from the ugly words uttered by Mr. D.—. This move is consistent with the pervasive suggestion throughout the *History* that language itself can be another type of physical punishment (a point made by theorists of performative language time and again).[59] At one point, for example, Prince admits lyrically that "words fell like cayenne on the fresh wounds of our hearts," confounding language, pain, and the physical and figural body. Later on, when a domestic servant threatens Prince, she recounts that "the threatening [was] so strong of what she would have done to me, that I thought I should have fallen down at her feet, I was so vexed and hurt by her words."[60] For Prince, humiliating words have the same power as body blows. The same logic that ties hurtful

language to physical violence extends to the protection of readers' ears in this scene with Mr. D.—. By removing his "wicked words" from the text, Prince not only protects her readers' sense of decorum, but she also defends their bodies from the shocking, dishonorable effects of certain types of speech.[61] Excising abusive material, the text attempts to put British readers under the protective care of a "decent" guardian in Prince, a figure who could now be recognized as a representative of feminine propriety, instead of a symbol for the debauched body of female slaves. More importantly, however, these textual omissions allow Prince to control and shape the private aspects of her own female honor by refusing to publicize all the details of the physical degradation that she suffered. These intentional exclusions within the text "remake" Prince's body so that it does, indeed, have a private realm that can remain untouched. Ironically, the public circulation of the *History* would bolster the sense of interiority and the physical privacy associated with feminine honor—once again recalling how a politics of recognition sees deep parts of "identity[as] partly shaped by" others.[62]

Thomas Pringle's supplementary remarks are also part of the strategy to vindicate female honor. Despite his declaration in the preface to the *History* that "no fact of importance has been omitted, and not a single circumstance or sentiment has been added," Pringle makes many major omissions in the supplement. One of the most striking omissions, occurs in a document that refutes point-by-point John Wood's claims about Prince's "troublesome" and "depraved" character—a tactic used by Wood to portray Prince as the typical, licentious black women, but also to appeal to the public's sensational appetite for such portrayals. One accusation stokes Pringle's ire in particular: Wood's claim that Prince behaved in a physically immoral way towards another female

with whom she was in a quarrel. "It would be beyond the limits of an ordinary letter to detail her baseness," says Wood in the original letter reproduced by Pringle, "though I will do so should his Excellency wish it; but you may judge of her depravity by one circumstance…" At this point, Pringle eliminates the "base" event from the text, telling the reader that "it is too indecent to appear in a publication likely to be perused by females."[63] On the surface, this bowdlerization could have been used to bolster Prince's credibility; in keeping with the subversive nature of the *History*, it stands to refute the pervasive ideology about the wantonness of West Indian slaves. (And it must be mentioned that this tactic could have even been Pringle's sly attempt himself to suggest prurience and sensation *through* exclusion—but in a way that turns the tables on Wood and other slavery apologists by showing how such lurid subject matter could only take root in the minds of colonizers and their apologists, not in the actions of the colonized.) In a larger sense, the omission of Wood's offensive anecdote from the compiled text of the *History* seems to emphasize the modesty of Prince's constructed, autobiographical subject—in other words, the text that is the public representation of "Mary Prince" refuses to sully its own pages by offering an anecdote about her degraded sexuality, whether the incident was fictional or not.

This textual effacement is in some ways analogous to the preservation of a "private body" frequently associated with female honor, where modesty comes from a sense of purity. While Pringle suggests that Wood's anecdote be omitted because it is fraudulent—a "vile calumny," as Pringle puts it— he also echoes Prince's own voice in the narrative of the *History*, a type of speech that omits "wicked," "indecent," or even "vile" words and events in order to create a sense of feminine honor and moral character.

What's more, the exclusion is not simply a defense of Prince's body alone, but of a larger social construct of feminine honor. When Pringle proposes to withhold the anecdote because the text is "likely to be perused by females," he expands a defense of Prince's honor to an entire network of proper women readers—those who may have been corrupted by hearing Wood's vile words as well. At first glance, this may look like overt chauvinism. But such a tactic allows Pringle to associate Prince with the paradigms of self-worth that were at the time reserved for white readers alone. Some might also allege that this is merely an instance of the gallant, white male editor stepping-in to save the day, and thus upholding traditional gender and racial divisions. Pringle's decision to defend women readers of all races, however, aligns with a pattern of feminine solidarity established by Prince herself, who comes to the aid of British and West Indian women alike throughout the narrative, and, in doing so, broadens the scope of a "politics of recognition" to include both black and white bodies.[64]

It should be noted that this extension of honor (or mutual recognition) once reserved for white, British women alone does not necessarily mean an effacement of Prince's own identity—what Fanon terms the exclusive ontology of the colonized from the colonizer. While Pringle may collaborate with Prince in order to recover a version of western honor usually reserved for British women, the *History* also features a momentous critique of British beliefs about black female licentiousness, thus illuminating the very assumptions that made up a racist ideology, and consequently opening the door for a new paradigm of black identity to take root in Britain. Finally, while Prince might appeal to various conservative versions of honor reserved for white British women throughout the text, she does seem to keep her distance from that subject position. Her concluding plea

for the recognition of a common humanity tellingly ends not with her assimilation into bourgeois British society, but with a return to Antigua and live out her days with her freeman husband.

Because the *History* has so many scenes representing the degradation of slave women, it seems impossible that Prince could ever redeem her own feminine honor through some momentous event within the narrative itself. The textual organization of the *History*, however, performs the very modesty that Prince wishes to demonstrate to British readers. (Remarkably, this is another subtle way in which the *History* resembles *Caleb Williams*, where modern honor is not a constative, but a performative ethic). In other words, even though the events in the narrative make public the sexual dishonor that Prince suffers, the structure of the text itself implies that Prince's dignity might just remain private and untainted.

V.

In the final paragraph of her narrative, Mary Prince moves away from her account of the indignities that she suffered and denounces the colonial slaveholders who perpetuated them. "The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery—that they don't want to be free," says Prince, echoing the rationalizations made by slavery apologists like James McQueen, "that man is either ignorant or a lying person…Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves."[65] Given all of the shame that Prince feels throughout the *History*, this is an appropriate wish for her oppressors, a kind of transference of the disgrace that Prince experienced while enslaved. A common emotion in the text, shame marks some of Prince's most private and confessional moments, as well: when she is

forced to bathe Mr. D.—, Prince says that her "eyes were so full of shame" and goes on to chastise him for having "no shame for his body, no shame for his own flesh;" reflecting on the physical acts she was compelled to perform while enslaved, she admits to being "too much ashamed to speak" at a meeting of Moravian churchgoers; and when she is unable to labor any longer, Prince feels "shame at being obliged to apply for relief whilst I had strength to work."[66] Because the text aligns shame repeatedly with transgressions and failures of the body—or the boundaries between one body and another—Prince's final rebuke of her tormentors seems deeply personal and retributive.

But in the concluding paragraph of the narrative, Prince implies that the shame of slavery should not just apply to her own tormenters—Mr. Williams, Mr. D.—, and John Wood—but to an entire group of apologists, "[s]uch people" that continue to support these physical transgressions against other humans. Here, Prince reveals the social component that is always a part of shame, the sense that shame always includes some break with public custom or propriety.

If framed in the sociopolitical terms that I've been using throughout these chapters, shame is the opposite of honor: where honor is the private awareness of public responsibility or self-worth, shame is the private awareness of public indignity. Shame would therefore apply to both the corporeal and civic life of slaveholders and apologists, and makes physically palpable the systemic disgrace of slavery. The *History*, however, does not just shame slaveholders and apologists but also rebukes a wider British reading public who would be complicit with their practices. Using shame to connect the public dishonor of the body politic to the private mortification of the individual body, the text turns the British public's repressions and rationalizations about slavery into a visceral,

affective state that could no longer be ignored. By concentrating on the faceless nature of shameful bigotry and cruelty, the *History* points to the way that colonialist prejudice became part of the structures of British social norms, and manifested itself ubiquitously and indirectly—an effectively anonymous ideology that was woven into the very fabric of citizens' everyday life and their material existence.[67]

Why even make a case for the physical nature of shame? Isn't the connection of shame to the body self-evident? What role does shame play in the day's literary culture, and what of its potential uses in abolitionist critique? Would its scenes of bodies in potentially shameful acts actually serve an amoral, sensational purpose instead of an ultimately virtuous one?

For many texts in the Romantic era, shame is a word with a family resemblance to a host of other familiar terms: embarrassment, remorse, guilt, sin, even guilty pleasure. Replete in the work of Keats, Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley respectively, such moods have engaged Romantic criticism for over a generation. Like shame, they align the private feelings or sentiments with a broader sense of social failure, blunder, or discredit. (This, of course, might serve as a vulgar definition of Romanticism itself, with its emphasis on how passion and self-awareness are precipitated by a collapse of political and/or philosophical ideals).[68] But moods like shame need not just be the private reaction of an individual to the outcomes of history—a despondent turn inwards made by the brooding poet after a loss of some ideal, a story often told by the New Historicists of the 1980s. Instead, a mood might be quite public and constructive, delineating the very horizons of a culture's awareness of itself, what Romanticists like Thomas Pfau have called "an oblique affective substratum that is not (at least not *yet*) thought" or allied to

consciousness within a given moment in history, and the representations that can arise from it.[69] While slavery might continue to be defended on rational or ideological grounds, a developing mood of shame associated with it could precipitate an expansion of what Raymond Williams's famously called a "structure of feeling," the foundational sentiments to which a culture appeals in their politics and ethics—something like an affective version of common sense.[70] In other words, an expanded sense of public shame about slavery—and its betrayals of cherished civic ideals like liberty and honor—might convert the abstract but impotent discomfort citizens felt about slavery into what critic Lauren Berlant and social psychologist Jonathan Haidt have called an intuitive, visceral response that could precipitate a change in the very nature of the abolitionist debate.[71]

While the repeated invocation of shame in the *History* aligns it with some of Romanticism's most canonical literature (and with its emphasis on guilt and transgression, *Caleb Williams* in particular), the text more importantly indicates a shift in the way the concept of shame was used by the abolitionist movement—from a moral or religious abstraction to a gut feeling. Originally, the meaning of shame in abolitionist literature was largely derived from scriptural language and evangelism. Just five years prior to the publication of the *History*, a popular progressive periodical *The Republican* challenged "true Christians" to view slavery as a moral atrocity worthy of shame: "[t]he language of the New Testament begets a certain turn of mind in the true Christian; it teaches him to look upon slavery as something base and shameful, and to consider liberty as something good in itself, and worthy to be esteemed."[72] Here, slavery tests the very spiritual worthiness and character of Christian Britons. *The Imperial Magazine* was even more direct in its association of private, individual shame with public, national disgrace.

Writing just four months after the publication of Prince's narrative in August of 1831, the periodical noted that "in the bosoms of pious and devout men, a holy indignation at the atrocity of those oppressors takes precedence of every other feeling; and thousands of honourable Britons feel so greatly ashamed of the actors in slavery, that they hold themselves disgraced by their national affinity."[73] While a transcendent sense of shame is located once again "in the bosoms of pious and devout men," this time the pall of disgrace is cast over the entire nation. Public shame becomes so strong that it could even effect "national affinity"—a danger that would have been tacitly underscored by the agitation preceding the Reform Act of 1832. While shame certainly encompassed a wide variety of meanings in British society, more often than not the abolitionist periodicals of the day aligned it with spiritual culpability and a national reputation that were abstract and auratic—important parts of any imagined community, to be sure—but not absolutely connected to the visceral or intuitive life of citizens.

Even Hannah More's famous "The Black Slave Trade: A Poem" (1788)—reprinted in a compilation published just months before the *History*—distinguishes shame from other basic affects like sympathy and pain:

> Plead not, in reason's palpable abuse,
> Their sense of feeling callous and obtuse:
> From heads to hearts lies Nature's plain appeal,
> Though few can reason, all mankind can feel.
> Though wit may boast a livelier dread of shame,
> A loftier sense of wrong, refinement claim;
> Though polish'd manners may fresh wants invent,
> And nice distinctions nicer souls torment;
> Though these on finer spirits heavier fall,
> Yet natural evils are the same to all.[74]

For More, shame is not so much tied to the body and to the passions as it is tied to reason—to the "livelier dread" of the wit or the intellectual faculties in general. Although More's invocation of shame directly follows her egalitarian pronouncement that "all mankind can feel," shame seems to be more of a rational phenomenon then an emotional one, allied more to the juridical "loftier sense of wrong" and to public customs of "refinement...[and] polished manners." More may acknowledge the social status of shame here, but it is in no way a "natural evil" like the feeling of pain. For those who are enslaved, then, shame is not the primary concern: More does not recognize dignity as a natural right because shame is not yet been established as a natural evil—or, put another way, shame has not been established as a broad "structure of feeling," a kind of general current of ignominy deeply felt by citizens that would allow its place in abolitionist politics to become intuitive. Even more revealing is what the poem says about the nature of shame for British citizens. Instead of being a condition that stirs one physically to change their consciousness about an issue, the shame of slavery blights the spirit of Britain, abstract and quasi-religious as it that spirit may be. Laying the ground for periodicals at the time of the *History*, More goes on to say that shame has been "Inscrib'd by Slavery on the Christian name," and taints the identity of all believers. [75] Such a feeling does not yet apply to bodies themselves but instead to the sacred marker of "the Christian name."

While the *History* draws upon this well-established rhetoric of shame and makes especially prominent the relationship between individual and national disgrace emphasized by More and other abolitionist writers, it also converts shame into a bodily affair, as opposed to a rupture in the national aura, a taint on the immortal soul, or an

indelible blight on Christian identity. No longer tied to spiritualism or abstraction alone, shame has a physicalized, almost contagious nature, gaining the ability to spread to readers who would ignore the harms of slavery. Here, Prince re-imagines shame as one of More's affective, "natural evil[s]," instead of an abstract lapse of "moral character":

> How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts?...Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner?—women that have had children exposed in the open field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women, and children are exposed alike. Since I have been here I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things. They tie up slaves like hogs—moor them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses never were flogged;—and yet they come home and say, and make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. It is not so. All slaves want to be free—to be free is very sweet. I will say the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend, Miss S——, is now writing down for me. I have been a slave myself—I know what slaves feel—I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery—that they don't want to be free—that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave say so. I never heard a Buckra man say so, till I heard tell of it in England. Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves.[76]

Shame is associated with the dehumanization of the body, its "disgrace[ful]" conversion into a "beast[ly]" form coming from forced nudity and corporal punishment. The prolificacy of exposed bodies and the violence under which they suffer show that colonial slavery disrupts the most basic prohibition between individuals: the boundary between

one body and another, a limit that is supposed to regulate the "modesty and decency" of British readers. In other words, when British citizens turn into colonialists, they lose a sense of the customary division between private and public life—as Prince says earlier in the text, there is "no shame for [the] body, no shame for [one's] own flesh."[77] After this, Prince turns to the civic realm, and wonders aloud "how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner," only to return to England and "make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery." Here, the conversion of the slave's body into something "no more than a beast" is reflected in the colonists themselves, who suddenly lose their Burkean manners when they go abroad and "forget God and all feelings of shame."[78] At this moment in the narrative, the traditional boundaries between individual bodies also relate to national borders, and their ability to delineate certain habits of good character. In this way, the very act of imperial domination—"when English people…go out into the West Indies"— becomes a kind of excessive body, extending itself into the space of others and symbolizing a total break-down of moral boundaries and social restraint.

When the colonists return, however, they rationalize their own wanton behavior by announcing that "slaves be quite happy in slavery." Fittingly, the "truth" of such beastly conduct is figured as a naked body around which the colonists "put a cloak" of ideology in order to cover their shameful practices. In her *Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004), Sara Ahmed makes a profound point about shame itself, noting that it presupposes the exposure of the body as well the impulse to conceal it (the original etymology of shame, Ahmed notes, is to hide or cover).[79] With this in mind, we might then say that the ideology of "beneficial slavery" used to cover the truth of colonial

brutality is just another part of the process of shame, and that in order to protect their individual self-worth—or dignity—the colonists readopt the cloak of propriety when they return to England. But Prince's narrative will also circulate throughout England, and it intends to—almost literally—expose the disgraceful behavior of colonists and apologists so that "[s]uch people [will be] ashamed of themselves," feeling "what slaves feel" on the body, and bringing up a comparable physical shame in all of those citizens who "heard tell of [such a pernicious ideology] in England."

In this astonishing passage from the final paragraph of her narrative, Prince depicts shame as a condition affecting the entire social body of England and makes public an emotion usually reserved for private life. By removing the cloak of ideology that was used to preserve the dignity of a burgeoning empire, all citizens might "know what slaves feel" and experience the touch of national shame, a mood tied deeply to identity and the recognition of self-worth. Not only does the passage emphasize how shame was employed in the fight to recognize the humanity of black colonials, but the entire *History* modifies the way in which abolitionist literature approached the concept of shame itself. Once thought of as an abstract lapse in manners or social propriety, or as a theological blight on one's character, shame is figured here as a corporeal state that would unsettle a "good" British public's tacit complicity with slavery, and serve as a corrective to injustice. In other words, Prince hopes that shame will turn the disembodied, public disgrace of slavery into an embodied, private ignominy that could be felt by individuals deeply. This hope for national shame would not be a direct retaliation for all the abuse that Prince suffered while in Antigua, Turks Island, and in London with the Wood family. Instead, powerful civic shame could make the humiliations of slavery that had been

rationalized and disregarded by English colonial apologists somatically undeniable. "Such people," Prince reminds the reader, "ought to be ashamed of themselves."

A pertinent question arises out of Prince's final words: doesn't shaming always imply some kind of deep, personal retribution, especially because it involves the very identity of individuals, and oftentimes concerns their most profound beliefs or their deepest intuitions about moral value? This is certainly the case when shame is used to single-out and condemn the actions of lone persons—when people are used as scapegoats or censured in acts of public expiation. A good example of this retributive type of shame can be found in John Wood's own accusations against Prince herself, where he presents a single licentious event as evidence for people to "judge of her depravity."[80] Through his allegations, Wood attempts to shame Prince out of any credibility she may have with the public. Interestingly enough, Wood is trading on another "structure of feeling" here: the foundational sentiments of the average reader towards the existing colonial enterprise, and the supposed domestic tranquility it was supposed to provide to indigenous peoples.

But, Wood's retributive shame seems petty and unconvincing when framed by a text that repeatedly insists on the communal character of shame and its connection to the enterprise of slavery. In short, Wood's use of shame here seems less like a vast "romantic mood" or a "structure of feeling"—what Williams, Pfau, Berlant and others have claimed might be employed to constructively reflect on history, politics, or the very values of a social system itself—than it does as a brazen legal tactic to be deployed within the system itself. Addressing a broad public with its castigations—"such people out to be ashamed of themselves"—the text of the *History* does a good job distinguishing between the

retributive, individual variety of shame illustrated by John Wood, and the more valuable communal shame invoked by Prince and Pringle.

Another way the text does this is by omitting the critical mark of individual identity: one's name. The removal of proper names has, of course, been a novelistic convention since time immemorial, and readers would have seen the blank spaces in the surnames of individual slave masters like Captain I.— and Mr. D.— as a means for preserving their anonymity and personal claims to honor. Such anonymity would of course protect Pringle from libel charges (beyond the one leveled at him by James McQueen) even as it would uphold the character of the abusive slaveholders back home in England. But the use of anonymity would also impel readers to view these figures as symptomatic of a greater social problem, one that is not attached to discrete individuals, but to an insidious belief that could be nameless, faceless, and ubiquitous: "such people [who believe in the beneficence of colonialism]," as Prince implies with telling imprecision, might be your good English neighbor. Along with Prince, Thomas Pringle's supplemental material offers examples of shame and demoralization that are detached from specific identities, but can be ascribed to an entire public system of oppression. Sounding almost like a legal brief, Pringle's supplement to the *History* makes a case for public, anonymous shame as a corrective to injustice:

> But there may be some persons into whose hands this tract may fall, so imperfectly acquainted with the real character of Negro Slavery, as to be shocked into partial, if not absolute incredulity, by the acts of inhuman oppression and brutality related of Capt. I—— and his wife, and of Mr. D——, the salt manufacturer of Turk's Island. Here, at least, such persons may be disposed to think, there surely must be some exaggeration; the facts are too shocking to be credible. The facts are indeed shocking, but unhappily not the less credible on

> that account. Slavery is a curse to the oppressor scarcely less than to the oppressed: its natural tendency is to brutalize both. After a residence myself of six years in a slave colony, I am inclined to doubt whether, as regards its demoralizing influence, the master is not even a greater object of compassion than his bondman. Let those who are disposed to doubt the atrocities related in this narrative, on the testimony of a sufferer, examine the details of many cases of similar barbarity that have lately come before the public…which are sufficient to prove, independently of all other evidence, that there is nothing in the revolting character of the facts to affect their credibility; but that on the contrary, similar deeds are at this very time of frequent occurrence in almost every one of our slave colonies.[81]

Pringle's opening line on "[t]he real character of Negro Slavery" is revealing. Not only does it return us to the question of "moral character," but it does so by personifying the very institution around which the *History* is centered. By turning "Capt. I—— and his wife, and of Mr. D—" into manifestations of an entire public personification of "Negro Slavery" the passage has the ironic effect of depersonalizing their brutalities. Although Prince herself shows how individuals like Mr. D.— could be shockingly distinctive in their maltreatment of her—"how could I ever forget," she says time and again—Pringle takes pains to characterize the entire colonial identity as common; in essence, to make anonymous people like the nameless Mr. D.— appear as a mere extension of a collective ethos and its "demoralizing influence" on the nation and its colonies.[82] Certainly, Pringle wants to establish the cultural and legal credibility of Prince's tale by emphasizing the similarity of shocking details from multiple slave narratives. But he also wants to show that the brutality of colonialism is so prevalent that it cannot be considered an aberration. Collective brutality defines the very character of Negro Slavery. It is not a deviation from

the ultimately paternal benevolence that British citizens believed colonials held towards their slaves, but the very public identity of slavery itself.

If British readers were unmoved by revelations that ordinary, anonymous citizens could be implicated in a vast system of "inhuman oppression"—if they were still unable to find private culpability in the public shaming of Britain's imagined community—Pringle emphasizes his point further by recording the consequences of Negro Slavery on the identities of these anonymous figures. Under Negro Slavery's "demoralizing influence," the slave master loses his own sense of private dignity, a result of colonial life that is so common that Pringle is "inclined to doubt whether…the master is not even a greater object of compassion than his bondman." Here there is another variation on the Hegelian theme, as both lord and bondsmen are subjected to the public character of Negro Slavery that steals their private self-worth. With this in mind, the physical shame or "demoralization" of Negro Slavery also carried with it an additional, existential type of brutality. To be subjected to Negro Slavery as either master or slave would be to risk the loss of private identity altogether: a result worse than feeling shame is not being able to feel at all.

In her study on the role of disgust and shame in legal opinion *Hiding from Humanity* (2004), Martha Nussbaum argues that modern civilization should avoid shame as a strategy for enforcing laws and customs. Enforced shame, Nussbaum says, marks a citizen as "a member of a degraded class…[where] there qualitative distinctness [can] not be seen, and their separateness [can] not be acknowledged."[83] Nussbaum recalls Mary Prince's own appeal for full social recognition and dignity within the *History*—a text that shows the persistence of the life of honor even under the most oppressive circumstances

of modernity. And yet the *History* also uses shame as a viable, constructive affect that had the ability to address both national and private identity, to shape public opinion, to influence legal action, and perhaps to chip away at a lingering ideology about the benevolence of colonial masters and their practices. Pringle and Prince's shaming of a mass, anonymous British readership—which could include colonials, colonial apologists, lawmakers, indifferent British readers, even abolitionists whose arguments functioned only through condescension—has the seemingly contradictory effect of being a "project of reintegration and reparation," as Nussbaum once again puts it, one predicated upon the "inclusion of all human beings in [a] community" that could recognize the mutual dignity of the enslaved.[84] Stronger and perhaps more tangible than abstract, spiritual guilt, the shame of colonial brutality might be felt deeply in the body of the individual reader of the *History*, even as it made clearer shame's public character, which extended across Great Britain and the expansive national boundaries of its colonies in 1831. Such an expansion of collective remorse was perhaps one of the driving forces behind the Slavery Abolition Act two years later, a document known for its manumission of nearly all slaves in British colonies, but one that can also be seen as the formal declaration of a more global politics of recognition.

VI.

Towards the end of the Romantic era Britons came to recognize the dignity of humans who did not resemble themselves in part because of the emergence of a wider sense of shame, a structure of feeling that may have been able to go beyond some of the limited meanings associated with it—like spiritual fallenness derived from a Christian

tradition, or the disgrace relegated to the single nation-state. This wider relevance of shame might have also served as a way for citizens to acknowledge more deeply their negligent governance of distant lands that were under their control. But perhaps this conclusion sounds too optimistic. The invocation of Hegel as forefather to the politics of recognition is, for starters, vexed. Hegelian historiography presupposes a kind of teleology were tyranny is eventually defeated and any inherent contradictions will be inexorably overcome in a great procession towards reason and freedom. Like many texts in the nineteenth-century, the *History* can thus be said to transmit a Whiggish—and therefore ideologically distorted—view of history: Westerners become more global (or at least more globally-minded); there is a small but important amplification of secularism as it relates to a "shared" or more universal body that disregards sectarian or racial divisions; the Hegelian "arc of history bends towards justice," and so on. The codification of physical privacy rights and laws in seemingly ineradicable, written forms is another cornerstone of bourgeois liberal history that seems to find expression in the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 and in later treatises on human rights—whose rhetoric of honor and shame was in part made possible by texts like the *History*.[85]

But it is also possible that the *History* and the Slavery Abolition Act tacitly contain a number of illiberal elements. For instance, while the Act granted West Indian slaves freedom in the abstract, it also turned them into indentured servants, guaranteeing that their bondage would be coerced by way of labor and livelihood instead of by chains and punishment. In addition, while the Act may have led to greater British awareness of colonial atrocity, and resulted in the extension of British law to the colonies, such an expansion of law could also have the effect of formalizing English dominion and giving

legitimacy to the encroachment of imperial power, giving more legal grounds for the "civilizing mission" of imperial Britain. Finally, the extension of bodily dignity and privacy to slaves in the form of abolitionist legislation puts moral imperatives in the safekeeping of the state alone. While the state might beneficially recognize the categories of physical dignity, bodily privacy, and corporeal shame—all of those that had long been the focus of abolitionist periodicals and slave narratives like the *History*—they could also convert this "bodily morality" into categories to be administered only by legitimate legal organizations and bureaucracies. Here, we are a long way from Godwin's ideals about honor and dignity outside of the authority of institutions.

In other words, the *History* can be read as a text that both upholds liberal politics and heralds some of its most well-known theoretical problems. In what follows, I want to suggest that the text responds to some of liberalism's current contradictions through its radical articulations of political subjectivity and ethical citizenship, thus presenting a way to modify and preserve such a system in our time of global crises.[86]

Above I mention how the British state's legal sanctioning of liberty in Antigua also meant the regulation of its bodies. In this way, the calls for physical dignity and liberty in the *History* suggest an early example of biopolitics, where the codification of physical sovereignty covertly serves new structures of management, regulation, and even domination. In Foucault's formulation, the state grants physical freedom to subjects so that they will take it upon themselves to become healthy, rational workers who provide for its markets—so that workers will fixate on "care of self" instead of capitalist exploitation.[87] Prince's own statements that manumitted Antiguans would work just as hard as enslaved ones correspond to this formulation, and, throughout the narrative,

Prince says that she "did not like to be idle," demonstrating that if liberated her labor would be made a part of her own, personal ethos.[88] (It should be noted, however, that Prince also says that black colonials "don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment, and proper wages like English servants." She recognizes the potential for the exploitation of free laborers, even if confronting it is secondary to her goals of manumission and general cultural recognition).[89] If this type of biopolitics is at the heart of today's neoliberal order—where individuals are expected to internalize the hegemonic directive to add value in all areas of their life—then the *History* is just one example of how such a directive came to fruition well before the mid-twentieth-century.

Paul Youngquist sees Atlantic slavery through the lens of another philosopher of biopolitics—Giorgio Agamben. In Youngquist's article, "The Mothership Connection," he dubs the slave-ship a vehicle for the spread of the liberal-capitalist order. With the ability to convert Agamben's category of bare life (*zoe*) into literal human capital, the slave ship combines "[g]lobal mobility and economic prowess…[into a] floating factory of sovereignty and terror, a constitutive space for the production and circulation of liberal democracy."[90] In Youngquists's ingenious reading, slavery makes possible the spread of this system by expanding globally the private property relations that liberalism was, in part, intended to protect. While liberal thought later gives rise to declarations of universal human rights—which include prohibitions on human trafficking (a central irony, Youngquist might point out) and commonly feature the right to bodily privacy, dignity, and autonomy—these declarations will inexorably link the body to the nation state and its own systems of regulation. (It is no surprise that Agamben focuses specifically on

declarations of rights as a central pretense of liberal modernity in his seminal text *Homo Sacer*).[91]

The written declarations of sovereignty central to liberalism—especially those that concern the privacy and dignity of the body—are thus revealed by these critics to have controversial histories and insidious designs.[92] For Youngquist, liberal declarations of physical egalitarianism and freedom are underwritten by a legacy of subjugation that begins with Locke's equating of liberty with private property, a socioeconomic arrangement that can be spread by way of the slave ship. For Foucault and Agamben, to acknowledge bodily privacy through legitimate documents is simultaneously to acknowledge the modern nation-state's power to designate and regulate pure (or bare) life. According to Agamben, this is the main paradox of liberal sovereignty, where subjects may hold sacred rights like physical dignity inside of the juridical order, but can only be provided those rights by an entity outside of that order that may suspend, or "except" those rights at any time.[93]

Does Mary Prince ever become fully subjected to this insidious liberal-capitalist order, despite supporting it through her labor? Is she ever fully recognized by a state that grants her sovereignty? Even after 1833, would she have the same status as other Englishmen? If so, would Prince's body by thrown into the double bind of sovereignty that Agamben announces? While the *History* and texts like it would prompt further abolitionist legislation that granted sovereignty to black bodies throughout the colonies—and eventually lead to a more widespread recognition of their physical dignity—such laws in Agamben's sense would lead to an order that still had claims over physical sovereignty.[94] In addition, Thomas Pringle's publication cannot be separated from the

context of an expanding literary industry that banked on the sensation produced by graphic slave narratives. Driven in part by the mid-nineteenth-century literary marketplace, Pringle may have hoped to claw himself out of debt by becoming a popular purveyor of what he calls an "astonishing *History*." Thus, for all of its social virtue, the *History* can be seen as Pringle's somewhat cynical attempt to trade on the scandalous content of slave narratives—and to commodify Prince once again—in order to bring about greater literary celebrity and financial stability.

Even if the text hints at the expansion of a liberal-capitalist ideology—through Prince's professions of selfless labor after her manumission, through the expansion of a physical sovereignty for which the text advocates, and especially through Pringle's attempts at literary-commercial celebrity through the publication of the *History*—it also gestures towards certain reforms and restructurings of liberalism that might preserve it in the face of strong critique. One of the ways in which the *History* might be seen as addressing the problems of liberal subjectivity is through Prince's political status. While a major political goal of the *History* is to get readers to accept Prince as a citizen worthy of full British recognition and liberal sovereignty, at the time of its publication Prince would not have been formally recognized by a nation-state or subjected to its various ideological machinations. Such illegitimacy is not nearly as disempowering as it might first appear: while Prince remains outside of the formal mechanisms of state power—not yet given rights by British laws or declarations—she *is* recognized by the Anti-Slavery Committee, a group of British abolitionists and agitators. The Committee acknowledges that the manumission of the colonies would be an ideal solution to Prince's dilemma, but they also recognize that state authority is not a precondition of Prince's right to dignity or

privacy. At root, they want Prince to be able to pursue a classically "good life" with her husband Daniel James—to fulfill her "[hope] to spend her latter years in domestic tranquility with her husband, free from the lash of the taskmaster"—even if that means returning to an Antigua where slavery has not yet been abolished.[95] In advocating for Prince's dignity outside of the rule of law, the Committee shows how humane recognition and the protection of privacy could be extended to persons without having to resort to the legitimating structures provided by the state. In other words, they model the way in which communal cultural advocacy outside of the law can advance progressive rights usually associated with liberal nationhood.

This group sounds very much like a mid-nineteenth-century version of a modern NGO, those contemporary organizations that advocate for specific humane causes without the direct involvement of the government.[96] But the Anti-Slavery Committee differs from contemporary NGOs in some crucial ways. Most importantly, they have literary figures like Pringle, who could capture the cultural imagination through astonishing texts like the *History*, instead of simply acting as a bureaucratic manager or legal advocate for her struggle (even if he seems to ventriloquize this role at times). Pringle's is a type of humane advocacy not wedded to practical solutions alone, but to ideological transformations. In this way, the committee can be seen as far more radical in their political agitations then contemporary western NGOs, who tend to evade direct ethical prescriptions and advocacy in favor of more practical, seemingly non-partisan solutions to global problems.

Operating at a time rife with political agitation, the provocations of the Anti-Slavery Committee can also be read as an early example of the bourgeois order's need for

radical factions to uphold its most cherished values of freedom, egalitarianism, and human dignity—illustrating what Slavoj Žižek has called the eternally parasitic nature of liberalism. "In order for its key legacy to survive," Žižek writes, "liberalism needs the fraternal aid of the radical left" who remind it of its foundational moral commitments.[97] (This is not to say that Žižek finds totally dubious the "core values of liberalism—freedom, equality, etc." It is merely to highlight Žižek's point that a political system built on these values alone has the tendency to undermine itself. Hence, in one of his sharpest recent aphorisms Žižek declares that "only communism can save liberal democracy [from itself].")[98]

Although she may be torn between two countries, Prince's unclear legal status during the publication of the *History* also grants her a kind of sociopolitical advantage. Neither British nor Antiguan, Prince is a citizen-alien when she arrives in London with the Wood family, occupying a liminal space between civilian and exile. In some contexts, this non-citizenship can be considered perilous. As Edlie Wong points out, if Prince returns to Antigua she is chattel, but if she stays in England she has an unsure, precarious life, one without employment or social ties to ensure her survival. But while she may not be legally British, she also does not have to concede her sovereignty to the nation—the primary threat to *any* sort of biopolitical rights according to Agamben. In other words, Prince seems to have political advantages that a full liberal subject might not have. Consider that Prince may in fact represent a kind of global subject: when she invokes the statute law of Antigua and England in her narrative, Prince shows a legal savviness that operates across national boundaries and addresses the double-standards in British law through her experiences in many different colonial jurisdictions. Consider also that Prince

espouses liberal ideals about physical privacy and egalitarian dignity, but that she is not bound to a nation who might overrule these ideals in a time of crisis, as Agamben fears.[99] And With regards to Žižek's argument on the need for a radical moral commitment undergirding liberalism, consider finally that Prince's struggle is based on an ethical agenda for cultural recognition instead of on a purely legal or practical push for emancipation. In fact, Prince even recognizes the hypocrisy over slavery that exists in the law alone, indicating how a liberal-capitalist reliance on formal mechanisms like jurisprudence is often inadequate to the task of true justice. (Given that the supplement to the *History* resembles a legal opinion—a kind of *amicus curiae*—we might also see Pringle as the liberal pragmatist who supplements his own practical politics with the moral rectitude that only Prince can provide). Prince's status as an exile may actually enhance her political agency today, a position that for theorists like Hardt and Negri keeps alive the possibility of "an open citizenship…[that] expand[s] biopolitical production," while remaining self-determining and emancipated.[100]

I am not saying, of course, that we should de-historicize Prince so much that she becomes a blithe embodiment of the cosmopolitan spirit—with all the material advantages that the cosmopolitan is sometimes thought to have. But she does hint at a more global, authentically ethical version of the liberal subject to which we might aspire, evoking as she does an idealized liberalism without borders, without capitalist manacles, and without the imperial designs of the nation-state. Although we cannot forget the historical realities of Prince's enslavement or aggrandize her too much in her own time, we might today see Prince as a figure that avoids some of the more insidious restraints put upon the contemporary liberal subject. We might also find in the *History* a parable

about the need for "moral character" as an essential supplement to liberalism's sound fundamental principles of liberty and privacy—that the life of honor so crucial to the Romantic era might be just as imperative in our own, inconstant age.

NOTES

[1] "Monthly Literary Gazette," *The Englishman's Magazine* 1.1 (1831), 127; hereafter "Literary Gazette."

[2] H.L. Malchow, "Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Past and Present* 139 (May 1993), 90-130; Elizabeth Young, *Black Frankenstein: the Making of an American Metaphor* (NY: NYU Press, 2008).

[3] *CW* 302.

[4] *Multiculturalism* 25.

[5] ibid.

[6] *Multiculturalism* 28-37.

[7] *CW* 326. It is also worth noting that Caleb is a servant to Falkland, further emphasizing the Hegelian quality of their relationship and the symbiotic nature of their identities.

[8] Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*, ed. Moira Ferguson (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 78. Hereafter *History*.

[9] "Sermons on the Dignity of Man" 422.

[10] Olaudah Equiano, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (London: Self-Published, 1794), 148; John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (London: S. Simmons, 1674), 37.

[11] See William Wilberforce, "William Wilberforce to Sir T.D Acland, 12/13/1822," in *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce, Vol. 2*. Eds. Robert Isaac Wilberforce & Samuel Wilberforce. (Philadelphia: Henry Perkins, 1846), 278. In an audacious section of his *Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire*, Wilberforce announces "the West Indians…[have] told us, again and again…that these poor degraded beings, the Negro slaves, are as well or even better off than our British peasantry…A Briton to compare the state of a West Indian slave with that of an English freeman, and to give the former preference! It is to imply an utter insensibility of the native feelings and moral dignity of man, no less than of the rights of Englishmen!!" For this, see William Wilberforce, *Appeal to the Religion, Justice, and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire: On Behalf of the Negro Slaves in the West Indies* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1823), 45.

[12] Helen Thomas argues that the "dynamics of anti-slavery discourse…emerged from a framework of spiritual salvation," and that early abolitionism focused on shared spirituality and the egalitarian nature of the gospels as a way to humanize slaves. See Helen Thomas, *Romanticism and Slave Narratives: Transatlantic Testimonies* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2000), 23-5.

[13] Although McKeon's is a grand—almost epic—study, one of his many recurring themes is how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century honor practices organized status before the more modern concept of class. In a chapter dealing with autobiography and Manley's *New Atalantis* (1709) McKeon focuses on feminine honor as it relates to the construction public opinion. "What is the nature and scope of women's

public 'honour,'" McKeon asks, "[i]s there no retrieve for a woman's honor lost?" See *Secret History* 597-8.

[14] *Secret History* 605-11.

[15] Barbara Baumgartner has focused on the debilitated body of Mary Prince as a way to defy forced labor, arguing that Prince's "broken down body, which would normally be construed as a sign of slavery's power to debase, mutilate, and destroy, ironically serves as a key locus of opposition; it enables her to refuse to capitulate to further demands of servitude." While this physical resistance to labor may give Prince more agency then her situation would imply, I argue later that Prince can also be seen to recover a sense of feminine dignity and honor by remaking and revitalizing the body through the textual designs of the *History* itself. See Barbara Baumgartner, "The Body as Evidence," *Callaloo* 24.1 (2001), 253; hereafter "The Body as Evidence."

[16] Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (NJ: Princeton UP, 2001); *Living Liberalism*. See also the recent work of Slavoj Žižek, who discusses the need for an infusion of moral energy into the increasingly detached prescriptions of liberal policy. See *End Times* 154.

[17] This will inevitably provoke questions about Thomas Pringle's role in the production of the *History*, especially his decision to publish lurid, sensational details about the sexual degradation suffered by Prince and other slaves so that Pringle might sell more copies of his text. Pringle's intervention into Prince's story has been a contentious issue for many critics—especially for those who see Pringle as more of a self-interested usurper of Prince's original story, and, thus, her subjectivity. Although I won't attempt to refute those very legitimate critiques here, I would argue that we shouldn't aggrandize Prince too much by thinking she could have produced this story alone, or that that she should have been able to completely unsettle rigid British ideologies about race and gender that had been formed over hundreds of years, or even that she should overturn the market's expectations about the sensational subject-matter of slave narratives or the tales of fallen women. To even uncover these categories—to even expand the panorama of history and culture by that much—is a momentous achievement. For scholarship on the specific controversy see "The Body as Evidence." For a more general discussion of authority and authorship in slave autobiography see Robert B. Stepto, *From Behind the Veil: A Study of Afro-American Narrative* (IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

[18] *The Prelude* X.225.

[19] G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (Selections).* Trans. Howard P. Kainz (PA: Penn State UP, 1994), 49-63; hereafter *Phenomenology*. The most prominent sociopolitical and philosophical Hegelians are, of course, Marx and Nietzsche, whose writing on the nature of modern values is highly influenced by Hegel's idea of struggle. For Marx, this struggle takes place predominantly between labor and capital, while for Nietzsche it is a more abstract "struggle for existence," which can take root within a single individual. Both provide in part the foundation for the early-to-mid-twentieth century Frankfurt School, and their diverse writing on aesthetics and culture. Finally, French Philosopher Alexander Kojève's 1950s lectures on Hegel had a profound influence on Jacques Lacan, Michael Foucault, and Jacques Derrida.

[20] *Phenomenology* 50.

[21] For the best and most lucid take on the split between left and right Hegelians—and what it meant for continental philosophy going forward—see Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990).

[22] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press, 1988); 82.

[23] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 60; hereafter *Black Atlantic*; *History* 17-8; Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26.4 (2000), 821-65.

[24] See Drucilla Cornell and Sara Murphy, "Anti-Racism, Multiculturalism, and the Ethics of Identification," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28.4 (2002), 421, 423.

[25] For an interpretation of Hegel that makes the process of recognition a "pure" or more idealistic phenomenon, see Taylor's earlier work on Hegel, specifically Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977).

[26] *History* 74.

[27] *History* 57.

[28] *History* 61.

[29] *History* 57, 59.

[30] *History* 75.

[31] See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (Fall 1985), 243-61; Felicity A. Nussbaum "Being a Man," in *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic*. Vincent Carretta and Phillip L. Gould, eds.. (KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 54-71; Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006); Danilyn Rutherford, "Sympathy, State Building, and the Experience of Empire." *Cultural Anthropology* 24.1 (2009), 1-32.

[32] *History* 66.

[33] James McQueen, "The Colonial Empire of Great Britain," *Blackwood's Magazine* 30 (November 1831), 750.

[34] Baumgartner points to Prince's scars as a type of text that interlocutors like Pringle could read and interpret. Noting Pringle's appendix that details her wounds, Baumgartner writes that "[t]he decision to include this additional material suggests Pringle's sympathy for and understanding of Prince's interpretation of her life/body/text. The conflict between the two contrasting images of Prince's body—one as debilitated, resistant former slave, the other as sexualized, fallen woman—indicates Pringle's ambivalence about his ability to read and interpret Prince's body and text" (264). *Pace* Baumgartner's insightful analysis, I see this ambivalence as a kind of strength: the text attempts to "repair" both images of Prince's body through artful re-arrangement—which I discuss later—and through repeated accounts of Prince's physical dignity in the face of brutality. See "The Body as Evidence."

[35] *History* 66.

[36] Although it may not have been given dignity in the classic sense of the word, the broken, abnormal, or non-normative body *was* however valorized throughout the Romantic era. For the best study of the ideologies associated with anomalous bodies see Paul Youngquist, *Monstrosities: Bodies and British Romanticism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2003); hereafter *Monstrosities*.

[37] Orrin N.C. Wang has pointed out that the *History* might be a paratext for *Jane Eyre*, whose West Indian Bertha is referred to by Rochester as "[a] sort of a being I was cheated into espousing," a statement that articulates the dominance of British over Jamaican custom. See Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (NY: Penguin Classics, 2003), 327. Regarding the *History*'s connection to *Jane Eyre*, see Cora Kaplan, "Imagining

Empire: History, Fantasy and Literature," in *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World*, Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 205-6.

[38] *History* 104-5.

[39] Edlie Wong, "'Turned Out of Doors:' Voluntary Return and Captive Agency in the Case of Mary Prince," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 24.3 (2001), 59-72; *Neither Fugitive nor Free: Atlantic Slavery, Freedom Suits, and the Legal Culture of Travel* (NY: NYU Press, 2009), hereafter *Neither Fugitive nor Free*.

[40] For a recent biography of Saartjie Baartman see Clifton C. Crais and Pamela Scully, *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost Story and a Biography* (NJ: Princeton UP, 2009); for the cultural look at the exotic/erotic displays of the "Hottentot Venus" around London, see Sadiah Qureshi, "Displaying Sara Baartman, the 'Hottentot Venus,'" *History of Science* 42.2 (2004), 233-257; *Monstrosities* 57-8.

[41] *Monstrosities* 58.

[42] *Monstrosities* 58; Gilroy's famous opening chapter in *The Black Atlantic* deals with blackness as a "Counterculture of Modernity" that extends well past the Romantic era and abolitionism, arguing that "[black people] had to fight…to hold on to the unity of ethics and politics sundered from each other by modernity's insistence that the true, the good, and the beautiful had distinct origins and belong to different domains of knowledge." See his *Black Atlantic* 39.

[43] "Testimony of Rev. J.M. Trew on Colonial Slavery," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter* 4.76 (Feb 1831), 131; hereafter "Testimony."

[44] ibid.

[45] "Testimony" 137.

[46] "Testimony" 138.

[47] ibid.

[48] *History* 83.

[49] On the rise of secular and dissenting movements—including the Owenites and Freethinkers—and their relationship to the Methodists and Evangelicals before the Reform Act, see E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (NY: Penguin, 2002), 427-8.

[50] *History* 77.

[51] Moira Ferguson's standard introduction to the *History* gives a good sense of Prince's distinctiveness as a female slave who engages in courageous acts of resistance. While Bibi Bakare-Yusuf argues that Mary Prince undergoes an intense loss of self when she suffers from abuse—violence that turns her into a body alone—she also argues that the "deconstruction of the subject also entail[s] a deconstruction of gender categories." Although Bakare-Yusuf does not apply this deconstruction to Prince directly, there is a sort of empowerment to Prince's resistance that comes from not having to conform to the codes reserved for stable subject-positions (codes that applied, for example, to bourgeois white women). See Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, "The Economy of Violence: Black Bodies and the Unspeakable Terror," in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, Eds. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (NY: Taylor & Francis), 322. Gillian Whitlock's wonderful essay "Volatile Subjects" contends that the *History* provided an opportunity for the solidarity of two unlikely women, the black former-slave Mary Prince and her white, middle-class amanuensis Susanna Strickland: "Their intimacy," says Whitlock, "is fundamental to…reading…the *History*, 'intimacy'…as the meeting of two very different subjects in borderlands of identity." See Gillian Whitlock, "Volatile Subjects:

The History of Mary Prince," in *Genius in Bondage: Literature of the Early Black Atlantic*, Eds. Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould (KY: The University Press of Kentucky 2001), 73.

[52] *History* 77.

[53] ibid.

[54] "Testimony" 137.

[55] *History* 77.

[56] *History* 84-5.

[57] ibid.

[58] *History* 96.

[59] Judith Butler immediately comes to mind here, especially her work on hate speech and speech acts in *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (NY: Routledge, 1997). These ideas correspond, of course, to Elaine Scarry's work on pain as "pre-linguistic." Scarry has also been associated with Mary Prince in many articles. See Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (London: Oxford UP, 1985). Finally, for a broader look at the affective side of speech acts, see Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling*.

[60] *History* 80.

[61] *History* 77.

[62] *Multiculturalism* 25.

[63] *History* 101.

[64] Barbara Baumgartner says that the "silence" attending Prince's victimhood is part of a more general inability of the subject to represent pain. In her "The Body as Evidence," Baumgartner goes on to suggest that "the assistance of others can be instrumental in regaining a voice that has been silenced," pointing directly to Susanna Strickland, Prince's amanuensis (266). But if collaborators like Strickland and Pringle restore Prince's individual voice through collaboration, I argue that it is precisely their shared creation of silence—not just speech—that establish Prince as an honorable subject in the minds of the British reading public.

[65] *History* 94.

[66] *History* 77-8, 83, 92.

[67] Jacques Khalip's recent book on anonymous life in the Romantic era gives anonymity major cultural and moral weight. Against the predominant genre of confession—a form that attempts to present a stable, single identity—anonymous texts "serve to remind us of a disruption of ontological certainty, and thus [provoke] insight into the troubling *ethical* bonds of subjectivity." See Jacques Khalip, *Anonymous Life: Romanticism and Dispossession* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2008), 5.

[68] See Christopher Ricks, *Keats and Embarrassment* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1974); Norman Fruman, *Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel* (NY: George Braziller, Inc., 1971); *Byron and Romanticism*. For Shelley's sense of sin, see criticism on *The Cenci* from Stuart Curran, *Shelley's Cenci: Scorpions Ringed with Fire* (NJ: Princeton UP, 1970), and *England in 1819*. Finally, for a book which takes as its organizing principle the various dispositions of Romanticism, see *Romantic Moods.*

[69] *Romantic Moods* 7.

[70] Raymond Williams first posits the "structure of feeling" in *The Long Revolution* (1961), describing it as the "dominant social character" of a culture in a given moment of history, the unspoken groundwork of cultural mores and standards to which certain generations appeal. Williams develops the concept more fully in his *Marxism and Literature* (1977). See Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (NY: Broadview, 2001), 64-88; *Marxism and Literature* 127-35.

[71] Lauren Berlant has been one of the most convincing scholars to weave affect together with culture and politics. See her diagnosis of shared political belonging as an emotional experience in *Cruel Optimism* (53). The social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has also been on the forefront of a popular discussion about the role affect and emotions play in our moral disposition and, hence, our political allegiances. Although I would categorize Haidt as an "emotional-determinist"—someone who can be far too rigid in his ceding *all* forms of rationality to affect and gut-feeling, without considering the dialectic that seems to exist between reason and emotion—his arguments about the importance of "intuitive" states are very sound. See Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided Politics and Religion* (NY: Random House, 2012); "Reasons Matter (When Intuitions Don't Object)," *New York Times* (October 7, 2012). opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/10/07/reasons-matter-when-intuitions-dont-object/. November 2012.

[72] "Sacred Politics," *The Republican* 11.5 (1825), 153.

[73] William Coldwell, "West Indian Slavery," *Imperial Magazine* 1.8 (1831), 356.

[74] Hannah More, "The Black Slave Trade. A Poem," in *The Works of Hannah More. A New Edition, with Additions and Corrections* (London: T. Cadell, 1830), 109-21, ll. 181-90; hereafter "Black Slave Trade."

[75] "Black Slave Trade" ll. 294.

[76] *History* 93-4.

[77] *History* 78.

[78] Here, it is interesting to note the clear division between the loss of religious morality—"forget[ting] god"— and loss of corporeal "feelings" of right and wrong. This division speaks to the proto-secular way in which the *History* delineates "moral character," oftentimes emphasizing social solidarity through common, human bodies instead of through shared religion.

[79] *Cultural Politics of Emotion* 104.

[80] *History* 101.

[81] *History* 119-20.

[82] *History* 61, 66, 68.

[83] *Hiding from Humanity* 221.

[84] *Hiding from Humanity* 213, 214.

[85] The "honor" of the private body might also set the stage for the ethical codes of modern institutional medicine, with their emphasis on the privacy and dignity of patient. The UNESCO "Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights" (2005) is one of the more recent documents to combine human rights with bioethical norms. Article 3 in particular incorporates the liberalist language of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and human dignity. See UNESCO, "Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights:

UNESCO." portal.unesco.org/en/ ev.phpURL_ID=31058&URLDO =DOTOPIC&URLSECTION=201.html. November 2012.

[86] The approach to "save liberalism from itself" resonates with political philosophers like Žižek, who has recently argued that the crises facing liberal-democracy must be addressed through a supplemental ethos or political system from the radical left, not from a fundamentalist right. See Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009); "Denial: The Liberal Utopia."

[87] Foucault's work on biopolitics is notoriously disparate, spread around throughout various lectures later in life. See, however, his work on "Governmentality" for the clearest connection between biopolitics, "care of self," and neoliberalism. Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (NY: New Press, 2000), 201-22.

[88] *History* 92.

[89] *History* 94, "The Body as Evidence."

[90] Paul Youngquist, "The Mothership Connection," *Cultural Critique* 77.1 (2011), 7; hereafter "The Mothership Connection."

[91] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998); hereafter *Homo Sacer*.

[92] "It is almost as if, starting from a certain point, every decisive political event were double-sided: the spaces, the liberties, and the rights won by individuals in their conflicts with central powers always simultaneously prepared a tacit but increasing inscription of individuals' lives within the state order, thus offering a new and more dreadful foundation for the very sovereign power from which they wanted to liberate themselves" (*Homo Sacer* 72).

[93] For the "state of exception" as the decisive factor in liberal sovereignty see *Homo Sacer* 11-4; Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). See also Agamben's influential source on the "state of exception," Carl Schmitt, esp. *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[94] Obviously, racial prejudice could exist in the colonies after such legislation: while the formal recognition of dignity was written into the rule of law, it might not have affected a deep cultural change in the West.

[95] *History* 104.

[96] Currently, an *actual* anti-slavery NGO, *Anti-Slavery International*, dates itself back to the original Anti-Slavery Society (not the Anti-Slavery *Committee* featured in the *History*) founded by Thomas Clarkson in 1839. Thus, the link between these 19th and 21st century organizations is not really strained. See Anti-Slavery Society, "Anti-Slavery - our history." www.antislavery.org/english/what_we_do/our_history.aspx. November 2012.

[97] *End Times* 218.

[98] Slavoj Žižek, "Only Communism Can Save Liberal Democracy," *ABC.net* (2011). www.abc.net.au/religion/ articles/2011/10/03/3331164.htm. January 2013.

[99] In the phenomenon of the slave ship, Youngquist also finds a kind of resistance that belies its traditional suggestion of complete domination. Turning the vessel upside-down—metaphorically and visually—he illustrates an alternative to liberal-capitalism and its propagation by way of the high seas: "This is the counter-legacy of the mothership to the politics of bare life. It arises as cultural solidarity. It persists in a

community of those who have nothing in common. It fulfills itself in communal care" ("The Mothership Connection" 16).

[100] Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (2000) made a major splash when it diagnosed the contemporary contradictions of neoliberal economics and the conditions of the new western hegemony. Their recent *Commonwealth* can be considered a solution to this proposal. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2009), 309.

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