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**The Secret Horror of the Last: Readers, Authors, and the Production of Ends  
in the Long Eighteenth Century**

by

**Rachel E. Bennett**



**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Department of English**

**Edmonton, Alberta**

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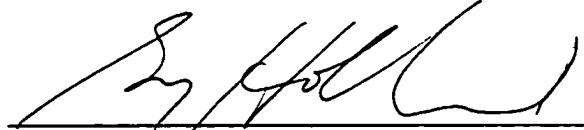
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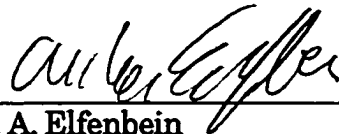


Prof. K. Binhammer

3 December 1999



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*for my mother*

*The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but  
from hope to hope. —Johnson*

## **Abstract**

Although Samuel Johnson referred to the “secret horror of the last” as emotional territory people were more likely to fear than to embrace, readers and authors in the long eighteenth century were very interested in closure. This thesis examines the reception of five literary works published between 1747 and 1824 and investigates specific responses, contemporary to the author, in which readers either continued or rewrote works’ endings. Chapter one analyzes Lady Echlin’s rewriting of *Clarissa*; chapter two looks at both Johnson’s input into the endings of Goldsmith’s *Traveller* and *Deserted Village* and three poetic imitations of the *Deserted Village*; chapter three studies Godwin’s two conclusions to *Caleb Williams* and Humphry Repton’s 1798 outline of a fourth volume; and chapter four examines three continuations of *Don Juan*, including an 1825, two-volume one by Isaac Starr Clason. In its analysis of both eighteenth-century and Romantic works, this thesis suggests that the binary of open-closed often used to distinguish the two literary periods inadequately describes historical authors’ and readers’ attitudes towards endings. Rather than being concerned with openness versus closure, the authors and readers considered here hold a general didactic belief that texts influenced the way readers lived their lives. Because fiction did not simply reflect the social world but potentially formed it, writers based closure decisions on considerations of real-world applications of the work. Readers frequently disputed texts, consequently, because their ideas and concerns about the works’ audiences differed from the authors’. This thesis investigates those disputes and observes that the figure of the author during this period did not have the authority over the text that we have retrospectively attributed to the role. Instead, readers, too, were actively involved in the production of texts—and of texts’ ends—even as they read them.

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## Introduction

The common end of all *narrative*, nay, of *all*, Poems is to convert a *series* into a *Whole*: to make those events, which in real or imagined History move on in a *strait* Line, assume to our Understandings a *circular* motion—the snake with it's [sic] Tail in it's [sic] Mouth. (Coleridge to Joseph Cottle, 1815, *Letters* 545).

Once a defining statement in Romantic aesthetics, highlighted by M.H. Abrams in his *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971), this description of the circular text represented artistic unity and closure. Since Abrams, however, critics have questioned this picture of the Romantic project. Jerome McGann suggests in *The Romantic Ideology* (1983) that “Romanticism is characterized not by its reconciliations, its artistic completeness, but by its *Sehnsucht*, its fragmentations: by its aspirations toward that condition of reconciliation which Hegel ascribes to it” (47). Thomas McFarland writes, in *Romanticism and the Forms of Ruin* (1986), that “incompleteness, fragmentation, and ruin ... not only receive a special emphasis in Romanticism but also in a certain perspective seem actually to define that phenomenon” (7). Recently, Marjorie Levinson studies a particular poetic form, the Romantic fragment, and finds it to be both more deliberate and more prolific than in earlier periods. She speculates, however, that its publication was driven as much by market conditions as by philosophical or aesthetic goals. The fragment privileges reader response or encourages participation rather than consumption. Consequently, faced with growing audiences, “A poet who felt fundamentally estranged from his readers could, through the publication of his fragments,

create for himself a facsimile of sympathetic intercourse between trusting and trustworthy equals" (209).

This theory of reader imaginative completion requires readers to be driven by the same desire for closure or unity to which Abrams earlier argued the poets themselves aspired. The argument raises several questions about literary production and its reception: what audience expectations were for literary works and their endings, how these expectations influenced writers' decisions, and whether these conditions changed throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Traditionally, late eighteenth-century and Romantic works have been viewed as more open ended than earlier eighteenth-century ones. Richard Bridgman suggests that the "weak" endings of the later century contrast with the "tight, solid, reassuring confirmation of *Absalom and Achitophel* .... Or, of Pope's *An Essay on Man* .... these endings clinch one's sense that, despite temporary upsets and misunderstandings, there is harmony, order, and justice in this world" (268). Marshall Brown suggests in *Preromanticism* (1991) that the couplet form itself supports closure, a form having "more in common ideologically with aristocratic enclosure than with Bohemian liberty. They serve the same function as a fence" (126). The "ending of many great Augustan poems is death" (183), Margaret Doody writes, although she also suggests that the poems attempt to "stave off the end, turning again and again back to the world and packing it in, collecting more autumn leaves, people, ships, teacups—more things and more plays of transformation appear, and postpone conclusion and closure" (*Daring* 182-3).

The postponement of closure appears to resemble Romantic uses of fragmentation to defer closure to the reader's imagination, and Romantic poems also resemble earlier works in their use of death as conclusion. Other common Romantic endings include rhetorical strategies such as addressing the



reader or self-referentially discussing the work itself.<sup>1</sup> Yet much earlier, the self-referential ending had been considered so common by Lord Shaftesbury that he complained in his "Advice to an Author" (1711) of the author who uses closure as apology or "takes the advantage of his corollary or winding-up, and ends pathetically by endeavouring in the softest manner to reconcile his reader to those faults which he chooses rather to excuse than to amend" (212-13).

Levinson's theory suggests that if both Augustan and Romantic works conclude self-consciously, a significant question involves not how many such endings occur in each period but whether different types of addressees make up a radically different audience. The relation between closure and audience appears to be an unexplored area, yet one central to the study of literary production. Although I began this project by questioning the distinctions between closure in different literary periods, what soon seemed necessary was not in fact an explicit comparison of literary movements but rather a reevaluation of how we look at endings themselves. Studies of closure have generally been informed by theories of the text and analyses of content, yet eighteenth-century attitudes toward endings suggest that the paramount concern then was not with what endings said, but with what they did.

The four chapters here on Richardson, Goldsmith, Godwin, and Byron explore problematic poetic or fictional endings, endings either written or rewritten by a reader contemporary to the author. Each contested closure is situated within the context of the author's social position and possible literary intentions, and readers' positions and expectations. Period distinctions are

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<sup>1</sup> Poems that end with death include Wordsworth's "The Old Cumberland Beggar," Keats's "Lamia," and Byron's *Manfred*. Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," Keats's "Sleep and Poetry," and Shelley's "To a Skylark" end self-referentially, while "Tintern Abbey" and Coleridge's "This Lime-tree Bower My Prison" and "Dejection: An Ode" conclude with direct addresses to a reader. Wordsworth's "Simon Lee," Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty," and Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon" end with summaries of lessons learned.

themselves problematic, useful for comparisons and for historical reference but rarely solid as definitions of difference. Although in this study I attempt to balance eighteenth-century with Romantic works, the limited sample prevents any broad generalizations about the literary periods, and suggests merely that in each case the issue of closure in the long eighteenth century transcends genre in its concern with a didactic ideology of literary works' responsibility to improve readers' lives.

Closure, paradoxically enough, provides a starting point for this analysis rather than an ending for it. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, some of the earliest definitions of the word refer either to the act of shutting, or to physical structures, such as fences, walls, and barriers, that enclose or shut up. Discussions of closure as a psychological phenomenon began in the twentieth century with Gestalt psychology, which saw closure as the "process whereby incomplete forms, situations, etc., are completed subjectively by the viewer or seem to complete themselves; the tendency to create ordered and satisfying wholes" (OED). Following this idea, literary analyses of closure focus on the way narrative or poetic structures produce such a sense in the reader. In her *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End* (1968), Barbara Herrnstein Smith explores the thematic and formal structures that contribute to a poem's sense of closure. She begins by clarifying the difference between concluding and simply stopping and writes, "We tend to speak of conclusions when a sequence of events has a relatively high degree of structure, when, in other words, we can perceive these events as related to one another by some principle of organization or design that implies the existence of a definite termination point" (2). Jeremy Hawthorn, in defining closure as "more than ending, more than the discontinuation of a literary work: it requires that the ending or discontinuation have a certain aesthetic force" (19), reiterates the notion that

closure offers a sense of completeness, and Smith further defines the concept: “a structure appears ‘closed’ when it is experienced as integral, coherent, complete, and stable” (2). The “aesthetic force,” as Smith makes clear, refers to the reader’s experience, and this focus on experience suggests the centrality that interpretation plays.

Essentially, establishing a sense of closure is an action performed by the reader. The reader of fiction, Wallace Martin reasons, reads “events forward (the beginning will cause the end) and meaning backward (the end, once known, causes us to identify its beginning)” (127). Smith describes a similar process for poetry:

Poetic structure is, in a sense, an inference which we draw from the evidence of a series of events. As we read the poem, it is a hypothesis whose probability is tested as we move from line to line and adjusted in response to what we find there. ... the conclusion of a poem has special status in the process, for it is only at that point that the total pattern—the structural principles which we have been testing—is revealed. (13)

Because the ending of a work has this special status in the reading process, Marianna Torgovnick contends that it provides “the single place where an author most pressingly desires to make his points—whether those points are aesthetic, moral, social, political, epistemological, or even the determination not to make any point at all” (19). Smith suggests that the “manner in which a poem concludes becomes, in effect, the last and frequently the most significant thing it says” (196).

While the ending of a work may hold a significant place in relation to meaning, D.A. Miller questions the ability of a text to contain closure in the sense of completeness. Closure “never has the totalizing powers of

organization that ... critics claim for it” and his argument is “not that novels do not ‘build’ toward closure, but that they are never fully or finally governed by it” (Miller xiv). In his analysis, endings are simply choices, and his study of several canonical texts argues for their ideological instabilities. He reads Jane Austen’s novels as presenting two opposing forces:

Austen’s novels ... are directed toward a state of absolute propriety: proper understanding expressed in proper erotic objects and proper social arrangements. Yet her narratives are generated precisely by an underlying instability of desire, language, and society, and as such, they are inevitably felt to threaten the very possibility of this definitive, ‘finalizing’ state of affairs. (x)

Whether or not Austen’s endings are “definitive” is a debatable point, but for Miller, reading the endings as closure allows him to deconstruct that closure with his analysis of the instabilities that threaten it. Elizabeth MacArthur performs a similar study when she argues that epistolary narratives lack the type of closure available to other narrative forms, and the collection of essays in *Famous Last Words* (1993), edited by Alison Booth, uses feminist approaches to critique primarily canonical endings and question their representation of the “finality” and restrictiveness of women’s lives.

These studies maintain the dichotomy of “open” versus “closed” texts in order to subvert texts’ apparently closural meanings, but in fact what they most clearly reveal is that those categories shift from reader to reader as often as from work to work. Booth suggests, for instance, the link between degree of closure and reader ideology when she notes that for feminists looking for endings that offer more choices for women than marriage or death, narrative experiments and openness in form are not necessarily ideologically “open”:

“Disruptive prose may lead to proliferating ends without palpable effect on the

few narratives commonly prescribed for women's lives" (10). Lucy Newlyn, similarly, questions the role of indeterminacy in the Romantic period. She argues that Romantic writers actually used indeterminacy not to empower the reader but to reinforce the centrality of the author or literary genius:

"Romantic criticism controls indeterminacy by subduing it to authorial design, thereby reaffirming the primacy of the creative imagination" (231).<sup>2</sup> These issues suggest that "closure" should be defined not as a completeness that contrasts with openness, but, more generally, as the reader's "sense of satisfaction with the ending." An analysis of endings then concerns not the ideological containment of the text but the ways different reader perspectives can enact different meanings.

Arguably, then, it is the nature of the reading, rather than the text itself, that holds the final responsibility for closure.<sup>3</sup> Reader-response critics Douglas Vipond and Russell A. Hunt, in a 1984 article in *Poetics*, distinguish between three types of reading that would seem to affect a reader's concern with closure. Reading is "point-driven" when it attempts to construct why the story is told and what the speaker might be "getting at" (263). Because points

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<sup>2</sup> The binary of open/closed has often been used to distinguish literary forms and periods. In *Fables End: Completeness and Closure in Rhetorical Fiction* (1974), David Richter outlines critical contrasts between the "open-ended" modern novel and the "closed" traditional one (see his chapter one). He comments in his preface, "some of the works most commonly termed open-ended ... seem complete to me" (vii).

<sup>3</sup> The text-reader distinction is technically artificial, because the text can only be realized through a reader. But as Walter Benn Michaels argues, the "self, like the world, is a text. Hence the notion of an autonomous unconstituted subject is just as problematic (and for the same reasons) as the autonomous and unconstituted world" (199). The result of this awareness is not a conclusion that all meaning is therefore subjectively unknowable, but an acknowledgment that "neutrality itself is a fiction" (Michaels 200) because the "self is already embedded in a context, the community of interpretation or system of signs" (Michaels 199). The terms "text" and "reader" remain indispensable for interpretation, but we need not read either of those things as objective, or even separable, bodies of information. Jane Tompkins summarizes the implications of removing the text-reader dichotomy as a different perspective on literary analysis: "far from there being no values to which one can appeal, no criteria for judging what is good or true, there is never a moment when we are not in the grip of some value-system, never a statement we make that is not value-laden" ("Introduction" xxv).

involve “not the exchange of information, but rather the sharing and comparing of values and beliefs” (263), point-driven reading differs from the “information-driven” kind, which occurs in situations focused on content, when “the reader’s task is to learn or remember the material, and when the text itself is fragmentary or inane,” like a bus schedule, or “doesn’t repay the assumption of point” (268). “Story-driven” reading, finally, emphasizes plot, character, and event. The reader looks for “interesting, affectively-arousing events... rounded characters, and the like” (269), and he or she does not need to construct a model of the author because “the story seems to exist, and can be enjoyed, quite independently of any implied author” (269). Thus, story-driven readings contrast with point-driven ones, which envision an author behind a text, recognize ironies between the implied author and characters, and attribute authorial motives to stylistic features such as diction and tone (271-2). Vipond and Hunt describe point-driven reading as an essential component of what has been recognized as literary reading (263). Points are not fixed meanings and, according to Vipond and Hunt, are in fact negotiated by listeners and speakers, readers and texts. An “unsuccessful” point-driven reading would not be one that determined an incorrect “point” but one that failed to find a point for the text at all or one that ended with the question “so what?”<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the construction of points themselves, which we might read as central to the interpretation of closure, involves particular kinds of readings. Point-driven readings employ coherence strategies that attempt to establish the meaning of the text as a whole, so they tend “to hold off closure, waiting for the chance to integrate the disparate elements into the single coherent structure being assembled” (270). Those using primarily information- or story-

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<sup>4</sup> As Vipond and Hunt clarify, these categories describe types of reading rather than types of readers, although some readers may be more likely to engage in one type than another (269).

driven readings, on the other hand, process information in smaller units, like narrative episodes. Vipond and Hunt suggest that given a “cut” or incomplete “text, they would tend to seek closure, and to reject disparate and seemingly unrelated text elements” (271). At the same time, story-driven readers might abandon a text if they find it uninteresting more quickly than point-driven ones, who would be inclined to “defer evaluation until all the evidence is in” (271).

The “evidence” does not arise solely from the text. These audiences construct points based on what they know of the author and the kinds of points he or she has made before, on what they consider culturally and socially meaningful issues, on generic expectations, and on physical and social context (264-5). The “construction of point is a function of the *text*, the comprehender’s *cultural*, and the comprehender’s *generic* expectations” (266). This focus on context supports Torgovnick’s observation that readers do not need authorial insinuations about the future to imagine a prospective closure. As readers, we expect closure from the moment we begin. We predict from previous experience the ways a work might end, and we evaluate as we are reading the way we would like the text to end. She suggests that we need to remember

how endings correspond to very ordinary aspects of experience—to, for example, speculations about our futures in terms of anticipated “endings” (like marriage, graduation, recovery from or descent into illness), to retrospective analyses of history or of our pasts in light of “how things turned out,” and to observations of the lives of others and the endings we project for them. (8)<sup>5</sup>

Material previously read, and genre, also influence expectations, and Smith suggests that for poetry, “we expect to find what we have found before....

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<sup>5</sup> Conversely, though, one might argue that closural fictions affect readers’ attitudes toward their own lives—the influence works both ways.

Consequently, our expectations regarding any particular poem will be at least partly determined by our previous experience with poetry" (29).

Reception becomes central to studying endings, then, because the very interpretation of an ending—and frequently the “point” it is assumed to make—varies from reader to reader. Wolfgang Iser describes two categories of reader, the historical or “real reader” “known to us by his documented reaction” and the “hypothetical” reader, “upon whom all possible actualizations of the text may be projected” (*Act 27*):

Reconstruction of the real reader naturally depends on the survival of contemporary documents, but the further back in time we go, beyond the eighteenth century, the more sparse the documentation becomes. As a result, the reconstruction often depends entirely on what can be gleaned from the literary works themselves. The problem here is whether such a reconstruction corresponds to the real reader of the time or simply represents the role which the author intended the reader to assume. In this respect, there are three types of “contemporary” reader—the one real and historical, drawn from existing documents, and the other two hypothetical: the first constructed from social and historical knowledge of the time, and the second extrapolated from the reader’s role laid down in the text. (*Act 28*)

While Iser distinguishes here between hypothetical and historical readers, historical readers are hypothetical as well because we construct a reviewer from his reviews in much the same interpretive way that we construct the avowed “hypothetical” reader addressed in a text. Nevertheless, the hypothesis of the historical reader, being assigned a name and individual context, differs from the reader theorized from the text. Iser uses the term “implied reader” in



order to explore how, given individual circumstances and perspectives of readers, texts can accommodate “different ways of fulfillment” (*Act 37*). In trying to find the process that makes texts become meaning in the mind of the reader (*Act 38*), he is thus interested in a psychology of reading or studying the *role* the reader plays in relation to a text.

Iser’s theories become concerned with the process of reading, a process the critic must reconstruct often from a distant period of time. For the reader as addressee or person apostrophized, though, Erwin Wolff’s “intended reader” appears useful because it refers to the “reader” as noun rather than “reading” as action or verb. As explained by Iser, the intended reader is

... the reader which the author had in mind .... it may be the idealized reader; or it may reveal itself through anticipation of the norms and values of contemporary readers, through individualization of the public, through apostrophes to the reader, through the assigning of attitudes, or didactic intentions, or the demand for the willing suspension of disbelief. Thus, the intended reader, as a sort of fictional inhabitant of the text, can embody not only the concepts and conventions of the contemporary public but also the desire of the author both to link up with these concepts and to work on them—sometimes just portraying them, sometimes acting upon them. (*Act 33*)<sup>6</sup>

Walter J. Ong describes a similar reader when he writes that “the writer must construct in his imagination, clearly or vaguely, an audience cast in some sort of role—entertainment seekers, reflective sharers of experience” (12). The focus here technically is not the reader (discovering the meaning of the text or

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<sup>6</sup> Paraphrased from Erwin Wolff, “Der intendierte Leser,” *Poetica* 4 (1971).

being affected by the text) but the author, or the author's intentions, and the "intended reader" embodies those aspects of audience expectations that affect the writing of the text.

Torgovnick argues that closure should be considered in light of the intended reader, and she suggests three broad categories for the degree of affinity between author and reader at the end of a work. She describes as *complementary* those relationships where authors "assume that they share a variety of ideals and views with their readers" (17). *Incongruent* are those where "the author must more actively coax his reader into accepting an ending .... The distinction between a complementary relationship and an incongruent one depends upon the degree of resistance the author anticipates from the reader, and the degree to which an author works hard during closure to minimize such resistance" (17-18). Finally, "some authors exploit incongruent relationships between author and reader .... they confront their audience with endings that deliberately thwart reader expectations, using the confrontation to achieve desired aesthetic and philosophical ends" (18). She calls these endings *confrontational* and suggests that authors target their contemporaries (rather than posterity) through these endings, "especially those that flout popular conventions" (18). These categories are useful because they shift closure analyses away from categories of openness versus completeness to questions of ideological communication: how the ending was intended to confirm, to question, or to redirect readers' sympathies and ideas.

While the intended reader, then, helps in the construction of authorial motives and influences, the response of historical readers requires a different theoretical term and approach. Hans Robert Jauss and Stanley Fish offer similar models of "horizon of expectations" and "interpretive communities," respectively, to accommodate both reader differences and similarities. Jauss's

**“horizon of expectations” includes “familiar norms or the immanent poetics of the genre; ... the implicit relationships to familiar works of the literary-historical surroundings; ... the opposition between fiction and reality, between the poetic and the practical function of language” (*Reception* 24). Fish focuses on meanings being “not extracted but made and made not by encoded forms but by interpretive strategies that call forms into being” (172-3).**

**Consequently, his interpretive communities are “made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions” (171).**

Assumptions of objectification mar both these concepts. Robert Holub points out that critics’ interpretations of genre and history are filtered through their own presuppositions and even through documentary availability, and so any objective definition of Jauss’s horizon of expectations remains difficult (60). Fish defines interpretive communities as if they had stable, easily identifiable properties:

**members of the same community will necessarily agree because they will see (and by seeing, make) everything in relation to that community’s assumed purposes and goals; and conversely, members of different communities will disagree because from each of their respective positions the other “simply” cannot see what is obviously and inescapably there: This, then, is the explanation for the stability of interpretation among different readers (they belong to the same community). (15)**

**Although this argument appears to work for interpretations of limited, particular statements such as Fish’s question “Is there a text in this class?” the possibility of a “community” agreeing on each aspect of a more complex**

literary piece is unlikely. Consequently, both Fish's and Jauss's concepts seem useful for discussion and analysis of reader contexts, but only as unstable and shifting categories. If one is seeking authority for readings (like Fish) or authority for aesthetic judgements (like Jauss), that authority will remain difficult.

For this study, the two most useful models of the reader are the intended reader or imaginary audience of the author, and the hypothesized historical, real reader who "writes" the meaning of the work.<sup>7</sup> Both readers have expectations, personalities, and contexts, but the intended reader as envisioned by the author often does not correlate with historical reader responses. Reception is significant not only for studying historical reading conditions but also for analyzing production itself: the imagined reception directs authors and their decisions about closure.

Several eighteenth-century writers point to Aristotelian-type requirements for textual endings. Edward Bysshe in 1708 argued for the connection between poetic structure and closure when he advised poets in *The Art of English Poetry*, "it is absolutely necessary that both the Construction and Sense should end with the Stanza, and not fall into the beginning of the following one ... which is a fault wholly to be avoided" (26). Samuel Johnson suggests that Shakespeare "has well enough preserved the unity of action" in his plays, that "one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion

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<sup>7</sup> My meaning partially resembles Barthes' "writerly." In *S/Z*, he distinguishes between the "writerly" and the "readerly" text. The writerly text seems to be an action, not a thing: "the writerly text is *ourselveswriting*" (5). The readerly text is a product, opposite the writerly, "what can be read, but not written" (4). Only the readerly text can be interpreted because the writerly one is not yet "written." But this distinction falsely represents the readers' role. As reader-response critics have asserted, the "text" is meaningless except as it exists in the mind of the reader—every reading is, in fact, "writerly" because it is an action. Although we treat texts as products, I would argue that no text is readerly according to Barthes' definition. For him, authors produce readerly texts by imposing closure: "to give the text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" ("Death" 171).

follows by easy consequence” (*Shakespeare* 75). The “end of the play is the end of expectation” (*Shakespeare* 75). In another critical privileging of order and coherence, Lord Kames, in *Elements of Criticism* (first published in 1762), advises authors that “the conclusion of a book in an epic poem, or of an act in a play, cannot be altogether arbitrary; nor be intended for so slight a purpose as to make the parts of equal length. The supposed pause at the end of every book, and the real pause at the end of every act, ought always to coincide with some pause in the action” (II:384).

In addition to—and related to—these formal requirements, however, were specific considerations about both authors and readers. The ending of a project reminded Johnson, as an author, of death. In his final *Idler* essay he suggests, “There are few things not purely evil, of which we can say, without some emotion of uneasiness, ‘this is the last.’ ... This secret horror of the last is inseparable from a thinking being whose life is limited, and to whom death is dreadful .... the termination of any period of life reminds us that life itself has likewise its termination” (No. 103, 314-15). This idea seems somewhat akin to Jean-François Lyotard’s description of Burke’s sublime as “kindled by the threat of nothing further happening” (qtd. in Newlyn 210), or the “terror of privation” (Newlyn 210); it “challenges the subject with the death of meaning” (Newlyn 210). But while the sublime remains attractive in its potentiality, Johnson equates lack of meaning with uselessness in the poem translated “Know Yourself,” written after he completed his dictionary:

My task perform’d, and all my labours o’er,  
 For me what lot has Fortune now in store?  
 The listless will succeeds, that worst disease,  
 The rack of indolence, the sluggish ease. (*Poems* 274)

Closure for the author, then, means a privation of labour and purpose, a state to be dreaded.

Closure also makes the author question his accomplishments—just as impending death in a Christian system makes one question the way one's past will affect the future. The coming of the final *Idler* essay reminds Johnson of his readers and his authorial responsibilities:

Much of the pain and pleasure of mankind arises from the conjectures which every one makes of the thoughts of others; we all enjoy praise which we do not hear, and resent contempt which we do not see. The *Idler* may therefore be forgiven, if he suffers his imagination to represent to him what his readers will say or think when they are informed that they have now his last paper in their hands. (No. 103, 314)

In its self-consciousness of purpose, Johnson's second-last *Adventurer* essay similarly links endings with reckonings when the author considers,

At the conclusion of any undertaking, it is usual to compute the loss and profit. As I shall soon cease to write *Adventurers*, I could not forbear lately to consider what has been the consequence of my labours; and whether I am to reckon the hours laid out in these compositions, as applied to a good and laudable purpose, or suffered to fume away in useless evaporations. (No. 137, 488)

Significant in this statement is the idea of author as labourer, and the economic metaphor of "loss and profit" indicates that writing should have effects or results just as other forms of labour produce material goods or financial rewards. Also implicit are the two meanings of "end." As Ian Donaldson points out in an article on "Fielding, Richardson, and the Ends of the Novel," ends refer both to conclusions and to purposes, an aspect Johnson

assumes in the “Preface to Shakespeare” (1765): “The end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing” (*Shakespeare* 67). The physical or structural ending to a work reminds an author to consider his ends in a thematic or philosophical way, the ways his motives have been accomplished or applied to “good and laudable purpose.”

Inevitably, this type of closure remains heuristic, because authors alone cannot control the effects of the work. For this reason, it seems, Johnson tends to exhort readers to pick up where he leaves off. The *Idler* No. 103 concludes,

I hope that my readers are already disposed to view every incident with seriousness, and improve it by meditation; and that when they see this series of trifles brought to a conclusion, they will consider that by outliving the *Idler*, they have past weeks, months, and years which are now no longer in their power; that an end must in time be put to every thing great as to every thing little; that to life must come its last hour, and to this system of being its last day, the hour at which probation ceases, and repentance will be vain; the day in which every work of the hand, and imagination of the heart shall be brought to judgment, and an everlasting futurity shall be determined by the past. (316)

The spectre of a day of judgment, or a final determination by God, suggests that readers also, like authors, do not ultimately control their endings. But they can influence their “everlasting futurity” and should consider their ends when they decide how to live in the present. Just as readers must look to future endings, Johnson as author looks towards a closure beyond the text. Only through the reader can the work have a tangible effect, and the ending reminds

readers that the issues in the work do not conclude but should be rehearsed and used as models throughout readers' lives.<sup>8</sup>

In this sense, the written word could compensate for the author's personal fear of closure because, through the reader, writing does not end. This faith in the power of language is central to eighteenth-century literary ideals. The mimetic function of literature—imitating the world—was important so that readers might recognize authorial points: “He paints so as to need no inscription over his figures to tell us what they are or what he intends by them” (Shaftesbury 130). But mimesis was liable to didacticism. Johnson's famous discussion in the *Rambler* No. 4 praises the “realism” of current fiction—as opposed to the heroic romances like those idealized by Arabella in *The Female Quixote*—but argues that authors nevertheless must choose carefully what they represent because “it is necessary to distinguish those parts of nature, which are most proper for imitation” (22). This care, significantly, arose because readers were considered to be emotionally and mentally susceptible to literary representations. According to Johnson,

These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy, not

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<sup>8</sup> In “Samuel Johnson: Man of Maxims?” Isobel Grundy has outlined Johnson's tendency to begin a discussion with an aphorism which he then questions and reworks. His statements become maxims “only as the reader detaches them, in which condition they retain the value only of whatever forcefulness and ingenuity we ourselves can find for applying them to new contexts. In so far as they remain embedded in their original sequence of reasoning, they function not as conclusions but as part of a process” (28). Finally, it “is noticeable that Johnson's conclusions (which are no longer susceptible to modification) are on the whole less aphoristic than his openings” (29).



informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account. (*Rambler* No. 4, 21)

His subsequent statement even more startlingly stresses the power of literary works when he argues that “if the power of example is so great as to take possession of the memory by a kind of violence, and produce effects almost without the intervention of the will, care ought to be taken, that, when the choice is unrestrained, the best examples only should be exhibited” (22).<sup>9</sup>

Interestingly enough, this concept of the power of language appears akin to some twentieth-century theories. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, in *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* (1992), begin with Foucault, who challenged the tendency of historical studies to reinforce present power relations by claiming to show their “natural development” or origin in an earlier time period. He theorized that “one simply has to demonstrate that words come chronologically as well as ontologically before the things they are presumed to represent” (*Puritan* 4). In other words, he “uses the strategies of history to show that changes in ruling ideas preceded changes in economic production and consumption” (8). Armstrong follows this model in *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987) when she demonstrates that narrative representations of the middle-class domestic woman existed years before what we now see as its historical manifestation in the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup> Finally, Hans Robert Jauss argues for a similar point in his “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory”

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<sup>9</sup> He similarly writes in the *Adventurer* No. 137, “Books have always a secret influence on the understanding; we cannot at pleasure obliterate ideas ... he that entertains himself with moral or religious treatises, will imperceptibly advance in goodness; the ideas which are often offered to the mind, will at last find a lucky moment when it is disposed to receive them” (491).

<sup>10</sup> In her words, she “links the history of British fiction to the empowering of the middle classes in England through the dissemination of a new female ideal” and shows that “the domestic novel antedated—was indeed necessarily antecedent to—the way of life it represented” (9).

when he stresses the importance of avoiding the “reduction of the work of art to a merely *copying* function, in order finally to do justice to the long-suppressed insight into art’s character as *formative* of reality” (*Reception* 11).

These theorists, however, have not been as specific as Johnson in their analyses of precisely *how* literary works influence reader ideologies. Moreover, Johnson’s description of the “violence” of literary example applies particularly to the young reader, who is assumed to be impressionable or malleable in a way not seen in older readers (including Johnson himself). The eighteenth-century assumption that readers would imitate fiction seems in part a product of authors’ suspicions about reader malleability and innate depravity, and these assumptions influenced decisions about how closure should communicate with those audiences.

The poetic justice debate centred on which types of endings had the most significant moral effects. When Addison first attacked the concept, he argued that tragic defeat was cathartic:

as the principal Design of Tragedy is to raise Commiseration and Terrour in the Minds of the Audience, we shall defeat this great End, if we always make Virtue and Innocence happy and successful. Whatever Crosses and Disappointments a good Man suffers in the Body of the Tragedy, they will make but small Impression on our Minds, when we know that in the last Act he is to arrive at the End of his Wishes and Desires. (*Spectator* No. 40, I:169)

Steele in the *Tatler* No. 82 also suggested that calamitous endings improved spectators’ characters: “The wise *Athenians*, in their Theatrical Performances, laid before the Eyes of the People the greatest Afflictions which could befall human Life, and insensibly polish’d their Tempers by such Representations”

(qtd. in Addison I:169). In arguing for poetic justice, on the other hand, John Dennis suggested that it imitated the providential plan. Although it is an “imperfect” representation of “eternal Punishments,” “when we shew a Man unfortunate in Tragedy, for not restraining his Passions, we mean that every one will for such Neglect, unless he timely repents, be infallibly punish’d by infinite Justice either here or hereafter” (21).

Addison’s primary objection to the concept involved its sudden rewards for innocent characters and he argues, conversely, that because men are naturally imperfect (or even vicious), “there is none who in strictness can be called a Virtuous Man” (*Spectator* No. 548, IV:463).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, he continues,

The most perfect Man has Vices enough to draw down Punishments upon his Head, and to justifie Providence in regard to any Miseries that may befall him. For this reason I cannot think, but that the Instruction and Moral are much finer, where a Man who is virtuous in the main of his Character falls into Distress, and sinks under the Blows of Fortune at the end of a Tragedy, than when he is represented as Happy and Triumphant. Such an Example corrects the Insolence of Human Nature, softens the Mind of the Beholder with Sentiments of Pity and Compassion, comforts him under his own private Affliction, and teaches him not to judge of Mens Virtues by their Successes. (463-4)

This view does not contradict Dennis, who supports Aristotle’s position that tragedy should contain neither perfectly virtuous nor perfectly villainous characters but rather “Persons who neglecting their Passions suffer them to grow outrageous, and to hurry them to Actions which they otherwise would

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<sup>11</sup> Although Donald Bond explains that this essay has been attributed to others, he concludes that it is Addison’s response to Dennis (IV 461, fn.2).

abhor" (21). This tragic ending for the flawed character Addison does not dispute; he clarifies that although he "is so far against the Rule of Poetical Justice as to affirm that good Men may meet with an unhappy Catastrophe in Tragedy, it does not say that ill Men may go off unpunish'd... there are many Men so Criminal that they can have no Claim or Pretence to Happiness" (465). Both Addison and Dennis, then, argue for the importance of tragic endings and the necessity of punishing evil characters. They both assume that the audience needs instruction, a Hobbesian view of human nature that privileges didacticism because art should help people overcome their natural vices.

Addison and Dennis combine a belief that audiences might imitate fiction with a conviction that audience emotions will influence that reception. Kames also links emotions to actions. Emotions become passions; passions direct desire; desire affects actions: "An internal motion or agitation of the mind, when it passeth away without desire, is denominated *an emotion*: when desire follows, the motion or agitation is denominated *a passion*" (I:41), and "desire here is taken in its proper sense, namely, that internal act, which, by influencing the will, makes us proceed to action" (I:42). Consequently, then, studying emotions meant studying morality. Although Kames claims that his work "aspires not to morality" (I:6), he insists that a "taste in the fine arts goes hand in hand with the moral sense, to which indeed it is nearly allied ... neither of them are arbitrary nor local; being rooted in human nature, and governed by principles common to all men" (I:6).

Johnson had in 1750 also stressed readers' emotions in his insistence that attractive characters provide moral examples: "we accompany them [characters with good and bad qualities] through their adventures with delight, and are led by degrees to interest ourselves in their favour, we lose the abhorrence of their faults, because they do not hinder our pleasure, or,

perhaps, regard them with some kindness, for being united with so much merit” (*Rambler* No. 4, 23). In order for works to avoid creating reader sympathy and admiration for bad characters, “Vice, for vice is necessary to be shewn, should always disgust” (*Rambler* No. 4, 24). Kames moves from Johnson’s idea that “vice should disgust” to the assumption that vice *will* disgust, when he says, “no man hath a propensity to vice as such: on the contrary, a wicked deed disgusts him, and makes him abhor the author” (I:64). Significant here, then, is the assumption of universality of emotional life; emotions offer a point of similarity between otherwise diverse kinds of people.<sup>12</sup> With emotions thus allied with “human nature,” the claims for literary influence can be extensive. Kames’s concept of ideal presence, or the mind’s image of a thing as if it were present—an effect achieved through literature—powerfully influences the experiencer. It “strengthens the bond of society, and attracts individuals from their private system to perform acts of generosity and benevolence” (I:100).

Emotional response may have become more central over the course of the century because of the ways readership changed. Ian Jack has outlined the particular audiences of six canonical writers from Dryden to Yeats and found that in the eighteenth century reading audiences shifted from the kind of people whom the author knew personally to a more general reading public. While for Dryden it seemed “self-evident that the poet’s role was a public one, and that

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<sup>12</sup>The focus on reader emotions has recently been raised in the context of reader-response criticism. David Miall outlines neuropsychological research that indicates the importance of anticipation and feeling in interpretation strategies, and he suggests, in fact, that feelings “probably play the central role in initiating and directing the interpretive activities involved in such complex activities as reading” (279). It is through feelings that reading “draws on a reader’s memories and personal concerns” (286); thus, the “affective or somatic markers that initially guide reading derive their significance from prior experience” even though the reading itself prompts readers to “reassess the feelings and memories they bring to ... a story” (287).

Hans Robert Jauss earlier attempted to construct a model of identification patterns that implicitly involve emotions. He studied the “aesthetic attitude which ... disposes us to identify with the model” (*Aesthetic* 152). He provides examples of historical readers’ reactions to texts, such as when after Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Héloïse* “those among the young who had earlier looked for prestige as drinkers and toughs now wanted to be seen as lovers” (169).

the centre of his audience should be the King and the Court" (Jack 31), during Pope's career the "Court was ceasing to be the cultural centre of England" (32). Pope nevertheless wrote for an elite audience, with his later poetry addressed to a small, educated, and sophisticated group of readers who might recognize his poetry's allusions. By contrast, Thomson's *The Seasons*, as a "poem describing the succession of the seasons and the annual occupations of mankind, written in blank verse and in a style accessible to all readers of the Bible and other devotional books, found its way into households which could have had little interest in Pope's later poetry" (Jack 59).

Romantic writers continue to assume responsibility to teach or enlighten readers, and Susan Meisenhelder has pointed out in *Wordsworth's Informed Reader* (1988) that for Wordsworth poetry was indirectly didactic because it "teaches readers how to feel" (9). He discusses the author needing to "communicate power" (*Essay* 82), and he, like Kames, links passion with action: to be moved by passion "is to be excited, often to external, and always to internal, effort" (*Essay* 81-2). The reader cannot passively partake of this power: "Is it to be supposed that the reader can make progress of this kind, like an Indian prince or general—stretched on his palanquin, and borne by his slaves? No; he is invigorated and inspirited by his leader, in order that he may exert himself; for he cannot proceed in quiescence, he cannot be carried like a dead weight" (*Essay* 82).

Coleridge complained that readers often were a dead weight. It was difficult to lead a diverse and often indifferent audience:

alas! the multitude of books, and the general diffusion of literature, have produced other, and more lamentable effects in the world of letters, and such as are abundant to explain, tho' by no means to justify, the contempt with which the best grounded complaints of

injured genius are rejected as frivolous, or entertained as matter of merriment. (*Biographia* 1:38)

He adds, "Now it is no less remarkable than true, with how little examination works of polite literature are commonly perused, not only by the mass of readers, but by men of first rate ability, till some accident or chance discussion have roused their attention, and put them on their guard" (*Biographia* 1:39-40). Moreover, Wordsworth and Shelley, in representing the poet as a being quite different from the ordinary reader, appear to be seeking to circumvent problematic reading conditions by creating an idealized realm for the poet. Although for Wordsworth the poet is simply "a man speaking to men" (*Preface* 138), he is also "in the situation of a translator" (*Preface* 139) because he has "more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness ... a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind" (*Preface* 138). Shelley's depiction of poets as "legislators of the world" (140) or prophets also separates the poet from the audience; in fact, he recommends that the poet escape historical influences: "A Poet ... would do ill to embody his own conceptions of right and wrong, which are usually those of his place and time, in his poetical creations, which participate in neither" (118).<sup>13</sup> Wordsworth not only emphasizes the poet's uniqueness but also encourages the reader to strive for individuality of response by requesting "that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others" (*Preface* 155).

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<sup>13</sup> According to Imlac in Johnson's *Rasselas*, the poet "must write as the interpreter of nature, and the legislator of mankind, and consider himself as presiding over the thoughts and manners of future generations; as a being superiour to time and place" (45).

Although according to didacticism, then, literature could influence, authors describe masses of readers who are immune and stubborn. Johnson had earlier written,

He that endeavours after fame by writing, solicits the regard of a multitude fluctuating in pleasures, or immersed in business, without time for intellectual amusements; he appeals to judges prepossessed by passions, or corrupted by prejudices, which preclude their approbation of any new performance. Some are too indolent to read any thing, till its reputation is established; others too envious to promote that fame which gives them pain by its increase. What is new is opposed, because most are unwilling to be taught; and what is known is rejected, because it is not sufficiently considered that men more frequently require to be reminded than informed. (*Rambler* No. 2, 14)

This “prejudiced” audience, moreover, had the potential to mold the unwary writers in the same way that readers were supposed to be influenced by authors. Shaftesbury laments authors being “turned and modelled (as themselves confess) by the public relish and current humour of the times.... In our days the audience makes the poet, and the bookseller the author, with what profit to the public, or what prospect of lasting fame and honour to the writer let any one who has judgment imagine” (172-3).

In other words, the focus on audience that was so central to didacticism had the potential to work precisely the opposite effect, when the author cared too much about readers’ opinions to keep track of his or her own. For Shaftesbury, the ancient Greek writers represent the authorial ideal, in which literature holds power over public opinions: “They formed their audience, polished the age, refined the public ear and framed it right, that in return they



might be rightly and lastingly applauded" (172). Shaftesbury's task in "Advice to an Author" is to gain the author "a Will, and ensure him a certain resolution by which he shall know where to find himself; be sure of his own meaning and design; and as to all his desires, opinions, and inclinations, be warranted one and the same person to-day as yesterday, and to-morrow as to-day" (123).

Indeed, Shaftesbury seems concerned with the danger that writing becomes the "negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing" (Barthes "Death" 168). When Barthes declared this "death" of the author, he contrasted the poststructural idea of language with the notion of control and order we associate with the eighteenth century. But Shaftesbury and others suggest that this contrast is invalid because eighteenth-century authors did not have the authority many have retrospectively attributed to them. Foucault, for instance, suggests that "since the eighteenth century, the author has played the role of the regulator of the fictive, a role quite characteristic of our era of industrial and bourgeois society, of individualism and private property" (209). Armstrong and Tennenhouse espouse a similar view when they explore "certain changes in intellectual and artistic practice" in the late seventeenth century that

called into being an author with a personal life and transformed irreversibly what writing was, because they changed forever what writing did and could henceforth do. Writing could make demands in the name of the author on behalf of others. Thus, one can imagine, it created a sense among certain people that the so-called author—no longer to be understood as the spokesperson of God, king, or some lesser patron—exemplified the English people themselves. (7)

While eighteenth-century and Romantic writers may have wanted to influence their reading publics, their writings register severe anxieties about this

possibility. If the public was patron, then the author was threatened with merely becoming a composite of his or her audience. As merely a pawn of an audience generally seen as corrupt, the writer would lose the moral authority necessary to be writing at all.

The involvement of the reader in the text was not merely a remnant of didactic thought, but was also a material element in reading and writing conditions. The copyright law of 1710 gave intellectual property rights to publishers, but David Richter highlights Robert Mayo's observation that a provision in the legislation allowed periodicals to claim the "right to abridge, or print extracts from, any literary work irrespective of copyright" (qtd. in Richter, *Progress* 122). A generation after this Act, reviewers began to offer readers the "good" parts of a work without recommending that the work be read in its entirety. Extracts allowed critics to represent what they considered to be both interesting and useful to the audience, and they offered the critic the opportunity to impose his (most were men) own moral or to guide readers' reactions to the work.

Furthermore, individual readers themselves seem to have responded in ways similar to reviewers. In extracting passages and determining morals quite independently of authorial "intentions," they problematize categories of "author" and "reader." Magazines invited reader contributions, and so they, as Jon Klancher reveals, encouraged readers to "revolve between reading roles and writing roles" (22). In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, private readers were accustomed to transcribing in personal journals portions of favourite poems; such transcriptions often took the place of the reader owning a copy of the entire poem. This practice resembles the Renaissance tradition of the commonplace book, which lived on into the eighteenth century. In "Literary Capital: Gray's 'Elegy,' Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and the

Vernacular Canon" (1995), John Guillory suggests that "we can observe a transformation in the purpose of the commonplace book, as the rhetorical motive is gradually displaced by a more explicitly anthological one, a motive oriented toward the *consumption* rather than the production of texts" (395; italics original). But this "consumption" is still an active production of a text, albeit a private one. In *The Poetics of Sensibility* (1996), McGann has outlined a private nineteenth-century reader's response to poetry by Laetitia Elizabeth Landon, and argued that the marginalia supplied by the individual reader render the reading experience as a kind of exchange, where the reader appropriates the text for personal use by applying its situations and emotions to specific personal events (138).

Jon Klancher has emphasized the importance of studying historical audiences: the "cultural critic or historian must multiply the mediators, not eliminate them" (10). Yet as he points out, reader studies have tended to explore either high-cultural production that "invites the language of 'reception,' the symbolic giving and receiving of texts between great writers and singular, sensitive readers" or, alternatively, mass-cultural production, which "yields up the harsher vocabulary of 'consumption,' supply and demand among innumerable writers and vast, faceless audiences" (13). This latter study of consumption is difficult, because poor documentary availability limits our knowledge of private reader reactions. Reception studies can consequently tend to explore only authors' conceptions of audiences, but in doing so, they perpetuate the idea of authorial power to shape readers. Klancher's study does not, it seems to me, escape this problem because in his focus on "audience-making" (15) he suggests that texts and language had power over readers and neglects adequately to consider reader resistance to written attempts to direct them.

Who were eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century readers? It is difficult to suggest in any way that individual readers can be representative of readers as a whole. Although each chapter in this thesis highlights a particular reader, it examines other readers as well and thus seeks to consider the individual within the context of the work's general reception. The readers I include all seem point-driven, in Vipond and Hunt's term, yet they also both consciously and unconsciously incorporate their own attitudes and ideas into interpretation. In the individuality of reader interpretations, the changes to the author's context or apparent intentions, and the impulse itself to creatively rewrite or continue another writer's work, these reader/writers question the absolute authority of the author.

A didactic ideology fueled the literary production of both authors and readers. This didacticism I would define not as prescriptive instruction but a more general belief, originally stemming perhaps from classical ideas of rhetoric, that texts influenced the way readers lived their lives. Since most people assumed that texts had a social function, anyone could assert control of a work's meaning as long as he or she focused on the good of society. Frank Kermode argues, in *The Sense of an Ending*, that we imagine beginnings and endings primarily to add meaning or perspective to the middle. He describes "a need to speak humanly of a life's importance in relation to it [a timeline]—a need in the moment of existence to belong, to be related to a beginning and to an end" (4). My argument, then, is that poetic and fictional "endings" were in the long eighteenth century projected beyond the conclusion to the literary description or plot. Both authors and readers approached literary endings in relation to real people's behaviours—rather than being an aesthetic response to a text, closure was a heuristic, highly debatable, proposition for others' lives.

## Chapter One

### Would Clarissa like *Clarissa*? Lady Echlin Reading Richardson

Few eighteenth-century authors offer the extensive discussions of readership and closure that occur in the prefaces, postscripts, and correspondence of Samuel Richardson. With *Clarissa* in particular, readers' anxiety over the conclusion prompted them to write letters begging for a happy ending, accusing the author of unparalleled cruelty, and threatening to abandon the book. Long before Wolfgang Iser and Stanley Fish debated reader involvement in texts, these readers took it for granted. Lady Echlin, sister of Lady Bradshaigh, took her discomfort even further, not by writing to the author but by appropriating the writer's authority herself and creating a new ending.

Richardson himself, while disturbed by these reader demands, had to some extent anticipated them. He knew he was publishing a confrontational ending in terms of reader expectations but he persisted in his plan because he meant to teach readers. His choice of themes seems to stem from a negative idea of human nature: readers, he felt, were easily corrupted and not so easily improved. Lady Echlin challenges Richardson in precisely his didacticism, arguing that in his quest for an forceful story he went beyond realistic probability and threatened to wound, rather than amend, his readers. Her ending is clearly moralistic in its presentation of the process of repentance and restitution. In many ways, including her character similarities to Clarissa herself, she would seem to be an ideal reader of a highly moral novel. But her

appropriation demonstrates the way a reader's emotional response to the novel would transform its social critiques.

Richardson's didacticism has been largely rejected by critics who see it as simplistic and uninteresting. Terry Castle distinguishes between Richardson's "vulgar didactic sense" and "programmatic 'message'" and the complicated morals she finds in *Clarissa* (28-29), and Ian Watt suggests that the didactic elements in the novel are what "we find incredible or uncongenial in Clarissa's personality" (213). Terry Eagleton is drawn not to the didact but to the man "who disseminates his writing to the winds, the engagingly modern deconstructionist adrift in an infinity of texts" (22). Didacticism Eagleton associates with closure, asking, "how is a structural openness, the essential medium of transformed relations between producers and audiences, to be reconciled with a necessary doctrinal closure?" and adding, "such closure is surely for us the unacceptable face of Samuel Richardson" (22). Defining closure as interpretive resolution, Castle goes further by claiming that the novel "offers little in the way of closure. It has more to do with fragmentation, difficulty, irresolution" (170). The multiple correspondents produce this indeterminacy, a shifting that makes the epistolary novel "marvelously unfit ... for didacticism of any kind" (168). Closure does further didacticism for Richardson—he constructs the ending in an attempt to secure didactic aims—but his attempts are important because his novel addresses crucial themes. To be more precise, his didacticism, and closural choices, regardless of whether they produce "determinacy," both reflected and influenced social conditions in the eighteenth century. Eagleton summarizes his importance: "Richardson did

not only share in the bourgeois public sphere of eighteenth-century England; he helped to construct it" (7).<sup>1</sup>

Richardson's decisions about the novel's ending were centrally concerned with marriage, a cultural subject important to both him and his readers. As William Beatty Warner argues, the novel begins as a classic romance and it is not surprising that readers expected it to end happily (135-8). An undated letter to Richardson from "Philaretus" reveals the tendency of the first two volumes. During the persecution of Clarissa by her family, Lovelace seems the potential hero who will finally rescue her. Philaretus writes, "I could not have borne her Family's barbarous Treatment of her with Patience, if I had not been calmed with the Hope, that she would have met with the Reward of her Piety and Virtue, and been happy with Lovelace at last" (Forster).<sup>2</sup> The novel counters this tendency, of course, when Lovelace becomes the persecutor, but the early suggestions of romantic potential became, with readers, difficult to extinguish.

The most famous champion of a marriage ending was Lady Bradshaigh, who insisted that Lovelace seemed capable of reformation and so wanted the "lovely pair" to be happy (Barbould 4:181). In her arguments she does not overlook his wickedness, telling Richardson, "you may assure yourself the good and virtuous are utter enemies to all his wickedness, and are only pleased with

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Keymer does see the didacticism as important. He argues that "what many of Richardson's contemporaries saw when they considered this didacticism was not the naive attempt to enforce banal warnings against misconduct so often derided in modern criticism, but a far more intelligent, extensive and dynamic endeavour (in the words of one) to 'new-Model [the] Affections' of the reader, and 'to inform the Understanding'—an endeavour closer in motivation if not in form to Fielding's attempts to exercise and empower the 'Sagacity' of his reader than either novelist was ever prepared to admit" (*Reader* xviii; Keymer's [ ]).

<sup>2</sup> All references to the Forster Collection refer to the microfilm produced by the Victoria and Albert Museum. Letters quoted are from the section "Clarissa Harlowe Correspondence" (Reel 2). Since page numbering in this copy of the series is erratic and occasionally non-existent, I have not attempted to reproduce it. Letters are handwritten: I have retained their capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.

the distant view and hopes of his becoming the good, the virtuous, and the tender husband of Clarissa” (Barbauld 4:195). There is room in the text for such a view. While Richardson writes to Bradshaigh the moral that he also includes in *Clarissa’s* Preface, that there “cannot be a more pernicious notion, than that which is so commonly received, that a reformed rake makes the best husband” (Barbauld 4:190), the character of Belford demonstrates that a rake can reform and make a tolerable husband. Lady Bradshaigh uses him in her comments when she suggests that Lovelace might be reformed gradually, and “by the sufferings of Clarissa, occasioned by himself, be brought to reflection with the help of his friend Belford, who seems to be paving the way towards so good an end” (Barbauld 4:196).

Bradshaigh’s comments about Belford highlight the view that social pressure can reform individuals. Despite a modern reader’s difficulty in seeing how one could possibly desire a rapist to marry his victim, the potential marriage is sanctioned by many characters in the novel itself. Their views are based on the idea of marriage as a social contract that brings obligations with which the individual, despite his or her inclinations, must comply.

For the characters in the novel who advocate for it, for instance, marriage is not romantic wish-fulfilment but social necessity. Early on, Anna advises Clarissa to marry Lovelace so that she may obtain power over her own actions and with her family: “Plotting wretch as I doubt your man is, I wish to heaven that you were married, that you might brave them all; and not be forced to hide yourself, and be hurried from one inconvenient place to another” (406).<sup>3</sup> Clarissa has no social influence without reputation, and so it is imperative that she guard hers. Marriage is important for that reason, as

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<sup>3</sup> All quotations are to the first edition of the novel, edited by Angus Ross. Lady Echlin was most likely reading this edition when she composed her ending, and it inspired Lady Bradshaigh’s letters and the novel’s earliest reception.



Anna argues, “All the world, in short, expect you to have this man .... The longer the ceremony is delayed, the worse appearance it will have in the world’s eye. And it will not be the fault of some of your relations if a slur be not thrown upon your reputation while you continue unmarried” (467). In marrying Lovelace Clarissa marries his family, and “an alliance with a family so honourable as Mr Lovelace’s is, will not be a disgrace” (547).

Lovelace’s family is also important because they might regulate him. Lord M. believes, at any rate, that financial power can direct him. He tells him, “I will disinherit you, and settle all I can upon her, if you prove not a good husband to her” (787). He and “his two sisters are both to be guarantees” that Lovelace will “make the best of husbands,” Anna writes to Clarissa (1042). Despite Anna’s abhorrence of Lovelace after the rape, she still advises Clarissa to marry him, because “all his future grandeur (he wants not pride) depends upon his sincerity ... and the young ladies vouch for the depth of his concern for the wrongs he has done” (1043). Her advice is to make the best of a bad situation through established social options: “as all his family are such earnest pleaders, and will be guarantees for him, I think the compliance with *their* entreaties, and *his own*, will be now the best step you can take .... He is a man of sense; and it is not impossible but he may make you a good husband, and in time may become no bad man” (1113).

Other elements of the novel confirm the power of social pressure—albeit for negative goals. The Harlowe family, for one, is a supreme example of the influence a few can have over many. Similarly, Mowbray tells Belton to keep away once he is ill because he will influence his company: “thou droopest like a pip or roup-cloaking chicken. Thou shouldst grow perter, or submit to a solitary quarantine, if thou wouldst not infect the whole brood” (1089-90). Mrs. Sinclair and her crew drive Lovelace to lengths he might not alone have taken. When

explaining how he resists their pressure he indicates how strong that pressure is: "How do these creatures endeavour to stimulate me! .... with them I am a craven. I might have had her before now, if I would .... I begin to repent already that I have brought her hither" (535).

Lovelace's aversion to marriage to some extent confirms the suggestion that it would be an achievement for Clarissa. His second, sudden proposal is entirely spontaneous, brought about by her effect on him. He tells Belford, "I no more intended all this ecstatic nonsense than I thought the same moment of flying in the air!—All power is with this charming creature!—It is I, not she, at this rate, that must fail in the arduous trial" (493). Lord M. believes that she would have power over Lovelace's morals in marriage. To Belford he writes, "This match ... as the lady has such an extraordinary share of wisdom and goodness, might set all to rights" (606), and later to Lovelace, "God convert you! for nobody but He and this lady, can" (664).

The imperatives to marriage, then, spring from a belief that it will bring power to Clarissa: combine a position of respectability in the community (marriage into an established, honourable family) and a position of influence at home (virtue influencing one's husband) to effect change in one's domestic and wider social community. The novel does, of course, also indicate why this belief is inaccurate. Clarissa feels she would be sacrificing personal integrity to achieve superficial approval. The supposed social pressure would not necessarily occur: Lord M. is afflicted with illnesses that might prevent him from changing his will, or from living long enough to see if Lovelace is a good husband. Finally, Lovelace has shown how financially indifferent he is, or how little those types of pressures affect him.

Furthermore, Lovelace's exploitation of marriage's social acceptability defeats it as a desirable goal for the woman he persecutes. Relying on the

marriage convention to atone for his actions, he intends to “reward her by marriage” if Clarissa passes his tests (519). He cannot see any other options for her but marriage, and he reasons, “She has already incurred the censure of the world. She must therefore choose to be mine for the sake of soldering up her reputation in the eye of that impudent world” (575). In Lovelace Richardson reveals how an individual can use social pressures to his own advantages. He sanctions the impending rape with the argument, “And if her resentments run ever so high, cannot I repair by matrimony?” (879). By calling marriage a generic cliché, he exposes it as an artifice, suggests to readers that they rely too heavily on genre conventions, and also implies that Richardson’s own purposes are strikingly original: “Is not *the catastrophe of every story that ends in wedlock accounted happy*, be the difficulties in the progress to it ever so great?” (944).

Lovelace’s unconcern because marriage is commonplace is precisely Richardson’s concern. He considers reconciling Clarissa to her family and marrying her to Lovelace on her own terms but argues, “What however usefull, however pleasing the Lesson, I had done more than I had done in Pamela?” (Carroll 92). Furthermore, this situation is common in life: “it is hoped that there are many Mothers, many Wives, who, tho’ they have not been called upon to many Trials, thus meritoriously employ themselves in their Families” (93). Similarly, to Lady Bradshaigh he says of their potential marriage, “What is there unusual in all this? ... What in a Happiness so common, and so private, ... worth troubling the World about” (Carroll 106). The character of Clarissa is meant to be unusual, not common. Of a potential unhappy marriage plot he asks Lowe, “is a Clarissa to be reduced to bear so *common* a Lot?” (Carroll 124).

Clarissa rejects marriage to Lovelace for reasons similar to those for which she rejects Solmes. Her reasons support Lawrence Stone's argument that the eighteenth-century marriage was becoming based on individuality, or was "organized around the principle of personal autonomy" with a motive of "long-term personal affection rather than economic or social advantage for the lineage as a whole" (7-8). Clarissa rejects Solmes because of personal aversion, particularly in consideration of "the marriage intimacies" (507), and of his faulty character. In describing the state of marriage she reveals that her very superiorities and consciousness of individual thought and judgment weigh against Solmes: "Did I not *think* more and deeper than most young creatures think; did I not *weigh*, did I not *reflect*; I might perhaps have been less obstinate" (507). And she calls their potential marriage an "immiscible" one (507). With Lovelace, too, she is "not at all satisfied" (506) and thinks she "could hate him" (507). After the rape she describes marriage as a union of souls: "were *not* my heart to abhor thee and to rise against thee for thy *perjuries*, as it *does*, I would not, I tell thee once more, I would not bind my soul in covenant with such a man for a thousand worlds!" (914).

Clarissa's rejection of marriage throughout the novel, then, seems an assertion of individualism against social pressure and a resistance of the concept that a woman must marry. But the negative picture of marriage in the novel is produced, in fact, by Lovelace's individualism, his refusal to let his family, Clarissa, Belford, or anyone else, influence his actions. Moreover, as Robert Uphaus argues, "too much attention has been focused on Clarissa's self or individuality when this is exactly what she perceives to be her central and fatal weakness" (84).

Clarissa's refusals of marriage, furthermore, support the contemporary ideals of the patriarchal family because they are based on her insistence that

she must submit to her husband once she is married. To submit in this way to Lovelace, in her view, would hazard her own morals. She reasons, “Can I vow duty to one so wicked, and hazard my salvation by joining myself to so great a profligate ... ?” (1116). And she wonders if her “own sinful compliances with a man who would think himself entitled to [her] obedience might taint [her] own morals” (1116). Moreover, she advises (almost “commands”) Anna to marry Hickman. As Paula Backscheider points out, quoting Clarissa’s directions in her will (1416), in “contrast to Clarissa ... Anna can be ‘claimed,’ and her vestiges of independent free will become indulgences” (228).

Ultimately, the novel suggests, women are responsible for their own happiness. In a passage that Richardson later quotes in a letter to Lady Bradshaigh, Clarissa argues that “women are too often to blame” for men making light of their errors, since “the most virtuous among us [women] seldom make *virtue* the test of their approbation of the other: insomuch that a man may glory in his wickedness of this sort without being rejected on that account, even to the faces of women of unquestionable virtue” (1319). Anna is charged with responsibility for her own marital happiness, because Hickman’s moral virtues should outweigh the things she sees as personal shortcomings—“May you, my dear Miss Howe, have no discomforts but what you make to yourself! Those, as it will be in your power to lessen them, ought to be your own punishment if you do not” (1320). Margaret Lenta observes that Anna describes Mr. Harlowe as a tyrant but then blames Mrs. Harlowe for her passivity (Lenta 16). Mrs. Harlowe is “the less to be pitied, as she may be said ... to have long behaved unworthy of her birth and fine qualities, in yielding to encroaching spirits” (133)—she supports this assertion herself after Clarissa’s death (1396). Arabella Harlowe ends with an unhappy marriage to a man who behaves much as Lovelace might have, but her marriage is considered a

punishment to her, and his possible “personal abuses” are “said to be owing to her impatient spirit and violent passions” (1490). While on one hand one might see these passages as Richardson’s defense of female power or his insistence that women can control their own happiness, he does so only while retaining traditional submissive roles.

Despite her rejection of Lovelace, Clarissa seems to have alternatives for her future life: going to the American colonies—an option considered by her family (1256-7) but also earlier by Clarissa herself (754)—travelling abroad with Colonel Morden, or marrying Wyerley. The letter from Wyerley (1266) is itself an interesting inclusion, because it challenges the view that a woman who has been ravished can marry no one but her ravisher. But Hickman is shocked when Lovelace tells him that Clarissa has another lover (meaning death)—Miss Howe believes Clarissa must marry Lovelace or “nobody living” (1096)—and Clarissa does not consider Wyerley’s proposal as an option. In her answer to him she implies that she has no future at all when she speaks of her life only in terms of the past and indicates that she expects that she might soon die (1268).

Her earlier choice to live single has, of course, been opposed by her family. The Harlowes see singleness as a temporary state that merely postpones choice. Moreover, they do not believe a woman is discerning enough not to marry badly, a suspicion of female judgment supported later in the novel by Colonel Morden, who although he exempts Clarissa from the norm tells Lovelace that “men had generally too many advantages over the weakness, credulity, and inexperience of the fair sex, who were too apt to be hurried into acts of precipitation by their reading inflaming novels, and idle romances” (1279-80). Single life is problematic for Clarissa too, however, because she opposes litigating for her estate and thus challenging her father. Finally, she

opposes living single because the moment of her ruin has defined her social position forever: “must I not *now* sit brooding over my past afflictions, and mourning my faults till the hour of my release? And would not everyone be able to assign the reason why Clarissa Harlowe chose solitude, and to sequester herself from the world? Would not the look of every creature who beheld me appear as a reproach to me?” (1117).

Death as closure leaves intact this idea that a single woman without her virginity is ruined, and it removes all social options, and with them the corresponding social dilemmas. Eagleton reads Clarissa’s death as defiance against those who would possess her, yet sees her “individuality” as ironic: “the final exercise of ‘free’ individual choice is in fact a tragic option for self-extinction” (87). He writes,

Clarissa, after the rape, refers to her own body more than once as “nothing,” a declaration which critics have read as no more than a puritan repudiation of the flesh; but the implications of this denial cut deeper. It must be taken together with her assertion that “I am nobody’s”: a radical refusal of any place within the “symbolic order,” a rebuffing of all patriarchal claims over her person. (61-2)

As he explains later, her “elaborate dying is a ritual of deliberate disengagement from patriarchal and class society” (Eagleton 73).

But Clarissa rejects her body because she defends the patriarchy and can find no way to reconcile her physical presence within that system. Bakscheider concludes that although Richardson “saw women’s situation clearly and managed to comprehend many of its causes and implications” (230), he still “deflected attention from the problem of how women might achieve happiness and what they might demand of men and marriage to a resolution that calls for female virtue, exemplary forbearance and sacrifice,

and literary closure" (231). She argues that on balance, however, "Richardson furthered women's cause" (231). Eagleton offers a similar view that Richardson, while not an ardent feminist, takes part in "a deep-seated 'feminization' of values throughout the eighteenth century which is closely allied with the emergence of the bourgeoisie" (14). He acknowledges that feminization is not sexual revolution: "Male hegemony was to be sweetened but not undermined; women were to be exalted but not emancipated" (95).

Richardson's role as "exalter" of women warrants analysis not only in his novel's themes or mimetic capacity but also in his didacticism, which was central to his authorial decisions. His attitude towards readers combines a pessimism over conditions of the day with an optimism that a careful author can reform his audience. In a letter to Aaron Hill advising him on his own writings, he laments reader tastes: "Your writings require thought to read, and to take in their whole force; and the world has no thought to bestow. Simplicity is all their cry; yet hardly do these criers know what they mean by the noble word ... I am convinced that the fault lies in that indolent (that lazy, I should rather call it) world" (Carroll 98). Despite these problems, he argues that writers should not rely on posterity but should persevere in reaching their peers:

You would not, I am sure, wish to write to a future age only. — A chance, too, so great, that posterity will be mended by what shall be handed down to them by this. ... I am of the opinion that it is necessary for a genius to accommodate itself to the mode and taste of the world it is cast into, since works published in this age must take root in it, to flourish in the next. (Carroll 98)



He does not reject the hope of influencing posterity, but he believes the present will affect the future. In a letter to Frances Grainger he outlines his goals for *Clarissa*. He

was so sensible of the growing Depravity of the better Part of the Creation, that he thought he should not deserve ill of the present Age or of Posterity ... if his work could be presumed to live for the 4th Part of a Century for giving an History of a worthy Woman, and in it a Lesson to Parents as well as Children. ... If the present age can be awakened and amended, the next perhaps will not, duly weighing all Circumstances, think *Clarissa* too delicate or too good for Imitation. (Carroll 142)

These two words, “awakened and amended,” provide insight into Richardson’s didacticism because they suggest that he wishes to change people who perhaps do not even know they need to change. As Richardson writes frequently both in his letters and in the novel itself, the story is written “for the sake of *Example and Warning*” (To Lady Bradshaigh, Carroll 104). His summaries of the various morals to the story indicate that he intended a wide reading audience made up of young women, young men, parents, and profligates.<sup>4</sup> Writing to Lady Bradshaigh he emphasizes his broad goals, “And were not her execrable Relations deserving of Punishment as well as [Lovelace]? — Whence my double Moral, extending to tyranical Parents, as well as to Profligate Men; and laying down from [*Clarissa*] the Duty of Children, and that whether Parents do theirs or not” (Carroll 94).<sup>5</sup> For him, a writer’s task is

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<sup>4</sup> Although Richardson wrote to Hill that the novel was “*principally* suitable to the years and Capacities of Persons under Twenty of the one Sex, and under thirty of the other” (Eaves & Kimpel 210), his comments in the preface and to Bradshaigh, and the plot of the novel itself, suggest that he also envisioned older readers.

<sup>5</sup> I retain the editorial symbols used by Carroll, shaped brackets < > for enclosing words deleted by Richardson, daggers † for words inserted by Richardson in revising letters, square brackets [ ] for editorial insertions, and a single asterisk \* for a doubtful reading.

to identify some of the primary errors of the age and address them. When discussing the possibility of having Clarissa marry Lovelace, he writes to Hill, "I intend another Sort of Happiness ... for my Heroine, than that which was to depend upon the Will and Pleasure, and uncertain Reformation and good Behaviour of a vile Libertine .... The Sex give too much countenance to Men of this Cast †for any one† to make <them> such a Compliment to their Errors" (Carroll 87).

As the latter portion of this statement reveals, *Clarissa* was meant in some ways to undo *Pamela's* effect on readers, because Richardson assumes that readers are likely to imitate fiction. His didacticism, consequently, centres on manipulating this response, and Clarissa's death in itself offers readers a pattern to imitate. As Richardson writes to Lowe, the novel "is designed to make those think of Death who endeavour all they can to banish it from their Thoughts" (Carroll 126). Doody outlines the traditions Richardson draws on in his death scenes, traditions enforcing themes such as "the necessity of considering our end, the danger of damnation, the joys of salvation, the briefness of time" (154). After the rape, much of the novel is devoted to Clarissa's preparations for death and Belford's increasing awareness of the importance of it. Repentance does not occur suddenly: characters like Belton and Sinclair do not know how to die. In this sense, the didactic impulse is aimed at those who *do* feel they have many more years to live, because Richardson insists that it takes years for a "proper repentance" to take effect.

Richardson, of course, saw Clarissa's death as a reward, and, arguing against a marriage plot he says, "it would have been the highest Degree of Cruelty to keep longer [*sic*] out of the Heaven she aspired after" (Carroll 124). Her death is a triumph in part because her word is validated: she has been insisting that she will die but Lovelace and the members of her family have

refused to believe she is that ill. She finally proves her claims for herself—which have been disbelieved throughout the novel—with the act of dying. Her spiritual happiness, of course, and other characters' punishments support poetic justice. As the Postscript implies, as critics have pointed out since, and as Channing wrote to Richardson, "Clarissa's apotheosis is every way ... strict poetical justice" (Nov. 28, 1748, Forster).<sup>6</sup> Richardson's rejection of poetic justice in the Postscript, then, seems a bit puzzling, since he might have defended his ending simply by arguing for its accordance with a Christian poetic justice. Channing advises Richardson, in fact, "I think your post-script unnecessary, and too great a Deference paid to the opinions of many of your friends" (ibid.).

It is perhaps to those friends, however, that Richardson uses critical controversy to further his message. The tragedy the story produces seems based on the puritan idea that suffering is good for the soul. Readers' unhappiness was more beneficial than happiness. Richardson writes to Frances Grainger that "Calamity is the *test* of virtue, and often the *parent* of it, in minds that prosperity would ruin. ... Ask the people who frequent Vauxhall and Ranelagh if they found themselves fiddled and danced and merry into virtue" (Carroll 151). In a letter to Hill he refers to those who want a happy ending as "the greater Vulgar" (Carroll 87). To Lady Bradshaigh he calls a marriage ending "trite," stating, "I am sorry that it was supposed that I had no other end in the Publication of so large a Piece ... but the trite one of perfecting a private Happiness, by the Reformation of a Libertine" (Carroll 103). His story, on the other hand, should produce strong emotions, specifically "Pity on

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<sup>6</sup> Critics who identify the ending with poetic justice include R.F. Brissenden (Introduction to *Clarissa: Preface, Hints of Prefaces, and Postscript* iii), Ira Konigsberg (*Samuel Richardson and the Dramatic Novel* 90), and Sheldon Sacks ("*Clarissa* and the Tragic Traditions" 196).

her Account, and Terror on his” (To Lady Bradshaigh, Carroll 104). Moreover, the actual pain of reading (the tears, the frustration) effects a moral purpose. In encouraging Lady Bradshaigh to read to the end he says, “Tears you must consider as Reliefs from Grief, not as Grief itself. My Story is designed to strengthen the tender Mind, and to enable the worthy Heart to bear up against the Calamities of Life” (Carroll 116).

In his discussion of poetic justice, he writes that the novel is based on Christian principles of life as a “state of *probation*” (1495). He adds that critics might resist that message: “But we have no need to shelter our conduct under the sanction of religion (an authority perhaps not of the greatest weight with modern critics)” (1495). Richardson’s argument is motivated by a desire to place his novel within the tragic traditions, well known to readers with classical learning. At the same time, though, Addison’s and Rapin’s arguments against poetic justice repeat the same principle of “calamity producing virtue” that Richardson reveres in his letters. In other words, poetic justice furthers a didactic message without seeming to provide specifically religious instruction. Addison’s words sound like echoes of Richardson’s elsewhere-stated sentiments: “Terror and commiseration ... fix the audience in such a serious composure of thought as is much more lasting and delightful, than any little transient starts of joy and satisfaction” (1497). Similarly, Rapin reinforces the sentiments:

“Tragedy ... makes man *modest* ... makes him *tender* and *merciful* .... It prepares and arms him against *disgraces* ... and he will cease to fear extraordinary accidents, when he sees them happen to the *highest* (and still more efficacious, we may add, the example will be, when he sees them happen to the *best*) part of mankind. ... as the end of tragedy is to teach men not to fear too weakly *common*

*misfortunes*, it proposes also to teach them to spare their compassion for objects that *deserve it*." (1497-8)

Perhaps like some of the readers whom Richardson attempts to instruct through his tragedy, Lovelace is unprepared both for his own death and for endings in general. As Patricia Meyer Spacks points out, Lovelace as plotter enjoys the process more than the result and "delights in the play of his imagination quite without regard for the end in view" (65). The "problems" Lovelace encounters as a direct result of his creativity stem from plot's tendency to become an end in itself" (Spacks 65). Clarissa's responses to his attacks continually surprise him and lead him to exclaim, "Oh that I had been honest!—What a devil are all my plots come to! What do they end in, but one grand plot upon myself, and a title to eternal infamy and disgrace!" (957). When his death approaches, too, although one of his final letters to Belford seems "like a confession of a thief at the gallows," he insists of the duel, "I am as sure of victory as I am that I now live" (1484). He cannot suspect that he will lose because dueling is much like plotting: a sport to him, that he loves "as well as" his food (1484). Among de la Tour's final comments is, "He little thought, poor gentleman! his end so near: so had given no direction about his body" (1488).

Richardson, in contrast, gives a great deal of thought to what might occur following his novel's ending. Margaret Doody argues that in Lovelace's aesthetic ideals no "action is seen by him as begetting real consequences that interfere with the dramatic harmony of the work as he has designed it" (*Natural* 114). Richardson exposes Lovelace's views as a fiction, or reveals that the aesthetic—both Lovelace's and his own—is linked to the "real world." Consequently, any implication either in or beyond the novel of bringing Clarissa and Lovelace together would be dangerous because readers would take it as a

sanction for their own behaviour. For young women this would mean marrying libertines, while for young men it would mean acting as libertines. The novel's tragedy is intended specifically so that attentive readers will be spared having to endure similar problems in their own lives. Richardson wrote to Hill that he planned to make this novel "much nobler" and more "useful" than *Pamela*, "*As all must die*" (Carroll 83). He attempts through *Clarissa* to educate readers about the importance of preparing properly for their own inevitable closures—marriage and death.

Although Clarissa's briefly offered alternatives for her life would seem to challenge readers to expand their expectations beyond marriage, her death fails to leave these choices open for female readers who are to follow her example. The novel text as didactic implies only one choice for young women: imitating the character of Clarissa while hoping for the marriage of Anna Howe. While Eagleton argues that Clarissa's submission to the patriarchal system "simply twists the dagger a little deeper in the very social order of which she was so fine a flower" (76), as an exemplar she encourages female readers to remain submissively within conventional social boundaries. She offers a model of self-discipline, domestic economy, and social self-denial (1468), and she is carefully prevented from recommending any life other than marriage and obedience.

To a great extent, Richardson aims to prevent errors before they occur because, as he argues concerning libertines, "Reformation is not, can not, be †an easy, †a sudden thing, in a Man long immersed in Vice" (Carroll 94). Reader resistance, he seems to believe, can be overcome, and the more resistant a young person, the more that person needs the instruction: "Such are the Lessons I endeavour to inculcate by an Example in natural Life. And the more irksome these Lessons are to the Young, the Gay, and the Healthy, the more necessary are they to be inculcated" (Carroll 91). In fact, his readers'

perverseness in admiring Lovelace made Richardson more convinced that he cannot let Clarissa marry him, that he is correct in his chosen “Catastrophe” (Carroll 92).

Although Richardson seems to assume that people imitate what they read, he relies on closure to prevent men from imitating Lovelace. In a lively description to Lady Bradshaigh of the potential outcome of a reformed Lovelace, he describes a hypothetical response:

Here “says another Lovelace, may I pass the Flower and Prime of my Youth, in forming and pursuing the most insidious Enterprizes ... I may at last meet with and attempt a Clarissa .... I may try her, vex her, plague and torment her worthy Heart .... And if I find her Proof against all my Machinations, and myself tired with rambling, I may then reward that Virtue .... And all the Good-natured the Worthy, the Humane part of the World forgiving me too, because I am a handsome and an humorous Fellow, will clap their Hands with joy and cry out—

‘Happy, happy, happy pair!

None but the Rake deserves the Fair!’”(Carroll 93)

For Richardson, then, the ending determines the force of a bad example. If vice does not win, vice will not be imitated. In this light Clarissa’s death, because it is necessary to punish Lovelace (and, in fact, her entire family), seems self-sacrificial, despite her heavenly reward. She does not die for Lovelace’s salvation in the novel, but she does die for real libertine readers who are in danger of following his example.

These finer points of Richardson’s didactic principles illuminate reader reactions to the rape. Lady Bradshaigh extends his own beliefs about reader imitation when she blames him for teaching how to rape, and insists that the

tragic ending will not prevent such action: "What will any villain care what becomes of a Clarissa, when he has gained his horrid ends, which you have taught him how to gain?" (Barbauld 4:201). In practice, the rape has made for detrimental interpretations of Clarissa the character (regardless of the ending). As Castle and other feminist critics have noted, critics of the novel have "often suggested that in one way or another she had 'asked for it' by behaving unsuitably or ambiguously" (184). She quotes Ian Watt, who states, "Unconsciously, no doubt, Clarissa courts sexual violation as well as death" (Watt 232).

Their sympathy for Clarissa's suffering, or the emotions produced in the reader, would influence readers toward imitation, but as Bradshaigh's reaction demonstrates, this sympathy might also cause reader rebellion. In part for this reason, Clarissa's death seems meant to provide a more complete finality to her story than any form of her living could do. Richardson writes to Lady Bradshaigh of the lack of resolution in a marriage ending: "Let us attend Clarissa in the Issue of her supposed Nuptials. We will imagine her to have repeatedly escaped the Perils of Child birth. How many Children shall we give her? Five? Six? Seven? How many, Madam? Not less I hope" (Carroll 107). Given the insistence of readers to continue Pamela's life after the fiction ceased, it is not surprising that he chose to end Clarissa's fiction with death. In that ending it was he who controlled her production, not whimsical readers whose opinions and feelings sometimes discouraged and sometimes appalled him.

Richardson's ending was confrontational because it refused to offer the marriage ending that readers expected and instead ended with tragedy. Readers likely would have rebelled against this turn under any publishing conditions, but additional factors caused problems with reception. Because the



seven volumes were printed over the period of a year, readers anticipated conclusions for themselves. He writes to Lady Bradshaigh, "You and others having seen but Part of my Work; by Reason of the distant Publication of two Volumes, and two Volumes, have formed from the Four a Catastrophe of your own; and are therefore the more unwilling to part with it, in favour of that which I think from the Premises the only natural one" (Carroll 103). Similarly, to Elizabeth Carter he says, "A great deal of this trouble [readers wanting Clarissa to live] I have had from publishing a work in Parts which left everyone at liberty to form a catastrophe of their own" (Carroll 117). These objections diminished once readers actually finished the book. Lady Bradshaigh wrote in the fifth volume of her copy of *Clarissa*, "Did I ever wish Clarissa to marry Lovelace? How I hate myself for it" (Eaves & Kimpel 234). Similarly, in Sarah Fielding's *Remarks on Clarissa* the character of Bellario objects to the unhappy ending while it is impending, but is later convinced by its appropriateness: "I confess I was against the Story's ending unhappily, till I saw the Conclusion; but I now think the different Deaths of the many Persons ... produce as noble a Moral as can be invented by the Wit of Man" (47).

Richardson's practice of sending the manuscript to friends led to the ending becoming known before the book was published and so before, significantly, the narrative could emotionally prepare the reader for the confrontational ending. He writes of this process, "I had never, however, designed that the Catastrophe should be known †before Publication;† But one Friend and another got the Mss. out of my Hands; and some of them have indiscreetly, tho' without any bad Intention, talked of it in all places" (to Hill, Carroll 87). The knowledge of the ending detrimentally affected the book's sale: "The Sale is pretty quick for an *imperfect* Work. †Yet† I know not whether it

has not suffered <much> by the Catastrophe's being too much known and talked of" (Carroll 86).

Tom Keymer's study on *Clarissa* and the reader argues that the epistolary form aided Richardson's purposes because by "requiring the reader to make his own sense of the novel's world, unguided by anything remotely like a single authorial voice, he taxes the reader's understanding to what ... is an exceptional extent" (*Reader* xv). For Keymer, his novels "educate their reader by involving him in instructive 'mock encounters' with difficulties, challenges and dilemmas closely related in kind to those he will encounter in life itself: they inform his capacity to make sense of the world by first requiring him to make sense, from his own resources, of a correspondingly exacting text" (*Reader* xviii). Keymer stresses the absence of authorial control, but viewing the novel in this way overlooks the extent to which readers felt they were interacting strongly with an authorial presence. Richardson's didacticism was based on his assumption that most readers would share his most basic values.

Most readers' responses confirm this opinion, because they often did not misunderstand authorial intentions but nonetheless rejected them. Lady Bradshaigh's notorious fondness for Lovelace is revealed in her first letter to Richardson. She confesses, "I cannot help being fond of Lovelace. A sad dog! why would you make him so wicked, and yet so agreeable?" (Barbauld 4:180). As this statement indicates, Bradshaigh knows she is not to approve of Lovelace. Jane Collier cites a woman who condemned Clarissa for not marrying Lovelace at St. Alban's, who stated, "In short, Lovelace is a charming young fellow, and I own I like him excessively" (Barbauld 2:66). That this woman "owned" she liked Lovelace indicates her awareness of her feeling's impropriety. Despite his careful attempts to direct impressionable readers, Richardson discovered that they were much more independent than he had

anticipated. Rather than changing (“awaking and amending”), readers either admired aspects that he had not intended or abandoned the novel altogether.

Many readers also objected to Clarissa as paragon—even though they recognized her moral superiority—because her exaltation devalued “normal” women. Edward Moore told Richardson in October 1748 of “three fair Ladies” he knew who called the character of Clarissa “an Affront to the Sex” (Oct. 3, 1748, Forster). In Moore’s playful recounting of their objections lies an interesting social commentary. These women said Richardson had “been pleas’d maliciously to instruct the Men in what a woman ought to be, instead of advising them to bear with what she really is” (ibid.). Such a view fits with the novel’s implications that women’s unhappiness often results from their own moral failings (Anna’s, Mrs. Harlowe’s, Arabella’s) rather than outside influences. Although in his letters and novels Richardson stresses women’s capacity for learning and for individuality, he at the same time does not wish to upset a woman’s “reasonable” obedience to parents and husbands, and his novels teach opinionated women like Anna Howe and Charlotte Grandison to temper their rebellion.

Richardson often concluded that personal lapses of morality determined reader hostility. To Frances Grainger he writes in January 1750 that readers’ characters determined their responses to his and Fielding’s novels:

In [Sophia’s character], as in the Character of her illegitimate Tom, there is nothing that very Common Persons may not attain to; Nothing that will reproach the Conduct or Actions of very ordinary Capacities, and very free Livers: while Clarissa’s Character, as it might appear unattainable by them, might be supposed Prudish, too delicate, and a silent Reproach to themselves. (Carroll 143)

Along these same lines, he writes to David Graham in 1750,

It is an invidious Task to set up an Example to those who are resolved not to look out of themselves for one; and whose Errors are wrought into Habit. The best Lessons will be treated by such as Reflexions upon their own Conduct or Morals. While a faulty or vicious Character will be considered †by the Generality† rather as an Acquittal than a Condemnation †of themselves.† (Carroll 157)

Richardson's later novelistic revisions that attempted relatively black-and-white interpretations of characters parallel his attitude towards readers. In addition, however, many of his readers held the same moralistic judgments of people; these undoubtedly were found outside of Richardson's circle as well as within it. But these judgments seem in part meant to console him for some readers' failures to emulate the text. Young wrote after reading *Clarissa* before publication, "Believe me, Christians of taste will applaud your plan, and they who themselves would act Lovelace's part, will find the greatest fault with it" (Barbauld 2:6). Collier explained the woman cited above by suggesting, "the best answer to the present criticism is, to give you the history and character of the lady who so ingenuously avowed her fondness for Lovelace" (Barbauld 2:66-7). The woman

lived as a mistress with a man for many years ... then went into keeping with a noble lord (now her husband) and after having lived with him some years, she prevailed with him to marry her ... (besides being frequently in fits and sometimes in the most violent passions of rage) she once attempted to take laudanum to destroy herself; and, being prevented, she another time hanged herself, just as she knew he was coming up stairs; which last stratagem gained her ends: and now she is a woman of quality. (Barbauld 2:67-8)

The idea that the novel might reform readers, or change bad ones into good, often succumbs to this theory of the reader as a priori. Channing praises Richardson's novel in October 1748 (he had apparently seen an advance copy) and insists that the ending is perfectly formed for instructive purposes. He writes of the contrasting deaths, "How much more instructively will these scenes be formed to touch the hearts both of good and bad, than any which can be drawn upon the contrary plan!" and continues later, "Your reader will be shocked, forsooth, at poor Belton's horrid end ... perhaps too at Clarissa's coffin .... the reader who would be most shocked by them, has perhaps the most need of them" (Barbauld 2:334-5). But a subsequent letter suggests that "bad" readers are not affected by Richardson's work. Channing writes that he encountered two libertines carrying each a volume of *Clarissa* and "Skipping like monkeys from Letter to Letter" (Nov. 28, 1748, Forster). Rather than being moved by the story they say, "Lo—ds what a rout is here about a woman! .... she's such a woman as I never met with yet, and hope never to have to do with .... Laud such a multitude of reading without coming at the Story: 'tis quite tiresome, a man can never get through with any tolerable patience by my Sawl" (ibid.). While this letter was written before the final three volumes of the novel were published, and thus before these men could see the important deaths of so many of the characters, Channing did not here suspect that they would be influenced by the deaths, when so little of the earlier part of the book made a "proper" impression on them. Even Lady Bradshaigh used *Clarissa* to judge the characters of her young acquaintances. She says that she longs to admonish the "young, the gay, the fashionable" and uses *Clarissa* as a measure of their promise: "I ask them, if they have read Clarissa? and if the answer is, as it has been, D—n it, I would not read it thro' to save my life,—

I put that youth down as an incurable; but, on the contrary those that approve it, I look upon as hopeful, and proceed accordingly” (Barbauld 4:304).

These condemnations of improper readers are not surprising if one considers that Richardson’s didacticism is itself based on a suspicious view of human nature. His insistence that Clarissa not marry Lovelace occurs because he feels most young women *would* marry libertines if given the least encouragement. He rejects the marriage option, moreover, because he argues that unhappy marriages between women and libertines are commonplace. Finally, he worries that men *will* behave as libertines if they do not receive stern warnings against such conduct. Didactic intentions produced a didactic reception. Although most twentieth-century critics would agree with McKillop that the “narrative really moves in a world of moral ambiguities” (127), the novel’s eighteenth-century reception did not prompt open-minded scrutiny of moral attitudes, as much as it perpetuated stereotypes about moral and immoral readers.

In its examination of marriage, Richardson’s novel critiques both rampant individualism, expressed through Lovelace’s stratagems that disregard social protocols and morality, and a necessitarianism that would trust social pressure to effect reform. Richardson’s philosophy seems expressed by Clarissa in her answer to Wyrley: “the man who is good upon *choice*, as well as by *education*, has that quality in himself which ennobles the human race, and without which the most dignified by birth or rank are ignoble” (1268). This combination of free will with education also appears in Richardson’s didacticism, when he assumes both his responsibility and ability to influence readers and yet blames reader independence when that influence fails.

The ending denies reader expectations and thus confronts readers with a self-conscious examination of standards set by genres. But this questioning, self-conscious tendency accompanies an ending that supports conventional social practices. Clarissa has no place in the social world after she is ruined. Anna loses her lively friendship and settles into the role of submissive wife. The spiritual, death ending is a safe choice, because Clarissa performs no actions that readers might interpret as female rebellion. Her closure seeks to encourage readers' imitation because of their sympathy and admiration for the heroine—affecting reader emotions would influence their actions. In this sense, it is perplexing that the actual narrative ending revolves around Lovelace, not Clarissa. Richardson's final word to readers involves warning rather than example. It suggests that he did not assume readers would act on his advice, but rather that his confrontational ending might remain alien to the world it was intended to change.

In response to the novel, Lady Echlin imitates not the characters but the novelist himself. Although she only sent Richardson her narrative in late 1754 after his repeated requests, she had composed it much earlier: "I was in England at the time you published this History, and finished the reading it in Lancashire, with Lady B—; and this favourite subject was our daily conversation" (Barbauld 5:19). Her rewriting, then, involved an immediate reaction to the text, and her brief mentions in criticism tend to underestimate the importance of her position as reader. In fact, she resembles in several key ways Richardson's main character herself, and she resembles the author in her privileging of imitative didacticism. Her consequent changes to the novel critique his social portrayals and didactic decisions, while her unique role of offering unpublished fictional reader response shows the importance of emotional reaction intersecting with pedagogy.

She begins her narrative with Clarissa having newly escaped to Hampstead. Clarissa suspects Lovelace's impostor Tomlinson, soon exposes him through pointed questions, and subsequently distrusts Lovelace's fake relatives. Because she refuses to accept the supposed kinsmen and does not return to London, the rape does not occur, and eventually, Lovelace and the other plotting characters reform and provide—with the help of a new clergyman, Dr. Christian—conversion arguments about the stages of repentance and the importance of piety. Not all of the characters reform, however. Echlin punishes Clarissa's brother and sister, James dying from a wound incurred from duelling with Lovelace, and Arabella becoming destitute after eloping with "a Lousey Taylor" named Cabbage (Echlin 162).<sup>7</sup> Despite Lovelace's repentance, he and Clarissa do not marry—indeed, Echlin rejects any suggestion of marriage. Instead, both characters die of consumptive illnesses.

Echlin's narrative has been described in Richardson criticism, but not extensively analyzed. Eaves and Kimpel include it in the chapter on "Richardson and His Friends, 1754-1761." Presumably for chronological reasons they do not discuss it in the *Clarissa* chapters (Richardson did not begin corresponding with Echlin until 1753), but its later mention seems to relegate it to social interaction rather than serious criticism of the novel. Warner is less than complimentary to her narrative, summarizing it in a sentence and adding in a footnote that it "makes very amusing reading" (166).

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<sup>7</sup> All references to Echlin's ending, to her prefatory material, and to Richardson's response of Feb. 14 & 18, 1755, are to Daphinoff's publication. He reproduces the erratic punctuation and spelling of the manuscript. I retain these here without the use of *sic*. I also retain Daphinoff's occasional punctuation insertion, enclosed in square brackets [ ]. As Isobel Grundy suggested to me, however, Daphinoff's editorial decisions suggest an inaccurate illiterate quality in Echlin's writing because he reproduces conventions that were still standard in eighteenth-century handwriting, such conventions as lower-case at the beginning of sentences and using *j* for *i* and *u* for *v*.



Keymer provides a more extensive discussion than Warner's, but he includes the text as a contrast to Richardson's more complex "challenge that requires the reader to face up to, and reach terms with, a world devoid of providential control" (*Reader* 217). Like Warner, he cannot resist humour when he writes that she introduces "such worthies as Mr Friendly, Dr Christian the clergyman, Mr Carefull the surgeon and every imaginable exemplar of practical benevolence short of Mrs Bunn the baker's wife" (*Reader* 215).

It is difficult to discuss Echlin's narrative without becoming comical, although in doing so one should not overlook the fact that she herself did not revise her writing and did not consider it to be a serious literary endeavour.<sup>8</sup> Since Richardson read and responded to her, however, he and the critics who discuss him have interpreted her as a writer of a serious piece—and thus a mockable one. When Richardson wrote back to her with comments on her narrative, he admired aspects of it and made comments on plot and characterization choices, such comments as, "think you, Madam, as you spare [Lovelace] his capital Crime, the outrage on Clarissa's Honour, that she might not have been spared to y<sup>e</sup> World?" (Echlin 177), and "is not your Ladship over-generous to Mrs. Norton, and her Son?" (Echlin 178). Much-quoted has been his half-playful remark that the repentant Lovelace "might have been made a Governor of one of the American Colonies; and there shone, as a Man you had reformed, by giving an Example of Piety, and enacting, or causing to be enacted, Laws promotive of Religion and good Manners. One would not, methinks, for the Sake of Example, have *only* reformed him, to die" (Echlin 178). In this response, Richardson judges as he would another author writing an original piece, not a reader responding to his narrative. He avoids debating

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<sup>8</sup> She might also have considered her narrative elements to be humorous. Despite her emphasis on morality, her letters to Richardson suggest that she also had a sense of humour.

the specific elements in his novel with which Echlin disagreed, and he does not comment on what she retains and what omits. One might see this avoidance as his respect for a “fellow author,” because he treats her as a serious novelist with themes of her own. One might also see it, however, as a lack of respect for her treatment of his narrative: he disdains to discuss (as he did not with Bradshaigh, who, however, did not have the effrontery to completely rewrite him) the contentious points, and sees her narrative as quite separate from his own.

Seeing Echlin as a novelist, I think, imposes a category on her that she did not desire and which she does not fit.<sup>9</sup> The text we have is fragmentary because she did not even “have patience,” in her words, to copy the entire piece (Echlin 175). She sees her narrative as something to discuss with a friend, and says she would prefer they “were so happy to be sat snug together” and she should “with great pleasure read the whole long scribble to such a friend” (Echlin 175). Moreover, her narrative is unrevised, and, in her own estimation, “nothing more than a jumble of jll-connected thoughts—a peice of a story, badly told; or rather the contents, & an imperfect narrative—interspersed with abrupt conversation peices” (Echlin 174-5). Finally, Echlin seems correct. Plot and characterization frequently seem weak, and the story itself rather dull. In Daphinoff’s words, “she has neither the psychological insight nor the richness,

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<sup>9</sup> Janet Todd categorizes Echlin as a “novelist” in her *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers 1660-1800*, although the *Feminist Companion to Literary History* refers to her as an “amateur critic” (327), a category I would adopt over novelist. While I would argue for Echlin’s importance as reader response, she may have in an “authorial” way influenced someone who read her. I find it interesting that Lady Bradshaigh, the only known reader of Echlin apart from Richardson, eventually postulated an ending to *Clarissa* that seems to contain aspects of Echlin. Bradshaigh’s Lovelace receives a wound from duelling with James Harlowe, not Morden, and he becomes, as in Echlin, a “sincere penitent” (Barchas 140). Her Lovelace attempts but does not succeed with the rape. Then, in a departure from Echlin that makes more sense than Echlin’s retention of tragedy, Bradshaigh has Clarissa live single “to the Edification of all arround her. & even in a sort of distant friendship with Lovlace, to his *Soul*, I mean” (Barchas 140).

flexibility and subtlety of language necessary to sustain our interest in such a narrative" (Echlin 21). Her prefatory material is more interesting than the narrative itself because it outlines the issues involved without the accompaniment of a narrative often repetitive.

But while studying Echlin's alternative ending as a serious literary endeavour is neither fair nor profitable, analyzing it as reader response is enlightening. Her writing was prompted first by an extreme emotional reaction to the novel. To Richardson in 1755 she wrote, "It is impossible to describe what I suffered from the shocking parts of the story; in short, the woeful complicated distress attending innocence, virtue, and religion, affected me strangely, and prevented my giving a reasonable attention to the moral" (Barbauld 5:19). About the "shocking circumstances" she describes her response: "my mind was strangely agitated—I felt Emotions not to be describ'd; and was too much opprest, or distracted, to admitt a rational sensibility to take place—but my heart fired with indignation at those passages so horribly shocking to humanity" (Echlin 172-3).

Lady Bradshaigh had also written of her traumatic reaction. She begins one letter, "Let me intreat! only suppose all the good-natured, compassionate, and distressed on their knees at your feet, can you let them beg in vain?" (Barbauld 4:182), and later says, "write I must, or die, for I can neither eat or sleep till I am disburdened of my load" (Barbauld 4:183). She often writes immediately after reading, and adds a section to one letter after she reads of the rape: "I can scarce hold my pen. I am as mad as the poor injured Clarissa; and am afraid I cannot help hating you, if you alter not your scheme" (Barbauld 4:201). As this comment indicates, readers' emotions paralleled those of Clarissa herself, who reveals to Anna, "I grew worse and worse in my

head; now stupid, now raving, now senseless .... My strength, my intellects, failed me" (1011).<sup>10</sup>

Although Castle refers to Lady Bradshaigh's emotions as a "disturbing and obsessive act of identification" (174), there were other readers who mimicked Clarissa's sufferings. Sarah Fielding wrote, "when I read of her, I am all sensation; my heart glows; I am overwhelmed; my only vent is tears" (Barbauld 2:60). Colley Cibber claimed, "my mind is so hurt with the thought of her being violated, that were I to see her in Heaven, sitting on the knees of the blessed Virgin, and crowned with glory, her sufferings would still make me feel horror, horror distilled" (related by Pilkington, Barbauld 2:129). Castle herself suggests that Richardson underestimated the importance of the identification. She argues,

It does not occur to him, obviously, that a female reader—even a moderately pious one—might not necessarily take an unalloyed pleasure in seeing one of her sex made over into a decomposing emblem of martyred Christian womanhood, or respond wholly favorably to that equation between sexual violation and death which he seems unconsciously to have accepted as a given. ... In the case of Lady Bradshaigh ... the desire to see Clarissa safely married off, even to Lovelace, seems to have been more a wish to nullify ... an unusually strong 'dysphoric' response to Clarissa's dissolution than a sign of improper readerly predilections for the villain. (173-4)

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<sup>10</sup> Richardson's effect on his readers paralleled Lovelace's on Clarissa. Castle notes that Clarissa calls Lovelace the "author" of her sufferings and her "trauma is ... the realization that meanings have been enforced upon her. Her comprehension of things has been neatly ordered from without, by an 'Intelligencer'" (164). Although Castle argues that Richardson is in fact very different from Lovelace, because Richardson does not tell readers what to believe, eighteenth-century readers felt persecuted, or forced into unpleasant situations and experiences.

Lady Bradshaigh suggested that Clarissa's suffering violated acceptable eighteenth-century aesthetic standards: "I cannot see the innocent suffer without the most intolerable pain, except I have some notion of their being brought out of their misery by some more pleasing methods than that of leaving the world. —Terror and commiseration are agreeable enough to the mind, when there is hope of relief; otherwise it leaves the mind in agonies, rather than in a *pleasing anguish*" (Barbauld 4:197-8). She later overtly links her observations to Addison: "Dear Sir, let us have no more horror, as much soothing distress as you think proper; which, I suppose, is what Mr. Addison means by *pleasing anguish*" (4:205-6).

Richardson's defence of his tragedy indicates that female victims can elicit these extreme responses more easily than male ones. He stresses Clarissa's exemplary character, but in doing so suggests that he gave her such pressures as would have broken a man without the social power that a man might have to extricate himself. He writes: "I had proposed to draw my Girl amiable in order to make her a true Object of Pity, and Example to her Sex. ... I had to shew, for Example-sake a young Lady struggling nobly with the greatest Difficulties, and triumphing from the best Motives, in the Course of Distresses the tenth Part of which would have sunk even manly Hearts" (Carroll 90). Clarissa as example should help women bear "nobly" and more than "manly" the distresses that a man would never have to undergo.

Whether Richardson played a central role in cultivating this image or only reinforced existing stereotypes is problematic. Mrs. Donnellan suggested, after *Clarissa* however, that women (as socially constructed) were ideally suited for victimization. In discussing plans for Grandison she observes, "I am sensible, 'tis impossible to give a man so delicate a distress as a woman; their different situations will not bear it, nor can he so well complain, or raise so

much compassion in others; he cannot possibly shew the sort of noble fortitude Clarissa does, as he cannot be in her sort of distress; so that I am afraid, even the pen of a Richardson will not move us in his, as it has done in her history” (Barbauld 4:31-2). Moreover, in discussing the fictional construction of a virtuous man, she suggests that women could and should be more faultless than men:

Some faults, you observe, our virtuous man must have, some sallies of passion; the best *man’s* character will bear it, tho’ a Clarissa’s would not.

I will not arrogate any merit to our sex from it, but suppose it arises from custom, education, or what you will, ‘tis certain our man must not be an angel. Clarissa’s goodness seems, if I may use the expression, *intuitive*. Our man, to make him natural, must have some failings from passion, but must be soon recovered by reason and religion. (Barbauld 4:32-3)

As these statements imply, part of the difficulties in creating a Grandison as opposed to a Clarissa stem from cultural ideas about what makes men and women attractive: Richardson could create an attractive female paragon, but a paragon of moral purity, if male, would not be attractive. Female readers, however, might have responded particularly strongly to the persecution of a virtuous woman because they identified not only with the suffering but with the feeling of powerlessness that male readers might have been less able to comprehend.

Indeed, Echlin’s emotions reached their toleration limit at the narrative point when Lovelace’s voice overpowers that of Clarissa. One of Echlin’s main objections is Clarissa’s return to London after escaping once. Lovelace narrates the removal from Hampstead back to Mrs. Sinclair’s, after he gives a

lengthy account of training his impersonators to act the part of his relatives (876-7). The reader, then, clearly knows these actors' deficiencies before we hear Clarissa's point of view. Furthermore, we do not hear her side of this episode until long after the rape, after she escapes from Sinclair's, and after Anna chides her for leaving Hampstead (994). When she does explain the events, she retrospectively knows her errors and says such things as "being put a little out of countenance by the richness of their dresses, I could not help, fool that I was! to apologize for my own" (998), and "I have recollected since, that I once saw this Lady Betty ... take a paper from her stays and look into it" (999). She admits that although she did not suspect the women, "they fell short of what [she] expected *them* to be" (1001), and she describes the speech: "It was *ladyship* at every word; and as she seemed proud of her title, and of her dress too, I might have guessed that she was not used to *either*" (1004). Clarissa explains, "my lucid hopes made me see fewer faults in the behaviour of these pretended ladies than recollection and abhorrence have helped me since to see" (1005).

Echlin does not merely identify from an emotional distance with Clarissa's suffering and sympathize with her lack of power. Richardson had compared Bradshaigh to his novel's Anna Howe (Carroll 279), and he might have similarly compared Echlin's character to Clarissa's. Bradshaigh in April 1751 writes to Richardson of her sister, who "before that age [20], read divinity, and all grave books; remembered what she read, lectured me for saying short prayers, and talked like a sage old woman" (Barbauld 6:112). As Bradshaigh also points out, most women were unlikely to resemble or admire Clarissa: "the poor phantom [Clarissa] has set half her own sex against her. ... with some of the sex she is a prude; with others a coquet; with more a saucy creature, whose life, manners, and maxims, are affronts to them. Mr. Fielding's

Sophia is a much more eligible character” (Barbauld 6:82). Echlin, though, frequently describes herself as unable to understand other women. She wrote in August 1754 of the conclusion to *Grandison* and offers comments that sound like a Clarissa recommending Hickman to Anna. She says that a “sensible woman” could not treat the Count of Belvedere with contempt, but “some females are such fashionable ladies, they regard neither manners, morals, nor constancy, in a lover. These modish ladies must allow me to think they are as unjust to real merit, as those fine polite gentlemen, who declare their dislike to Sir Charles Grandison, because he is much too religious and virtuous” (Barbauld 5:11).

Echlin’s personal similarities to Clarissa and her emotional identification with the trauma seem to have influenced her version of the characters. She had told Richardson that she hadn’t the patience to recopy her alternative ending after she wrote it. Similarly, her Clarissa writes to Anna, “you must not expect me to run this letter to such an unreasonable length, as to tell you all he uttered” (88). Earlier she asks Anna “haue you patience to read such stuff” when referring to Lovelace’s promises, and later adds, “I haue not patience ... to tell you every artful word he uttered” (44, 46).

Echlin’s attribution of anger to Clarissa also seems to stem partly from her own personal response to the novel. Her Clarissa expresses impatience at her own actions when she writes Anna from Hampstead, “you will tell me perhaps, Love is Blind; and I confess, I haue been strangly Blinded, but not with a foolish passion .... nothing can Excuse, so weak a credulity but my innocency” (39). Having found out Tomlinson, she immediately suspects Lovelace’s coming kinsmen to be “sham-Kindred” (47). She voices Echlin’s concerns when she asks Anna, “dos he think me, such an ignorant simpleton, that could not see the difference between true delicacy, and impudent



affectation” (47). Later in the story Lady Betty confirms the idea that Clarissa is too smart to have been fooled by Lovelace’s plans. She tells him, “did you suppose she must be an jdiot—because she was so perfectly innocent; but I think sir—she has sufficiently convinced you—that she is not the credulous fool you imagin’d” (103). When Lovelace proposes, Echlin’s Clarissa responds neither with bashfulness nor silence but with an anger that suggests Echlin was not overly concerned with female delicacy or propriety. She writes to Anna (upon Lovelace asking her to “be reconcile’d to the man who adores you”), “this speech, provok’d me beyond all bounds, and warmly I said—can Mr. Lovelace imagine I shall depend upon him—who is the destroyer of my fame! are not you the source—the prime cause of all I now suffer” (60). She adds later when he threatens to control her living arrangements, “I then thought, I cou’d haue kill’d him—tho’ I was not so unguarded as to make a very angry reply” (60) and “I cou’d haue spit in his face, had it not been to low a peice of resentment” (61). Finally, when Lovelace says marrying him is the only way to repair her reputation she responds, “these words—big with jll nature, cruelty, & insolence; roused my sinking spirits [-] banish’d weak fear, and call’d upon womanly pride to resent this afrontive scoff .... I dispise the man who sports with my fame, and cruelly blasts my reputation” (61).

For Keymer, Lady Echlin falls into the category of naive, instead of sophisticated, readers, or “women of sentiment like Lady Bradshaigh and Lady Echlin, whose naive outpourings seem to typify the otherwise irrecoverable responses of the wider public” (“Collier” 143). He contrasts naive readers with readers like Jane Collier, who wrote to Richardson defending the fire scene. As Collier’s comments on the kept mistress who liked Lovelace (cited above) indicate, she believed authors were not responsible for the misconceptions of their readers. Similarly, she writes about the fire scene, “should any Improper

Ideas arise in my Mind, I shall always condemn myself, and know that it can proceed from no Reason but not keeping within the Bounds you intended to prescribe” (Keymer, “Collier” 151). In both her defence of *Clarissa* and elsewhere—for instance in her defence of a portion of Sarah Fielding’s *The Governess* (she supported the text against Richardson’s criticisms)—Collier’s concern is “to uphold the integrity of the text and the prerogatives of the author” (Keymer, “Collier” 156).

But in fact this distinction, that Collier defends the authorial position while Echlin does not, is the only stark difference between the two women. Echlin parallels Collier’s argument that readers are at fault who cannot respond to Richardson’s intentions when she insists that

if Clarissa’s virtuous inclination, true principle of real honour, attended with strict nicety in her constant adherence to womanly modesty [without the necessity of the rape] can not convince those Reprobate mortals, and force them to renounce their notorious unjust opinion of woman—they are not to be perswaded, tho’ one rose from the Dead for their conviction. (Echlin 174)

Collier aims at fictional instruction and realistic portrayal. She insists that the fire scene “carries with it the most noble Instruction that can be taught; and I hope it is as natural as Instructing” (Keymer, “Collier” 152). Similarly, Echlin stresses didacticism, and her objections are to what she considers unnatural and unnecessary plot devices: “some parts of the story ... serve only to wound good minds; & can not probably contribute, towards mending corrupt hearts” (172). Collier examines narrative probability, concluding, “you have, I think, fully proved that such a Scene was absolutely necessary, not only to exalt your Heroine, but as the Sole means He could think of to put Her to any sort of Tryal (for She was too discreetly watchfull to be lyable to any Liberties but by

some such Surprise)” (Keymer, “Collier” 151). Echlin, too, examines narrative probability, arguing instead, however, that consistency in Clarissa’s character should have prevented her from returning to London from Hampstead. In fact, the very “discreetly watchfull” aspect of Clarissa that Collier cites in defence of the fire scene, Echlin uses as an argument against the Hampstead action:

was Clarissa ever unguarded—even before she had any suspicion of her lover hauing a base design, how carefully cautious, & reserv’d was she in her deportment towards him—I cannot then suppose she was less guarded, after he had plainly discover’d this Evil intention—therefore she cou’d not be so unpardonably silly as to accompany him to London, with two flirting strumpets, who, tho’ they had assum’d the names of his kindred, their affected airs, & over acted part, wou’d not suffer Clarissa to imagine them, the real, well=Bread Ladies of quality. (171)<sup>11</sup>

Echlin critiques narrative decisions and, more importantly, refuses to grant the author complete authority over his text. She registers respect for Richardson but nevertheless questions him when she describes how she came to rewrite him:

I will not deny, that, in the midst of my intolerable vexation, I endeavoured to divert my thoughts from horrible scenes by the strength of fancy, and contented myself with supposing that I had discovered some mistakes in Clarissa’s story, which were owing to your being misinformed. The spirit of imagination caught first hold

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<sup>11</sup> Echlin’s attitude towards Clarissa resembles Clarissa’s comments to Anna about Rosebud. After Anna writes with news of Lovelace’s attention to the girl, Clarissa first responds, “Must she not know, that such a man as that, dignified in his very aspect; and no disguise able to conceal his being of condition—must mean too much, when he places her at the upper end of his table, and calls her by such tender names?—Would a girl, modest as simple, above seventeen, be set a singing at the pleasure of such a man as that? A stranger, and professedly in disguise!” (285).

of my pen, and a huge heap of undigested matter it produced, with no other view than to please myself. (Barbauld 5:20)

This statement suggests that Richardson's epistolary method, which presented his narrative as akin to a real situation and his own role as simply that of reporter, devalued his authority, because Echlin imaginatively sees "Clarissa's story" as an entity potentially beyond the author's control, a story about which he might have been "misinformed." In addition, though, in sharing Richardson's passion for pedagogy, she shares his power, when the morality of the story, not its author's creative decisions, have ultimate authority.

Although Bradshaigh also critiqued Richardson, she suggests more deference when she writes to him, "Instruction may well be your principal view; you have the power, and also the inclination to instruct the ignorant, — I cannot pretend to it. I write to be instructed, and I read, and find I am so" (Barbauld 4:272).<sup>12</sup>

Although Echlin's rewriting seems motivated, then, by her emotional response to the novel, her beliefs about narrative probability and didacticism also drive her decisions. In her revision, Lovelace's character ceases to be attractive, presumably because she disapproved of the combination of vice with heroism that Richardson seemed unable to avoid. Clarissa suspects Lovelace and so refuses to let him control her. Moreover, Mrs. Moor sees him as an "artfull, sly gentlemen" whom she distrusts (58).<sup>13</sup> Belford arrives in Hampstead to try to aid Clarissa and leaves Lovelace "vext and disconcerted" (62) and "in a melancholy attitude" (64). After Clarissa rejects Lovelace's

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<sup>12</sup> In this same letter Bradshaigh describes the things she has learned from Clarissa, such as rising early to write and keeping an account of her time (Barbauld 4:264). A much later Echlin letter to Richardson (1755) suggests quite the opposite, that while she may have been similar to Clarissa in attitude and piety, she did not mimic her work ethic: "As to my constant employ and amusement, I am inclined to be silent on that head. Shall I venture to tell you I never loved needle-work, nor am I a good housewife; yet I can employ myself from five in a morning till ten at night. Call me, if you please, a busy-do-little" (Barbauld 5:58).

<sup>13</sup> Echlin spells Mrs. Moore's name without the e.

marriage proposal she describes his behaviour: “he did not once look at me: his eyes were cast downward, & a cane in his hand apply’d to his chin, when his fingers were not Employ’d: in his snuff-Box—in short, he look’d very foolish” (67). His pursuit of her appears motivated by romantic love (albeit a controlling one) more than a passion for stratagem. He tells Belford, “the force of love Belford, hurrys a man into wild, Extravagancies” (68). After Belford arrives he acts as chaperone to Lovelace’s visits and tells him when to leave: “our being agreeably engag’d here, must not make us forget, to consider Miss Harlowes late indisposition” (73). At this statement Lovelace “sigh’d like a fool” (73). He loses the intelligent energy of Richardson’s character, and his description of his pre-repentant self suggests the opposite of his qualities in Richardson: “I was so corrupted with Evil communication, my mind was incapable of receiving sublime impressions; and I was immersed in that depraved state of stupid insensibility, till my intoxicated reason was awaked” (130).

Echlin’s narrative discourages reader imitation of wrongdoing, while it simultaneously offers moral examples that mimic conduct books. When her Lovelace is shocked by the emaciated condition of Clarissa’s body and suddenly repents, his subsequent reformation follows the steps outlined in Jeremy Taylor’s *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living*. He expresses what Taylor calls a “pungent afflictive sorrow” because of hatred for the sin (271), and confesses to Clarissa and others his wickedness (Echlin 111). Taylor advises taking on a spiritual guide (273); Lovelace asks Dr. Christian for assistance (Echlin 111). Taylor advocates a punishing duty (272); Lovelace weeps and prays on his knees, and Belford sees him “lyeing on the grownd, in a melancholy attitude” (Echlin 114). In this description, Echlin stresses imitation. Dr. Christian tells Clarissa, “such a reformation will be a great Example: when a man renounces

a vicious course of living, in the prime of his youth, and strictly adheres to virtue and goodness, the pattern is amiable, and instructive and consequently, a good Lesson well recommended, to the consideration of all Licentious Libertines” (Echlin 113).

By eventually repenting and becoming pious, Echlin’s characters lose their differences from each other, but considered in the context of Richardson, this static characterization may in fact be a revolt against the application of different standards to women than to men. Raymond Stephanson has outlined the role of sensibility in *Clarissa*, the “intimate relationship of mind and body ... in which one’s mental state can have a direct effect on one’s bodily health” that was “an integral part of mid-eighteenth century medical thought and physiological theory” (268). He points out that eighteenth-century readers (unlike twentieth-century ones) had no questions about how Clarissa died because they accepted this nervous sensibility as fact. Furthermore, Stephanson argues, Lovelace attempts to deny his sensibility (seeing it as a female condition) but suggests in his emotional breakdown that such attempts are self-destructive. The novel in this way “is a rejection of an earlier, emotionally-repressive masculine code in favor of a physiological model which not only makes possible the existence of a Man of Feeling but also encourages and cherishes such a type” (Stephanson 281).

Echlin assumes Clarissa’s sensibility even when it seems out of place for such a practical woman to weep so quickly. She also assumes male sensibility, and in this way renders the men as fragile as the women. After the penknife scene her Clarissa writes of Belford, “I observe’d Belford shedding some tears: as he cou’d not restrain that signal of compassion—I imagin’d it cou’d not proceed from a quite harden’d heart” (64). Lovelace loses his health because of sensibility. He tells Dr. Christian, “I am not well, tho’ I haue not any great

cause to complain of Bodily indisposition: my present disorder, is probably occasion'd by anxiety and grief; deep sorrow sinks the spirits; impairs health, and makes the heart sick" (119). Clarissa describes their meeting after both have been ill: "the moment he beheld me, I thought he would haue fainted; such a tremor seized him, the two gentlemen were forced to lead him to a chair—and they supported him there—whilst I call'd for hartshorn and water ... I never saw any living creature look so languid & pail—excepting my own deathly face ... he sat silent for some minuts—then wipeing the tears off his cheeks ...." (128). Anna forgives Lovelace more readily when he is ill than if he had been healthy. In his words, "grief, and sickness, can effectually, do the work of time" and have altered him to a "Languid complexion, and melancholy dejected look" (145). Both Echlin's characters' deaths result from bodily sensibility, which essentially involves a heightened susceptibility to the environment. In Clarissa's fatigue, her "exhausted ... spirits" produce a "cold" that leads in turn to a "slow fever" that leads to a "violent cough" which "tears [her] lungs" and reduces her to "a meer shadow" (104).<sup>14</sup>

This retention of the characters' deaths does not mark a typical reaction to the novel. Although both women and men wrote to Richardson requesting a marriage ending, the desire for a happy ending was frequently associated with women. John Read refers to those "who out of an effeminate kind of Compassion are for saving" Clarissa (Dec. 5, 1748, Forster). David Graham writes that an objection to "Lovelace's general character is, that you have

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<sup>14</sup> Echlin's heroine has a more specific cause for her death than does Richardson's Clarissa, who dies apparently in part from an inability to eat perhaps stemming, as Eagleton argues, from depression (90). Her physicians suggest that she controls her own health (1081), an idea paradoxically supported in Clarissa's denial of it. She claims she will eat "what is sufficient to support nature" although adds, "A very little, you know, will do for that" (1118). Donnalee Frega discusses Clarissa's slow decline in the dissertation "Pedagogy of the Perfect: Consumption and Identity in Richardson's *Clarissa*," and Brigitte Glaser outlines Clarissa's possible illnesses, including *chlorosis* (66-9), in *The Body in Samuel Richardson's Clarissa*.

made him too lovely to become the object of our indignation: And that the female-sex, particularly must be so captivated with the picture you have drawn of him, that they will be more likely to regret his punishment, than acquiesce in the justice of it” (Apr. 22, 1750, Forster). Although Echlin portrays extreme sensibility in her characters and responds emotionally herself to the novel, she fails to fulfill this “effeminate kind of Compassion” that would save the characters themselves.

Rather, she includes sensibility in part because of her assumptions of reader imitation. Although she is not writing for a real audience (other than herself and maybe her sister), she implicitly imagines one. Her assumptions about this reader parallel her literary treatment of the lower classes. The lower classes are abused, led into bad courses, because of their “innocency, and inexperience” (124). Her Lovelace stresses the fact that William has erred because of his example. Clarissa writes to Anna that he “very justly observed, that the general complaint of bad servants, is in a great degree owing to jll Example from their superiours—of which, the present age gives many flagrant proofs” (122). Echlin’s attitude as an author parallels this class relationship. While she does not argue that authors should write to the lower classes, her preface suggests that an author must provide clear examples for readers to follow—much as Lovelace ought to provide an example for William. She writes, “piety & virtue, must ever be allowed a powerfull influence, so as to render Exemplary goodness an instructive lesson” (171).

Perhaps because of his own lower social standing, Richardson’s attitude towards the lower classes differs from Echlin’s.<sup>15</sup> His Lovelace does refer to

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<sup>15</sup> Daphinoff writes that Echlin’s implication that Richardson “was not acquainted enough with ‘high life,’ or else Clarissa would have known the difference between true and false gentility” in Lovelace’s pretended relations “must have stung Richardson to the quick” (25). Bradshaigh also disagreed with Richardson’s treatment of class, as Barchas outlines.



Joseph Leman as a “poor weak soul as he was from his cradle” (1475), but Leman is not excused on this basis. On the contrary, Belford call him the “vile, hypocritical, and ignorant Joseph Leman” (1477). He is shown to be manipulated by flattery and bribery and fooled into thinking he is doing the best for everyone. Betty Barnes, similarly, Clarissa includes in her will and forgives, but she does not excuse her of blame. She writes that “former disobligations” were “owing more to the insolence of office, and to natural pertness, than to personal ill-will” (1417). Betty assumes responsibility for her treatment of Clarissa, and others do not contradict what Morden relates: that she “was more clamorous in her grief than the rest; and the moment she turned her back, all the others allowed she had reason for it” (1400).

Richardson’s writings about audience imply that his distinctions between innocence and experience are based on gender (and age) rather than class. Barbauld wrote of Richardson that he “professed to take under his particular protection that sex which is supposed to be most open to good or evil impressions; whose inexperience most requires cautionary precepts, and whose sensibilities it is most important to secure against a wrong direction” (1:xxii). Clarissa herself is deceived because she is inexperienced, and her story is a warning to other such innocent young women.

Echlin questions not Richardson’s general methods but the existence of his audience, when she suggests that few real women would be tempted to marry Lovelace. Not only does her Clarissa reject Lovelace conclusively, but Dr. Christian wholeheartedly agrees with Clarissa’s refusal:

it is not possible you should ever regard that man as a faithfull friend, who has been capable of injureing your fame so notoriously. ... how injudicious, and weak, must any woman be, to enter into a matrimonial engagment with a man, who has treated her

insolently, before marriage. for it cannot be supposed! that an jll-manner'd Lover, will make a tollerable civil husband. (87)

Barbauld, approximately half a century later, expresses a similar skepticism about Richardson's assumed reader. On Clarissa's resistance to Lovelace's sexual advances she argues, "It is absurd ... in Lovelace to speak of trying her chastity; and the author is not free from blame in favouring the idea that such resistance had any thing in it uncommon, or peculiarly meritorious" (1:ci). This conviction, that the easily seduced female is a fiction, may remain on the margins of our ideas about the eighteenth century because it is not expressed in forms as widely read (then or now) as the major novels themselves.

While Richardson's portrayal of women may have been influenced not only by inaccurate assumptions about his audience but also by his aesthetic need to create sympathy for his central characters, Echlin as reader demonstrates the way his combination of virtue and suffering might backfire and produce something other than the sympathetic imitation at which Richardson aimed. She focuses not on what Clarissa does but what she is unable to accomplish, or, simply put, she tries to do what Clarissa cannot. Involved in these actions are written signs of protest against the patriarchy to which Clarissa willingly submits. In Richardson, Anna learns the lessons of being a proper wife. Clarissa tells her, "I am sure it was not your intention to take your future husband with you to the little island to make him look weak and silly" (1263). Echlin's narrative, on the other hand, reconstructs the marital power relationship. Her Hickman tells Belford that Anna has agreed to see Lovelace so that "she may haue an oppertunity to tell the wretch—she mortally hates him" and he adds, "in obedience to my beloved Anna, I write this—for I am determind, not only to Love, and honour[,] but to obey all her commands—it will ever be the joy of my life, to please her" (141). Belford's

marriage has taken place within the narrative time frame, and he writes an affectionate, sincere, and respectful letter to his new wife. He echoes Hickman's statements when he tells Charlotte, "I will obey you, my Dear—in relation to Lovelace, but I am as much affraid to afflict my Charlot's heart, as unwilling to disobey her: for it shall ever be the pleasure of my life to consult your Ease, to promote your happiness, and chearfully obey all your commands" (157-8). This emphasis on husbandly obedience is significant enough in the mid-eighteenth century, but it becomes even more significant in its contrast to Richardson's novels, which encourage female submission.<sup>16</sup>

Echlin also treats flippantly the masculine practice of duelling, and so registers not merely disapproval of the practice but irreverence towards its traditions. Barbauld's description of the duel subtly indicates its adherence to gentlemanly codes: "Lovelace dies in a duel, admirably well described, in which he behaves with the cool intrepidity of a gentleman and a man of spirit" (1:xc). For Echlin, duels offer "no good instruction, either moral, or Religious, ... from any thing so contredictory to christianity" (171). Her Lovelace first condemns them verbally to James Harlowe: "I expostulated with him very seriously; desired him to reflect upon the henious offence of Duel-fighting! to consider the inhumanity—the impiety of such unrighteous revenge; and beg'd he would avoid the guilt, by not comitting a crime, destructive to the Life and soul of man" (151). Echlin subsequently adds force to her condemnation by making the duellist look ridiculous when, after disregarding Lovelace's warning, James bungles his attempts: "Harlowe rushed forward like a mad man! he actually ran upon the point of my sword, and wounded himself, by over-eagerly attempting to destroy me" (152).

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<sup>16</sup> Echlin may have meant these passages to be humorous, opposite as they are to the accepted hegemony. But I think they remain serious reflections on the cultural norms even in their humour.

This mockery of violence appears to be not simply an idealistic refusal to recognize its existence. Rather, it suggests Echlin's belief that fiction should not present as heroic actions that are immoral and in this case unintelligent. For similar reasons, she removed the rape. Some objections to the rape in fact reinforce what Anna Clark calls the "bourgeois values" that a rape victim was "irrevocably tarnished" once virginity was lost (Clark 29). Laetitia Pilkington wrote to Richardson that she and Colley Cibber could not "bear the thought of the lady's person being contaminated." She found it easier to accept Clarissa's death than her rape: "If she must die ... let her make a triumphant exit, arrayed in white-robed purity. ... Spare her virgin purity, dear Sir, spare it! Consider, if this wounds both Mr. Cibber and me (who neither of us set up for immaculate chastity) what must it do with those who possess that inestimable treasure?" (Barbauld 2:130-1).

Although Echlin, too, argued that the rape serves "only to wound good minds" (172), her objections were different from these idealizations of virginity itself. She insisted that Clarissa is "effectually subdu'd in the eye of the world" before the rape (173). Her character is "branded with infamy, which as inevitably ruin'd her reputation, as if she had been in the worst sense, actually subdued—so injuriously was this chaste Heroine basely scandaliz'd" (173). Echlin does not seem here to be underestimating the violation of rape, nor specifically longing for Clarissa's sexual purity. She is arguing that eighteenth-century ideals of sexual purity are socially constructed, and so because Clarissa is socially raped long before Lovelace's physical act, his rape adds a violence completely gratuitous. This belief in social constructions of character parallels both her attitude towards the lower classes who are influenced by their superiors and her emphasis on educating the reader.

Twentieth-century critics have retrospectively credited Richardson with being a central force in the development of middle-class power. Eagleton outlines, however, some of the problems *Clarissa* presents:

Clarissa's forgiveness of Lovelace ... reflects something of the bourgeoisie's impulse to make peace with the traditional ruling class; but it also of course frustrates it, since, given her death, no actual alliance will ensue. There is a similar ambivalence in her relationship to bourgeois patriarchy. On the one hand, her death is the strongest conceivable affirmation of that ideology: it is less Lovelace's rape, than the melancholy into which she is plunged by her father's curse, which causes her to die. ... But her every refusal to condemn the Harlowes, her saintly internalizing of such aggression, blackens them a little deeper in the reader's eyes. (90-1).

As this final sentence indicates, *Clarissa's* effect on the reader might differ significantly from representations within the novel. To interpret political influence based primarily on what a novel says or represents is, basically, to assume a kind of subsequent cultural "imitation" of those themes. Both Echlin and Richardson suggest an eighteenth-century precedent for assuming imitation, while they also indicate its failings. Echlin in general expects readers to be impressionable, yet she responds as a reader herself by rewriting the text. She demonstrates the way that Richardson's influence may not have progressed along the lines of reception that appear most obvious. His role as champion of the female sex, for one thing, may have worked through opposition, as women became so agitated over *Clarissa* that they defended female power and authority.

Interestingly enough, in *Grandison* Richardson leaves closure choices up to the reader when he refuses to decide if Clementina will marry the Count of Belvedere. In his words, her fate is the readers' to decide:

Do you think, Madam, I have not been very complaisant to my Readers to leave to them the decision of this important article? ... a considerable time will pass before this point will be agreed upon among *them*: And some of my correspondents rejoice that Clementina is not married in the book; hoping that she will never marry; while others express their satisfaction in the time given her, and doubt not but she will. (Appendix to *Grandison* 3:468)

Richardson seems to have taken a cue from *Clarissa* here, and simply refused to determine contentious points. But he has nothing at stake with Clementina, as he had with Clarissa. The fate of an Italian, Catholic woman, choice of the cloister or the decent man (of whom we know little), is unlikely to affect young English female readers. Either choice is a pious one that accords with obedience to God and to family (who has learned to accept her decision), and thus her situation has little in common with the threatened moral principles and precarious chance for marital happiness not only of Clarissa herself, but of all her "impressionable" readers.

## Chapter Two

### Economies of Ending: Goldsmith, Johnson, and the Purpose of Poetry

Oliver Goldsmith's two major poems, *The Traveller; or a Prospect of Society* (1764) and *The Deserted Village* (1770), express concern over changing property conditions and the consequent displacement and alienation of the country's peasantry. At the same time, the poems exhibit the potential alienation of the poet himself because he called upon friend and mentor Samuel Johnson to supply poetic conclusions. Goldsmith's problems with his endings have been seen as symptomatic of general problems with closure in the eighteenth century. Marshall Brown argues in *Preromanticism* (1991) that many "preromantic writers did not know how to stop, and that problem becomes Goldsmith's besetting infirmity" (9). Similarly, Richard Bridgman claims in "Weak Tocks: Coming to a Bad End in English Poetry of the Later Eighteenth Century" (1983) that spiritual uncertainties led to irresolute conclusions in the poems of the late century. Explaining Johnson's input into Goldsmith's endings, Bridgman writes, "the phenomenon might better be located in the general uncertainty about endings" (270). Bridgman's exploration of spiritual uncertainties causing the phenomenon assumes that a poet's language reflects his beliefs: an uncertain poet produced inconclusive endings.

As Richardson's and Echlin's attitudes towards *Clarissa* reveal, however, the didactic element of literary works was a central part of authors' decisions about closure. Writers attempt to give their language tangible reality by applying their ideas directly to "real" readers' lives and futures. Because eighteenth-century poetry exhibits a concluding self-consciousness acutely

aware of pedagogy, it seems profitable to reevaluate Goldsmith's endings by examining not only how they might reflect the author's beliefs but how they might reflect, contradict, or attempt to change those of the reader. In poetry concerned with particular economic problems, the poems' own transactions with particular readers—transactions explored both through Johnson's literary input and through three poetic imitations of *The Deserted Village*—can be affected more easily than the land conditions themselves.

As the introduction has outlined, critical discussions of eighteenth-century endings have often focused on their subject matter. My focus, alternatively, has been on their purposes and addressees, which often become self-consciously highlighted at the point of concluding. Margaret Doody cites Thomson's first version of *Winter* (1726), which concludes with the subject matter of death (Doody, *Daring* 183), but it also ends by directly addressing the reader. After the final paragraph begins "Dread Winter has subdued the year" (359), the poet warns,

Now, fond Man!  
Behold thy pictured life: pass some few years,  
Thy flow'ring Spring, thy shortlived Summer's strength,  
Thy sober Autumn fading into age,  
And pale, concluding Winter shuts thy scene,  
And shrouds thee in the grave. (363-8)<sup>1</sup>

This rather morbid description influences the reader to value what is most important. Although physical things will die, the poet adds that "Virtue sole survives" (374), and then he explains how heavenly rewards atone for suffering

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<sup>1</sup> Citations to *Winter. A Poem* (1726) refer to line numbers of the first edition, as published in Lonsdale's *Eighteenth-Century Verse* (179-88).



on earth. The final lines of the poem conclude the advice about how to live, and give a purpose for living virtuously:

Ye good distressed!  
 Ye noble few! that here unbending stand  
 Beneath life's pressures, yet a little while,  
 And all your woes are past. Time swiftly fleets,  
 And wished Eternity, approaching, brings  
 Life undecaying, love without allay,  
 Pure, flowing joy, and happiness sincere. (399-405)

When Thomson revised the wording of this conclusion for the longer *Seasons* (1746), he kept the essential sense of giving the reader something to do. Because “The storms of WINTRY TIME will quickly pass, /And one unbounded SPRING encircle All” (Thomson 1068-9), the reader should live virtuously, and concentrate on eternal values that will *surpass* death.

These endings are significant because they comprise the tradition Goldsmith's poetry followed. Like the *Seasons*, Gray's complex conclusion to his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) self-consciously and deliberately assigns the reader a task. The poet seems to address himself before introducing the idea of the “hoary-headed swain” (97) who will describe to a kindred spirit the poet and the epitaph:

For thee who, mindful of the unhonoured dead,  
 Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;  
 If chance, by lonely Contemplation led,  
 Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate. (Lonsdale, *Poems* 93-6)

The reader's role, consequently, becomes that of the “kindred spirit” listening to the tale and interpreting the epitaph. Roger Lonsdale suggests of the changes between the original ending and the published version that Gray's

“continuation of the poem may lack some of the clarity, control and authority of the earlier stanzas, but it does represent a genuine attempt to redefine and justify his real relationship with society more accurately by merging it with a dramatisation of the social role played by poetry or the Poet” (*Poems* 115).

The Horatian verse-epistle frequently concludes with self-consciousness about poet and reader, and this form is a model for *The Traveller* (Lonsdale, *Poems* 627). Addison’s “Letter from Italy, to the Right Honourable Charles Lord Halifax” (1704) seems to end prematurely since the speaker declares, “I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain, / That longs to launch into a bolder strain” (161-2).<sup>2</sup> The speaker desires to continue his panegyric to Britain but doubts his ability. The final lines allude to the passing of time, to the humility and simplicity of the poet, and to the superiority of his auditor, classed with Virgil, who would be capable of writing the verse to which this speaker aspires:

But I’ve already troubled you too long,  
Nor dare attempt a more advent’rous song.  
My humble verse demands a softer theme,  
A painted meadow or a purling stream;  
Unfit for heroes, whom immortal lays,  
And lines like Virgil’s or like yours, should praise. (163-8)

In the traditional manner, Lord Halifax is both patron and auditor for the poem, and so Addison’s subordinate position influences his deferential tone. His speaker suggests that the auditor “knows” what the poet would like to say or would like to write—the auditor can fill in the blanks or continue the tenor of the poem in a manner, it is implied, more skillful than the poet could. Thus, the

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<sup>2</sup> Lonsdale compares this poem to *The Traveller* (*Poems* 627). The bracketed references for Addison’s poem give line numbers as included in Lonsdale’s *Eighteenth-Century Verse* (41-4).

self-consciousness is also a plea for collaboration that suggests the poet's amicable and humble relationship with the reader.

While humility is not the quality most obvious in Alexander Pope's persona, his poetry often uses it as it closes self-consciously. *Windsor Forest's* conclusion (1713) not only repeats the first line from his *Pastorals*, but also returns to personal considerations of the poet and auditor:

Here cease thy flight, nor with unhallow'd lays  
 Touch the fair fame of Albion's golden days:  
 The thoughts of Gods let GRANVILLE's verse recite,  
 And bring the scenes of op'ning fate to light.  
 My humble Muse, in unambitious strains,  
 Paints the green forests and the flow'ry plains,  
 Where Peace descending bids her olives spring,  
 And scatters blessings from her dove-like wing.  
 Ev'n I more sweetly pass my careless days,  
 Pleas'd in the silent shade with empty praise;  
 Enough for me, that to the list'ning swains  
 First in these fields I sung the sylvan strains. (423-34)<sup>3</sup>

This ending is similar to Addison's in its focus on poetry itself and in its humility and deference to the auditor, who is also the patron. Similarly, the conclusions to *The Rape of the Lock* (1714) and *Eloisa to Abelard* (1717) discuss the poet, the future, and the particular auditor. *The Temple of Fame* (1715), with its more general addressee, still concludes with poetic and personal considerations:

Then teach me, heav'n! to scorn the guilty bays,  
 Drive from my breast that wretched lust of praise,

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<sup>3</sup> *Windsor Forest* and *The Temple of Fame* are quoted from Pope's *Poetical Works* (pages 37-50 and 132-46 respectively).

Unblemish'd let me live, or die unknown;

Oh grant an honest fame, or grant me none! (521-4)

Pope's poetry ranges among national, financial, and social concerns, yet these endings persistently return to the personal.

Perhaps because of the close connection between his poems and the contemporary world, Pope was concerned about his poems' usefulness, their positive effect. Despite his increasingly avowed pessimism about his age, he persists in claiming that he means to produce good. When in January 1733 Pope writes to Caryl that he is sending him the *Epistle to Bathurst* he says, "It is not the worst I have written, and abounds in moral example, for which reason it must be obnoxious in this age. God send it does any good! I really mean nothing else by writing at this time of my life" (*Correspondence* 340). After the publication he writes again (Jan. 31, 1733): "I find the last I made had some good effect, and yet the preacher less railed at than usually those are who will be declaiming against popular or national vices. I shall redouble my blow very speedily" (*Correspondence* 345). Of the *Essay on Man* and *Epistles to Several Persons*, four end with praise for the addressee, and furthermore, a praise that often incorporates economics and extols public virtues that benefit the country as a whole.<sup>4</sup>

The *Epistle to Burlington* (1731) articulates Pope's argument that "'Tis Use alone that sanctifies Expence" (179), or that a wealthy man's moral responsibility is to employ his money in improving projects. The ending suggests that an awareness of the future drives these projects, and a focus on the good of the country:

Whose rising Forests, not for pride or show,

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<sup>4</sup> References to the *Essay on Man* and *Epistles to Several Persons* cite line numbers from the Twickenham edition.

But future Buildings, future Navies grow:  
 Let his plantations stretch from down to down,  
 First shade a Country, and then raise a Town.  
     You too proceed! make falling Arts your care,  
 Erect new wonders, and the old repair,  
 Jones and Palladio to themselves restore,  
 And be whate'er Vitruvius was before:  
 Till Kings call forth th' Idea's of your mind,  
 Proud to accomplish what such hands design'd,  
 Bid Harbors open, public Ways extend,  
 Bid Temples, worthier of the God, ascend;  
 Bid the broad Arch the dang'rous Flood contain,  
 The Mole projected break the roaring Main;  
 Back to his bounds their subject Sea command,  
 And roll obedient Rivers thro' the Land;  
 These Honours, Peace to happy Britain brings,  
 These are Imperial Works, and worthy Kings. (191-204)

An individual — Burlington — changes the land in ways that benefit the entire nation, and the environment cooperates when the Sea is “subject” and the Rivers “obedient.” The speaker here praises the auditor and suggests through his knowledge their close relationship. Moreover, he gestures at the future benefit of Burlington's improvements, improvements that align him with royalty.

The ending of the *Essay on Man* (1733-4) similarly alludes to the future in its address to Lord Bolingbroke, because it suggests that present actions will benefit posterity. The lines suggest both praise and collaboration:

Come then, my Friend, my Genius, come along,

Oh master of the poet, and the song! ....  
 Teach me, like thee, in various nature wise,  
 To fall with dignity, with temper rise;  
 Form'd by thy converse, happily to steer  
 From grave to gay, from lively to severe;....  
 Oh! while along the stream of Time thy name  
 Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame,  
 Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,  
 Pursue the triumph, and partake the gale?  
 When statesmen, heroes, kings, in dust repose,  
 Whose sons shall blush their fathers were thy foes,  
 Shall then this verse to future age pretend  
 Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?  
 That urg'd by thee, I turn'd the tuneful art  
 From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart;  
 For Wit's false mirror held up Nature's light;  
 Shew'd erring Pride, **WHATEVER IS, IS RIGHT;**  
 That **REASON, PASSION,** answer one great aim;  
 That true **SELF-LOVE** and **SOCIAL** are the same;  
 That **VIRTUE** only makes our Bliss below;  
 And all our Knowledge is, **OURSELVES TO KNOW.**  
 (373-4; 377-80; 383-98)

The abstractions in these final lines summarize the argument of this lengthy poem and argue that individual improvements and social ones should be the same thing. Before this summary resides the idea of Bolingbroke's present sacrifices—antagonizing the “statesmen, heroes, kings”—being rewarded

because the poet and addressee are aligned in knowledge of future good and future respect from their aristocratic peers.

With their praise for the addressee—suggesting a positive relationship between poet and reader—and their forward-looking themes, these poems provide the reader with a purpose or goal, and a reason to act in ways the poem advises. Although the 1734 *Epistle to Cobham*'s final address to Cobham is much shorter than those to Burlington and Bolingbroke, it too looks to the future and stresses nationalistic motives. Again the ending praises the addressee:

And you! brave Cobham, to the latest breath  
Shall feel your ruling Passion strong in death:  
Such in those moments as in all the past,  
'Oh, save my Country, Heav'n!' shall be your last.

Spirituality—dying with a prayer—praise, and nationalism mark this short passage. Moreover, the focus on the future appears not only in the allusion to Cobham's eventual death but also in Cobham's words to his county's future salvation. Poet and addressee are aligned in working towards future good.

The conclusion to the *Epistle to a Lady* (1735) demonstrates the way that these same themes and motivations become modified because of a female auditor. As the ending turns the poem from satire to praise, it looks towards the past rather than the future, but the auditor is here encouraged to continue the sense and good-humour she has always exhibited:

Be this a Woman's Fame: with this unblest,  
Toasts live a scorn, and Queens may die a jest.  
This Phœbus promis'd (I forget the year)  
When those blue eyes first open'd on the sphere;  
Ascendant Phœbus watch'd that hour with care,

Averted half your Parents simple Pray'r,  
 And gave you Beauty, but deny'd the Pelf  
 Which buys your sex a Tyrant o'er itself.  
 The gen'rous God, who Wit and Gold refines,  
 And ripens Spirits as he ripens Mines,  
 Kept Dross for Duchesses, the world shall know it,  
 To you gave Sense, Good-humour, and a Poet. (281-92)

Similar to the earlier poems are the economic and aristocratic references, although here the auditor is superior to Duchesses and blessed for not having money. While Burlington can put his money to good national use, money would enslave Martha Blount because she would not control it. Her personal attributes, however, her "Beauty," "Sense" and "Good-humour," reside in place of money or are compared to financial acquisitions—Phœbus (the sun) "ripens Spirits as he ripens Mines." The link to mythology perhaps provides a grandeur similar to the astronomical focus of *The Rape of the Lock's* ending, a grandeur that replaces in these poems to women, outside the public sphere, the nationalism of the endings addressed to men. At the same time, although this conclusion lacks an explicitly nationalistic focus, it still offers a broader social scope than just poet and auditor because "the world shall know" the difference between duchesses and this auditor.

The ending to *The Dunciad* (1743) becomes shocking because it lacks any regenerative principle to guide the reader. It is about "uncreating" rather than creating:

Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;  
 Light dies before thy uncreating word:  
 Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;  
 And Universal Darkness buries All. (IV:653-6)



Significantly, the poem's satiric targets are not the addressed auditors; rather, the addressee is a figure who dramatizes or fulfills the poet's argument about the effects of dulness. Even though the poem does not give real readers specific, concluding advice for change, then, it in a sense continues the tradition of collaboration because the final auditor completes the predictions of the poet. Like the other poems, this ending has a nationalistic or "universal" focus and the addressee the power to direct surroundings ("Light dies before thy uncreating word"). But unlike other poems, the addressee, representing non-being or annihilation and so emphatic closure, remains within the poem and swallows the speaker himself.

The *Epistle to Bathurst* (1733) more perplexingly lacks any consolatory, future-looking address to Bathurst. Two of the lines (400-1) were in a manuscript draft but deleted from the early publications and not inserted until 1735:

The House impeach him; Coningsby harangues;  
 The Court forsake him, and Sir Balaam hangs:  
 Wife, son, and daughter, Satan, are thy own,  
 His wealth, yet dearer, forfeit to the Crown:  
 The Devil and the King divide the prize,  
 And sad Sir Balaam curses God and dies. (397-402)

The abruptness highlights the negative example of Sir Balaam and the futility of his life and death when all his achievements suddenly vanish. The satire applies not only to a selfish opportunist like Sir Balaam, but also to the government that capitalizes on such men, and the forcefulness with which Pope intended this satire is emphasized by his need to omit two potentially

treasonous lines in the early editions.<sup>5</sup> Like *The Dunciad*, however, the ending does contain an addressee—here it is Satan—who is the one, together with the King himself (again suggestive of nationalism), who benefits financially from Sir Balaam's demise.

Pope's poetry usually has a specific audience consisting of friends, enemies, and aristocrats involved in the politics of the country. When the speaker aligns himself and his addressee in wishes for a positive posterity, he demonstrates an awareness of what the addressee might do. The wealthy Burlington might build works, and the politician Cobham pray for his country's rescue, while the non-wealthy, unmarried Martha Blount might continue a friendship with the poet and receive satisfaction from having a sensible reputation. Any focus on posterity seems intended to emphasize usefulness, both the poet's and the reader's potential role in improving the future, and this focus appears not only in Pope but also in other eighteenth-century poets like Addison, Thomson, and Gray.

When James Battersby suggests that Samuel Johnson, unlike the metaphysical poets, does not pursue poetic thoughts to their full extent but rather leaves readers a participatory function in continuing these thoughts (231), he identifies a tendency prevalent in much eighteenth-century poetry.

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<sup>5</sup> I cannot determine a precise reason for the difference between the ending to this epistle and the endings to the others. Perhaps Pope meant to send a message to Bathurst, a warning perhaps about his lifestyle or his philosophic opinions. Or perhaps the abrupt ending marks the sincerity of their friendship—Bathurst may have been most pleased with the humour of a blunt ending, and a jovial relationship between Pope and Bathurst is indicated by the speaker's final comment to the auditor, and the response, "But you are tir'd—I'll tell a tale— — 'Agreed'" (338). Colin Nicholson reiterates Vincent Carretta's argument that the poem's publication was carefully timed: "it is quite possible that publication of *Bathurst* in January was timed to coincide with a renewed attack by its addressee in the House of Lords calling on the Directors of the South Sea Company to account for the current state of affairs concerning former directors' forfeited estates" (141-2). The ending may be intended to emphasize the satire of Sir Balaam—representative of greedy capitalists—if Pope was attacking the South Sea Company Directors. When Pope determined the poem's ending, however, is uncertain. He claimed the poem was "the work of two years by intervals" (Pope to Caryll, March 8, 1732/3, *Letters* 353).

Johnson's two major poems end with an awareness of the reader, the future, and a purpose. In *London* (1738) Thales concludes his commentary because external forces—specifically the boat's arrival—beckon him. Although the poem offers trenchant satire, the ending also stresses friendship and support:

Farewell!—When youth, and health, and fortune spent,  
 Thou fly'st for refuge to the wilds of Kent;  
 And tir'd like me with follies and with crimes,  
 In angry numbers warn'st succeeding times;  
 Then shall thy friend, nor thou refuse his aid,  
 Still foe to vice, forsake his Cambrian shade;  
 In virtue's cause once more exert his rage,  
 Thy satire point, and animate thy page. (256-63)<sup>6</sup>

This ending foretells the future of the addressee (technically the poem's speaker), and gives him a focus, to help the poet warn "succeeding times."

Johnson offers a more specific cause for Thale's discontent than does Juvenal. Dryden's translation of this satire has Umbritius tell his friend, "when, like me, o'erwhelm'd with care" (497), while Johnson specifies this care: "youth, and health, and fortune" have been "spent." The implication here is that all things that make life in the city bearable have been destroyed, but interesting here too is Johnson's focus on economic concerns. As in Pope's comments to Martha Blount, the lack of money requires compensation in other ways. Even if the compensation in *London* amounts to nothing more than further written satire, that pessimism is at least produced by collaboration with a friend.

The ending to *The Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749) differs from Juvenal more significantly than does *London*. The first half of the final section advises

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<sup>6</sup> *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are from the Yale edition of Johnson's *Poems* (45-61, 90-109), while Juvenal's satires are from Dryden's *Poetical Works* (327-34, 347-55). References give line numbers.

the human addressee, the “Enquirer” from line 349, to be confident in heaven’s benevolence. Power here belongs to heaven:

Still raise for good the supplicating voice,  
 But leave to heav’n the measure and the choice,  
 Safe in his pow’r, whose eyes discern afar  
 The secret ambush of a specious pray’r.  
 Implore his aid, in his decisions rest,  
 Secure whate’er he give, he gives the best. (351-6)

The idea of leaving choice to the power of heaven resembles Juvenal. As translated by Dryden the lines read, “Receive my counsel, and securely move; / Intrust thy fortune to the pow’rs above” (535-6). The subsequent lines of Juvenal’s poem continue to advise readers on blessings to seek, such as “health of body, and content of mind” (549). While these lines in Juvenal tell readers to “stand confin’d” (548) to asking for these things, Johnson’s poem offers similar advice but changes the wording to give readers something specific—and fervent—to do. In lines that suggest a more active solicitation than Juvenal’s do, the speaker advises, “Pour forth thy fervours for a healthful mind / Obedient passions, and a will resign’d” (357-60). Juvenal’s final four lines argue that readers may easily—freely—obtain the most important things in life:

The path to peace is virtue: what I show,  
 Thyself may freely on thyself bestow:  
 Fortune was never worship’d by the wise;  
 But, set aloft by fools, usurps the skies. (558-61)

Johnson’s final quatrain, on the other hand, presents abstract virtues as “goods” and suggests that readers possess the power to gain them. Thus, power has transferred from heaven to readers:

These goods for man the laws of heav'n ordain,  
 These goods he grants, who grants the pow'r to gain;  
 With these celestial wisdom calms the mind,  
 And makes the happiness she does not find. (365-8)

Significant in these lines are the ideals of possession, power, and “making” happiness. The word “goods” here, repeated twice for emphasis, denotes material possessions and is defined in Johnson’s dictionary as either “Moveables in a house,” or “Wares; freight; merchandise.”<sup>7</sup> Because heaven grants “the pow’r to gain,” readers can actively seek these things rather than passively wait for them. One can “make” love, patience, and faith become part of one’s life, in perhaps the same way one might pursue other possessions.<sup>8</sup>

Battersby disagrees with Bridgman’s contention that abstractions in this ending signal uncertainty and weakness. Agreeing with Donald Greene, he argues that the brevity of the final solution “is sufficient because the answer to all the preceding misdirections is one direction .... one alternative fits all” (246). The ending prompts the reader to reflection and action: to “understand the conclusion we must ourselves take thought and work out the large implications of Johnson’s economically expressed wisdom” (Battersby 247). For Johnson “religion is largely an incitement to activity” (Battersby 248). What Battersby does not point out is that involving the reader at the conclusion to a poem —

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<sup>7</sup> Battersby also notes this definition (245).

<sup>8</sup> Several others view this ending as dependent on heaven. Frederick W. Hilles reads the ending as contrast. The poem begins with observation or looking down, while “in the concluding paragraph we are looking up .... In the ‘eyes’ of the poem’s close the ‘extensive view’ of its beginning shrinks to a proper humility” (“Johnson’s” 70). Isobel Grundy writes that “any evidence that human observation can present will remain inconclusive” (*Greatness* 160). The search leads only to “further questions” and to “admitting failure and to calling instead on the keener sight of God” (*Greatness* 160). When the poem ends, “God takes over from humanity the task of observation; the sense of being a target for the divine vigilance is an important part in the unease which this close produces” (*Greatness* 164).

suggesting how the reader might approach the future—and incorporating economic language was part of the poetic tradition.

*London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* are not addressed to specific contemporary people, and Johnson's audience seems broader than that for Pope's *Epistles*.<sup>9</sup> But while Pope's endings depend in part on the financial and social conditions of his auditor, Johnson's perhaps do as well. In terms of publishing history, Johnson's selling of his poems through booksellers would reach a diverse audience composed of many of the middle classes—he could not assume that most of his readers would be landowners. Johnson's general concluding advice takes into account this audience that lacks direct political or social influences. His emphasis on spiritual virtues may be not only a religious conviction but also an economic replacement, a replacement that parallels Pope's consolation to Martha Blount: nonmaterial compensation for the reader's literal lack of money.

Johnson's attitude towards endings is important because of both his influence on Goldsmith and his position as an observer and a shaper of literary trends. His prose writings suggest that tradition and didacticism should drive conclusions. Shakespeare's histories were not meant to follow Aristotelian models and so did not require traditional closure: "History was a series of actions, with no other than chronological succession, independent of each other, and without any tendency to introduce or regulate the conclusion. It is not always very nicely distinguished from tragedy .... But a history might be continued through many plays; as it had no plan, it had no limits" (*Shakespeare* 7:68). Works other than histories, however, traditionally require dramatic unity and coherent endings, which Shakespeare provides. In his description, Johnson

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<sup>9</sup> Johnson claimed that *London's* Thales did not mean anyone specific (Johnson, *Poems* 47n2).

implies that Shakespeare fulfills the basics of ending requirements because “one event is concatenated with another, and the conclusion follows by easy consequence” and “the end of the play is the end of expectation,” even though he does not have “an intrigue regularly perplexed and regularly unravelled” or “endeavour to hide his design only to discover it” (“Preface” *Shakespeare* 7:75). Thus, his endings are not highlighted by the uncertainty of reaching them, but appear as a product of raised expectations throughout the work. The endings are necessary, unremarkable in themselves perhaps. Indeed, Johnson elsewhere suggests that the endings have been privileged too highly in categorizing the works when he argues that comedy, history and tragedy have not been distinguished by “any very exact or definite ideas” but only by the ending: “An action which ended happily ... in their opinion constituted a comedy. This idea of a comedy continued long amongst us, and plays were written, which, by changing the catastrophe, were tragedies to-day and comedies to-morrow” (“Preface” *Shakespeare* 7:68).

Although conclusions might be given too much authority in classification, they should, Johnson suggests, encourage morality. Part of his criticism of Shakespeare is that concern for virtue does not always govern his writings, and in particular his endings. In comments that suggest poetic justice he argues,

He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose .... he makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to shew in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and at the close dismisses them without further care, and leaves their examples to operate by chance. (“Preface” *Shakespeare* 7:71)

In complaining that Shakespeare leaves “examples to operate by chance,” Johnson here implies that a writer has a greater responsibility to direct readers than Shakespeare fulfills.

Because Nahum Tate’s poetic-justice version of *King Lear* privileges virtue, Johnson prefers it to Shakespeare’s version. In this discussion, he invokes audience response as argumentative support. He cannot believe that “if other excellencies are equal, the audience will not always rise better pleased from the final triumph of persecuted virtue,” and he suggests that in the case of Tate’s happy ending to *Lear*, “the publick has decided” (“*Lear*” *Shakespeare* 8:704). His own reaction to the play sounds similar to many readers’ reactions to *Clarissa*: “I was many years ago so shocked by Cordelia’s death, that I know not whether I ever endured to read again the last scenes of the play till I undertook to revise them as an editor” (“*Lear*” *Shakespeare* 8:704). In fact, Johnson’s explanation reveals an important aspect of consolatory endings: a happy ending encourages a reader to read the book again, while a tragic one discourages such a repeat endeavour. Satisfying audience desires allows one to influence readers with the other sentiments in the book because the happy ending palliates the potential harshness of the virtues taught.

In *Lives of the Poets* he takes for granted the moral aspect of poetry and stresses its need to reach readers by pleasing them. He complains of *Paradise Lost* that the “man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged, beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself” (1:126). In part for this reason, the poem “is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down .... Its perusal is a duty rather than a pleasure. We read Milton for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation” (1:127). Reception appears to



be a quite reliable gauge of merit. Of John Pomfret he writes, "He pleases many, and he who pleases many must have some species of merit" (1:212). Writing of Thomas Gray he praises ordinary readers: "In the character of his *Elegy* I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtilty and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours" (2:485).

As the introduction has outlined, in his essays Johnson often provides didactic endings and treats endings as reckonings, or times to consider one's purpose. The title of the final chapter of *Rasselas* addresses audience expectations of closure even while it offers an unconventional, and uncertain, conclusion. At the same time, the lack of resolution in the ending completes the depiction of life as pursuit without attainment, the moral pointed to in the novel's opening sentence: "Ye who listen with credulity to the whispers of fancy, and pursue with eagerness the phantoms of hope; who expect that age will perform the promises of youth, and that the deficiencies of the present day will be supplied by the morrow; attend to the history of Rasselas, prince of Abissinia" (*Rasselas* 7).

Goldsmith's fictional endings reflect a similar self-consciousness about audience expectations because they tend to be conventional, but often self-consciously, flippantly, or even mockingly so. *The Good Natur'd Man* ends happily, with an engagement and with Honeywood's final speech about lessons he has learned. Goldsmith wrote the Epilogue himself, and the final two lines suggest a collaboration that foreshadows Johnson's input into his poetry, when he paraphrases Pope's *Essay on Man*: "Blame where you must, be candid

where you can, / And be each critick the Good-natur'd Man" (83).<sup>10</sup> *The Vicar of Wakefield* has an ending similar to that of *Tom Jones*, because after the characters become reduced in a potentially drastic tragedy, sudden reversals of fortune provide happiness and felicity at the conclusion. The reversals are so dramatic and so sudden, however, that they draw attention to their artificiality. It is almost as if Goldsmith felt uncomfortable concluding in traditional ways, yet obligated to his audience to do so; consequently, he undermines or even parodies the very strategies he is using. *She Stoops to Conquer* provides a clear example of this self-consciousness when, after the requisite marriages as rewards, Constance says she hopes from Mr. Hardcastle's "tenderness" what Mrs. Hardcastle has denied and the latter answers, "Pshaw, pshaw, this is all but the whining end of a modern novel" (215).

Goldsmith offers less material than Johnson from which to determine his attitudes towards readers, but he does suggest the difficulties of writing to an uncertain public. In his 1759 *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*, he complains that the new writing climate, in which the public is patron, has created unfair conditions for aspiring writers: "When the link between patronage and learning was entire, then all who deserved fame were in a capacity of attaining it" (310). This essay laments authors' circumstances and includes the speaker as one of the public, the "we" whom he admonishes to treat authors with more respect: "Perhaps, of all mankind, an author, in these times, is used most hardly. We keep him poor, and yet revile his poverty .... we reproach him for living by his wit, and yet allow him no other

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<sup>10</sup> From Epistle I of *Essay on Man*, lines 15-16, "Laugh where we must, be candid where we can; / But vindicate the ways of God to Man." Mary E. Knapp writes that the epilogue's purpose was to "sound their [the audience's] humor and to flatter or amuse them into saving the play" (9).

means to live" (*Enquiry* 314). He significantly refuses to blame the author for the living and writing conditions and implies that the modern public and bookseller should attempt to resemble the former patrons in their care for the author: "If the author be, therefore, still so necessary among us, let us treat him with proper consideration, as a child of the public, not a rent-charge on the community" (*Enquiry* 315).

This concern about current writing conditions diminishes in the later *Citizen of the World* (1762), where Goldsmith suggests that authors can succeed: "The ridicule therefore of living in a garret, might have been wit in the last age, but continues such no longer, because no longer true. A writer of real merit now may easily be rich if his heart be set only on fortune: and as for those who have no merit, it is but fit that such should remain in merited obscurity" (344). Now praising reading audiences, Goldsmith explains, "the few poets of England no longer depend on the Great for subsistence, they have now no other patrons but the public, and the public collectively considered, is a good and a generous master" (*Citizen* 344; cited in Collins 198). A writer whose works are valuable knows they are valuable and every "polite member of the community by buying what he writes, contributes to reward him" (*Citizen* 344). The perspective in the *Citizen* differs from that in the *Enquiry* perhaps because Goldsmith felt writing conditions changed between 1759 and 1762, because he felt more confident as a writer and reflected that confidence in a praise for the public, or because he felt that the tone of the pessimistic *Enquiry* was inappropriate for the *Citizen*. More importantly, both works call for a respectful relationship between author and public—the *Enquiry* requests it, while the *Citizen* assumes it—because the author is in a subservient position of dependence upon the reading audience.

This suggestion of authorial subservience appears in the tone of Goldsmith's poems and in their concern with audience expectations. For both Johnson and Goldsmith, the situation of public as patron merely enhances the poet's responsibility to communicate effectively for useful social ends, and these concerns become particularly pronounced at endings. Reading *The Traveller* in light of a tradition of self-conscious, collaborative, and future-looking endings illuminates Goldsmith's choices for the ending.

The 1902 discovery by Bertram Dobell of the printed but unpublished *Prospect of Society* offers a possible version of *The Traveller* before Johnson's contribution.<sup>11</sup> The poem lacks both what became the beginning and what became the end of the later poem, and sections of *The Traveller* are here ordered backwards, or opposite to their order in *Traveller's* published form.<sup>12</sup> Explanations for the confusing arrangement of *Prospect* vary, but most agree that it resulted from printing errors.<sup>13</sup> The lines in *Prospect* that appear latest in *The Traveller*—and so perhaps were meant as *Prospect's* ending if the order of sections had not been mishandled—technically consist of lines 1-42 in *Prospect*, but they offer a version of what became the third- and second-last paragraphs of *The Traveller*. This potential closure contains a summary of depopulation and concludes with the alienated exile in a dangerous new land:

Yes, my lov'd brother, cursed be that hour  
When first ambition toil'd for foreign power;

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<sup>11</sup> As Lonsdale notes, Johnson may have advised Goldsmith before revisions to *Prospect*, but his claims for lines he wrote suggest that he helped Goldsmith transform *Prospect* to *Traveller* (*Poems* 624).

<sup>12</sup> A *Prospect of Society* abruptly ends with the catchword "Each." William B. Todd suggests that this word is "an obvious indication that the remainder of this section, 91-100 (corresponding to 93-102 in *The Traveller*), was in galley and intended for imposition" ("Imposition" 106). Todd reasons that the opening of *The Traveller* was intended for the final unprinted sheet as well ("Imposition" 106). L.W. Hanson, on the other hand, disagrees with this speculation (298).

<sup>13</sup> See Todd and Hanson for discussions of *A Prospect of Society*.

When Britons learnt to swell beyond their shore,  
 And barter useful men for useless ore,  
 To shine with splendors that destruction haste,  
 Like flaring tapers brightening as they waste.  
 Have we not seen, at pleasure's lordly call,  
 An hundred villages in ruin fall?  
 Beheld the duteous son, the sire decay'd,  
 The modest matron, and the blushing maid,  
 Forc'd from their homes, a melancholy train,  
 To traverse climes beyond the western main;  
 Where wild Oswego spreads her swamps around,  
 And Niagara stuns with thund'ring sound?  
 Even now, perhaps, as there some pilgrim strays  
 Through tangling forests, and through dangerous ways;  
 Through woods, where beasts divided empire claim,  
 And the brown Indian takes a deadly aim;  
 There, while above the forceful tempest flies,  
 And all around distressful yellings rise,  
 The famish'd exile bends beneath his woe,  
 And faintly fainter, fainter seems to go;  
 Casts a fond look where Britain's shores recline,  
 And gives his griefs to sympathize with mine. (19-42)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This paragraph in *Prospect* contains two additional lines, corresponding to lines 315-16 in *Traveller*: "War in each breast, and freedom on each brow; / How much unlike the sons of Britain now!" (42-3). But because these lines do not make sense in the context of the exile sympathizing with the poet, I am assuming that their placement here is part of the mistaken arrangement in the entire poem. In fact, these lines begin the next section from *Traveller* that is out of order here: lines 315 to 358.

As a poetic ending, this paragraph conforms to the tradition of the Horatian verse-epistle in its final address to the auditor—“Yes, my lov’d brother, cursed be that hour....”—and it portrays a sense of community in the speaker’s identification not only with his brother but with the exile. The paragraph offers a very specific picture of those leaving the country, and, in fact, contains themes not unlike the conclusion to *London*, with its idea of departure and alienation, but identification between those alienated from the rest of society. This description even parallels *London* in Johnson’s poem’s reference to the “wilds of Kent” (257). In Goldsmith the wilds are America, the colony beyond the shores of Britain.

What *Prospect*’s ending does not do is offer the reader a purpose, or signal any type of action for the future. If Johnson’s ending to *London* is sudden and pessimistic, this ending is even more pessimistic since it lacks even a sense of the future bringing future poetry. The only implied collaboration occurs with the speaker’s brother perhaps agreeing with the curses on the country’s decline, and the pensive exile sympathizing with the poet. Significantly, however, Goldsmith is not writing to the pensive exile but to poetry readers living in Britain, so this ending does not speak to those most likely to read the poem.

When Goldsmith revised the poem, he not only added (with Johnson’s help) a different ending but also composed a lengthy beginning that stresses the speaker’s alienation from other members of society. He is an isolated wanderer, cut off from his brother and the type of life his brother possesses: “But me, not destin’d such delights to share, / My prime of life in wand’ring spent and care” (23-4).<sup>15</sup> The speaker compares himself to

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<sup>15</sup> I use Friedman’s versions of both *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* because he prints the earliest versions, which would have led to their first receptions. Later variants

... some lone miser visiting his store, [who]  
 Bends at his treasure, counts, recounts it o'er;  
 Hoards after hoards his rising raptures fill,  
 Yet still he sighs, for hoards are wanting still. (51-4)

Like the miser, the speaker always longs for what he cannot find:

And oft I wish, amidst the scene, to find  
 Some spot to real happiness consign'd,  
 Where my worn soul, each wand'ring hope at rest,  
 May gather bliss to see my fellows blest. (59-62)

The speaker longs primarily to see his “fellows blest,” not to find a particular happy social situation of his own. This theme continues later, when he mourns for others—“Here let me sit in sorrow for mankind” (102)—but compares himself in this situation to something neglected: “Like yon neglected shrub, at random cast, / That shades the steep, and sighs at every blast” (103-4). The poet’s personal alienation accords with his desire for the exile to sympathize with him in the line that concludes *Prospect*.

How much Johnson influenced the new ending is uncertain. Sir Walter Scott describes Johnson as having “contributed the sentiment which Goldsmith has so beautifully versified” (243). But such a case seems unlikely since Johnson was able to point out specific lines he wrote. Included in his list was the line “To stop too fearful, and too faint to go” (420), a line he seems to have reworded, not created, because it is related to the one in *Prospect*: “And faintly fainter, fainter seems to go” (see above, l.40). Although he had told Joshua Reynolds that “the utmost” he wrote in the poem was “not more than

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do not affect the endings or my argument about the poems. Bracketed references for both poems give line numbers.

eighteen lines" (Hilles, *Portraits* 77),<sup>16</sup> Johnson's final statement, and the one holding most authority, occurred when he told Boswell that he wrote the "To stop" line and the concluding ten lines, except the second-last couplet (Boswell 355).

With Johnson's help, the final paragraph corrects the speaker's idea of neglect when he blames himself for straying from the source of happiness, and it offsets his alienation and implies an aligned community when it uses the pronoun "our." Johnson's lines are marked, and the new ending follows the former conclusion from *Prospect*:

The pensive exile, bending with his woe,  
 \*To stop too fearful, and too faint to go,  
 Casts a long look where England's glories shine,  
 And bids his bosom sympathize with mine.

Vain, very vain, my weary search to find  
 That bliss which only centers in the mind:  
 Why have I stray'd, from pleasure and repose,  
 To seek a good each government bestows?  
 In every government, though terrors reign,  
 Though tyrant kings, or tyrant laws restrain,  
 \*How small, of all that human hearts endure,  
 \*That part which laws or kings can cause or cure.  
 \*Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,  
 \*Our own felicity we make or find:  
 \*With secret course, which no loud storms annoy,

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<sup>16</sup> Lonsdale quotes this information (*Poems* 625).



**\*Glides the smooth current of domestic joy.**

**The lifted ax, the agonizing wheel,**

**Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel,**

**\*To men remote from power but rarely known,**

**\*Leave reason, faith and conscience all our own. (419-38)**

If the ending to *A Prospect of Society* resembles *London*, then this ending to *The Traveller* resembles *The Vanity of Human Wishes* in its focus on the mind and on spiritual virtues—the lines repeat both Johnson's find/mind rhyme that opens and closes *Vanity's* final paragraph (Brown 116), and his make/find alternative in the final line. As in Johnson's poem, the reader here receives advice about what to *do* in the face of national deterioration. The line "Our own felicity we make or find" places the onus on each individual to better his social situation, and the earlier claim that "the mind" (424) is the source of happiness or unhappiness, with the accompanying rejection of social influences, argues for individuality and self-sufficiency.

This individuality is an abstract feeling, however, not a description of economic self-sufficiency or political free speech. In fact, this type of individuality is similar to that granted to Clarissa in Richardson: the right to refuse, the right to champion one's interiority and moral principles, and the right to withdraw from the social world. Thus, although the rest of the poem criticizes foreign trade and increased luxury, the ending avoids offering overtly political solutions. The political realm appears in Goldsmith's two lines, "The lifted ax, the agonizing wheel, / Luke's iron crown, and Damien's bed of steel" (435-6). These lines contain a specificity the abstractions in the other lines lack, and they suggest a violence reserved for the lower classes who rebel (the peasants of Hungary; Damien, son of a gatekeeper) and the government that punishes them. These social agitations need not disturb this poem's readers,

whose lives can remain constant and seemingly apolitical. The choice of political abstention is reinforced by the pronoun “our”’s socially cooperative implications, which counter the poet’s earlier concern about Britain that “Ferments arise, imprison’d factions roar” (345).

The ending speaks to the desire for social improvement but channels that desire into spiritual areas rather than explicitly economic or political ones because of the particular audience addressed. Goldsmith needs to offer his reader something to do or a purpose for the future, yet he is speaking neither to the poor who have lost “domestic joy” through forced emigration nor to the aristocrats involved in the government producing “tyrant laws.” His audience lacks strong political or financial power and also lacks the desperation that might drive the poor to violence. The ending, then, abstains from politics altogether and suggests individual power within a smaller controlled social sphere: the family. Betterment should not occur through material acquisitions, and in fact the poem’s concluding with “all our own” stresses that phrase and suggests that the reader is compensated for a lack of material ownership by ownership of more lasting things, “reason, faith and conscience.” The idea parallels Johnson’s use of “goods” for spiritual virtues. This audience’s obsession with luxury could ruin the country if the middle classes become wealthy and usurp the position of the landowners. Earlier the poet explains,

Hence, should one order disproportion’d grow,  
Its double weight must ruin all below.  
O then how blind to all that truth requires,  
Who think it freedom when a part aspires! (375-8)

Thus, the conclusion’s replacement of potential material goals with spiritual and familial ones provides readers with a purpose that will not encourage further trade and consequently cause class destruction. Readers’ desires for

improvement are not discouraged but instead are redirected towards character building, and this attitude explains the ending's apparent confidence that if readers take care of their own personal motivations, then the problems of wealth accumulation will disappear.

Bridgman argues that the ending contradicts the rest of the poem. Of both this poem and the *Deserted Village* he writes, "Johnson's conclusions did not fit the poems, although they were apparently dignified assertions of man's capacity to prosper on his own" (272). Specifically, he argues that the *Traveller's* final confidence in "domestic joy" is unfounded: "Johnson had only to consult the turbulent condition of his own household to know the precarious sentimentalism of that proposition" and "Goldsmith himself was far from sanguine about the ability of domestic life to resist the incursions of economic greed" (271). But while Goldsmith and Johnson may have had some personal doubts about domestic bliss, Bridgman's assertion overlooks the example of domestic felicity within the poem itself: the family of the auditor, the speaker's brother. The speaker may be far away from this situation, but he recalls it idealistically near the poem's beginning:

Blest be those feasts with simple plenty crown'd,  
Where all the ruddy family around  
Laugh at the jests or pranks that never fail,  
Or sigh with pity at some mournful tale,  
Or press the bashful stranger to his food,  
And learn the luxury of doing good. (17-22)

This description contends that hospitality and social interaction, the "luxury of doing good," take the place of other forms of luxury. In light of this passage, the ending seems in fact to return to a praise of the auditor, even if it praises him

indirectly, and it reinforces the contention that “luxuries” that cannot be purchased are more rewarding than physical commodities.

The original poem, *A Prospect of Society*, then, concludes with an address to an auditor and a plea for fellowship, but the speaker identifies with a marginalized social group, the exiles. The revised *Traveller* in fact extends the idea of the alienated speaker, but finally speaks not to the exiles but to those likely to read the poem. The conclusion’s intended readers are the middle classes in Britain, whom it encourages to shun desires for economic or political gain and seek instead for ownership of domestic bliss and personal integrity: reason, faith, and conscience. These things, notably, can be obtained without upsetting the contemporary class structures, and at the same time seem intended to compensate for lack of wealth or political power. They give the reader something tangible and socially admirable to do; they fulfill reader expectations for a traditional ending that *gives* them something to do; and they fulfill these conditions without antagonizing any other social groups. Thus, the ending seems to focus Goldsmith’s complaints about the country into specific advice for specific readers.

Johnson’s assistance with the ending provides a literal collaboration that resembles the social harmony of the “domestic joy” the poet espouses. Did Goldsmith as author, then, not feel the same sense of isolation as his poetic speaker? Paradoxically, the poetic persona expresses a combination of isolation and cooperation that grants him authority. In the letter to Henry beginning *The Traveller*, Goldsmith presents a three-part argument about poetry: that it has been neglected for painting and music, that it has been marred by absurd forms (like blank verse), and that it been corrupted by party. Within the final point he strongly criticizes the reader, “infected” with party, who “has once gratified his appetite with calumny, makes, ever after,

the most agreeable feast upon murdered reputation” (247). Near the end of the dedication he distinguishes his poem from these corruptions and argues that he does not care what readers think: “What reception a Poem may find, which has neither abuse, party, nor blank verse to support it, I cannot tell, nor am I solicitous to know. My aims are right” (247).

Reviewers reacted positively to Goldsmith’s insistence on shunning the cause of particular parties, and their agreement with his argument suggests that his stance in the dedication was not as oppositional as he presented it. In an unsigned notice in the *London Chronicle*, December 1764, the writer says of the *Traveller*, “It has been for some time justly objected to our Poets, that they have been unable to solicit the attention of the Public in any extraordinary degree, without leaning upon party for support. The writer of the poem we have under consideration, borrows no aid from prejudice, but builds upon a nobler and more extensive plan” (Rousseau 34). An unsigned notice in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* (December 1764) similarly praises the poem’s moderation and specifically the conclusion: “it concludes with an apostrophe to *England*, in which the author has shewn a warm love for his country, without deviating into either bigotry or enthusiasm” (Rousseau 33-4).

As these responses indicate, the ideal for poetry was that it transcend—or appear to—particular political positions and arguments. The most authoritative stance was one that appeared not to take sides. Goldsmith’s poet, with his attitude of solitary, transcendent vision, adopts this respected, isolationist position. The final sentence in the *Traveller’s* dedication uses humour to balance between cultivating a positive relationship with readers and maintaining poetic transcendence: “Without espousing the cause of any party, I have attempted to moderate the rage of all” (247).

When Goldsmith continues his theme of depopulation in *The Deserted Village*, his dedication again suggests a solitary, confrontational poet. He cites “modern politicians” and “fashion” as those against him (286) and represents himself as “a professed ancient” on the subject himself (286). He contrasts tradition or the past with modernity, and subtly suggests (with the term “fashion”) that modernity is frivolous. Such an opinion about his audience might warrant a confrontational ending—which tries to change the reader’s opinion—yet the ending to the dedication retreats from antagonism and turns his themes into mere witty posturing: “Indeed so much has been poured out of late on the other side of the question, that, merely for the sake of novelty and variety, one would sometimes wish to be in the right” (286). This ending, in fact, aligns him with those he opposes. The “novelty and variety” he cites resemble his opposition, the newness of “modern politicians” and “fashion.” Like *The Traveller*, then, *The Deserted Village* aligns itself with audience desires or motivations while it at the same time presents a poetic alienation that grants literary authority. At the poem’s conclusion, advice to readers has been mediated through Johnson’s voice to suggest a society of the cultivated and virtuous which the sympathetic reader is encouraged to join.

Central to the poem is the objection to one displacing many, or the desires of an individual ruining the livelihood of an entire community. The poem insists that the village was a group of people who shared similar ideals and interests. Near the beginning of the poem, the speaker shows the community, the “they,” the old and young, socializing together:

And all the village train from labour free  
 Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,  
 While many a pastime circled in the shade,  
 The young contending as the old surveyed. (17-20)

Individual people in the village are not named but are portrayed as types:

The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,  
 While secret laughter tittered round the place,  
 The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,  
 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove. (27-30)

The representational figures reinforce the idea of community and tradition—these figures have appeared again and again throughout history and innumerable “swains” have held the same interests.

When the speaker reveals what has destroyed this village, the solitary nature of the possession is marked:

Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,  
 And desolation saddens all thy green:  
 One only master grasps the whole domain,  
 And half a tillage stints thy smiling plain. (37-40)

Although the speaker too is a solitary figure, his projected retirement depends upon incorporation into the community. His ambitions do suggest a superiority over the group—“I still had hopes, for pride attends us still, / Amidst the swains to shew my book-learned skill” (89-90)—while nevertheless he would not upset their lifestyles. He now cannot live out his retirement in the way he planned because the people are gone and residing in the geographical area alone is not enough. The speaker is not lamenting destroyed landscape here but destroyed societies, where the houses worked to draw people together: the “beggar,” “spendthrift,” “soldier” and others congregating at the village preacher’s “modest mansion” (140-155), and the pupils making a “noisy mansion” of the school master’s abode (195). Now, the crumbling buildings in the village attest to the extinct population.

In fashionable society, by contrast, material acquisitions outweigh social interaction, and the description of the masquerade lacks human personalities:

But the long pomp, the midnight masquerade,  
 With all the freaks of wanton wealth arrayed,  
 In these, ere trifflers half their wish obtain,  
 The toiling pleasure sickens into pain;  
 And, even while fashion's brightest arts decoy,  
 The heart distrusting asks, if this be joy. (259-64)

Furthermore, in the city people lack social cooperation. One goes to the city,

To see those joys the sons of pleasure know,  
 Extorted from his fellow-creature's woe.  
 Here, while the courtier glitters in brocade,  
 There the pale artist plies the sickly trade.... (313-16)

Possessions characterize the wealthy man who has displaced the villagers, and again the description emphasizes the fact that one person has ruined many others:

The man of wealth and pride,  
 Takes up a space that many poor supplied;  
 Space for his lake, his park's extended bounds,  
 Space for his horses, equipage, and hounds;  
 ... His seat, where solitary sports are seen,  
 Indignant spurns the cottage from the green. (275-82)

Although there were various reasons for enclosure in the eighteenth century, the motivation here is not farming improvements but pleasure of a wealthy landlord. The poet argues that trade has produced wealthy men who are now displacing the country's peasantry.



As in *The Traveller*, the displaced villagers become outsiders exposed to dangerous conditions. The “poor houseless shivering female” lies “Near her betrayer’s door” (326, 332), and the rest of the villagers emigrate to a hazardous America, where the threats are primarily natural, including the “blazing suns” (347), “matted woods” (349), “poisonous fields” (351), and “mad tornado” (357). In other words, the conditions here are the opposite to the social and environmental harmony that existed in Auburn. The solipsism of the wealthy landowner has produced chaos and destruction among all not explicitly producing his pleasure.

Female figures in particular in this poem represent the powerless, the ones reduced to beggary and destitution. The village itself begins as female and youthful: “Sweet Auburn, loveliest [sic] village of the plain ... / Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease” (1-5). Later, of course, the land is directly compared to “some fair female unadorned and plain, / Secure to please while youth confirms her reign” (287-8). Time becomes the enemy in this metaphor when the young woman begins to lose her charms and so changes her appearance and, implicitly, her nature. The poet here describes women—and so, correspondingly, the land—as subservient to stronger powers, both time and the “lovers” on whom the woman depends. The widow earlier in the poem has been forced into her poverty (“She, wretched matron, forced, in age, for bread” 131) and in remaining only the “sad historian of the pensive plain” (136), she bears representation only through her appearance, not through speech.

The speaker is the verbal historian of the poem, and this similarity to the beggar woman is appropriate because he seems to identify most strongly with the destitute female figures (Lonsdale, “Garden” 24). The addressee in the

poem's concluding paragraph is poetry herself, also female, also leaving the country, and also close to the speaker:

And thou, sweet Poetry, thou loveliest maid,  
 Still first to fly where sensual joys invade;  
 Unfit in these degenerate times of shame,  
 To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame;  
 Dear charming nymph, neglected and decried,  
 My shame in crowds, my solitary pride.  
 Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,  
 That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;  
 Thou guide by which the nobler arts excell,  
 Thou nurse of every virtue, fare thee well. (407-16)

Like the young female earlier, poetry faces exile because of her inability to draw the attention of readers: "Unfit in these degenerate times of shame, / To catch the heart, or strike for honest fame." Poetry here is unthreatening, and will simply (and pathetically, like the villagers) leave the country if unappreciated. The only power poetry holds is over the speaker. In other words, the speaker himself is identifying with social outcasts, but resides lower on the social scale than even these exiles because he is controlled by poetry: "[Poetry] found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so."

This powerless speaker is governed by a poetry that fails to connect with readers. Goldsmith himself may have felt a powerless inability to communicate adequately with readers, because he again turned to Johnson. As the poem concludes, the speaker requests that poetry overcome resistance and teach. The final lines offer future-looking themes, something that poetry can teach, and thus, implicitly, something that the reader can accomplish. Johnson's concluding quatrain makes the theme nationalistic:

Farewell, and O where'er thy voice be tried,  
 On Torno's cliffs, or Pambamarca's side,  
 Whether where equinoctial fervours glow,  
 Or winter wraps the polar world in snow,  
 Still let thy voice prevailing over time,  
 Redress the rigours of the inclement clime;  
 Aid slighted truth, with thy persuasive strain  
 Teach erring man to spurn the rage of gain;  
 Teach him that states of native strength possest,  
 Tho' very poor, may still be very blest;  
 \*That trade's proud empire hastes to swift decay,  
 \*As ocean sweeps the labour'd mole away;  
 \*While self dependent power can time defy,  
 \*As rocks resist the billows and the sky. (417-30)

The speaker's isolation is not overcome through an inclusive "we" or "our" at the end of this poem, as it was in *The Traveller*. The truths the speaker asks poetry teach are ones he already knows and has attempted to demonstrate in the picture of a healthy Auburn, that man should "spurn the rage of gain" because "states of native strength possest, / Tho' very poor, may still be very blest." That the speaker wants poetry to teach "erring man" suggests that his audience does not consist of villagers—or even himself—but of those tempted or in the process of destroying those lifestyles—the upper and middle classes desiring to gain wealth and land. Despite their apparent intention to apply to "mankind" generally, the combination of the descriptor "man," the pronoun "him" (425), and the "self dependent power" (429) suggest an individuality that resembles the landowner, or the would-be landowner, more than the communal villagers. As in *The Traveller*, these implications suggest a re-channelling of

existing reader desires. The poem is speaking to those with possible economic ambitions and it attempts to work with them instead of confrontationally against them. If “trade’s proud empire hastes to swift decay,” then commerce, the poet warns, is not only destructive to peasants but to the traders themselves.

Just as the speaker is compensated for poverty with important but intangible valuables, “pride,” “nobler arts” and “every virtue” (412, 415-16), Johnson’s lines palliate readers’ potential desires for possessions and/or for power by the advice to seek “states of native strength possest” and “self dependent power.” His metaphors suggest that maintenance of tradition or what is already part of the country—the “rocks”—will resist destruction while improvements to the land—the “labour’d mole”—will be easily overcome. The “mole” swept away by the ocean recalls Pope’s line at the end of the *Epistle to Burlington*: “The Mole projected break the roaring Main” (200). Johnson must have recognized the parallel because his *Dictionary* cites Pope’s passage under the definition of “mole” as a mound or dike. In Pope’s poem Burlington may be called on to build temples, arches, and dikes, to open harbors and direct rivers—works that will strengthen the nation. In Goldsmith’s poem, improvements made by the powerful lead to depopulation. Thus, although Johnson’s lines express a nationalism similar to Pope’s, the mole parallel indicates the explicit difference between this economic advice to rely on what the country holds instead of increasing trade, and Pope’s general support for trade. Goldsmith’s readers, both those who lack the power to build and those who have it, are here told that man-made landscape changes will decay.

Readers are also offered positive alternatives similar to the “pow’r to gain” in Johnson’s *Vanity*: “states of native strength possest, / Tho’ very poor, may still be very blest” and “self dependent power can time defy” (425-6, 429).

The hypothetical nature of expression here (“may” and “can”) leads Bridgman to argue that although Johnson’s “quatrain has an apparent settled strength to it, it is merely assertive. Neither the contents of the poem nor any available experience supplied Johnson a sanction for this stirring claim that the individual will prevail” (272). He also suggests of the earlier lines, “Goldsmith’s impassioned summation was not only unconvincing but, again, powerfully repudiated by the accumulated evidence of the poem” (272). Certainly Bridgman seems correct that the conclusion does not follow as a logical result of an argument. The speaker calls the times “degenerate” where poetry cannot “catch the heart” (409-10), yet fifteen lines later he asks poetry to “let thy voice prevailing over time ... / Teach erring man” (421-4). Within the poem, “trade’s proud empire” has not decayed but has destroyed a village, and the conclusion’s confidence in “rocks” is troubling because it parallels the “tall cliff” of the village preacher, who has not survived.

To expect this ending to conclude a completed argument, however, is to misread its purpose. The request of poetry speaks to the future, perhaps including posterity, and so the advice in the ending should be considered separate from the descriptions in the rest of the poem. In other words, Goldsmith wishes not to reiterate what is *in* the poem but to look to what might occur after the poem—in fact *because* of the poem. Readers accustomed to endings that offered some sort of future advice would not question this conclusion, and the tendency of this ending to suggest a situation completely unsubstantiated in the poem itself is not unusual—Pope’s final words to Cobham and Burlington suggest future actions not contained within the poems themselves.

A second significant element of the ending is its appeal to reader sympathy, when it balances advice for future action with sympathy not only

for displaced villagers but for an exiled poetry. An earlier essay, “The Revolution in Low Life,” deplures depopulation, and the conclusion, quoting an unnamed historian, outlines the conquest of Italy because of its attachment to luxury:

“in proportion as Italy was then beautiful, and its possessors rich, it was also weak and defenceless. The rough peasant and hardy husbandman had been long obliged to seek for liberty and subsistence in Britain or Gaul; and, by leaving their native country, brought with them all the strength of the nation. There was none now to resist an invading army, but the slaves of the nobility or the effeminate citizens of Rome, the one without motive, the other without strength to make any opposition. They were easily, therefore, overcome, by a people more savage indeed, but far more brave than they.” (198)

This ending gives a darker warning than the ending to the *Deserted Village*, but the essay, unlike the poem, was published without Goldsmith’s name and included in neither his 1765 nor 66 collection of essays.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, it was the fifth of several essays to *Lloyd’s Evening Post* in 1762, and so was necessary neither to secure him employment nor to win him fame. As an anonymous essay writer he could be grim; as a poet, on the other hand, he indicates an acute awareness of the position of the speaker himself, a position requiring support and sympathy.

When Goldsmith concludes the poem by saying farewell to poetry, consequently, he makes poetry itself—the occupation and the genre—equivalent to the country’s displaced peasantry. And if the poet, through

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<sup>17</sup> Goldsmith’s authorship is assumed, primarily from internal evidence, but not known for certain.

belonging to poetry, is like the poor, exiled peasants who belong to the village, then he symbolically obtains the sentiments associated with them. The “innocence and ease” (5), the “humble happiness” (8), and the ability to balance labour with leisure (17) all portray what were considered to be positive virtues. Both poet and peasant hold a moral authority not only appealing but unthreatening, because they both remain vulnerable to conditions they cannot control. The audience addressed is more powerful than the subject, or the poet himself.

Goldsmith’s solicitation of Johnson’s help with the ending suggests that if he shared his speaker’s feelings of alienation, then they were not acute enough to prevent him from social interaction and shared labour with another poet. Johnson would likely consider his role supportive, not ideologically influential. He describes in *Lives* how Sir Richard Blackmore had solicited editorial assistance from friends for his 1712 poem *Creation*, and he argues that collaboration does not reduce the author’s credit and responsibility for the poem’s structure and sentiments:

to him must always be assigned the plan of the work, the distribution of its parts, the choice of topicks, the train of argument, and, what is yet more, the general predominance of philosophical judgement and poetical spirit. Correction seldom effects more than the suppression of faults: a happy line, or a single elegance may perhaps be added; but of a large work the general character must always remain. (2:41)

While Johnson’s comments can be read in part as the modesty of a poet who had aided many other writers, his point at the same time warns us against attributing values and ideas to him based on lines he wrote for another poet. His input into the poem seems, more importantly, to reinforce the ideal of

community that the villagers represent, and so literalize the social focus that endings in general during the period seemed to solicit.

Both in advice about spiritual virtues and in sympathy for an exiled poet, the poem's ending becomes one, to use Torgovnick's term, congruent with intended readers' sentiments. Goldsmith's lines provide positive advice for the reader and a goal for the future, while Johnson's couplets offer an empowerment that extends from individuals to the country, a nationalism that follows poetic tradition. This sense of cooperation with readers, however, left room for them to dismiss his economics. The reviews separate the argument of the poem from its effect, or object to the complaint that luxury is destroying the land but praise the poem nevertheless. The unsigned notice in the *Critical Review* argues, "England wears now a more smiling aspect than she ever did; and few ruined villages are to be met with except on poetical ground. — Whatever is, must be ultimately right, and productive of universal good" (Rousseau 77). Nevertheless, the critic decides that a "fine poem may be written upon a false hypothesis" (Rousseau 78). This critic also objects to poetry leaving England at the end and insists, "England is certainly not so inhospitable to poetry as the equinoctial fervour, or the polar cold would be" (Rousseau 81). The critic objects to the location of poetry, however, not to its ideals. In fact, the critic complains that out of England, "She would be employed on none of the noble themes, which the poet requests her to embellish in her exile, for the good of mankind" (Rousseau 81). The noble themes, finally, resolve the reviewer's judgment of the poem, which in closing suggests that the ending's consolatory spirituality had a positive effect: "Dr. Goldsmith deserves the highest applause for employing his poetical talents in the support of humanity and virtue, in an age when sentimental instruction



will have more powerful influence upon our conduct than any other" (Rousseau 82).

John Hawkesworth's reviews in the *Monthly Review* and the *Gentleman's Magazine* again object to Goldsmith's condemnation of luxury, and he argues, "but we do not therefore read his poem with the less pleasure" (Rousseau 84). His attitude towards the ending is much more complimentary than the previous reviewer's when he describes it as a "beautiful apostrophe to Poetry" and concludes, "We hope that, for the honour of the Art, and the pleasure of the Public, Dr. Goldsmith will retract his farewell to poetry, and give us other opportunities of doing justice to his merit" (Rousseau 86). The reviewers' tendencies to use inclusive pronouns, "we" and "our," reinforce the universality of "humanity and virtue." And because of this universality, political views and poetic expression are entirely different things.

The separation of poetry and politics, then, uses Goldsmith's equation of poetry and peasantry as a metaphor in which poetry is the tenor or "real" thing with moral authority and the peasants are merely the metaphor's vehicle. At the same time, the ideals of community and solidarity instead of individualism are borne out in appreciative praise for the poet and in poetic imitations. In his analysis of reader response, Wolfgang Iser distinguishes between the "meaning" of a text and its "significance." Meaning must be assembled by the reader and is the "referential totality of the entire work" but significance is the "reader's absorption of the meaning into his own existence" (Act 151). Three poems inspired by *The Deserted Village*, Anna Letitia Barbauld's "On the Deserted Village," Anthony King's *The Frequented Village* (1771),<sup>18</sup> and John Robinson's *The Village Oppress'd* (1771), demonstrate the

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<sup>18</sup> The title page of this poem simply attributes it to "A Gentleman of the Middle Temple" and also lacks a publication date, but the Eighteenth-century Short Title Catalogue lists Anthony King as the author and 1771 as the publication date. D.J. O'Donoghue, in *The*

ways the meaning of Goldsmith's poem became "significance" in readers' lives: the ideal of the village became a model for middle-class readers to follow.

The 1994 editors of Barbauld's *Poems* suggest that she wrote "On the Deserted Village" not long after *The Deserted Village* was published and certainly before Goldsmith's death (in 1774) because William Shepherd wrote of Goldsmith's reaction to Anna Letitia Aikin's poem.<sup>19</sup> The poem suggests that Auburn need not despair because she has inspired so many: "In vain has proud oppression laid her low; / She wears a garland on her faded brow" (3-4).<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the village should forgive its destruction, because that physical decay has led to its aesthetic immortality: "Now, Auburn, now absolve impartial fate / Which, if it made thee wretched, makes thee great" (5-6). The poem, then, privileges the tragic sentimentality of Goldsmith's poem and reinforces the ideal of the riches of poverty. Finally, the poet praises *The Deserted Village's* author, and rebuts his suggestion that poetry is leaving Britain:

Oh patron of the Poor!—it cannot be,  
While one, one Poet yet remains like thee;  
Nor can the Muse desert our favoured isle  
Till thou desert the Muse and scorn her smile. (13-16)

This ending not only conforms to the tradition of ending with praise for another poet, but also responds directly to Goldsmith's ending, which asked that poetry should teach. Like many of Goldsmith's reviewers, Barbauld focuses on

*Poets of Ireland*, includes this poem under Anthony King's entry and assigns 1771 for its date. He writes that King (1742-1797) was a "counsellor-at-law in Dublin, who published a work on 'National Education' in that city in 1793."

<sup>19</sup> "On the Deserted Village" was eventually published in 1825.

<sup>20</sup> Bracketed references cite line numbers of the poem on page 33 of Barbauld's *Poems*.

poetry's power to move audiences and suggests, at the same time, the separation of poetry from real social conditions. That is, her advice to Auburn that it not lament its fate seems directed at a fictional village, not at real people languishing in foreign climates. The social validity of Goldsmith's claims about depopulation matters much less than the aesthetic and emotional effect on readers of the poem itself. At the same time, this response itself seems a result of a reader moved by the emotional effects of Goldsmith's poem yet holding no power to alleviate the real social conditions Goldsmith claims he is describing: the reader has the power only to respond with poetry herself.

Anthony King's *The Frequented Village*, dedicated to Goldsmith, responds in a similar manner. He idealizes rural life by picturing a thriving village as a model of the virtues readers should emulate. The poem praises the village simplicity, honesty, and work ethic, virtues that lead to tranquillity. Night is "When each a calm repose is sure to find, / The sweet possession of a peaceful mind" (7).<sup>21</sup> King, like Goldsmith, argues that the poor are never really poor, because they possess an emotional and physical security that others might envy:

Oh blest content, than which no genial flame,  
A fire so pleasing lights within the frame,  
Whose nurturing sweets a rich profusion lend,  
And healthful pleasures thro' the body send,  
Which tho' affliction opens her needy door,  
A mental treasure, never can be poor. (7)

Like Goldsmith's reviewers, King is concerned neither with village depopulation nor with advising readers to move to villages. More importantly, by describing

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<sup>21</sup> References cite page numbers because individual lines lack numbers.

this thriving community he devalues Goldsmith's claim that depopulation is a threat to the country. Readers need not assist stricken villagers but rather should keep the benefits of the city while emulating in their own lives the villagers' positive qualities:

And must we then from learning's crowded seat,  
From towering spires, and gilded domes retreat ...  
To seek refinement in an humble cell,  
Where erudition seldom shews her face,  
And ruder principles the taste debase ...  
Forbid it, taste, politeness, learning, shame,  
And Oh, forbid it, heaven-implanted fame;  
But rather let us emulation catch,  
And from the peasant, full perfection snatch;  
From city tumults, turn our greedy eye,  
And learn to live, as we would wish to die. (23-24)

The "village morals" hold primary importance: "Religion, justice, piety ... / And bounteous charity ... / sweet society, and love, / ... genuine honour" (24-5). The villagers themselves simply provide literary conduits for the ideals the city-dwellers might possess.

We might attribute King's view to his inability to do anything about depopulation—he was a Dublin lawyer—but such a situation suggests that as the desire for poetry to *produce*, or to offer something that the reader can do, meets authors and readers remote from public power, poetry becomes more and more engaged with gleaning spiritual virtues out of socially problematic subjects. King's poem ends with nationalism when it suggests that Goldsmith and Auburn have been sacrificed for the good of others, just as a military officer might be for his country:

So some tall monument, of letter'd fame,  
 Records a brave commander's deathless name,  
 Warns us, how many battles he has won,  
 And regions travell'd with the journeying sun,  
 With grief, the speaking monument we leave,  
 And wish to snatch the hero from the grave. (28)

This patriotic sacrifice idealizes the vacant village as a tragedy Goldsmith has turned, through his "page instructive, as harmonious found" (28), into a lesson for British citizens.

Robinson's *The Village Oppress'd* in a similar manner suggests an attempt to "save" the country peasants through perpetuating their lives in verse. One might argue that Goldsmith was fairly successful in his attempt to challenge readers to recognize that this part of the social culture was in danger of extinction. Readers view the peasants' disappearance as a loss to the country as a whole. Robinson's poem suggests, however, that the peasants were idealized because they represented the most attractive attributes of the upper and middle classes, without their accompanying vices.

*The Village Oppress'd* immediately suggests that character flaws have driven the country's economic changes, when the poem personifies particular vices in the opening lines:

Far from the noisy, bustling scenes of life,  
 Where Pride and Envy foster ceaseless strife,  
 Where Fashion, link'd with Folly hand in hand,  
 Bids countless vassals bow at her command. (1-4)<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> References are to line numbers.

The rustic no longer experiences pleasure since his acts are controlled by “power and frowning pride” (20), and “Avarice and Pride” have “torn” his own power from “his hand” (50-1). Pride comes into play again when for the sake of luxury, “proud Commerce ransacks foreign shores” (145).

In contrast to this destruction, the “rural scenes” described early connote peacefulness. The presence of the speaker is implied but the actions are general and so include the reader:

How it delights 'midst rural scenes to stray,  
Where varying Beauty paints the devious way,  
To saunter careless on the mountain's side,  
And view the smiling landscapes opening wide,  
Or stretch'd upon the bank, where, gliding near,  
The stream's soft murmurs greet the listening ear,  
The bliss of listless Indolence to know,  
Which Care's *wise* votaries *prudently* forego. (5-12).

The human actions in this passage, “stray,” “saunter,” “view,” and “stretch'd,” stress leisure, while the landscape has as many actions as the human: beauty “paints,” landscapes are “smiling” and “opening wide,” and the stream is “gliding” to “greet” the ear. The ideal here essentially describes aristocratic-type leisure, but a leisure the peasant used to have as well. In the past, the “joyful farmer” shared produce with the labourer, who maintained his “native freedom” and had “leisure which in sports he spent” (31-9).

Modern enclosures now create class conflict when “Ruin and indigence the wretch surround, / Nor more the friend is in the master found” (43-4). The representation of the past, in contrast, suggests class homogeneity or similarities. Not only did the peasant have aristocratic-type leisure, but he also had motivation for his labour that suggests the working middling classes:

Where the rewards which still were hoped at last?

Where the repose so oft he wish'd to share?

How are his prospects vanish'd into air! (56-8)

In the subsequent lines, the labourer's motivation closely resembles Goldsmith's speaker's in *The Deserted Village*, who had desired to return and impart his experiences to the villagers:

In grey old age, his heart estrang'd from crime,

Vainly he hoped to cheer the lingering time,

Beside the winter's hearth his tales to tell,

Reasoning from long experience passing well. (59-62)

Like Goldsmith's poet, the villagers should reap benefits from their labour or have some sort of limited power over their futures. Without that, their lives are slavery:

Why should they care to till th'extensive field,

Or gladly teach the barren glebe to yield?

What tho' their diligence should plenty bring;

For them no plenty is allow'd to spring. (223-6)

The emphasis on trade and luxury, the poet argues, harms the work itself when because the labourers lose their purpose, "long th' appointed task unfinish'd lies" (222).

The imagined readers need to have more power than the powerless rustics without being gluttons for power like those driven by "commerce." Moreover, they need to possess and cultivate the virtues of the peasants without the vices of those attempting to rise in status. The speaker specifically addresses the moderate landowners because they have the potential to span the various qualities of the classes:

Is there perchance some one of humble mind,

To sober life and industry inclin'd,  
 Whom changeful fortune has not yet bereft  
 Of a few roods his predecessors left.... (233-6)

This reader—more middle-class gentry than aristocratic—might through resistance maintain a particular way of life. The speaker addresses him with a didactic plea as the poem progresses towards its conclusion:

Oh thou whose evils from this cause [lost patrimony] arise,  
 Learn to neglect them, and be truly wise;  
 Forget what once thou wast, nor proudly strive  
 To keep thy little splendour yet alive. (249-52)

This life combines the ideal of leisure, when “Heaven meant not life should torture thee, but please” (260), with the preservation of tradition: “Such was the life our wise forefathers chose” when “Their wants were answer’d then with moderate care, / And half their days for pleasure could they spare” (263-4).

The final paragraph tempers this image of a leisure-class when it warns against a luxurious sloth, and so it reiterates the ideal of class moderation or the existence of a particular combination of power, labour, leisure, virtue, and feeling:

Ye thoughtless race, on Industry who prey,  
 And lounge in baneful sloth your hours away,  
 See Luxury’s influence to yourselves extends,  
 Nor barely with the suffering labourer ends;  
 Tempt not too far the flattering smiles of fate,  
 But check each vain pursuit, ere yet too late;  
 Stay not, neglecting sober Reason’s voice,  
 Till Ruin, near impending, leaves no choice;  
 Show Virtue still remains, and while ye heal



Want's toilsome miseries, show yourselves can feel. (271-80)

As in the other poems on the same theme, this ending offers specific behavioural guidance. Although the addressees are a "thoughtless race," they have not degenerated past the point of redemption and the ending advocates resistance more than reformation. In assuming that "Virtue still remains" in readers it addresses, the ending flatters readers with a picture of their potential, not their depravity.

The poem is dedicated, on the title page, to Goldsmith, and the preface portrays the work as a continuation of the *Deserted Village*. At first Robinson suggests contiguity of subject or parallel plans when he begins, "The following poem being on a subject similar to that on which you have lately distinguished yourself, I do not hesitate to offer you this dedication" (iii). But if Robinson did begin his literary plans before Goldsmith's poem was published, he shifted his poem's status to that of an addition before he published it. Because "the plan of that poem," he writes to Goldsmith, "prevented your following *Rustic Oppression* through all its branches, I have endeavoured to illustrate some of these, with the same views of yourself" (iv). These "same views," consequently, imply a poetic collaboration for the didactic improvement of a particular social group. The poet's purpose is "both of exposing luxury, and of convincing the rich, that as it is repugnant to benevolence, so likewise is it to their own interest, to harrass and oppress the poor" (v).

As Robinson's stance begins to indicate, the collaboration and community stressed in these poems becomes rather problematically borne out in the position of the author. Robinson obtains literary authority by comparing himself to an already accepted poem and poet, yet he needs also to distinguish his purpose enough to indicate his own originality. Those in literary circles knew that Johnson had helped Goldsmith with his poems, but in fact people

suspected that Johnson had written the whole of *The Traveller*. Reynolds recorded, “there was then an opinion about town that Dr. Johnson wrote the whole poem for his friend, who was then in a manner an unknown writer” (Hilles, *Portraits* 77), and he comments on Goldsmith’s personality that the “supposition that he did not write his own works had a great appearance of probability to those who knew him but superficially” (Hilles, *Portraits* 42). In one way these rumours indirectly praise Goldsmith for superior poetry, but what seems remarkable in terms of our twentieth-century ideas of the author function is that readers would assume that a writer (Johnson) would write two lengthy and probing poems and then simply let a friend publish them as his own.

Perhaps such a scenario was possible because the individuality or social centrality of the poet was not something that should be asserted. Barbauld’s tribute to the *Deserted Village* was first read to Goldsmith at a social gathering. William Shepherd’s narration of this event indicates a disapproval of authors self-centredly desiring praise. According to him, Goldsmith was

“at first highly delighted with the commendation thus bestowed upon him by a lady both young and fair, who, he averred, evinced in the poem just read considerable talent. But some of the party making an unwelcome diversion from his praise by warmly commending Miss Aikin’s poetry, his countenance fell, and gradually assumed an air of impatience, and at length he broke out in an angry disparagement of the youthful poetess’s composition.”  
(qtd. in Barbauld, *Poems* 240)

This anecdote suggests that for Goldsmith, Aikin holds value as a reader, responding to his work. As soon as she usurps the position as author, she diminishes his power in his eyes. In the perspective of the other observers,

however, his fear is peevish and ungenerous, and not befitting the character of an author.

The uneasy power relationship between author and readers is, finally, encapsulated by Anthony King's title pages. The second and third pages of the work contain two items. On the third page, the author elevates his own position by linking himself with Goldsmith: "The following poem is with much respect inscribed to Dr. Oliver Goldsmith, (in whose acquaintance he is personally honoured) by his much obliged, and very humble servant, the Author." The second page, however, before this deferential transference, exhibits the author's signature with the following advertisement: "The author the better to prevent surreptitious copies, entreats the indulgence of signing each book with the initials of his name in writing." The poetic collaboration implied by the dedication to another poet, then, applies strictly to a cultivated community and does not indicate a wider collaboration with all readers, who might capitalize financially on his work. At the same time, the purchaser of this particular book, with the author's initials, is incorporated into the select community because he or she has lawfully and respectfully (like the author himself) entered it.

The idea of poetry's "use-value," or its investment in future good for a community and not for the poet, becomes apparent in Pope's work and suggests that the "spiritual capitalism" critics have associated with Wordsworth begins much earlier although in an investment for social rather than individual benefits.<sup>23</sup> Colin Nicholson writes of the end of Pope's *Burlington Epistle*: "Aristocratic virtue and landed integrity combine in an

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<sup>23</sup> Mark Jones discusses the relation between material and spiritual capital and argues that Wordsworth parallels the two. "Tintern Abbey," for instance, in Jones's view "promotes a capitalism both material and spiritual" (54). As he explains, other critics have discussed the economics of and in Wordsworth's poetry.

investment morality of improvement within the established hierarchy of England's ancient order" (158). Indeed, the conclusion suggests a kind of collaborative investment. While Pope satirizes individual capitalistic money-making projects that corrupt individuals, he extols physical improvements designed to better the future of a group.

Goldsmith is writing within this tradition of self-conscious, collaborative, future-looking endings, and the conclusions to *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* similarly express self-consciousness and consider the future. They also consider the poem's usefulness in relation to the reader, or advise the reader on how to live. The endings speak to readers who lack legitimate political power and whose attempt to gain some of that power would disrupt the country's class system and, in Goldsmith's view, consequently destroy the country. Therefore, his poems focus on replacing material desires for luxury with spiritual and emotional satisfactions, and encouraging control of power and happiness within the family and local community rather than abroad.

Goldsmith's collaboration with Johnson reproduces in the literary community the ideals of the communal villagers—a cooperation so complete that one cannot distinguish individual contributions. Then, the conditions prized in the poem are reproduced by the actions of readers themselves who have responded with the sympathy, identification, and motivation that the endings solicit but who either do not agree with the economic complaints or do not hold the social power to alleviate them. What becomes reproduced and maintained, consequently, are not traditional farming techniques but writing ones, when economic arguments become transactions with real readers to idealize the poem itself. Goldsmith elsewhere humorously suggests that physical circumstances limit writers' themes. In the Preface to his collected essays (1765), he writes, "I could have made them [the essays] more metaphysical ...

but I would ask whether in a short essay it is not necessary to be superficial?  
Before we have prepared to enter into the depths of a subject, in the usual  
forms, we have got to the bottom of our scanty page" (2).

## Chapter Three

### Changing *Things as They Are*: Humphry Repton and the Reception of *Caleb Williams*

Whereas Goldsmith's two major poems lacked endings, William Godwin's 1794 *Things as They Are; or the Adventures of Caleb Williams* proliferates with endings. As Godwin was completing the novel in early May 1794, he rejected his original conclusion in which Caleb fails to overthrow Falkland's power and wrote a new ending in which Falkland confesses his crimes. Since D. Gilbert Dumas discovered the original manuscript ending in 1966, there have been multiple discussions of the role of both endings in the novel's intentions and effects. There also exists a third ending to *Caleb Williams*, one lacking authorial approval. Humphry Repton, landscape gardener, father, and friend of Anna Seward, responded to the novel in 1798 by writing an outline for a "fourth volume" that continues Caleb's life and reinterprets Falkland's.

Central to most discussions of the novel have been the roles of psychology and politics, which many agree are for Godwin inseparable. David McCracken writes that "Godwin the philosopher and Godwin the novelist were allies, not antagonists" ("Literary" 133); Mitzi Myers describes the "unusual accomplishment in reconciling philosophy and fiction and uniting the understanding and the imagination" (595); and Gary Kelly argues that the "novel's chief excellence" is the "balance between psychological interest and English Jacobin social criticism" (180). Kenneth Graham pronounces, "Our experience of the novel's power suggests that imagination and philosophy are

in harmony, not in conflict" ("Narrative" 219).<sup>1</sup> The importance of philosophy to *Caleb Williams* merely mirrors, in fact, the relevance of psychology to *Political Justice*. Even a cursory look at the philosophical treatise reveals that the evaluation of character marked the origins and impetus for Godwin's political analysis.<sup>2</sup> Although several critics have analyzed the role of psychology and politics in the novel's endings, fewer have examined the corresponding effects on the reader and the different intended audiences that each ending projects. Repton's response offers an opportunity to compare these effects with an undiscussed contemporary reader's reaction. Godwin's original title, "Things as They Are," might seem to privilege mimesis over didacticism, but in fact the novel's purpose was rhetorically and aesthetically to persuade the audience that social change was necessary. Repton's "fourth volume" and other reactions to the novel demonstrate the gentlemanly conversation that Godwin wished to inspire, but they show both the benefits and the problems arising from that metafictional model.

In a manner reminiscent of Richardson's attitude towards audiences, *Caleb Williams* offers a pessimistic view of the writer-reader relationship. Audiences, crowds, and "men" as a category are shown to be easily manipulated and judgmental, and people often perform only as groups, acting and thinking with a single focus. The young Falkland, who believes in honest and open public relations, tells Tyrrel that he will be publicly, unequivocally

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<sup>1</sup> Many other critics, however, frame arguments by privileging either politics or psychology. Dumas sees the manuscript ending and the published conclusion demonstrating a controversy between politics and imagination. He reads the original ending as conforming more faithfully to Godwin's political argument and argues that the "rewritten ending in effect almost transforms *CW* into a novel of 'things as they ought to be,' undercutting the severity of Godwin's view of "Things as They Are" (584). Robert Uphaus writes, alternatively, that the novel "may be read to some extent as an analysis of the corrupting influences of social and political institutions, but such a reading is unable to account for the compelling psychological reverberations" (123).

<sup>2</sup> Much of the first half of the text, in particular, outlines the "characters of men," their "voluntary actions," their "right of private judgment" and so on.

condemned for mistreating the Hawkinses: “society casts you out .... You will live deserted in the midst of your species; you will go into crowded societies, and no one will deign so much as to salute you” (1:133).<sup>3</sup> When Tyrrel decides to enter a public assembly after the death of Emily Melville, he demands that people not judge him for concerns that are private: he expects that “nobody there would be ignorant and raw enough to meddle with what was no business of theirs, and intrude into the concerns of any man’s private family” (1:261). For Falkland, on the other hand, all things are part of one’s reputation. Tyrrel tells Falkland that the company is not the “time and place” for Falkland to accuse him, but Falkland disagrees and refers to “mankind” as a unified force: “You are mistaken, sir. This public scene is the only place where I can have any thing to say to you. If you would not hear the universal indignation of mankind, you must not come into the society of men” (1:263).

The public in this scenario is controlled through its conformity. Early in the novel the figure of the crowd is an indecisive group that asks for leadership. When Tyrrel addresses an assembly of men he commands their attention and unnerves their opinions: “The whole company were astonished. They felt the same abhorrence and condemnation of his character; but they could not help admiring the courage and resources he displayed upon the present occasion. They could without difficulty have concentrated afresh their indignant feelings, but they seemed to want a leader” (1:261-2). Falkland arrives to provide that leadership, and his control of the situation becomes symbolic of his later control of public opinion towards Caleb. Later in the novel, in a conversation

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<sup>3</sup> All references to *Caleb Williams* are to the second edition, unless otherwise stated. Repton had borrowed Anna Seward’s copy of the novel, which according to an 1860 *Notes and Queries* was the second edition. In May 1809 Edward Sneyd bought a second edition of *Caleb Williams* at the sale of the late Anna Seward. He recorded his purchase on the inside of the cover, and she had signed her novel on the title page (Bates 219). References to the manuscript ending of the novel refer to Appendix I of McCracken’s edition of *Caleb Williams*, and citations of changes made to the novel’s third edition cite McCracken as well.



with Falkland, Caleb describes people's desire for leadership in ways with which Falkland completely agrees. Caleb comments, "The world was made for men of sense to do what they will with it. Its affairs cannot be better than in the direction of the genuine heroes; and, as in the end they will be found the truest friends of the whole, so the multitude have nothing to do, but to look on, be fashioned and admire" (2:34). Although Marilyn Butler reads this passage as Caleb reinforcing Falkland's aristocratic, but misguided, beliefs ("Godwin" 247), its opinion about the multitude has been demonstrated in other ways throughout the novel. In other words, Falkland's beliefs, though misguided, nevertheless represent "things as they are." Forester similarly remarks on the instability of public opinion when Caleb awaits being charged with robbery. Forester explains, "I am indifferent myself about the good opinion of others. It is what the world bestows and retracts with so little thought, that it is impossible to make any account of its decisions" (2:162).

During Caleb's repeated flights—particularly after widespread circulation of the half-penny pamphlet *Most Wonderful and Surprising History, And Miraculous Adventures of Caleb Williams*—he feels as though the world as a group opposes him. Raymond asks the other thieves if they can refuse their protection to one "against whom the whole species is in arms" (3:51). Caleb, disguised as a beggar and on his way to London, thinks, "I could almost have imagined that I was the sole subject of general attention, and that the whole world was in arms to exterminate me" (3:91). After being drenched in a storm he laments, "All men desert me. All men hate me. ... Accursed world! that hates without a cause .... dead to every manly sympathy; with eyes of horn, and hearts of steel!" (3:130). He tells Falkland's servant Thomas that Falkland has contrived for him "the ill opinion and enmity of all mankind" (3:220).

This pessimism about audiences leads Caleb to direct his narrative to posterity. But posterity does not indicate a far-distant future as much as an imaginary alternative to the other audiences represented in the novel. Caleb establishes this distinction when the novel opens. He writes with “a desire to divert my mind from the deplorableness of my situation, and a faint idea that posterity may by their means be induced to render me a justice which my contemporaries refuse” (1:2). He is vague here about the “means” posterity might have, yet he is constant in implying that both his “contemporaries” and “posterity” are groups of individuals that act with a single purpose.

At the same time that Caleb despairs about audiences he encounters, however, either he or the people rejecting him provide reasons for their conduct. His fellow servants respond to his predicament according to their attitudes towards theft and their respect for benevolent authority: “The robbery of which I was accused appeared to them atrocious from its magnitude, and whatever sparks of compassion might otherwise have sprung up in their ingenuous and undisciplined minds, were totally obliterated by indignation at my supposed profligacy in recriminating upon their worthy and excellent master” (2:198-9). Furthermore, both the servant Thomas and Falkland’s brother Forester invoke the deceptiveness of appearances (the problem with Richardson’s *Lovelace*) to explain Caleb’s conduct and their refusal to regard him further. Thomas tells Caleb, “For your sake, lad, I will never take any body’s word, nor trust to appearances, thof it should be an angel. Lord bless us! how smoothly you palavered it over, for all the world as if you had been as fair as a new-born babe! But it will not do; you will never be able to persuade people that black is white. For my own part I have done with you” (2:200-1). This black-and-white interpretation of character, and the idea that vice pervades the entire individual, affects Forester as well. While Caleb expresses a naive confidence in

reputation and attitude attesting to his innocence, Forester relies on “plain and incontrovertible facts” (2:193) without realizing that those facts do not exist independently of complicated causes. Despite Caleb’s “exterior of innocence” (2:193), Forester calls him “this serpent, this monster of ingratitude” (2:195). The old man guarding Caleb for the bounty hunters refuses to hear him once he discovers his name, because his mind is already determined on his guilt (3:120-21). Moreover, Collins refuses to hear Caleb near the end of the novel because he considers Falkland’s character as fixed while the young Caleb’s could have turned either to good or bad: “I have known you a promising boy, whose character might turn to one side or the other as events should decide. I have known Mr. Falkland in his maturer years, and have always admired him as the living model of liberality and goodness” (3:265).

When Godwin revised the novel for the 1797 third edition he elaborated on motivations behind character prejudice. In an added passage, Caleb speculates that Spurrel’s motive for betraying him was “an incitement too powerful for him to resist” (McCracken 273), an incitement produced by remembrance of his son’s death and fear of repeating that suffering. He “was driven by a sort of implicit impulse, for the sake of avoiding one ungenerous action, to take refuge in another, the basest and most diabolical” (McCracken 273). This description suggests the necessity of human actions—impelled by experience. The story of Laura Denison, also added in the third edition, stresses the strength of prepossession when Laura is too accustomed to the name of Falkland being “a denomination ... for the most exalted of mortals, the wisest and most generous of men” (McCracken 300) to contemplate Caleb’s innocence. She, like Forester and Thomas, believes in extremes of evil and good and trusts in providence to reveal them. She tells Caleb that the “good man and the bad, are characters precisely opposite, not characters distinguished

from each other by imperceptible shades. The Providence that rules us all, has not permitted us to be left without a clue in the most important of all questions. Eloquence may seek to confound it; but it shall be my care to avoid its deceptive influence" (McCracken 299-300). Following this rejection Caleb decides to re-accuse Falkland after he concludes, "In encountering the prejudices that were thus armed against me, I should have to deal with a variety of dispositions, and, though I might succeed with some, I could not expect to succeed with all" (McCracken 302).

These additions to the novel imply that Godwin wanted to further emphasize the force of education and habit. Even those characters Caleb "succeeds with" are predisposed to their reactions. Of the soldier Brightwel Caleb writes, he "examined it [Caleb's story] with sincere impartiality; and, if at first any doubt remained upon his mind, a frequent observation of me in my most unguarded moments taught him in no long time to place an unreserved confidence in my innocence" (2:245). But Brightwel can sympathize because of his own past experience. Caleb continues immediately, "He talked of the injustice of which we were mutual victims without bitterness" (2:245). Similarly, for Raymond, Caleb's situation presents new evidence of a situation in which he already believed. Caleb explains, "He listened to my story with eagerness, and commented on the several parts as I related them. He said that this was only one fresh instance of the tyranny and perfidiousness exercised by the powerful members of the community against those who were less privileged than themselves" (3:39). Mrs. Marney helps Caleb in London because she does not know his real identity and because she "was sincere and ardent in her attachments, and never did she omit a service which she perceived herself able to render to a human being" (3:144). Later, when Caleb considers bringing an accusation against Gines, he recognizes the force of prior

inclination: "This story had succeeded with persons already prepossessed in my favour by personal intercourse; but could it succeed with strangers?" (3:256).

Characters in the novel, then, repeatedly demonstrate the doctrine of necessity, which sees subjects as produced by social forces. Graham writes, "None of the characters is evil in any simple sense of the word. All are passive, acted upon by psychological Necessity and caught up in chains of circumstances, so that it is impossible for them to act otherwise" (*Politics* 128). Godwin writes in *Political Justice* that

the characters of men are determined in all their most essential circumstances by education. By education in this place I would be understood to convey the most comprehensive sense that can possibly be annexed to that word, including every incident that produces an idea in the mind, and can give birth to a train of reflections. (1:45)

But necessity did not eliminate potential improvement. In the next chapter he advises, "In our speculative opinions and our practical principles we should never consider the book of enquiry as shut" (1:69).

While the narrative characters remain locked in their author-created world of representation, readers of the novel might be capable of the change promoted by this "book of enquiry." Recent criticism has identified the pessimism about audience in *Caleb Williams* and suggested that Godwin consequently did not expect to change his contemporaries. New publishing practices and wider audiences at the end of the eighteenth century promoted readership among the lower classes (Sullivan 331; Klancher 27), and while some of Godwin's assertions in *Political Justice* imply that he would welcome such a change to class readership, Sullivan argues that his "conception of texts and the audiences they engender is more in line with Addison and Steele than

with *Hog's Wash or Pig's Meat*" (332). Sullivan refers to the half-penny pamphlet in the novel, which perpetuates lies rather than truth, and he analyzes the thieves' reactions to the handbill offering a reward for Caleb's arrest. Both Leaver and Sullivan argue that Caleb's appeal to posterity occurs because of Godwin's mistrust of contemporary print culture, and for Tilottama Rajan, similarly, the novel is "a memoir addressed to a future reader by someone who has himself tried to correct past misreadings of the truth" (168). Leaver writes, "Godwin's discomfort with the material terms of literary practice—including mass production and large, fragmented reading audiences—is reflected in *Caleb Williams*, a novel that attempts to alter these processes even as it participates in them" (609). Caleb's early appeals to posterity, however, do not necessarily reflect Godwin's intended audience for the novel, and the narrative strategies can be re-examined to pinpoint more precisely the reader he envisioned.<sup>4</sup>

Most obvious are strategies to increase the reader's emotional involvement and interest. The 1794 *Critical Review* article comments, "so fascinating is the narrative, that few readers will have sufficient coolness to lay down the book before they have concluded it" (291). In fact, although Caleb blames himself at the end of the novel for his incessant curiosity, curiosity is an integral part of the novel's power over the reader. Uphaus writes that Caleb's instinctive curiosity "is not only necessary as a narrative device for providing interest and momentum; it is a psychological attribute by which the

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<sup>4</sup> Graham outlines four distinct narrative moments in the novel: the events before Caleb's departure from Wales, those after the meeting with Collins, those after the meeting with Gines, and the postscript. Graham notes different purposes in each section, with Caleb shifting between "testimony, memoir, adventure and *Bildungsroman*" (*Politics* 85). These purposes shift the intended reader somewhat, but they can describe different aspects of a contemporary reader—one influenced by both reason and emotion—rather than different readers themselves, and my concern lies with the reader as projected, finally, by the novel's ending(s).

reader is lured into reenacting Caleb's mental processes" (127). In explicit productions of suspense, one early chapter's opening paragraph ends, "all that remains is rapid and tremendous. The death-dealing mischief advances with an accelerated motion, appearing to defy human wisdom and human strength to obstruct its operation" (1:100). Some chapters use cliffhanger endings such as, "Such reasoning will no doubt be generally found sufficiently solid, and it appeared to Mr. Falkland perfectly applicable to the present case. But he was mistaken" (1:218). The story only exists because Collins's description of Falkland "strongly tended to inflame [Caleb's] curiosity, and [he] requested him to enter into a more copious explanation" (1:18). Much later in the novel, Caleb's curiosity allows him to discover why his neighbours have changed their attitudes towards him. The reader also wants to discover the truth when Caleb finds a possible answer: "Here, as I looked round, my eyes accidentally glanced upon a paper lying in one corner, which, by some association I was unable to explain, roused in me a strong sensation of suspicion and curiosity" (3:244). Although curiosity impels one to seek knowledge, discovering answers does not bring closure. After Caleb discovers that the half-penny pamphlet has appeared in his village, he still does not know his future. He explains, "This discovery at once cleared up all the mystery that had hung upon my late transactions" (3:244), but then he continues, "Was there no hope that remained for me? Was acquittal useless? ...." (3:245).

The lack of closure simply enhances Caleb's position as a questioning reader. After concluding Collins's story he explains, "At first I was satisfied with thus considering every incident in its obvious sense. But the story I had heard was for ever in my thoughts, and I was peculiarly interested to comprehend its full import. I turned it a thousand ways, and examined it in every point of view" (2:3). He frequently asks interpretive questions. After he

receives money from Thomas, apparently from Falkland, he inquires, “What was I to infer? What light did it throw upon the intentions of my inexorable persecutor?” (3:222) and later “Was I to receive the money which had just been put into my hands? ... (3:222). Even when Caleb resolves this dilemma at the end of the chapter he expresses his resolution in rhetorical questions.

In Godwin’s other writings curiosity is a positive attribute. Uphaus argues that in “Caleb’s world secrets must become public, not merely to satisfy his curiosity, but to defend his obsessive attachment to the idea that all human activity is rationally accessible and that all human problems are soluble” (126). Uphaus does not acknowledge here that he is effectively describing Godwin, who attempts in *Political Justice* precisely to move towards rationally explaining human activity. Burke begins his *Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* by describing curiosity as the “first and the simplest emotion which we discover in the human mind” and yet the “most superficial of all the affections; it changes its object perpetually” (31). According to Burke, although curiosity is superficial, it leads to all the other experiences: “Some degree of novelty must be one of the materials in every instrument which works upon the mind; and curiosity blends itself more or less with all our passions” (31). Godwin shares the idea of curiosity as an impetus. In “Of Choice in Reading” from *The Enquirer* he argues against parents censoring their children’s reading because curiosity “is one of the strongest impulses of the human heart” (131). When he considers that many feel that curiosity should be tamed he responds, “is this any thing more than saying in other words, that the finest springs of the human mind may be broken...?” (“Choice” 131). As a stimulus, it leads one to philosophical speculation. In book six of *Political Justice* Godwin argues that perfectibility of understanding will be secured in posterity by “incessant industry, by a curiosity never to be



disheartened or fatigued, by a spirit of enquiry to which a philanthropic mind will allow no pause" (2:231).

In the first and second editions of *Caleb Williams* Caleb early refers to his curiosity: "in my new residence I was excited by every motive of interest and curiosity to study my master's character, and I found in it an ample field for speculation and conjecture" (1st ed. 1:8; 2nd ed. 1:9). But for the third edition Godwin added a passage that links this curiosity with philosophy. Curiosity makes Caleb "sort of a natural philosopher" (McCracken 4), and his curiosity is refined. Interested not in "village anecdotes and scandal," his "*imagination must be excited*" (McCracken 4; my emphasis). Godwin seems to have been concerned with clarifying curiosity's lofty purpose: Caleb's inquisitiveness can lead to philosophical speculation.

When the novel invokes readers' curiosity as well, it helps prompt them toward the philosophical enquiry that Godwin wanted to foster. Godwin's treatment of Falkland's mysterious trunk strengthens this suggestion. In attempting to conclude the questions of his narrative, Caleb speculates that the trunk contains "a faithful narrative of that and its concomitant transactions, written by Mr. Falkland, and reserved in case of the worst, that, if by any unforeseen event his guilt should come to be fully disclosed, it might contribute to redeem the wreck of his reputation" (3:282). Because Caleb never discovers this narrative (or the real contents of the trunk), his story rests in its place, and the substitution seems to be Godwin's move to channel reader curiosity into consideration of the novel itself: "If Falkland shall never be detected to the satisfaction of the world, such a narrative will probably never see the light. In that case this story of mine may amply, severely perhaps, supply its place" (3:283).

Considered as a description of social conditions, then, the representation of prejudiced audiences in *Caleb Williams* pessimistically marks contemporary audiences as both unwilling and unable to respond to new ideas. Considered as a dialogue with these contemporary audiences, however, the novel self-consciously highlights potential biases and rejections. The identification of particular prejudices that influence people invites readers to perform self-analyses or to realize that they and those around them hold deep-seated ideas that influence their reactions. Caleb's own introspection and constant analysis of events provide a model for what readers were similarly to do, and the trunk motif suggests that closure involves a circular process of reading and re-reading. An enigma requires a solution, but here the "answers" appear in an analysis of society—with all the complexities that that word contains—itsself.

The conclusion to the novel is significant here as well, because it too offers a retelling of events. Both the manuscript ending and the published one condense versions of the story that has occupied the previous two volumes. Caleb accuses Falkland before an "audience ... at the house of the magistrate" (3:290) consisting of "several gentlemen and others selected for the purpose, the plan being, in some respects as in the former instance, to find a medium between the suspicious air of a private examination, and the indelicacy, as it was styled, of an examination exposed to the remark of every accidental spectator" (3:290-91). Caleb's purposes for accusing Falkland vary. He explains that he alternately saw it as "just revenge ... necessary self-defence, or as that which in an impartial and philanthropical estimate included the smallest evil" (3: 288). He also desires an ending, preferring any outcome to "a state of uncertainty" (3:289). The trial metaphor mimics the novel itself, with

a story being told to an audience of miscellaneous hearers.<sup>5</sup> The implication is that although readers of the novel know this story already, they have not heard it outlined from Caleb's fresh perspective of sorrow and repentance. But the mere reiteration of the story emphasizes the theme of repetition that has already arisen with the trunk motif. Caleb demonstrates the perpetual self-analysis and re-analysis that Godwin considered necessary for self and social improvement.

Despite the number of listeners, the success of Caleb's speech depends on Falkland, because he alone can verify the truth of the accusation. In the manuscript version, Caleb fails to move Falkland or his hearers. The "trial" ends in failure and Caleb finds himself imprisoned by Gines (then named Jones) and then apparently drugged. In this conclusion, Caleb loses altogether the powers of reason and speech that allowed him to tell his story. He considers when first imprisoned, "By what strange cause it has happened that under the discipline of this man I have ever recovered any portion of reason, I am unable to pronounce," and "I am subject to wanderings in which the imagination seems to refuse to obey the curb of judgment" (McCracken 332). In Postscript number two, consequently, he rambles like a disturbed Clarissa or Ophelia: "Once I had an enemy—oh! two or three enemies!—and they drove me about, and menaced me, and tormented me!—and now nobody disturbs me—I am so quiet..." (McCracken 333). This conclusion ends with Caleb's sense of identity disintegrating. He loses coherent consciousness and fancies himself "a stone—a GRAVE-STONE" (McCracken 334), and he ends by reciting his epitaph: "HERE LIES WHAT WAS ONCE A MAN!" (McCracken 334).

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<sup>5</sup> The published conclusion narrates Caleb's entire retelling, while the manuscript merely summarizes it. But Godwin might have revised the manuscript ending had he retained it.

The published conclusion is decidedly more optimistic than this rambling degeneration of the narrative voice itself. Falkland's verification of Caleb's truth provides a more satisfactory idea of justice done than the manuscript offers, despite the fact that Caleb still suffers by now considering himself a murderer. In fact, his self-doubt here causes a similar breakdown to the manuscript ending. Because his life has been defined by Falkland, Caleb now lacks all identity, and the novel concludes with his declaring, "I have now no character that I wish to vindicate" (3:312). His guilt furthers the circularity of the narrative. Just as the trunk is said to contain a narrative like the novel itself, and just as the postscript contains a retelling of the novel, Caleb resolves at the end to think only of Falkland or, in other words, to continue to live within the narrative that Falkland helped produce: "Falkland, I will think only of thee, and from that thought will draw ever-fresh nourishment for my sorrows!" (3:310). While the lack of identity in the manuscript ending produces narrative incoherence—he is no longer capable of telling a story—the disintegration in the published ending produces a compulsion to repeat the same story again and again.

Critical readings of the ending often take Caleb's self-incriminations as verification of his own responsibility for the tragedy, and read his condemnation of various actions (his curiosity, his failure to converse privately with Falkland) as morals for the novel.<sup>6</sup> But it is difficult to accept these final comments as moral statements because each assertion is problematic. Caleb sees the

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<sup>6</sup> Leaver argues that the end of the novel promotes conversation as the impetus to political change. She argues that Godwin "characterizes mass forms like the penny-dreadful and the 'romance' negatively and insistently presents *Caleb Williams* as a private conversation between an individual reader and the text" (591). The metaphor of novel as conversation appears in *Tristram Shandy*, as John Preston points out (5), as well as in other eighteenth-century texts. While Godwin does privilege conversation, that conversation should occur—I will argue later in agreement with Sullivan's position—between readers themselves (as "gentlemen"), rather than between a single reader and the text.

conclusion as ironic when he exclaims, "It was fit that he should praise my patience, who has fallen a victim, life and fame, to my precipitation!" (3:309). Yet Caleb, accusing himself of haste, is pursued for over ten years before he decides to take action. Furthermore, he blames himself for being a murderer, but Falkland's health has deteriorated throughout the novel and he is close to death before Caleb states his accusation. As Falkland enters the trial room Caleb notes that his body "was now the appearance of a corpse" (3:291) and he "seemed not to have three hours to live" (3:292). Although Caleb is disconsolate because his solution is inappropriate, no alternative solution is satisfactory. He regrets not having talked to Falkland privately (3:303), but Dumas notes that he "did try to open his heart to Falkland; indeed Caleb in expressing such regret contradicts his assertion, stated only a moment before, that 'the restless and jealous anxiety of Mr. Falkland would not permit him to repose the least atom of confidence'" (591). Finally, Falkland contradicts Caleb's judgement of himself when he tells him, "your heroism, your patience and your virtues will be for ever admired" (3:308).

Because of these problems, Caleb's own moral summaries and his status of being correct or incorrect, I would argue, are less important than the attitude of self-examination that he demonstrates, an attitude important if readers might imitate him. Godwin seems to anticipate some degree of reader imitation because Caleb embodies certain attitudes he considered beneficial. In addition to curiosity, Caleb's central trait, Godwin advocates in *Political Justice* the power of sincerity. The 1793 version considers sincerity equivalent to honesty, and advocates the avoidance of secrets: "How extensive an effect would be produced, if every man were sure of meeting in his neighbour the ingenuous censor, who would tell to himself, and publish to the world, his

virtues, his good deeds, his meannesses and his follies?" (3:292).<sup>7</sup> The potential benefits of such disclosure would be extensive. He considers, "Nor is it possible to say how much good one man sufficiently rigid in his adherence to truth would effect. One such man, with genius, information and energy, might redeem a nation from vice" (3:292). Godwin's descriptions here fit Caleb's pursuit of sincerity and truth, and Caleb demonstrates *Political Justice's* claim that from the "consequence to myself of telling every man the truth .... I should acquire a fortitude that would render me equal to the most trying situations, that would maintain my presence of mind entire in spite of unexpected occurrences, that would furnish me with extemporary arguments and wisdom, and endue my tongue with irresistible eloquence" (3:292). Reason and emotion are inseparable here, when sincerity combines "truth" with passion. Godwin continues that one's neighbour's benefit motivates sincerity, because "with such a motive it is impossible I should not seek to communicate it in the most efficacious form, not rousing his resentment, but awakening his moral feelings and his energy" (3:293). Caleb's sympathy for Falkland is the aspect that moves his audience most, when every one is "melted into tears" and "could not resist the ardour" with which Caleb praised Falkland (3:305). Although Falkland originally suspects manipulation in Caleb's speech, eventually, Caleb explains, "He saw my sincerity; he was penetrated with my grief and compunction" (3:307).

When Caleb describes his movement towards the final trial as feeling "as if impelled by an unconquerable necessity" (3:289), he suggests that his actions and very identity have been formed by his circumstances. Falkland, too, has been a product of his obsessions, and he dies because "as reputation

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<sup>7</sup> Although Godwin revised the chapter on sincerity after the 1793 *Political Justice*, his basic tenets remained the same.

was the blood that warmed [his] heart, so .... death and infamy must seize [him] together" (3:308-9). The reader is left, finally, with the sense that influences from much earlier have led to this catastrophe. Caleb refers to Falkland's early life, to the "poison of chivalry" (3:311) that corrupted him. Caleb's comments suggest that readers are to look for causes of the tragic ending and see the characters as products of a series of errors. As Pamela Clemit notes, for Godwin it is "this move beyond the study of inner states to explore historical causes that opens up the possibility of reform" (49). Clemit points to the unpublished essay "Of History and Romance," where Godwin argues that the writer of romance "is to be considered as the writer of real history" because:

True history consists in a delineation of consistent, human character, in a display of the manner in which such a character acts under successive circumstances, in showing how character increases and assimilates new substances to its own, and how it decays, together with the catastrophe into which by its own gravity it naturally declines. (Godwin, "History" 301)

It is not only late in Godwin's career that this focus on psychology and motivation appears. Not only is it an inherent aspect of both *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*, but it informs the characterization of *Italian Letters* (1784), written for profit long before Godwin was writing his political philosophy.<sup>8</sup> The true examination of the individual focuses on the forces that

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<sup>8</sup> The blackest character in *Italian Letters* is the Marquis of San Severino, whose corrupt advice prompts the Marquis of Pescara to ruin himself and the others. Yet the novel focuses not on him, but on the originally good characters who are either betrayed (Count de St. Julian), deceived (Matilda), or corrupted (Marquis of Pescara). Furthermore, the characters themselves discuss motivations. The opening letter not only foreshadows future events but indicates the susceptibility of personality to influence when the Count de St. Julian tells Rinaldo (Marquis of Pescara), "you are full of the ardour of youth, ... you are generous and unsuspecting, and ... the happy gaiety of your disposition sometimes engages you with associates, that would abuse your confidence and betray your honour" (4).

have made him what he is, and the ending to *Caleb Williams* invites readers to consider character as a complex response to social influences.

The changes to the ending ensure that readers are left sympathetic enough to both characters that they view their actions as produced by error, and Falkland's repentance and death allow the reader to feel a sympathy for him that has not been felt during his persecution of Caleb. In the 1832 account of the composition of *Caleb Williams*, published in the preface to *Fleetwood: or, the New Man of Feeling*, Godwin described the importance of making Falkland an admirable character. As Myers points out, his first plan for the novel centred on Caleb as fugitive (596). But as he sketched out the three volumes, he became aware of Falkland's importance to audience response. He explains that he deliberately made Falkland's character admirable, so that his figure was tragic or "so that his being driven to the first act of murder should be judged worthy of the deepest regret, and should be seen in some measure to have arisen out of his virtues themselves" (*Fleetwood* viii).

This desire to create a tragic hero, yet a hero whose "fate" impelling him consists of Godwinian necessity, is reflected in the changes to the ending. Although the manuscript version ends calamitously, many read this conclusion as melodrama. Uphaus writes that the original conclusion "keeps the novel on the level of political melodrama, with Caleb as victim, and with the reader left hearing only Caleb's 'truth'" (132). Dumas suggests that the published ending "represents an effort to raise the novel from the level of propaganda and sensation to the heights of tragedy" (594) (he regrets this attempt by Godwin). The manuscript ending, although it presents Caleb's decay, does not achieve the sense of a life wasted that the published ending highlights. The published ending mourns Falkland as a loss to society: "Falkland! thou enteredst upon thy career with the purest and most laudable intentions" (3:311).



Deliberately making Falkland's character admirable indicates that Godwin expected readers to react towards Falkland in a similar manner to characters in the novel. After Falkland's original trial for the murder of Tyrrel, he receives overwhelming support:

"It was a sort of sympathetic feeling that took hold upon all ranks and degrees. The multitude received him with huzzas, they took his horses from his carriage, dragged him in triumph, and attended him many miles in his return to his own habitation. It seemed as if a public examination upon a criminal charge, which had hitherto been considered in every event as a brand of disgrace, was converted in the present instance into an occasion of enthusiastic adoration and unexampled honour."

(1:287-8)

Dumas indirectly identifies the historical basis for this admiration because he implies that twentieth-century readers would no longer view Falkland as the novel's most tragic figure. He sees Caleb as soliciting sympathy when he argues that the first ending's "tragic theme, the utter reduction by a hostile society of a human being of considerable potential, has come to seem more poignant and 'modern' than tales which relate how the mighty have fallen" (595). Butler points out that the admiration for Falkland results from a narrative that cultivates it:

Falkland exercises a powerful spell over everyone in the world of the novel, as a hero, a 'beneficent divinity', a human being of special value. Unfortunately, he has also exercised it over most critics, who continue to write of Falkland's greatness and attractiveness as though these were objectively established

rather than obliquely reflected in the unreliable narrations of Collins and of Caleb. ("Godwin" 248)

The rewritten conclusion asserts the preeminence of Falkland when Caleb retracts his address to posterity and speaks directly to Falkland and his contemporaries. As Sullivan notes, Caleb uses "thy" at the end of the novel in a direct address to Falkland (Sullivan 335). He retracts his former reason for writing—"I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate" (3:312)—and replaces it with the intention of telling Falkland's story. He registers his basic mistrust of the world, the idea that people will not independently seek out the truth, when he concludes that he writes so that gossip should not misrepresent events and motivations. The novel ends, "I will finish them [Falkland's memoirs] that thy story may be fully understood; and that, if those errors of thy life be known which thou so ardently desiredst to conceal, the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale" (3:312). The audience Caleb finally projects is not posterity, but "the world" that might hear the stories anyway, or in other words, his contemporaries, and Falkland as auditor represents a gentlemanly reader involved in the situations the narrative enacts rather than the reader as detached or future spectator.

Falkland's class in itself—because it gave him respect and power to perform benevolent action—provided him with an appeal to many late eighteenth-century readers that Caleb as a lower-class figure lacked. Mary Shelley wrote of probable class-based reactions to the novel: "those in the lower classes saw their cause espoused, & their oppressors forcibly & eloquently delineated—while those of higher rank acknowledged & felt the nobleness, sensibility & errors of Falkland with deepest sympathy" (Marshall

154).<sup>9</sup> Contemporary reactions verify that Falkland's status did translate to historical readers. The *Critical Review* describes the plot as revolving around Falkland and Tyrrel and does not even mention Caleb. Falkland is "externally amiable, but is internally directed, not by true principle, but by that very equivocal motive to virtue, the love of fame" (290). Hazlitt's preference for Falkland over Caleb is striking. In his review of *Cloudesley*, April 1830, he says, "what an elevation and what a fall was that of Falkland;—how we felt for his blighted hopes, his remorse, and despair" (16:393). Later in the review, after discussing *St. Leon* he summarizes the appeal of *Caleb Williams* by focusing on Falkland: "We give the decided preference to Caleb Williams over St. Leon.... In the suffering and dying Falkland, we feel the heart-strings of our human being break" (Hazlitt 16:407). Hazlitt suggests reader identification with Falkland, combined with an admiration and pity that make his figure tragic. Falkland embodies, "in the finest possible manner," the "romantic and chivalrous principle of the love of personal fame," Hazlitt writes in the *Spirit of the Age* (11:24). Later in this review Falkland, not Caleb, is described as the victimized and suffering character when the "hapless but noble-minded Falkland at length falls a martyr to the persecution of that morbid and overpowering interest, of which his mingled virtues and vices have rendered him the object" (11:24).

Godwin elsewhere wrote of the importance of triggering this kind of sympathetic reception. An author's highest purpose is to inspire the reader with emotional impulses to thought and improvement. He praises those writers

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<sup>9</sup> Sullivan quotes this passage (337).

who have a talent to “create a soul under the ribs of death” [Milton]; whose composition is fraught with irresistible enchantment; who pour their whole souls into mine, and raise me as it were to the seventh heaven; who furnish me with “food for contemplation even to madness” [Rowe]; who raise my ambition, expand my faculties, invigorate my resolutions, and seem to double my existence. (“Choice” 139-40)

He argues that good authors extend an influence very broad when he suggests that the “poorest peasant in the remotest corner of England, is probably a different man from what he would have been but for” Shakespeare and Milton (“Choice” 140).

Yet in this particular essay, he argues that authors do not know what form their influence may take: “authors themselves are continually falling into the grossest mistakes in this respect, and show themselves superlatively ignorant of the tendency of their own writings” (“Choice” 132). Godwin’s distinction between the “moral” and the “tendency” of a work indicates that an author might at most point the reader in a direction, but not dictate interpretation. He defines the moral as “that ethical sentence to the illustration of which the work may most aptly be applied” (136), yet the selection of the moral, he claims “will in a great degree depend upon the previous state of the mind of the reader” (“Choice” 136). While some of his examples reveal that the moral may be explicitly stated—as in fables—his main point is that different readers can derive different morals from a text. The tendency of a work or “the actual effect it is calculated to produce upon the reader” also will depend upon the reader’s prior mental state, and is very difficult to ascertain (“Choice” 138). Godwin argues, thus, that both moral and tendency are drawn by the reader, regardless of authorial intentions. He

outlines different morals that readers can draw from *The Fair Penitent* and concludes, "It is of no consequence whether the moral contemplated by the author, were different from both of these. The tendency again may be distinct from them all, and will be various according to the various tempers and habits of the persons by whom the work is considered" ("Choice" 137).

Authors gain influence not through their own intentions but through their interpretation and perpetuation by readers. He explains, "Every man who is changed from what he was by the perusal of their works, communicates a portion of the inspiration all around him. It passes from man to man, till it influences the whole mass" ("Choice" 140). Striking in Godwin's description of readers is the independence and energy that they exert. He writes that "Man is a creature that loves to act from himself; and actions performed in this way, have infinitely more of sound health and vigour in them, than the actions to which he is prompted by a will foreign to his own" ("Choice" 144).

Whether Godwin became more sanguine about varied reader reactions as his career progressed or whether he responded differently as an author than as a reader, his attitude towards his 1794 novel suggests more authorial control than his later writings grant. According to Godwin, *Caleb Williams* offered "no inadequate image of the fervour of" his spirit and was the "offspring of that temper of mind in which the composition of" *Political Justice* left him (Kegan Paul 1, 78). He wrote in the original preface to the novel, suppressed in the first edition, that he wanted to communicate the "truth" that the "spirit and character of the government intrudes itself into every rank of society" (*Caleb*, McCracken vi). *Political Justice* had been expensive, impossible to be purchased by anyone but the wealthy. The *Critical Review* had assured readers that the book could not do much damage because it would "from its nature and bulk ... never circulate among the inferior classes of

society” (Review of *Political Justice* 361). In the account of composition, Godwin reiterated the intense emotion he felt, which he wished to duplicate in readers: “I said to myself a thousand times, ‘I will write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he has read it, shall ever be exactly the same man that he was before’” (*Fleetwood* ix).

This statement indicates Godwin’s desire to change not simply readers’ opinions, but readers themselves. His comments emphasize an essentially didactic purpose, or reiterate eighteenth-century assumptions of fiction’s utility, the idea that a novel was not simply to describe but to do. What Jane Tompkins describes as the classical model of literature, which sees it as producing effects, remains central in Godwin’s descriptions of his novel. She describes the attitude in the Greek state as the “identification of language with power and the assimilation of the aesthetic to the political realm” (“History” 204). Moreover, the reader “in antiquity, is seen as a citizen of the state, the author as a shaper of civic morality” (Tompkins, “History” 204). Godwin’s 1794 preface claims that the writer wanted to influence by having “taught a valuable lesson, without subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort ought to be characterised” (vi).

In 1795 Godwin wrote a letter to the *British Critic* that answered legal criticism of the novel printed in the April edition. He argues that the assumption that the novel was meant to have “thrown an odium upon the laws” of the country is “a mistake into which no attentive and clear-sighted reader could possibly fall” (94). In part this statement criticizes the legal critic by implying that he is neither “attentive” nor “clear-sighted.” But it also suggests that he felt his book to have a particular tendency that readers should identify, his object being “to lead the enquiring reader to examine whether they [evils in present civilized society] are, or are not, as has

commonly been supposed, irremediable; in a word, to disengage the minds of men from prepossession, and launch them upon the sea of moral and political enquiry” (94). His strongest emphasis in this letter rests on reader impartiality: although he knew readers had prejudices, he believed his work could challenge them. He concludes this letter by implying that readers should try to calculate the intentions of the author:

I trust no person tolerably impartial can peruse my writings, without perceiving, what I myself intimately feel, that I have no sentiment nearer my heart than a liberal and disinterested concern for the true welfare of my species. But the books must speak for themselves: if they will not obtain credit for the benevolence of their purposes, any professions of mine would be of little avail. Perhaps they will be thought honourable to the intentions of their author, when party animosities are forgotten. (95)

This censure of party as the barrier to reasonable judgements is not, of course, new with Godwin. But he advocates readers setting themselves free from prejudice while the doctrine of necessity would emphasize the difficulty of escaping from the influences that create those prejudices. In fact, his own position in the *British Critic* letter is conflicted. His legal critic had argued that Tyrrel’s persecution of the Hawkinses would be illegal in Britain and that Hawkins would have been able to charge Tyrrel and receive damages. Godwin responds by sidestepping the legal issue: “It was not the business of such a work to enquire whether the law authorised a rich man to spoil the crop of a poor one, to poison his cattle, or to commit him to jail upon an absurd and sophistical charge of burglary. It was enough that oppressions of a similar nature, and of equal magnitude, are known to be perpetually practised with impunity” (Letter 95). He continues that unfortunately the “volumes of facts”

to prove these claims have been “suffered to perish, almost as rapidly as the facts themselves are produced” (Letter 95). Because of this circumstance, Godwin appeals to his readers’ experiences: “I ask any man, in the least degree informed as to the history of squires and their tenants in Great Britain, whether he can read this episode; and not recognise its counterpart in what he has himself heard and seen?” (Letter 95). In referring to reader experiences, he comes very near here to invoking the very prepossession—education “including every incident that produces an idea in the mind, and can give birth to a train of reflections” (*Political* 1:45)—he wanted readers to relinquish.

If Godwin wanted to change readers with his novel, then what were the characteristics of these intended readers? Caleb as narrator, who holds qualities Godwin prized in a philosopher, suggests some sense of a pattern, and his subservient position and original youthfulness would indicate a younger rather than older reader, someone somewhat impressionable and moldable. The original ending, with its strong sense of sympathy for the Clarissa-like Caleb, retains this picture of the reader, while the original preface similarly claims that the novel is meant for “persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach” (*Caleb*, McCracken vi). The revised ending, however, shifts the intended reader to someone more like Falkland than Caleb, and the *British Critic* letter in 1795 writes of disengaging readers from “prepossession,” as if readers have qualities of mature semi-rigidity instead of young malleability. Perhaps more importantly, Falkland as reader suggests landowner instead of servant: he holds the direct power to change social conditions.

An older reader would also be more likely to engage in the philosophical conversation that Godwin felt books could facilitate. As Sullivan explains, “For Godwin, books attain their full significance only in the spoken discourse they



help enliven, and one's reflections can only lead to truth after being tested in rational discussion" (329). Both Sullivan (329) and Leaver (607) quote from the section in *Political Justice* that privileges conversation over books:

Books have by their very nature but a limited operation; though, on account of their permanence, their methodical disquisition, and their easiness of access, they are entitled to the foremost place .... Books, to those by whom they are read, have a sort of constitutional coldness.... It is with difficulty that we obtain the courage, to strike into untrodden paths, and question tenets that have been generally received. But conversation accustoms us to hear a variety of sentiments, obliges us to exercise patience and attention, and gives freedom and elasticity to our disquisitions. (I 294-5)

In the 1832 account of composition, Godwin indicates his disappointment over not inspiring such conversation but instead feeding the consumption of the young reader: "when I had done all, what had I done? Written a book to amuse boys and girls in their vacant hours, a story to be hastily gobbled up by them, swallowed in a pusillanimous and unanimated mood, without chewing and digestion" (*Fleetwood* xiii). While this statement in part suggests authorial perfectionism—particularly in light of his self-criticism "How many flat and insipid parts does the book contain!...." (*Fleetwood* xiii)—it also suggests that he did not reach the readers to whom he had aspired. The metaphor of eating in his "gobbled up" statement significantly differs from his ideal in "Of Choice in Reading," which describes works "that have been the adoration of ages, upon which the man of genius and taste feeds with an uncloyed appetite, from which he derives sense, and power, and discernment, and refinement, and activity, and vigour" (139).

Godwin concludes the account of composition by citing Joseph Gerrald as a reader who consumed the book without contemplating it. He writes that he was

greatly impressed with the confession of one of the most accomplished readers and excellent critics that any author could have fallen in with (the unfortunate Joseph Gerald). He told me that he had received my book late one evening, and had read through the three volumes before he closed his eyes. Thus, what had cost me twelve months' labour, ceaseless heartaches and industry, now sinking in despair, and now roused and sustained in unusual energy, he went over in a few hours, shut the book, laid himself on his pillow, slept and was refreshed, and cried, To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new. (*Fleetwood* xiii-xiv)

Long before this account was written, Gerrald had died in Australia after being deported for sedition, and the *Lycidas* quotation makes the passage seem elegiac. In part this use of Gerrald inspires comparison. Godwin had written to him in January 1794 before his trial, "I cannot recollect the situation in which you are in a few days to be placed without emotions of respect, and I had almost said of envy" (Kegan Paul I, 126). Godwin advised him on his defence and argued that his trial "may be the means of converting thousands, and, progressively, millions, to the cause of reason and public justice" (Kegan Paul I, 126). But according to Mary Shelley's account, although "Gerrald's defence was eloquent and good ... the judge did not hesitate to interrupt it to tell him it was seditious" (Kegan Paul I, 125), and so Gerrald, like Godwin the author, failed to convert his audience.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The references to Gerrald in the account of composition may be subtly intended to render the reader sympathetic to the fervent and complete commitment that Jacobinism had inspired in its proponents.

There have been few attempts to compare historical readers to Godwin's intentions. Humphry Repton, long-time friend of Anna Seward, wrote his "fourth volume" to *Caleb Williams* after reading Seward's copy, and she includes the continuation in a footnote to a letter to Repton dated April 13, 1798.<sup>11</sup> His ideas about the novel seem contrary to Godwin's, and he illustrates Godwin's declaration that "the impression we derive from a book, depends much less upon its real contents, than upon the temper of mind and preparation with which we read it" ("Choice" 135). But his position as neither servant like Caleb nor landowner like Falkland demonstrates that historical readers failed to fall into obvious categories, and his documented reaction indicates that, as was the case with many readers, his horizon of expectations involved both his personal social position and his general didactic ideals.

Repton wrote his sequel in response to what both he and Seward saw as a major fictional flaw: "the leaving undiscovered the mysterious contents of the chest" (Seward 71).<sup>12</sup> Seward pronounces, "Doubtless it is the duty of every author of an imaginary history, to satisfy, ere his reader leaves him, the strong curiosity he has excited" (71). Although both readers exhibit the curiosity Godwin wanted to create, neither accepts Godwin's apparent direction that the reader fill the enigma of the trunk with Caleb's narrative itself. Or perhaps the problem, more precisely, is that these readers do not accept *Caleb's* claim about the trunk's probable contents and his imaginary substitution. Consequently, Repton's curiosity leads not to a skeptical analysis of social structures but rather an interrogation of the author himself. He primarily

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<sup>11</sup> Seward prepared her letters for publication, and so presumably included Repton's continuation then. The "sketch of a fourth volume" appears to be Repton's exact words because it is enclosed in quotation marks in the letter. Richard Pickard first pointed me to this alternative ending.

<sup>12</sup> Both use the word "chest" more often than "trunk," a choice that does not follow the novel's second edition in which Godwin changed "chest" to "trunk." Perhaps the word "chest" more readily came to mind because of Colman's dramatization.

continues the story after Godwin's has ended, but in doing so he completely rewrites the plot and themes of the original novel:

“Mr. Falkland, to atone for his cruelty, makes Caleb his sole heir; and in a private letter, inclosed in the will, conjures him to destroy the fatal chest, without examining its contents. Another field for the display of his passions. After a violent struggle, his curiosity again prevails, and he finds a narrative of Mr. Falkland's life—and two skeletons, of a female and child, which Mr. F. had caused to be placed there, to conceal their murder, and as a perpetual memento of his own crimes:—these are a life of uniform deceit, uncontrollable passions, and utter disbelief in all religion. The narrative contains a confession of having seduced Miss Melville, and by her had a child, whom he had caused to be murdered; and, for his own security, having destroyed his agent in that nefarious act; but, not knowing how to conceal the bodies, he had inclosed them in the iron chest, where, from gradual putrefaction, they had become skeletons. This putrefaction was the first cause of that sallow look and unhealthy symptoms, which always appeared after his visits to the trunk. In the course of the narrative, some warm descriptions occur of the delights he had experienced from his connection with Miss M. They excite new ideas in the breast of Caleb; for it has been justly observed, that where the whole of an animal's faculties are engrossed by the care of supporting existence, there is less passion for the intercourse of the sexes. Thus Caleb thought not of woman till this change in his circumstances;—but now the same ardour of spirit, the same energy of frame, are directed to new pursuits; and, being disappointed in his first attempt to form an honourable

connexion with a lady, whose history furnishes an interesting episode, he by degrees loses his boasted integrity, and, at length, by the help of his large property, becomes the greatest oppressor to those who oppose his libidinous pursuits. From hence we learn, that the temptation of wealth is more powerful and dangerous than that of poverty, and that the only security against vice, is a well-grounded confidence in that Supreme Being, who witnesses all our actions. Human laws can never be so framed as to reach the secret sins of man. Power must always have some relation to wealth.”  
(Seward 71-2)

Seward’s letter highlights the apparent anger that led to this portrayal of both Caleb and Falkland as oppressors. She writes Repton, “The excess of crime into which Falkland plunges, to screen from public violation his idolized honour, is fearful, is terrible. You call it disgusting” (69), and “Caleb’s want of power to interest you in his character and hard fate astonishes me. You call him a rascal for having yielded to the ardour of his curiosity” (69). Godwin’s published ending, unlike the manuscript one, diffuses the conflict between Falkland and Caleb, but Repton’s conflict with the characters has not been alleviated. Consequently, Repton’s continuation reasserts the villainy associated with the unrepentant Falkland and establishes again tension, not sympathy, between reader and characters.

Although Repton shares a gender with Godwin’s main characters, he arguably could not identify with their social positions nor attitudes towards them. He himself was a middling-class gentleman. He was born in 1752 in Suffolk, the eldest son of a Collector of Excise. Although he later became famous for his gardening, his father first apprenticed him to a textile merchant. After his parents’ deaths he abandoned a merchant’s career in 1778 to “live

the life of a country gentleman, farming, gardening, sketching and reading” (Carter et al. 7). In 1783 Repton went to Ireland with William Windham, Lord of the Manor of Sustead, who was asked to be Chief Secretary to Lord Northington, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. After working as Windham’s confidential secretary and then settling outstanding affairs after Windham resigned his post, Repton, “according to his attractive, but, considering his circumstances, impractical, gentlemanly code, accepted no payment for any of his efforts in Ireland” (Carter et al. 9). He edited and published anonymously a collection of essays and tales called *Variety* in 1788, and turned to gardening as a profession that same year, when he was thirty-six. His personal decisions and attitudes suggest that he would sympathize neither with a landowner taking advantage of his authority to hide his murders, nor a servant using private information against a landowner.

Information in *Variety* further delineates Repton’s views. He wrote of and to the College of United Friars, or Society for the Participation of Useful Knowledge, whose principles expressed a sort of liberal humanism espousing “*Meekness, Honour, Benevolence, Brotherly Love, and Charity, in its universal sense*” (*Variety* 289), and encouraging equality. The members wore friar’s robes in order to eliminate “all distinction betwixt the most opulent citizen and the most indigent mechanic, whose skill, genius or abilities, may have entitled him to a seat” (*Variety* 289). As this last clause indicates, although the society proposed to overlook “rank or fortune” (*Variety* 287-8), it required in its members “a certain degree of proficiency, either in literature, in the arts, or in some species of elegant or useful knowledge” (*Variety* 288). Just as the College of United Friars considered literacy more important than social status, Repton in the introduction to *Variety* suggests the same idea when he parenthetically

defines “gentlemen” by saying “by which title is now understood all who can read” (8).

Repton further judges social position by attaching it to work. A gentleman should be cultivated, but should also be employed—not for profit but for usefulness. In the introduction to *Variety* he addresses various types of readers distinguished through occupation or primary interest—physiognomist, critic, logician, lawyer, divine, politician. Those not separated through these means are women, who are addressed as a group, and an additional group that appears to describe useless aristocrats, those who have the money for leisure but lack the motivation to work or learn: a “class of readers, by far the most numerous, who belong to no profession, espouse no party, form no conjectures, and deliver no opinions: in short, those idle, lounging, insipid beings, who having learned to read, but not to employ themselves, will occasionally kill time, by sauntering through a paper, without knowing on what it treats” (*Variety* 10-11). He concludes discussing these men by saying that he asked his printer to leave wide margins on the pages, so they could draw if they wanted to amuse themselves (*Variety* 11).

While useless aristocrats did not correspond to the gentlemanly ideal, neither did mercantile men consumed with increasing their wealth. Repton disliked a life of trade and left it, according to Kedrun Laurie, not only because he lacked a steady income but because he was altogether “disgusted with a life of trade” (Carter et al. 7) and had never been quite suited to it to begin with. He had in his youth spent “rather more time on poetry, music and drawing than his fond father would probably have wished” (Carter et al. 6). Later in his life, he encountered a situation Laurie describes as having “more power to shake and alarm Repton than events in Europe” (Carter et al. 28). In 1814 a Mr. Black, a “contractor for tents and bedding,” bought Gidea Hall, the estate to

which Repton had moved, and threatened to evict him. Laurie explains, “Here, on his doorstep and threatening his sense of order and stability, both personal and social, was a man who symbolised the new commercial classes he hated” (Carter et al. 28). Repton constructed in his Memoir a conversation with Will Woodlands, a wheelwright whom Black forced to move:

“I found him one day in an unusual state of angry excitement, and upon inquiry found a rich neighbour had been ill using a poor one—...  
 “Why you see sir, poor Widow Wards sow got into Mr B’s park and what does he do? but takes and claps it into the pound! and there he keeps it till he starves it to dead! and then he drives it to Romford market, and sells it for nothing at all! —and he puts all the money into his own pocket, and never gives no account of nothing to nobody!—But he’s a cruel man, he is Sir! and never was a gentleman!—I asked him what he meant by a gentleman, one as delights in seeing people happy—and will give up caring for himself to make them so.” (Carter et al. 28)<sup>13</sup>

Dislike for commercialism, combined with a respect for the “true” category of gentleman, appears central in Repton’s continuation of *Caleb Williams*. Godwin’s complex and conflicted characters fail to offer gentlemanly models. Just as Richardson rewrote Lovelace to decrease his appeal, Repton makes both Falkland and Caleb unattractive villains so that they would not evoke sympathy from readers. Repton’s attitude towards Caleb also resembles Richardson’s insistence that servants are responsible for their own actions

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<sup>13</sup> The quotation marks in this passage are confusing. Laurie puts double quotation marks beginning “Why you see sir,” but does not close this quotation. I am assuming “Repton” says “I asked him what he meant by a gentleman,” and “Woodlands” continues until the end of the passage.



despite their vulnerable positions. Arguing against Repton's opinion, Seward sees Caleb as a product of his upbringing:

You call him a rascal .... If he had received a gentleman's education, instilling the lofty and scrupulous notions of honour, such a violation of its principles might have deserved the harsh epithet. From a low-born youth, however endowed with native strength of intellect, we are not to expect them, and may well forgive the victory of an impulse so violent. (Seward 69-70)<sup>14</sup>

It is precisely because Repton believes in some class movement that he insists on regulating proper values among the new gentry. Although his story's "moral" that wealth corrupts discourages social mobility through commerce alone, Repton's portrayal of Caleb inheriting Falkland's estate assumes that social elevation is possible. As *Variety* asserts, all who can read can learn and thus cultivate the character traits of a gentleman even if they are lower by birth.

A mistrust of human nature seems the foundation of Repton's insistence that good and evil characters must be clear. He does not accept Falkland as a conflicted gentleman but instead suggests that Falkland must be either a gentleman or a hypocrite. He follows common eighteenth-century interpretations of character as stable, interpretations exemplified in *Caleb Williams* by Thomas, Forester, and Collins. The flawed man who has once murdered will murder—even more sinisterly—again. And the newly wealthy, prying servant may use his power to persecute others. The belief in the corruption of wealth has Biblical origins and so reinforces the Christian ideology that argues that human beings alone are incapable of governing

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<sup>14</sup> Seward shares Lady Echlin's opinion of the lower classes.

themselves without error: “the only security against vice, is a well-grounded confidence in that Supreme Being, who witnesses all our actions. Human laws can never be so framed as to reach the secret sins of man” (Seward 72).

Graham notes that “tyranny, prohibition and transgression” are political and gothic themes (*Politics* 110), and so in *Caleb Williams*, the gothic elements underscore the threats of the political system as it existed. The novel “demonstrates the link between the Gothic and the revolutionary by some of the overwhelming questions that characterize the Gothic narrative impulse, questions that tend to undermine comfortable orthodoxies in matters of narrative verisimilitude, human psychology, and political and religious authority” (*Politics* 109-110). Mark Madoff identifies a central gothic theme in the novel, the outside/inside motif or the secret contained inside a place, a motif which contrasts the reasonable and civilized with the disordered and passionate (51). Insides are “repulsive yet attractive, contemptible yet fascinating, places” (Madoff 52). Falkland’s trunk carries the same mystery as this motif. The inside is unknown, and Caleb is impelled to attempt to discover it. As Madoff describes the inside, it is a place “where the Gothic protagonist, like the reader, arrives only through apparently accidental transgression” (51). Madoff’s word “transgression” reveals a crucial aspect of the investigator in this motif. He argues, “That the transgression is accidental or, worse still, unwilling (as in the case of the usual Gothic victim of kidnapping), is a convenient mask for deeper motives in the transgressor” (510).

Unlike many gothic heroines, Caleb does not arrive at his knowledge through “accidental transgression,” but his search for truth is sanctioned by the novel’s politics, which question or undermine authority systems. For Repton as reader, though, Caleb’s self-determination displaces the gothic tension onto Caleb himself; he is not victim but perpetrator, and the attributes

that make Caleb seek the unknown will guarantee his becoming it. In other words, the emotions that impel Caleb throughout the narrative are threatening in themselves. Repton emphasizes Caleb's intensity when Falkland commands him not to open the chest: "Another field for the display of his passions. After a violent struggle, his curiosity again prevails..." (Seward 71). The idea that Caleb's emotions themselves are dangerous, that they border on the chaos and transgression of the "inside," appears later when Repton explains of Caleb's new relationships with women, "the same ardour of spirit, the same energy of frame, are directed to new pursuits" (Seward 72). Repton, in addition, parallels Falkland's "vices" with Caleb's when he names the "uncontrollable passions" that help perpetuate Falkland's tyranny (Seward 71). In interpreting passion not as the enthusiasm of a philosopher but as the potentially unleashed fury of a murderer, Repton simultaneously creates his own picture of good and evil in society and by implication condemns Godwin's intensity in social commentary. In fact, Seward similarly seems to interpret Godwin's politics as the result of misplaced or warped emotions. On *Caleb Williams*, she writes to Repton, "Viewed on the political side, these pages are the effusion of a morbid irritability, impatient of human defect in our constitution, and libelling our laws" (67).<sup>15</sup>

The "moral" that concludes Repton's continuation of *Caleb* indicates that he saw challenges to the model of a gentleman as a far more significant social threat than the government—indeed, lack of respect for authority seems the source of Repton's condemnation of Caleb. Furthermore, his inclusion of a moral summary indicates his didactic focus or his assumption that fiction was supposed to teach particular lessons. If people are innately flawed rather than

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<sup>15</sup> As McCracken's explanatory notes to *Caleb Williams* reveal, Godwin's presentation of English law was accurate.

perfectible, then the legal system is bound to contain errors and the most one can do is support the best system one can. If people are easily misled, furthermore—as they might be through books—then one should support the status quo to avoid confusion and mistrust. These assumptions drive Repton’s pedagogy. In making Caleb far worse than Godwin’s character, Repton eliminates his position as pattern by obliterating his status as victim. Significantly, then, despite Repton’s belief that Caleb’s actions as servant cannot be attributed to necessity, he nevertheless holds the common didactic attitude that other readers were easily influenced. Seward tells him, in agreement with this apparent fear of mass rebellion, that the “design” of *Caleb Williams* is “highly censurable;—and also on the unavoidable incompetence of all legal institutions, entirely to protect the dependent and the poor from being oppressed in some way or other, by the powerful and the wealthy” (67).

Repton’s earlier published gothic story “The Friar’s Tale” (1787), which was published in *Variety* and read to the College of United Friars, demonstrates his conservative didacticism. It is the story of lovers, Albert and Matilda, who cannot marry because Albert is poor. Matilda’s father sends her to a convent where she is to be “compelled to renounce both Albert and all the world” (*Variety* 263), and when her father later repents this action on his deathbed, his dying wishes are thwarted by the alternate inheritor of the fortune, Conrad, who thus cheats Matilda out of her inheritance. Albert, whom Conrad causes to be persecuted by creditors, flees to a monastery. Matilda, refusing to take the veil and suspecting all Catholic institutions of tyranny and hypocrisy, escapes from her convent and, disordered in her senses, wanders among rocks and dangerous precipices. When Albert, not knowing she has fled, attempts to see her, Conrad intervenes. The two fight (on Conrad’s instigation), and Albert stabs Conrad with Conrad’s sword. Albert, thinking himself a murderer,

escapes back to his monastery. Eventually, with the help of the monastic dog, the friar protecting Albert discovers Matilda and sends Albert to her. Conrad later turns up at the monastery, having not died but been wounded severely enough to produce his repentance and confession. Matilda regains her inheritance and after she recovers from her illness she and Albert marry. Conrad becomes a monk and lives a life of piety.

The story suggests the consistency of character. Conrad not only lies and steals, but also has an illicit affair with the corrupt Abbess, Theresa, in Matilda's convent. Their relationship does not seem necessary to the plot; instead, it suggests the permeation of vice into all areas of life. Matilda's and Albert's problems, in contrast to Conrad's, stem only from defending themselves—when Albert fights with Conrad the narrator points out that Albert “had no weapon” (*Variety* 273).

Character also operates without regard to financial status. Albert has no money but he has “a graceful person, cultivated mind, elegance of manners, and captivating sweetness of disposition” (*Variety* 262-3). Repton does not explain how Albert acquires these attributes, nor does he precisely describe Albert's social status. He seems to assume an ideal of holding positive upper-class qualities without the possible vices brought by established wealth. Yet the reward for such a character is financial. The friar of Repton's story explains that Matilda's father was “a stranger to the soul-delighting sensation, of raising worth and genius, depressed by poverty, to affluence and independence” (*Variety* 263). Matilda is eventually the one who accomplishes this transformation, when she recovers from her illness and marries Albert. This reward for a good character suggests, as Repton's continuation of *Caleb Williams* does as well, that it is not difficult to gain social elevation. But the elevation must occur through someone wealthy recognizing worth in the

beneficiary, not through someone poor striving for riches. Those who crave wealth, like Conrad, do not succeed. Poverty seems to be a potentially virtuous state, where one can gain moral strength, yet it is also free from the danger Godwin identifies because it is—in these types of fictions—a transitory state.

The moral of “The Friar’s Tale” recommends cultivating universal personal attributes that supersede specifics of religion or class. “True Religion” the friar says, however it “may vary in outward ceremonies, or articles of faith, will always teach you to do good, to love and help each other” (*Variety* 286). Because the “world and all its vanities” are temporary, eventually one “must seek refuge in conscious innocence, or a sincere repentance” (*Variety* 286). The implication here is that the mind will be stronger than circumstances or physical influences, that however hard one attempts to escape conscience, it will override other concerns eventually. The moral ends by insisting on individual, internal responsibility for happiness: “no matter whether you chuse a *convent* for retirement, or *commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still*” (*Variety* 286).<sup>16</sup>

This type of moral focus appears similar to the advice concluding Goldsmith’s poems, and may result from a similar motive. The author imagines his audience to be primarily middling class, largely impressionable, and often young. The author desires to improve rather than disrupt the social world. Because the intended audience does not consist of the upper classes, those with established political power, but rather of those whose bid for power might create mob-like rebellion, the author directs the desire for change or improvement towards personal rather than overtly political themes.

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<sup>16</sup> The existence of the moral itself, however, suggests that the reader may currently lack this strength and so require the guidance of the author.

Repton's ideal of the gentlemen as one who foregoes his own interests for the benefit of others was not radically different from Godwin's. In his discussion of justice Godwin writes that if one man has more property than others, "Justice obliges him to regard this property as a trust, and calls upon him maturely to consider in what manner it may be employed for the increase of liberty, knowledge and virtue" (*Political* 1:134). A virtuous society should benefit its members and turn all into "gentlemen": "That will most contribute to it [social welfare], which expands the understanding, supplies incitements to virtue, fills us with a generous consciousness of our independence, and carefully removes whatever can impede our exertions" (*Political* 1:137). Caleb himself, despite being lower class, is well read, intelligent, honest, and loyal to his promise even when it endangers him. What is notable here is not that a lower class person might acquire these traits, but that Godwin felt it important to invest his narrator with them. As many have noted, the published ending highlights Caleb's and Falkland's similarities or even treats them as doubles, an implication Repton of course exploits in his continuation. This identification diffuses class conflict because it portrays an essential similarity and sympathy between these formerly warring parties.

Repton's continuation to the novel basically eliminates class conflict, but it highlights sexual conflict in its characterization of Falkland's and Caleb's treatment of women. He blames Caleb for bringing his persecution upon himself and so highlights Emily Melville as the novel's true victim by creating other female victims in her position. Presumably, female victims did not promote the same social disruption that a persecuted male servant would inspire. Despite this change to the plot, the absence of a marriage ending to Repton's "fourth volume" suggests that he, probably unwittingly, reproduces Godwin's criticism of marriage. Graham points out that *Caleb Williams* seems

highly critical of marriage and of a sensibility, reflected in Emily, that would encourage women to expect a “love that overcomes social and economic barriers ... the recurring subject of novels of sensibility from *Pamela* on” (*Politics* 18). Tyrrel’s manipulations treat women as the property they legally were, and Falkland’s chivalry does not extend to a consideration of marriage with someone beneath him. Graham summarizes, “Godwin’s treatment of Emily reflects a more comprehensive vision that woman’s sensibility must ever be the victim of the realities of economics and class” (*Politics* 21). Repton’s adoption of the same male tyranny without the inclusion of a marriage ending that would reestablish sensibility manages to perpetuate these criticisms. And he makes Falkland’s chivalry even more sinister when Emily’s object of admiration destroys instead of rewards her. But because it also suggests, as does *Clarissa*, that women could provide sympathetic literary victims without becoming socially threatening, as a middle-class project rather than a radical one it discourages female mobility in the social hierarchy while maintaining the essential “rightness” of the system itself.

Repton’s differences from Godwin problematize what has been written to date about Godwin’s influence. Leaver has recently suggested that the sympathy encouraged by the ending aided the middle classes, that “Godwin’s emphasis on the need to exchange a fixed social hierarchy for an individually based model of organic growth coincided with the need of the middle classes to reinterpret the existing system and ‘write’ themselves in as a political and cultural power” (601). The novel accomplished this congruence with its model of conversation, because “the text was designed to bring the reader into a conversation with it, and to develop conversation as a mode of communication that could change the reader’s relationship to the world” (599). While Leaver, then, applies Godwin’s ideal of conversation to the text-reader relationship, I



would argue alternatively that the conversation he wished to inspire was that between readers themselves. Furthermore, Repton's response suggests that many readers, particularly middle-class ones, saw Godwin's novel as hindering, not aiding, personal growth. Repton does not view the novel as applicable to his own growth but rather to an "other" reader—a more impressionable and corruptible reader that resembles older aristocratic notions (like Falkland's) of the lower classes.

The complexities of this reception can be reinforced through a comparison with its contemporaries. Much of Repton's conservatism, for instance, resembles George Colman the younger's rewriting of *Caleb Williams* for his play *The Iron Chest* (1796). Colman primarily condenses volume two because the plot of the play revolves around Wilford (Caleb) in Sir Edward Mortimer's (Falkland's) service, discovering Mortimer's past trial for murder and attempting to open the mysterious chest. After Mortimer discovers Wilford, he tells him the truth, swears him to secrecy, and restricts his movements. Wilford consequently runs away and encounters the thieves in the forest. Mortimer discovers him and brings him back to accuse him of theft. But when Mortimer plants evidence in Wilford's trunk, he inadvertently moves to Wilford's trunk the entire contents of his own chest, including a knife and confession of his murder. Thus, his brother and the other witnesses discover his crime without Wilford needing to break his vow or Mortimer needing to acknowledge his lie. Colman also adds romantic subplots that change the tone of the story dramatically. The Emily Melville character, Helen, has not died but instead lives in a cottage nearby and frequently visits Mortimer, whom she still loves, and Wilford is engaged to the daughter in a poor family on the estate (Mortimer's forgiveness of the father's poaching demonstrates his generosity).

The play attempts to include a complexity of character that resembles the novel. Colman highlights the plight of the poor, and the idea that circumstances and poverty, not inherent depravity, force people into crime. It opens with the wretchedly poor Rawbold family (whose daughter Barbara is engaged to Wilford) and the scene highlights their desperate circumstances. Late in the play Armstrong, the captain of the robbers, rescues Wilford after Orson (Jones/Gines) has attacked him and tells his company, "Let it not be said, brothers, while want drives us to plunder, that wantonness prompts us to butchery" (Colman 59). The character of Mortimer holds complexities similar to Falkland's: he worships his reputation yet has a benevolent disposition; he is admirable, yet criminal. Wilford as a character combines extreme loyalty to his master with an insistent curiosity and a love for his liberty.

But despite these attempts to follow the novel, the changes (produced seemingly to adapt it to a popular audience) are politically crucial.<sup>17</sup> Because Mortimer exposes his own crime through his ineptitude, the play suggests that wrongdoers will eventually expose themselves, or that providence will reveal deceptions. The play demonstrates a belief in a higher power that will set things right despite the actions of men. Wilford delivers a closing moral at the play's end: "Heaven, to whose eye the dark movements of guilt are manifest, will ever watch over, and succour the innocent, in their extremity.... let the slow, still voice of gratitude be lifted up to Providence, for that care she ever bestows upon those deserving her protection!" (Colman 95-6). He gives this speech after the servants and others are clamouring to congratulate him on his acquittal. He reminds them that their master is dangerously ill (Mortimer

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<sup>17</sup> The *Catalogue of the Larpent Plays in the Huntington Library* indicates that *The Iron Chest* was changed after instructions from the Lord Chamberlain. The notice reads, "the inclosed Speeches intended to be introduced in the *Iron Chest*—it is hoped will not be disapproved of by the Lord Chamberlain—They are meant merely to connect, where omissions have been made according to your directions" (185; application Mar. 11, 1796).

has stabbed himself), and then he redirects their response. His action recalls the situation *Caleb Williams* seems critical of: the tendency of the mob to require a leader. Here Wilford acts as an authority figure delivering a moral most observers would have been so accustomed to that they would not even question its philosophical or political implications. The servants are kept in their place, as it were, exhorted to consider their “master” (Colman 95), by Wilford invoking a religious tradition of faith and gratitude. People should rely on providence to correct social problems, not address those problems themselves.

Both *The Iron Chest* and Repton’s fourth volume, then, espouse a political conservatism very different from Godwin’s position, and it is tempting to assume that Godwin would have unequivocally disapproved of these creative reinterpretations of his novel. There seems no evidence that he knew of Repton’s “fourth volume.” However, he was aware of the *Iron Chest*, and according to Don Locke, when he was asked if he liked the play he answered, “Certainly not, the best parts of the *Iron Chest* are those that have no relation to *Caleb Williams*” (Locke 70). The play’s differences fail to create the desire for consensus among readers that informs *Caleb Williams*’s published ending. Caleb seeks an ideologically coherent community in Mr. Collins, but he fails to find it there because Collins does not know the “truth” that Caleb knows. Falkland is the only other character in the novel who shares this truth with Caleb, and when Caleb triumphs at the trial he does so not because of his sincerity of speech—as Falkland claims—but because the one person who can verify his truth does so. His “artless and manly story” (3:307) overturns Falkland’s stubbornness; it does not communicate an unknown truth to ignorant listeners. Godwin’s philosophy also seeks consensus from a “knowing” audience in that *Political Justice* advocates the ability of reason to eradicate

social conflict.<sup>18</sup> Godwin did not, though, produce ideological consensus among his diverse readers, and instead the novel's "tendency" created controversy. But although Repton's and Colman's retellings seem to threaten the novel's intention instead of fulfilling it, in fact they contribute to a process that in a larger sense does resemble the inquiry that Godwin desired. Just as Repton and Colman answer Godwin, readers of these two men respond to them — and in doing so, question again the novel's intentions.

In response to the *Iron Chest* (or more precisely to Colman's public accusation that Kemble's opium habit ruined the play's first performance), John Litchfield wrote a harsh criticism that not only defends Kemble but also condemns Colman's play for badly misrepresenting Godwin's themes.<sup>19</sup> Like most other readers, Litchfield separates his interpretation of the novel from Godwin's politics when he says he would "have it understood, that the *political sentiments* in CALEB WILLIAMS have no share in this comparison either one way or the other. He has looked to the characters and incidents of the novel, purely as characters and incidents susceptible of DRAMATIC *application* and *effect*" (iv). Yet even though he claims to ignore politics, he analyzes the complex character motivation in the novel. Litchfield agrees with a critic in *The Oracle* that Falkland's remorse resulted from the murder of the Hawkinses rather than the murder of Tyrrel (21). He argues for the importance of slowly making the audience admire Falkland before he commits his irrevocable acts, acts that produce a tragic figure: "in the first volume he appears an object of admiration, in the second of pity, and in the third of pity and terror combined" (22).

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<sup>18</sup> Rousseau's *Social Contract* suggests a similar idea when he argues that the "general will" will offer agreement.

<sup>19</sup> Litchfield's response was first published in *The Monthly Mirror* and then republished on its own.

With Caleb Litchfield focuses on curiosity, which in Colman's Wilford he insists is "*wanton and indecent*" (25). Wilford's actions make the audience feel that "if Sir Edward were to shoot him in the first paroxysm of his rage, he would fall an unpitied victim to his own wilful and unwarrantable impertinence" (25). This criticism leads Litchfield to consider Caleb's contrasting curiosity and argue, "His was not the curiosity of wantonness, but an irresistible impulse, which drove him on to an involuntary, because an inevitable, act" (25). In addition Litchfield asks, "What reader does not feel the same anxiety as Caleb, to know what is contained in the chest?" (25). Thus, Litchfield has not only suggested that the reader feels the same curiosity as Caleb, but then also, earlier, that the mystery of the chest serves to increase suspense and then direct the reader, when the chest's contents are not revealed, "more strongly to the character of Falkland" (24). Such a consideration of characterization does not embark directly on political criticism, but for Godwin character analysis began philosophical and social inquiry.

Anna Seward offers a private response to Repton's fourth volume that resembles Litchfield's public reaction to *The Iron Chest*. Although she condemns Godwin's politics, she praises the novel's psychology. She states, "Considered as a delineation of character and manners, it has an impressive, awful, and useful moral; displaying the mischiefs, the wickedness, and misery into which the boundless indulgence of an originally noble passion, may betray an amiable and highly liberal mind" (67-8). Seward interprets the moral as pertaining to Falkland's character, then, and expresses a sympathy for Falkland that Repton lacks: "Hypocrisy it certainly is; but, not being assumed as the veil of purposed future vices, but as the screen of one dire irrevocable fault, it is hypocrisy without the meanness which, in every other instance, real or fictitious, attaches to that vice" (69). In fact, she objects to Repton's "fourth

volume” because she considers the tragic picture of Falkland to contain an important moral theme. The continuation “would destroy all the charm of the first volume. It is easy to draw a deep, designing, and uniform villain, with specious qualities. ... The interest, and the original moral would at once be lost, and the whole design of the work subverted, by making Falkland a born fiend rather than a fallen angel demonized” (72-3). Significantly here, she counters the black-and-white view of character that the novel itself appears to criticize, and she gives literary authority to this rather necessitarian portrayal by linking Godwin with Shakespeare. She reminds Repton of “Macbeth, once generous, humane, and brave” and tells him to “be not incredulous to the apostasy of a Falkland” (69).

Seward also views with sympathy and understanding Caleb’s breaking of his promise. She considers circumstances to influence responsibility and writes, “breaking an oath not voluntarily taken but desperately imposed, cannot, at least in the full extent, be deemed perjury” (70). Furthermore, she sympathizes with Caleb’s predicament:

His long and patient forbearance to break it, beneath persecution so incessant and extreme, renders every resistance he makes to its violation, virtuous in an higher degree than the final yielding is criminal. Whether in reality or fiction, human frailty considered, we ought to remit one fault to many virtues, rather than sink many virtues in the recollection of one fault. (70)

Godwin sees promises as completely antithetical to the individual reason and justice that ought to determine action. He writes in *Political Justice* that “promises and compacts are in no sense the foundation of morality” (1:194) because one’s obligation to a neighbour ought to arise solely from a sense of justice. Furthermore, promises may be broken if additional information

requires it: "Every engagement into which I have entered, an adherence to which I shall afterwards find to be a material obstacle to my utility ... ought to be violated: nor can there be any limitation upon this maxim, except where the violation will greatly encroach upon the province and jurisdiction of my neighbour" (1:210). Seward does not argue for this position that promises themselves are dangerous; however, her analysis does at least examine the issues Godwin felt important to social inquiry and in contrasting with Repton's view moves back towards Godwin's radical propositions.

Both Repton and Godwin incorporate necessity into their literary assumptions. Didacticism itself involves necessity, because it postulates individual readers being molded by the fictions they read. Godwin portrays necessity as an overriding influence within the novel, yet his attitude towards the book itself suggests some ambivalence about the reader's relation to necessity: did the novel educate the impressionable reader and thus become part of the reader's necessity, or did the novel conflict with the prepossession or habits already existing? While Godwin seems to have originally ended the novel with an impressionable reader in mind, he changes his imagined audience in the revised ending. That ending uses readers' pre-existing tendencies to admire Falkland in order to channel their sympathy towards the novel's political inquiry. Repton rejects this political inquiry but essentially advocates a necessity that similarly makes a literary work a tool for directing the reader. His imagined reader corresponds to the impressionable one Godwin, too, first envisioned.

As a reader, Repton demonstrates how Godwin's portrayal of Falkland and Caleb could conflict with gentry ideals, particularly among those who believed in class mobility. Holding a firm belief in the need for unconflicted fictional patterns, he corresponds to many characters within the novel itself.

Like the characters who question Caleb, Repton's lack of sympathy leads him not to question himself but to question the author. Repton and the other respondents to the novel consider their interpretations to have validity because of their basis in morality, in logic, in literary tradition, and in human psychology—they do not appeal to the beliefs or desires of the author himself. In part because Godwin was associated with dangerous radicalism, his status as controller of his discourse appears irrelevant to their discussions. Nevertheless, these readers demonstrate that the very prejudice Godwin feared could lead to the conversation he desired, because the types of prepossession were not constant among readers and they were all inclined to analyze the fiction's themes and debate its goals. Change, it seems, might be effected not through the consensus Godwin desired but through the controversy he inspired.



## Chapter Four

### No Such Thing as Indeterminate: Continuations of *Don Juan*

In the *Edinburgh Review* for July 1813, Francis Jeffrey reviewed Lord Byron's recently published *The Giaour, a Fragment of a Turkish Tale* and commented on its incomplete form:

Since the increasing levity of the present age, indeed, has rendered it impatient of the long stories that used to delight our ancestors, the taste for fragments, we suspect, has become very general; and the greater part of polite readers would now no more think of sitting down to a whole Epic, than to a whole ox.... The truth is, we suspect, that after we once know what it contains, no long poem is ever read, but in fragments; ... it is infinitely less laborious to *guess at* the author's principle of combination, than to follow out his full explanation of it. (Reiman 842)

While Jeffrey's comments suggest his own superiority as a reader able to outline Byron's plot for those who might not be quite as discerning, his attitude towards fragmentation indicates its acceptability. The fragment was preferable to the epic because it accommodated strategies readers already used, and it allowed active reader interpretation. In this interpretation, the fragment was pleasing not because it contained an indeterminacy allowing multiple meanings, but because it allowed the reader, rather, to get to the point more quickly than with longer poems. In terms of labour, the fragment was efficient.

Although Byron's final major work, *Don Juan* (1819-24), has been described as one of the "most spectacular" of the Romantic fragments (Levinson 19), its immediate self-categorization as an "epic" (I, 6) distinguishes it from the type of fragmentation Jeffrey discusses. Marjorie Levinson summarizes the common twentieth-century critical opinion of the poem:

the irresolution which characterizes *Don Juan* describes neither the relationship of one canto to its successor, nor the terminal condition of the work as a whole. The poem's (in)famous irresolution occurs within each canto and through the author's digressions and his disruptive posturings. ... One does not care about the completed whole .... One cannot even believe in such wholes by the end of the poem. (55-6)

Peter Graham offers a similar opinion when he writes, "My own sense is that definitive closure of any sort would act to betray the essence of *Don Juan*. Moving on to new things is natural to the poem, protagonist, narrator, and author alike" (194). In Anne Mellor's reading of the poem's Romantic irony, the poetic balance between sentiment and skepticism, she contends, "Byron's *Don Juan* has no ending; it stops, because Byron died, but it does not end in the sense of completing a pattern or finishing a tale. Indeed, it could have no 'sense of an ending,' in Frank Kermode's pithy phrase" (62). Jerome McGann had earlier written that "the only regret we have at the end is that we can go no more a-roving with Byron through his poem" and that however the poem "would have ended, wherever it would have stopped, Byron would still have wanted to say: 'I leave the thing a problem, like all things' (XVII, 13)" (*Context* 4). Finally, the poem's indeterminacy and flexibility are articulated by Philip W. Martin: "*Don Juan*'s signal characteristic might be its carnivalesque irreducibility: the strongly pronounced sense that the poem has no consistent

set of attitudes, no regular philosophic or moral underpinning, no means by which its poet can be conveniently transfixed" ("Reading" 104).

These critics have described *Don Juan*'s openness as a type of freedom for the reader and for the poet, an abandonment of fixed meaning that renders Byron a visionary of the future. But I wish to argue that what has been described as the poem's indeterminacy stems from several elements that do not signify freedom for the poet or for readers. If Jeffrey saw gaps as allowing reader efficiency and power (for him as reader anyway), then Byron's digressive form and mock-epic structure represent an attempt to limit that efficiency and power. Yet they do so only because the poet assumes that readers already have far more control over his poem than he does. Byron's intended audience was made up of particular, elite readers—not readers from all classes. By using a pre-determined story and involving the reader in his poem's creation, he challenged readers to accept their own involvement in *Don Juan*'s "existence" and critiqued (without wishing to overturn completely) the power relations that their class represented. The poem's actual audience, however, was far more diverse than *Don Juan* addressed. Although Byron's anticipated ending resembled the legendary one, continuations written between 1819 and 1825 by Lady Caroline Lamb, Jonathan Bailey, and Isaac Starr Clason demonstrate more concern with Byron's persona than with the traditional *Don Juan*. Their interest in Byron as personality and popular figure, however, does not change their ideals about authorial responsibility, and they apply didactic lessons to readers more varied than Byron seems to have addressed.

*Don Juan* has been classified as a supreme example of poetic indeterminacy because its form resembles its content. In the poem's anti-closural structure, plot lines conclude, but because they usually conclude mid-

canto, the protagonist and reader experience continual narrative renewal. Byron wrote and published the poem in successive sections of two or three cantos, and most of these sections conclude self-consciously: with direct addresses to the reader, with indications of future poetic content, or with cliffhanger plot endings. Indeed, the final canto published before Byron's death, the sixteenth, ends with the sudden revelation that the gothic "ghost" is none other than the Duchess Fitz-Fulke. In many ways this "ending" seems particularly appropriate for a plot marked by constant repetition.

The openness of the poem's form, however, has tended to overshadow its evidence not only of closure, but closure of a particular kind. The most significant aspect of *Don Juan's* plot is Byron's refusal to deny the traditional end to the story. On the contrary, he reminds readers of the ending immediately:

I'll therefore take our ancient friend Don Juan,  
We all have seen him in the pantomime  
Sent to the devil, somewhat ere his time. (I, 1)

In *Byron's Don Juan and the Don Juan Legend* (1997), Moyra Haslett has offered an extensive and meticulous historical study of the poem's relationship to the original legend and demonstrated that most of Byron's readers were familiar with, and had opinions about, the traditional story.<sup>1</sup> The legend began in Spain, with Tirso de Molina's 1630 publication of *El burlador de Sevilla, y convidado de piedra*. Michael F. Robinson summarizes the central plot elements that were repeated in subsequent versions:

the hero who is an attractive and reckless seducer; the valet who occasionally protests at his master's actions but usually aids them;

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<sup>1</sup> Haslett offers a political reading of the poem that stresses its similarities to the legend, particularly the poem's seduction of the reader paralleling the legendary Don's liaisons.

the father murdered by the hero while defending his daughter's honour; the hero's invitation to the statue of the murdered man to supper and the statue's acceptance; and finally the statue's revenge by dragging the hero to hell. (Mozart 10-11)

Coleridge argued in his critique of Maturin's *Bertram*, a critique that inspired Byron's attack on the Lake School (McGann, *Juan*, 668), that Juan had become a caricature or an unreal figure. Of "the old Spanish play" (*Biographia* 2:212) performed as Don Juan or Giovanni, he writes,

the play is throughout *imaginative*. Nothing of it belongs to the real world, but the names of the places and persons. The comic parts, equally with the tragic; the living, equally with the defunct characters, are creatures of the brain; as little amenable to the rules of ordinary probability, as the *Satan* of *Paradise Lost*, or the *Caliban* of the *Tempest*, and therefore to be understood and judged of as impersonated *abstractions*. (*Biographia* 2:213)

The "abstraction" Don Juan has moral value, because he presents gentlemanly courage and scrupulous honor "in all their gloss and glow, but presents them for the sole purpose of displaying their hollowness, and in order to put us on our guard ... whenever these, and the like accomplishments are contemplated for themselves alone" (*Biographia* 2:221). For Coleridge, then, despite Don Juan's potentially attractive characteristics, he is too absurd and unreal for readers to imitate. Consequently, the play teaches readers to avoid both his aristocratic and his immoral principles.

While Coleridge argues that Don Juan lacks resemblance to real people, Byron was undoubtedly aware of his own reputation's similarity to the fictional libertine. Haslett explains that the poem "seemed to represent the tale of the legendary seducer told by an author with a reputation for libertinism" (81).

When Byron's narrator begins by referring to Don Juan being "Sent to the devil, somewhat ere his time," he may allude not only to the legend, but to Lady Caroline Lamb's *Glenarvon* (1816) and consequently himself, vilified and punished by Lamb three years earlier. Lamb's portrayal of Byron parallels very closely the traditional Juan, because Glenarvon pursues and then abandons women, holds aristocratic status, registers disdain for social norms, and secretly murders. After escaping from Ireland and fighting in sea-combat, he goes mad and becomes haunted by his dead female victims—Calantha, Alice, and Fiorabella. Eventually, like the legendary Don Juan, he goes to hell. As he expires, "visions of punishment and hell pursued him. Down, down, he seemed to sink with horrid precipitance from gulf to gulf, till immured in darkness; and as he closed his eyes in death, a voice, loud and terrible, from beneath, thus seemed to address him..." (3:320). This voice explains to Glenarvon and to the reader the moral reason for his condemnation: "You did not controul the fiend in your bosom, or stifle him in his first growth: he now has mastered you, and brought you here: you did not bow the knee for mercy whilst time was given you: now mercy shall not be shewn" (3:321).

Soon after the publication of *Don Juan* Cantos I-II, Byron anticipated judgement, not only for the hero but for the whole poem. Writing to Hobhouse, he links his own work with Juan's tragedy, "Your next letters will probably tell me that the "*pome*" has gone to the devil—in imitation of the last scene of the pantomime of the same name.—*That* can't be holpen—and was to be expected—and had been prophesied by all in the secret—and anticipated by me" (*Letters* 6:200). In the poem's opening canto itself, his narrator highlights this punishment: "Besides, in canto twelfth, I mean to show / The very place where wicked people go" (I, 207). The well-known prediction in the 1821 letter

to John Murray, too, does not deny Juan's eventual punishment but only speculates on what form that punishment should take:

The 5th. is so far from being the last of D.J. that it is hardly the beginning.—I meant to take him the tour of Europe—with a proper mixture of siege—battle—and adventure—and to make him finish as *Anacharsis Cloots*—in the French revolution.—To how many cantos this may extend—I know not—nor whether (even if I live) I shall complete it—but this was my notion.—I meant to have made him a Cavalier Servente in Italy and a cause for a divorce in England—and a Sentimental 'Werther-faced man' in Germany—so as to show the different ridicules of the society in each of those countries— — and to have displayed him gradually *gaté* and *blasé* as he grew older—as is natural.—But I had not quite fixed whether to make him end in Hell—or in an unhappy marriage,—not knowing which would be the severest.—The Spanish tradition says Hell—but it is probably only an Allegory of the other state. (*Letters* 8:78)

Although these predictions for the ending offer some alternative possibilities—very real possibilities despite Byron's tongue-in-cheek tone—the traditional tragic conclusion remains an impending certainty.

Elizabeth French Boyd locates a brief biography of Anacharsis Cloots (1755-94) in one of Byron's books on French history, *Biographical Anecdotes of the Founders of the French Republic* (Ed. John Adolphus, 1797) (Boyd 39).

Known as the "Orator of the human race," Cloots was a Baron and man of fortune nevertheless with a "taste for liberty" (Boyd 39). Like Juan, Cloots in his early life travelled throughout Europe and "being rich, noble, and sprightly, he was every where received with attention" (Boyd 39). He published in 1792 a treatise against tyranny in which he asserted, "Steel can kill only the tyrant,

but tyranny itself may be destroyed by knowledge” (Boyd 40). Although originally Prussian born, Cloots became a member of the National Convention and voted for the execution of Louis XVI.

As Malcolm Kelsall pointedly highlights, Cloots was guillotined in 1794 by his own Jacobin side during Robespierre’s Reign of Terror. The description in *Adolphus* says that he “continued faithful to his principles, and that he appears to have died innocent” (Boyd 40). In a final rhetorical gesture, Cloots “insisted on being the last person executed that day, in order to have an opportunity of instilling certain principles into the mind of each, by means of a short harangue, which he pronounced as the fatal guillotine was about to descend on his neck” (Boyd 40). This portrayal of an ineffective “hero” parallels not only what the Don Juan figure himself had become according to Coleridge, but also what Byron’s hero becomes as well—full of energy with little productive result. Kelsall argues that the irony of the revolutionary killed by the revolution would have been appropriate for the pessimistic political stance of *Don Juan*. The poem, “if finished, would be *The Dunciad* of political liberty” (*Politics* 146).

Kelsall’s analysis of Byron’s politics is central to an interpretation of *Don Juan*, because he delineates the Whig source of what has become known as Byron’s stance for liberty and freedom. Byron was neither a Jacobin nor a radical, and his claim of being “born for opposition” defines the oppositional role the Whig party held throughout Byron’s life (*Politics* 168). Kelsall argues that the “language of opposition” in Whig politics “frequently has a republican ring because opposed to the Crown, and yet, in defending ‘the Constitution’ insists on the existence of the monarchy as part of the proper ‘balance’ of the state” (*Politics* 11). Byron’s position, then, differs significantly from Godwin’s, because they are champions of “the people” in very different ways. Kelsall notes Juan’s



being attacked by a highwayman immediately after he waxed eloquent on the freedom of Britain (XI, 10). The highwayman has not turned to crime because of poverty; rather, the “lower classes practise in their small way what the aristocracy practises in a great fashion. Everyone is on the make for money” (Kelsall, *Politics* 171). When Byron’s narrator compares himself to a “male Mrs. Fry” (X, 84) but criticizes her methods, he implies that the lower classes imitate the upper:

Oh, Mrs. Fry! Why go to Newgate! Why  
 Preach to poor rogues? And wherefore not begin  
 With C[ar]l[t]o[n], or with other houses? Try  
 Your hand at hardened and imperial sin.  
 To mend the people’s an absurdity,  
 A jargon, a mere philanthropic din,  
 Unless you make their betters better:—Fie!  
 I thought you had more religion, Mrs. Fry. (X, 85)

If Byron’s political opinions have their basis in Whig ideals, the poetic irresolution can be seen not as a result of a conviction about freedom but instead a result of the poet’s powerlessness. Juan is not “raising stones against tyrants” in Europe, Kelsall points out (*Politics* 151), and the satire of the poem pessimistically criticizes all existing power structures.<sup>2</sup>

The spectre of a tragic ending for the poem is necessary for its political satire, and Byron’s speculations about the ending—marriage or execution—significantly involve socially created condemnations rather than supernatural

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<sup>2</sup> The poet’s stance in *Don Juan* seems to resemble Byron’s 1814 journal comment: “I have simplified my politics into an utter detestation of all existing governments ... the first moment of an universal republic would convert me into an advocate for single and uncontradicted despotism. The fact is, riches are power, and poverty is slavery all over the earth, and one sort of establishment is no better, nor worse, for a *people* than another” (*Letters* 3:242).

ones. His Juan, as many have pointed out, becomes a product of social forces in ways not seen in the legend, and as a pre-condemned but pitiable hero, he gains sympathy.<sup>3</sup> The narrator's choice to "begin with the beginning" (I, 7) allows him to describe Don Juan's background. Even Juan's "natural spirit," which his education attempts to tame (I, 50), apparently comes from his father: "I had my doubts ... but it would not be fair / From sire to son to augur good or ill" (I, 51). Early on, Juan lacks understanding of the forces acting upon him: "Poor little fellow! he had no idea / Of his own case, and never hit the true one" (I, 86). Haslett makes the astute argument that Byron's Juan is not quite the victim he is assumed to be: he moves from each romance to another, while his lovers remain behind—sometimes in convents or graves. Nevertheless, in the portrayal of a Juan who is more innocent than those around him, the poem defends libertine conduct by suggesting that biological and social forces conspire to direct his actions.

Indeed, Byron's Juan, with his innocent motives and lack of social power, holds little resemblance to the traditional Don Juan or Don Giovanni. He resembles instead the Don's valet. In Da Ponte's and Mozart's opera, Leporello is as a comic character whose actions result primarily from Don Giovanni's commands. Leporello is interested in women himself, and he comments aside in a large company assembled to prepare for Zerlina and Masetto's wedding, "Among such a crowd / I might even find one or two [women] for myself" (58). When Don Giovanni rebukes him for joking with the peasant women, Leporello

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<sup>3</sup> I was surprised by my own response to the ending of a performance of *Don Giovanni*, which was to pity the Don. Although I had no sympathy for him throughout the opera, after he was thrown into hell the punishment seemed overly harsh.

The condemnation of Don Juan at the end of both the opera and the pantomime offered grand and apocalyptic theatre, when Juan was dragged to flames. The pantomime portrayed Juan surrounded by fiends and furies, who bind him in chains and throw him to the flames. Because the ending was well known, any portrayal of Juan's life will have grand appeal in part because his anticipated death will be so spectacular.

claims simply to be following his example: "I too, my dear master, / Am just showing these girls my protection" (Mozart 59). Later Leporello romances Donna Elvira, and finds the "game ... not unpleasant" (Mozart 84), but only because he is pretending to be Don Giovanni so that his master might seduce another woman by dressing as his servant ("women of her station / Don't seem to trust the gentry" [81]). Leporello, then, aids Giovanni's seductions and even acts as him, yet he does not bear responsibility for those actions and later pleads, "Don Giovanni by his cunning / Stole my innocence away" (Mozart 91). Don Giovanni, by contrast, possesses the cunning that destroys others, and others call him "the evil one" (Mozart 104) whose hardened heart and selfishness drive his crimes. Giovanni's seduction of lower-class women is an abuse of power, and his murder of Donna Anna's father is a transgression of the social hierarchy.

In Byron's poem by contrast, as Caroline Franklin points out, "all the adult women of the poem are in positions of power or authority over Juan" (*Heroines* 116), and he, of course, utterly fails to harm either Donna Julia's husband or Haidée's father, despite his attempts at bravado. Byron's contemporaries would have interpreted his Juan by comparing him with the Juan of legend, and this comparison would leave Byron's hero more of a victim than a perpetrator. The 1823 *British Critic* reviewer of *Don Juan*, VI-VIII, saw Byron's hero as very different from the traditional Juan:

Lord Byron knew very well that a character like the original Don Juan, or the heroes of Gil Blas and Peregrine Pickle, most of whom, a young and ingenuous reader heartily wishes in the house of correction, would not have answered the purposes of seduction so well as the generous but ungovernable boy of seventeen, whom he

has so artfully enveloped in a constant maze of temptation.

(Reiman 335)

Essentially, to defend Juan as a product of social forces is to implicate readers in his creation. It is significant, then, that the poem's imagined readers appear to have the elite knowledge that places them among Juan's potential peers. While the poem frequently complains about those condemning the poem and portrays the narrator as, martyr-like, sharing Truth's "Beauty and her Banishment" (IX, 22), the narrator uses the third person to refer to critics and the more personal, direct "you" to speak to the understanding, "kind reader" who is distinguished from those who do not appreciate the poem: "Our Hero (and, I trust, kind reader! yours)..." (IX, 23). This parenthetical statement suggests a secret intimacy with the reader, and the "kind reader" apparently would respond to Juan with the same affection as do both the narrator and the poem's female characters. While "kind reader" seems to address women in particular, the narrator frequently appears to speak to both genders and to alternate from one to the other. With both genders, significantly, the narrator uses a cultured tone that highlights their social position, and he assumes that he and his readers completely understand each other. He treats readers solicitously after Juan has been given the assignment of going to England:

While this high post of honour's in abeyance,  
 For one or two days, reader, we request  
 You'll mount with our young hero the conveyance  
 Which wafted him from Petersburg.... (X, 49)

The narrator also politely involves readers in creating the narrative itself.<sup>4</sup>

While describing the sleeping Turkish women he comments,

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<sup>4</sup> In *Tristram Shandy*, the narrator often calls readers "your worships" or "your reverences," and the "gentle reader" is often male—as in the famous passage where the narrator invites portraits of the widow Wadman: uncle Toby fell in love and "possibly, gentle

My similes are gathered in a heap,  
 So pick and chuse—perhaps you'll be content  
 With a carved lady on a monument. (VI, 68)

In such statements, he assumes that the reader has a certain level of knowledge and education, and he acknowledges that education in another intimate aside:

... few are slow  
 In thinking that their enemy is beat,  
 (Or *beaten*, if you insist on grammar, though  
 I never think about it in a heat). (VII, 42)

His elite readers have a pre-existing familiarity with described places and people. When on Gulbeyaz's boudoir the narrator suggests that "all descriptions garble / The true effect" and so concludes that he should not "Be too minute; an outline is the best, — / A lively reader's fancy does the rest" (VI, 98), he assumes that the reader can imagine the contents of a privileged woman's dressing room. Similarly, in Canto V when Juan rebuffs Gulbeyaz, the narrator infers readers' identification with this experience:

reader, with such a temptation—so wouldst thou .... To conceive this right .... Sit down, Sir, paint her to your own mind—as like your mistress as you can—as unlike your wife as your conscience will let you" (450). Sterne's female reader usually is "Madam," who is given a lesson early in the novel on reading for knowledge instead of plot. The narrator tells her to reread the previous chapter because he is trying to combat "a vicious taste, which has crept into thousands besides herself,—of reading straight forwards, more in quest of the adventures, than of the deep erudition and knowledge which a book of this cast, if read over as it should be, would infallibly impart with them" (83). This conversational style and Sterne's unfinished endings in *Tristram Shandy* and *Sentimental Journey* resemble Byron's poem. *Don Juan* does, though, seem to address a more aristocratic audience than does either Sterne or Fielding. While the following usage likely only indicates changes in language from Sterne's time to Byron's, according to the *Concordance to Don Juan*, Byron's poem never uses "Madam" to address the reader. *Juan* uses Madam only in Canto VII, in quotation marks and paired with "Sir" to discuss the commonality of the name "Smith" (VII, 25), and in Canto I, when Antonia, Donna Julia's maid, addresses Donna Julia (I, 136-7, 163, 172).

Remember, or (if you can not) imagine,  
 Ye! who have kept your chastity when young,  
 While some more desperate dowager has been waging  
 Love with you, and been in the dog-days stung  
 By your refusal, recollect her raging!  
 Or recollect all that was said or sung  
 On such a subject; then suppose the face  
 Of a young downright beauty in this case. (V, 130)

The reader might “remember” or “imagine” because such incidents are already part of the readers’ horizon of expectations, as the next stanza makes clear: “Suppose, but you already have supposed, / The spouse of Potiphar, the Lady Booby...” (V, 131). The implications of these instructions are twofold. First, they assume the reader’s understanding because of literary exposure if not personal experience as well. Second, they establish the sexual politics as a power relationship where the experienced, older woman has control over the disempowered younger man. This scenario applies to aristocratic women more than bourgeois ones, and calls for a reader who recognizes these particular social contexts. Graham suggests that early in the poem, at the end of the third canto, “true confessions curtailed at just the right moment and ‘old boy’ consensus blended of antics and esoterics prove superbly effective at ensuring that Byron, his narrator, and the reader stand together as a community of the cultivated” (144).

The narrator assumes that female readers, too, are sexually experienced yet socially aware that one would never admit that. When Juan is in Russia, he leaves to the reader the responsibility of specifying Juan’s role with the Empress. He tells the “gentle ladies” (IX, 49) that if they want to know the

meaning of the “high official situation” (IX, 48), they should suppose it themselves:

And thus I supplicate your supposition,  
 And mildest, Matron-like interpretation  
 Of the Imperial Favourite’s Condition. (IX, 52)

The narrator’s ironic tone not only defers to “knowing” readers but mimics a particular class-based attitude. Andrew Elfenbein adopts D.A. Miller’s term the “open secret” to refer to “scandalous information that most in a particular group know, but none discusses” (209). He writes, “The aristocrats in Regency society reinforced their class solidarity by tolerating behavior that flouted norms associated with Victorian ‘bourgeois morality’” (209-10).<sup>5</sup>

The internal marketing of future cantos similarly demonstrates the narrator’s understanding of audience desires and capitalizes on the poet’s intimacy with readers. The end of Canto XII advertises:

And if my thunderbolt not always rattles,  
 Remember, reader! you have had before  
 The worst of tempests and the best of battles  
 That e’er were brewed from elements or gore,  
 Besides the most sublime of—Heaven knows what else—  
 An Usurer could scarce expect much more—  
 But my best Canto, save one on Astronomy,

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<sup>5</sup> What we now think of as Victorian bourgeois morality can apply to several sets of norms. Jonathan David Gross argues that Byron uses a gay narrator in *Don Juan*. His contemporary readers might have identified this aspect of the narrator if they already knew the rumours about Byron’s sexuality. The idea of a gay narrator would help to explain the narrator’s claims of powerlessness (a homosexual narrator cannot express his sexuality except through innuendo, as Gross points out). Despite Byron’s attraction to boys, which might indicate his dominant position in relationships with both men and women, he rejected any idea that he possessed sexual authority. Not only did he have a very feminized image (Elfenbein 209), but he frequently claimed that women controlled him, and he seems to have felt powerless in his feelings for boys such as Loukas Chalandritsanos.

Will turn upon 'Political Economy.' (XII, 88)

Poet and reader, here, share a familiarity with epic poetry and a knowledge of modern, educated, and likely male, conversation: "Mean time read all the National Debt-sinkers, / And tell me what you think of your great thinkers" (XII, 89). Yet the reference to a "Usurer" subtly alludes to the economic aspect of author-reader relations. An author must market his material because he depends upon reader purchases, and while Byron did not rely on poem sales for his livelihood—indeed, maligned such a dependency—reminding readers of their economic importance empowers them.

Reviewers claimed that the poem's solicitation of reader involvement was irresponsible. Moyra Haslett argues that they did not interpret Byron's poem as a confrontational satire of society in the manner of Pope; they instead argued that the poem seduced the reader in a manner similar to the traditional Don Juan's seduction of women. She summarizes, the "reviewers of *Don Juan* specifically cautioned, not just against the frank indelicacy of many of the poem's expressions, but, more fearfully, against the contamination which the mode of reading encouraged by the poem implied" (228). The sexual innuendoes, puns, and allusions require reader "participation in the production of their, frequently bawdy, meaning" (Haslett 228). Reviewers feared these consequences particularly for women: "As the act of seduction was concomitant with the woman's loss of innocence, so too the female reader's participation in the text betrayed her already, or simultaneous, corruption" (Haslett 228).

The poem's intended audience indicates, however, that Byron considered his readers—female and male—to be both socially knowing and sexually experienced. Moreover, the poet's position is that it is the poem, not the reader,



that is impressionable. When the first canto ends, the narrator suggests that the story's continuation will depend on the reader:

whether

I shall proceed with his adventures is  
 Dependent on the public altogether. (I, 199)

In outlining future poetic scenes, the narrator implies that the selection has its basis in epic tradition:

My poem's epic, and is meant to be  
 Divided in twelve books; each book containing,  
 With love, and war, a heavy gale at sea,  
 A list of ships, and captains, and kings reigning,  
 New characters; the episodes are three:  
 A panorama view of hell's in training,  
 After the style of Virgil and of Homer,  
 So that my name of Epic's no misnomer. (I, 200)

If the poet simply follows the classical tradition of Virgil and Homer, he should not personally be held responsible for his subjects. His "things as they are" representation of characters, too, stresses his lack of control. Of Gulbeyaz's reaction to Juan and Dudù the narrator comments, "far be't from me to anticipate / In what way feminine Caprice may dissipate" (VI, 119). Writing itself has its own life:

Men should know why

They write, and for what end; but, note or text,  
 I never know the word which will come next. (IX, 41)

In such comments he says that “the word” performs the action, because it “will come next” with little thought or planning on his part.<sup>6</sup> When Juan is in Russia he describes Catherine’s passion in equivocal terms:

the Sovereign was smitten,  
 Juan much flattered by her love, or lust;—  
 I cannot stop to alter words once written,  
 And the two are so mixed with human dust,  
 That he who *names one*, both perchance may hit on. (IX, 77)

Love and lust are already interchangeable in human nature, and so the poet cannot help but equate them. Things govern him, not the other way around, and the narrator further justifies his satiric equation of love with lust by invoking the onward pace of the narrative. He represents writing itself as having the same control over him that “the world” he portrays has over his representations.

Michael J. Robertson illustrates how the colloquial freedom of the narrator, the poem’s skepticism, and its cynicism were typical of the aristocracy. Byron, though, devalues the aristocratic position in his poem by representing its apparent carelessness and flexibility as a feminine attribute. The narrator discusses the “She epistle” which “never ends” (XIII, 105), yet he himself “meant to make this poem very short” but now “can’t tell where it may not run” (XV, 22). He refers to himself as “scribbling once a week, / Tiring old readers, nor discovering new” (XIV, 10). The style of the poem reinforces his argument that it lacks power, and of his Muse, which is of course female, he suggests, “I think she is as harmless / As some who labour more and yet may charm less” (XV, 94).

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<sup>6</sup> *Tristram Shandy’s* narrator, too, claimed to be governed by his pen.

The digressive and flippant style of the writing itself, then, supports the poet's position as simply a powerless mirror of human affairs—the oppositional role is, pessimistically, not a politically influential one. In this representation, the poem, like *Juan*, is a social product of environment, and the projected ending, too, has been predetermined by literary and cultural tradition and so would be described, in Marianna Torgovnick's schemata, as congruent with audience expectations. Even Byron's didactic argument that his poem exposes hypocrisy assumes audience understanding and power. The preface to Cantos VI-VIII, published with those sections in 1823, quotes from Voltaire: "Modesty has fled hearts and has taken refuge on lips" and "The more depraved our conduct, the more careful our words become; people believe they can reacquire through language what has been lost in virtue" (trans. by McGann, fn.53-8, p.719). Byron explains, "This is the real fact, as applicable to the degraded and hypocritical mass which leavens the present English generation, and is the only answer they deserve" (296). Instead of specifying any particular conduct or situation in which modesty and virtue have been lost, he merely gestures to the "real fact" and disdains giving readers more than "they deserve." Martin argues that Byron's poetry "exhilarates in the denial of its public's expectations and demands" (*Poet* 174), and that *Don Juan* "assaulted its predominantly middle-class audience with a display of aristocratic irresponsibility" (*Poet* 186). But while he in this preface does suggest an antagonistic position, he, more importantly, assumes that readers know what he is talking about. Like a political opponent among his peers, he assumes that readers will recognize his satiric targets, know what should be done about them, and have the understanding to figure out answers for themselves—should they choose to.

Words themselves, as the argument in the preface suggests, are simply superficial. In a letter to Richard Belgrave Hoppner in October 1819, Byron countered the assumption that readers imitated literary works: “There has been an eleventh commandment to the women not to read [*Don Juan*]*—and what is still more extraordinary they seem not to have broken it. — — But that can be of little import to them poor things—for the reading or non-reading a book—will never keep down a single petticoat*” (*Letters* 6:237). Readers are not passive consumers molded by the power of the literary work; on the contrary, Byron represents the world as *his* producer.

This position radically contradicted the dominant view among reviewers, who continued to assume the malleability of readers and thus literary works’ crucial role in regulating behaviour. The first *British Critic* review of the poem (on Cantos I-II, 1819) suggests,

If without knowing the name of the poet, or the history of the work, our opinion had been required of the intention of the canto, we should have answered—that it was a calm and deliberate design to palliate and recommend the crime of adultery, to work up the passions of the young to its commission, and to afford them the most practical hints for its consummation. (Reiman 299)

The *Edinburgh Monthly Review* argues that the best written works are the most influential. It describes “the characters written on the soul of man by the hand of genius” as “*more indelible by far than the feeble impress attempted to be given by didactic drudgery, and elaborate moralising*” (Reiman 793). And Francis Jeffrey reiterates this view when he attributes automatic pedagogy to the writer who creates attractive characters:

his writings have a tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue ... this is effected, not merely by direct maxims and

examples, of an imposing or seducing kind, but by the constant exhibition of the most profligate heartlessness in the persons of those who had been transiently represented as actuated by the purest and most exalted emotions—and in the lessons of that very teacher who had been, but a moment before, so beautifully pathetic in the expression of the loftiest conceptions. (Reiman 936)

These reviewers, then, did not recognize the alleged necessitarian nature of Byron's representations, but rather read the literary work as an instrument of power over impressionable readers.

Contemporary individual readers of Byron, too, treated the poem as if it had authority over readers even though they themselves freely changed its content. If Byron through *Don Juan* meant in part to defend his character by implicating readers in his own creation, then Caroline Lamb recognized his intention. Both she and, later, Isaac Clason see Byron's persona as being closely connected to his narrator and central character. But they also attribute a power to "Byron as author" that Byron had denied he had.

Caroline Lamb fits the requirements for an upper-class reader who recognizes the narrator's tone and targets, while her 1819 imitation titled "A New Canto" stresses Byron's controversial position as author. James Soderholm points out the similarity between Lamb's "blazing world" (XXI), with its waters' "fire-stream curl" with a "whizzing, roaring, sweltering whirl!" (XII), and Pope's *Dunciad* (Soderholm 64-5). Just as "Universal Darkness buries All" in Pope, here a "deep damnation" waits for "callous, crooked, hopeless souls!" (XVII). Thus, although Lamb imitates the poem after Byron had published only two cantos, she anticipates the satirical thrust of the whole and incorporates the Don Juan legend, with its pessimistic, strong closure, into her

reading. Importantly, however, her poem anticipates a more diverse audience than does Byron's and subtly criticizes him for lacking the same awareness.

This poem focuses on "doomsday" (III) rather than on Juan, or in other words, it takes the traditional legend's conclusion as a theme but does not apply the condemnation to Juan alone. In fact, Lamb assumes that the Byronic narrator essentially is another version of the Don Juan figure. Her speaker asks to have a place high in the burning St. Paul's "To catch, before I touch my sinner's salary, / The first grand crackle in the whispering gallery" (III), and he still feels amorous, even towards the devils "riding on a burning rafter ... in my arms I long to fold one" (XIV). Like the traditional Juan, Lamb's narrator differs from his readers because of his contempt for consequences:

And now, ye coward sinners (I'm a bold one,  
Scorning all here, nor caring for hereafter,  
A radical, a stubborn, and an old one). (XIV)

Later in the poem, her narrator confirms that he is "Byron" (who was living in Italy) when he parallels his own fate with that of readers: "And I in Italy, you soon may learn, / On t'other half am reeling far from you" (XVIII).

This condemned narrator is central to Lamb's poem from its opening:

I'm sick of fame—I'm gorged with it, so full  
I almost could regret the happier hour  
When northern oracles proclaimed me dull,  
Grieving my Lord should so mistake his power. (I)

The "northern oracles" that condemned Byron as a young, obscure poet seem to have accused the narrator of uselessness, because an aristocrat ("my Lord") should employ his abilities more profitably—more politically. Lamb's narrator suggests that although he had been incensed by his reviews at the time, he now despises his subsequent fame. The first line indicates that the

narrator's excessive consumption has produced not nourishment and growth but only disgust.<sup>7</sup> Her narrator's self-portrayals here of being both lethargic ("sick") and greedy ("gorged") seem in part to satirize the aristocracy itself. Her narrator highlights his class again in the second stanza when Montgomery, supposedly killed by the reviewers, "had not spirit to revenge their mummery, / Nor lordly purse to print and persevere" (II). Lamb mentions Juan only once in this poem, and then to suggest again the class superiority of the poet and his hero. Juan is a well-bred contrast to Napoleon: "I doubt him thoroughbred, he's not a true one, / A bloodhound spaniel-crossed, and no Don Juan" (XI).

In Lamb's narrator's scorn, doomsday itself simply provides entertainment. The second-last stanza again describes the speaker's celebrity: "Mad world! For fame we rant, call names, and fight— / I scorn it heartily, yet love to dazzle it" (XXVI). Because this closing reference to "fame" parallels the opening stanza, where Lamb's Byronic poet is "sick" and "gorged" with fame, he seems to acknowledge at the end his obsessive need for that which makes him ill. The doomsday images themselves frequently include metaphors of food. Holy water is "fizzing in a tea-kettle *piano*" (V); the "Peak of Derbyshire" reels like "a drunken sot" (VI). The devils "Play at snapdragon," a game of snatching raisins out of burning brandy (XIV); the devils "serve the skulkers" as the skulkers have "served lobsters in their time" (XV); "usurers and misers melt" into a "hell-broth of their cursed gold" (XVI), and the narrator has heard tales that would "make a bishop long to roast attorneys" (XVII). The entire world—or at least the financial world—collapses when "Norway's copper-mines about the Baltic / Swell, heave, and rumble with their boiling ore." This collapse is like "some griped giant's motion peristaltic" that eventually "burst, and to the sea

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<sup>7</sup> This language gains significance in light of habits in Byron that we would now refer to as eating disorders.

vast gutters pour" (XII). Just as Lamb's narrator's consumption makes him ill, these images of food become images of excretion.

Lamb's poem's strongest condemnation rests on those who allow greed to overcome sympathy:

On all who mock at want they never felt,  
 On all whose consciences are bought and sold,  
 E'en as on me, be stern damnation dealt—  
 And lawyers, damn them all! The blood runs cold,  
 That man should deal with misery to mock it,  
 And filch an only shilling from its pocket. (XVI)

The "E'en as on me" reminds readers that the speaker himself is damned, because he employs the same principles in writing his poetry as the lawyers and usurers use in their businesses. For instance, the final stanza addresses the reader:

You shall have more of her another time,  
 Since gulled you will be with our flights poetic,  
 Our eight, and ten, and twenty feet sublime,  
 Our maudlin, hey-down-derrified pathetic;  
 For my part, though I'm doomed to write in rhyme,  
 To read it would be worse than an emetic—  
 But something must be done to cure the spleen,  
 And keep my name in capitals, like Kean. (XXVII)

Thus, because the poetry "gulls," dupes, or takes advantage of readers, Lamb's poet will continue writing. Although "doomed to write in rhyme" or confined to the hell/heaven of writing, the speaker prefers authorial over reader status. The reference to an "emetic" again suggests purging. If Lamb's narrator finds reading to resemble an emetic, then his readers likely will be made sick as well.



Readers' illnesses, however, seem to feed the poet: he must continue the cycle in order to "cure the spleen" by keeping his "name in capitals." The poem ends by returning to the image of the fame-"gorged" poet with which it began.

In this portrayal of a writer who (rather disgustingly) consumes the beliefs and sympathies of his audience in order to satisfy his own appetite, Lamb portrays a poet with disdain for his readers. If Byron posits a knowing, elite audience in *Don Juan*, then Lamb interprets this stance as an arrogant dismissal of more sensitive readers. Here, on the other hand, in a move that shows the difference between this poem and the *Dunciad*, her poet includes a picture of the survivors who will rise above the chaos:

Free, bursting from his mound of lively green,  
     Winged light as zephyr of the rosy morn,  
 The poor man smiling on the proud is seen,  
     With something of a mild, forgiving scorn—  
 The marbled proud one, haply with the mean,  
     Sole on his prayer of intercession borne:  
 Upward in peal harmonious they move,  
     Soft as the midnight tide of hallowed love. (XXII)

In part this recognition of the virtuous may reflect Lamb's desire not to damn all. She similarly writes in the preface to *Glenarvon* that "the shaft of satire" is not "in any one instance directed against the weak, the fallen, or the defenceless" (I:vi).

This distinction indicates Lamb's sensitivity to difference in her readers. She represents the Byronic narrator, by contrast, as using the virtuous only as additional sport. Her narrator reconsiders his manipulation of reader emotions:

If some poor nervous souls my muse affright,

I might a strain of consolation pour,  
 Talk of the spotless spirits, snowy white,  
 Which, newly clad, refreshing graves restore,  
 And silvery wreaths of glory round them curled  
 Serenely rise above the blazing world. (XXI)

Because the poet pities delicate readers, he decides not to condemn them. But Lamb's "Byron" imagines the ascension of the virtuous because both readers' destruction and their preservation provide sport for him. Her poem "mingles heaven and hell" (XXVI) because doomsday for him equals "heaven": "Return we to our heaven, our fire and smoke, / Though now you may begin to take the joke!" (XXIV). Byron's sentimental verses that have "gulled" readers into thinking that the poet himself is sentimental comprise Lamb's "joke": verses her speaker describes as "gushing shrieks, the bubbling squeaks, the bride / Of nature, blue-eyed, black-eyed," which he treats sarcastically: "Except for rampant and amphibious brute, / Such damp and drizzly places would not suit" (XXV).

Soderholm writes that the "bulk of 'A New Canto' presents Lamb's wish to bury Regency society" (64), and Haslett argues that these "verses punish, through the impersonated voice of Byron's narrator, the canting English public who had condemned the 'immorality' of both *Glenarvon* and *Don Juan*" (211). Yet the poem also punishes the Byronic narrator himself for manipulating and using readers for personal satisfaction. Lamb's imitation of *Don Juan* highlights Byron's transgression against the ways literature was interpreted and applied.

While “A New Canto”’s narrator stays distant from his readers, Lamb’s narrator in *Glenarvon* uses identification and sympathy.<sup>8</sup> The novel, like *Don Juan*, claims to represent “reality,” but, unlike Byron’s later poem, *Glenarvon* exposes the heroine’s most private weaknesses so that others may learn to avoid her mistakes. Although it criticizes the upper classes, its satiric targets do not receive stringent punishment, except for Glenarvon himself, and its didacticism works largely through developing the reader’s sympathy for Calantha, the attractive but flawed heroine.

In fact, the tone of the novel implies that these lessons can be applied to a broad range of readers even though the primary characters are aristocrats. When Calantha feels that her husband Lord Avondale does not understand her, the omniscient narrator explains her error in general terms: “when the mind once cherishes a discontented spirit, every event that occurs tends to strengthen it in the delusion it loves to indulge. Calantha only thought herself neglected. To her perverted eyes every thing appeared in a false light. Thus she accused Lord Avondale when in fact she herself was alone to blame” (2:110). It is important that Calantha shares her position as Glenarvon’s spurned lover with other female characters from lower social classes. Her errors offer guidance to readers distinguished by gender rather than class:

It may indeed be held immoral to exhibit, in glowing language,  
scenes which ought never to have been at all; but when every day,

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<sup>8</sup> Discussions of the novel have often been harsh. Lamb’s peers were shocked over her exposure of personal relationships, and her biographer Henry Blyth argues that William Lamb was “condemned for his insensitivity” and that the novel was “an outrageous work in many respects and badly written” (196). Biographer Elizabeth Jenkins offers a more sympathetic portrayal of *Glenarvon* than does Blyth, although she also suggests, “as a novel it is not a competent piece of work, and it does, in places, verge upon idiocy” (185). My view is that while the novel is not as well-written as it could be, it is frequently a very probing work and even its melodramatic excesses are not “idiocy” when one considers the contemporary literary context—in which Jane Austen’s ironic detachment was more of an exception than a rule for female writers.

and every hour of the day—at all times, and in all places, and in all countries alike, man is gaining possession of his victim by similar arts, to paint the portrait to the life, to display his base intentions, and their mournful consequences, is to hold out a warning and admonition to innocence and virtue; this cannot be wrong. All deceive themselves. At this very instant of time, what thousands of beguiled and credulous beings are saying to themselves in the pride of their hearts, “I am not like Calantha,” or, “thanks be to Heaven, the idol of my fancy is not a Glenarvon.” (3:39-40)

The novel’s purpose, in part, is to prevent female readers from falling prey to the same type of seduction that destroyed Calantha, a seduction caused by the innocent inability of women to recognize seduction itself.

Although the female-focused didacticism in *Glenarvon* results in part from the novel genre, Lamb’s literary assumptions reflect the dominant cultural ideals for poetry as well. Because readers might imitate the work, authors should offer specific guidance about behaviour to emulate and to avoid. Indeed, even readers sympathetic to Byron interpreted *Don Juan* as offering satire of individuals and particular moral failings rather than criticism of more general social structures and ideals. Leigh Hunt implies a parallel with *Clarissa* when he argues that, with the marriage of Donna Julia and Don Alfonso, Byron does not ridicule the bonds of marriage generally, or where they are formed as they should be: he merely shows the folly and wickedness of setting forms and opinions against nature. If stupid and selfish parents will make up matches between persons whom difference of age or disposition disqualifies for mutual affection, they must take the consequences. (Rutherford 177)

Hunt suggests that Julia's fate provides a lesson on "painful consequences to those who have sinned according to 'nature's law.' Julia, the victim of selfishness and 'damned custom,' is shut up in a convent, where no consolation remains to her but the remembrance of her entire and hapless love; but even that was perhaps pleasanter to her than living in the constant irksomeness of feigning an affection she could not feel" (Rutherford 177). Shelley, too, reads individual moral lessons from the poem when he writes to Byron about Cantos III-V (Oct. 21, 1821), "You unveil & present in its true deformity what is worst in human nature, & this is what the wittings of the age murmur at, conscious of their want of power to endure the scrutiny of such a light. — We are damned to the knowledge of good & evil, and it is well for us to know what we should avoid no less than what we should seek" (Rutherford 197). Shelley's comment about "human nature" and his assumption that the poem shows "what we should avoid" and "should seek" suggest that it offers moral lessons that readers from a variety of social situations and classes might learn.

Although Byron intended his audience to be select, then, numerous readers from various classes used Byronic statements to support their causes. The twentieth-century view of Byron as anti-closure and pro-freedom has its basis in nineteenth-century radical adoptions. In a detailed study of Byron's poetry sales, William St. Clair suggests that *Don Juan* was received by a reading public different from that of earlier works. While the early audience for Byron was composed of the upper classes who decreased after the scandal of his separation, the number of readers from lower social classes increased: "in the 1820s a growing new readership developed among a different class of society, who can be loosely categorised as the educated lower middle and upper working classes" (19). These readers could afford the cheap editions and cheap piracies of *Don Juan* (piracies Byron had objected to), and they sympathized

with the liberal political and moral sentiments that the conservative classes condemned. Radicals such as “George Julius Harney and George Jacob Holyoake, leading agitators, often quoted lines from *Don Juan* as their motto: ‘I wish men to be free, / As much from mobs as kings—from you as me’ (ix.25)” (Elfenbein 86-7).

In a similar manner, Franklin has described how the feminized, “natural” sexuality portrayed by Byron influenced later writers or

contributed to the incorporation of female sexuality and feeling into the feminist romantic individualism of female-authored nineteenth-century novels like *Villette* ... the development of twentieth-century psychoanalytic theories of repression .... [and even] the insistent focus on female sexuality within the confessional *Bildungsroman* of so-called feminist contemporary novels and the preferencing of psychosexual experience over the socio-political in liberal humanist feminist criticism. (“Changes” 84-5)

Just as liberal uses of Byron’s politics tend to play down his aristocratic Whig position and attitude, feminist uses of his sexual politics have repressed his anti-feminism.

At first glance, these varied uses of Byron simply appear to arise from the poet’s flexibility and readers’ capitalization on that diversity. In *Byron in England: His Fame and After-Fame* (1924), Samuel Chew describes the “imitations in the metre and manner” of *Don Juan* as “innumerable” (69). He describes three plays founded on the poem (one in 1822, two in 1828 [41]) and he lists eleven poetic sequels written before 1830 and a total of twenty-nine by 1908. Readers were absorbed with *Don Juan* undoubtedly because Byron was already an immensely popular and controversial figure before the poem was published. In addition, examining two of the sequels reinforces the ideas already

suggested in reference to Lamb: that interpretations and uses of Byron involve historically specific ideas about the authority of the author, the place of the literary work in relation to the reader, and assumptions about the audience itself.

Jonathan Bailey's three-act play *The Sultana: or, A Trip to Turkey* (1822) dramatizes the Juan-Haidée narrative after Byron's Canto V had in 1821 left Juan in the Sultana's possession. If "point" often fails to be determined before the end, as Vipond and Hunt have suggested, then at the same time this rewriting demonstrates the way a changed ending transforms an entire work. Bailey uses the Juan-Haidée plot as a self-contained narrative with a new conclusion, when he keeps their relationship a sentimental romance and has Haidée and the Sultan of Turkey become heroic figures who save Juan. The play uses closure to assert conservative lessons for audiences, and in doing so it highlights by omission the importance of class in Byron's representations.

The play opens with Haidée lamenting to her maid "the poor mariners at sea" after the recent storm (5). She is thus immediately introduced as a sentimental heroine with the action focalized through her rather than through Juan. Unlike Byron's Haidée, who "spoke not of scruples, ask'd no vows, / Nor offer'd any" (II, 190), Bailey's character promises to be true to Juan. Then, she does not die but rather uses her death as a ruse to allow her escape. Planning to purchase Juan's freedom with her jewels, she dresses in men's clothes and sets off after him.

Eventually, the ending depends on the Sultan, who discovers Juan's and Haidée's impostures. He vindicates them: "We will protect you, and reward your faithful loves. Wealth, splendour, and a monarch's smiles, shall bless your future days" (33). The title of the play seems meant only to highlight the basis

in Byron's poem, because the Sultana has little involvement in the plot. Although Haidée thought she could buy Juan's freedom with her wealth, the pair gain happiness only because of the Sultan's power—a benevolent patriarchy that prizes an ideology of romantic love and commitment. The final two lines ask the audience to seal this message: "Now, let the world the Sultan's act approve, / Who crowns with wealth and honours *faithful love*" (34).

Unlike Bailey's Haidée, Byron's *Don Juan* women are unable to leave the social hierarchies that govern them. Although his Haidée and Juan seem to have the ingenuous idea that they live in an island paradise immune from economic troubles or foreign antagonism, when Lambro returns he exposes their naiveté. Lambro becomes angry, significantly, not because his daughter has presumed him dead, but because she has promoted another male to take his place. The servants recognize Juan, not Haidée, as the ruler of the island (III, 43), and so Juan threatens Lambro's established patriarchy.<sup>9</sup> In Juan and Haidée's separation, then, Byron skeptically analyses the power relationships that thwart naive idealism—perhaps thwart it necessarily, since Haidée and Juan are on a course to bankrupt the island. Romantic love does not exist independently, but rather impacts the social hierarchies surrounding the pair.

Bailey transforms this plot, interestingly enough, not by challenging Lambro's patriarchal authority, but by removing Juan and Haidée to a locale in which they cease to threaten the ruling powers. Effectively, they become middle-class lovers whose union fails to affect government or ruling-class power relations. With Turkey as the play's setting, Bailey can capitalize on the appeal of a foreign location while also removing Haidée and Juan from a Greece in which their positions were problematic. In part this change seems

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<sup>9</sup> Literally, Haidée dies because just as she misinterpreted her own role on the island, she misinterprets blood on the floor as signifying Juan's death (IV, 58).



ideologically appropriate to the Americas. The play, published in New York, suggests that travelling to a new country will bring happiness and prosperity. But the shift also reveals how central class implications were to Byron's representations. In *Bailey*, when Haidée and Juan cease to hold positions that threaten authority (whether they mean to or not) and instead appeal pathetically to the ruling classes, they receive both emotional and financial rewards for their subservience.

This type of sentimentalism that prizes a middle-class ideal of insulation from the corruptions of class marked much of Byron's reception. The review of *Don Juan Cantos I-II* in *Blackwood's Magazine*, August 1819, condemns Byron's immorality but praises the poem's moments of sentiment and, significantly, highlights Haidée's "innocence" and helplessness instead of her status as daughter of the island's ruler. The authors lament the pollution of beauty when they write that although the story with Haidée will likely play over "the same game of guilt and abandonment" (Reiman 148), there is "a very superior kind of poetry in the conception of this amour—the desolate isle—the utter loneliness of the maiden, who is as ignorant as she is innocent—the helpless condition of the youth—every thing conspires to render it a true romance" (Reiman 148). They complain, "How easy for Lord Byron to have kept it free from any stain of pollution! What cruel barbarity, in creating so much of beauty only to mar and ruin it!" (Reiman 148).

The aristocratic skepticism that "ruins" Byron's poem disappears in *Bailey's* play. When Juan stands before the Sultana in the play, *Bailey* paraphrases Juan's speech (V, 127) when *Bailey's* character asserts, "I am a slave, and love is for the free; I am not dazzled with this splendid roof; whate'er thy power, tho' heads bow, knees bend, eyes watch around a throne, and hands obey, our *hearts* are still our own" (29). This assertion of personal liberty

supports comments on the slave market itself: Bailey's Juan exclaims, "tis too shocking, humanity should *blush* at it—all men were born to be free, and the curse of Heaven light on the wretch who would enslave them" (18).

Byron's Juan is far from free not because he has been sold into slavery but because he is human. Juan's friend and fellow slave at the market, John Johnson, echoes Rousseau when he suggests that all men are slaves:

"But after all, what is our present state?

"Tis bad, and may be better—all men's lot:

Most men are slaves, none more so than the great,

To their own whims and passions, and what not;

Society itself, which should create

Kindness, destroys what little we had got:

To feel for none is the true social art

Of the world's stoics—men without a heart." (V, 25).

The Byron narrator later, in a paraphrase of Robert Walpole, argues that both lower and upper classes "all have prices, / From crowns to kicks, according to their vices" (V, 27). Finally, Juan appears just as malleable as everyone else, despite his rhetorical insistence on "freedom," and the narrator undermines Juan's speech by calling it "a truth to us extremely trite" (V, 128)—a rhetorical commonplace. Although Juan had "made up his mind / To be impaled, or quarter'd as a dish," his "great preparatives for dying / Dissolved like snow before a woman crying" (V, 141). Byron's narrator's comparisons indicate that this comical process is far from unique:

So Juan's virtue ebb'd, I know not how;

And first he wonder'd why he had refused;

And then, if matters could be made up now;

And next his savage virtue he accused,

Just as a friar may accuse his vow,  
Or as a dame repents her of her oath,  
Which mostly ends in some small breach of both. (V, 142)

Because it is important for both Bailey's genre (the comic marriage ending) and his ideology that Juan's staunchness be both genuine and *possible*, his Juan of course does not waver from loyalty to Haidée. Bailey justifies these changes to Byron, paradoxically enough, by indicating his respect for the author function. In the preface to the play, Bailey has to combine deference to the public with justification of his position as author. He offers the play as one of two compositions composed during "his leisure intervals" and proposes to publish the second only if this first should "be read." His authority for publishing stems first from the generic translation of a popular work, "of adapting lord Byron's story of 'Don Juan' to the stage," and second from including his own ideas rather than merely paraphrasing and then selling someone else: "that of originality in *at least two-thirds* of both plot and dialogue—with what justice, he leaves the reader to determine." Thus, Bailey's reader, not Byron, holds the power of judgment over this work, and Bailey's very changes to the original, which transform an ironic text into a conservative and sentimental one, are his justification for publishing at all.

Isaac Starr Clason, in his poetic continuation of *Don Juan* published in 1825, after Byron's death, mimics the Byron persona much more closely than Bailey, yet he similarly draws poetic "authority" from sources beyond the original poem. The title page for *Don Juan. Cantos XVII-XVIII* immediately imitates Byron when it repeats the Shakespearean epigraph he had attached to Cantos VI-VIII (from *Twelfth Night*), and the poem continues the Juan and Fitz-Fulke plot from the end of Byron's Canto XVI. Like Bailey, Clason has not been discussed in criticism, apart from a dismissal in Chew and a brief

paragraph in William Ellery Leonard's *Byron and Byronism in America* (1965), on "Byron's Sub-Literary Influence." Leonard describes the poem as having the "same manners, morals, opinions, style, and even story," and containing "some boldly printed stanzas almost rivalling the original" (93).<sup>10</sup> But Clason, like Bailey, incorporates Byron's poem into his own horizon of expectations while he also invokes the Byronic image, the Bible, and literary tradition as support for his particular didactic purposes.

The poem opens with its Byronic narrator self-consciously praising his own poem in lines that seem to "justify" Clason's appropriating the now-deceased poet's voice. The poem is a "true ... Image of the world" (XVII, ii) that offers both description and didacticism:

it furnishes a moral lecture,

And plants a window in the human breast:—

Which, as a polished mirror, shall reflect sure

Thoughts, though conceal'd, and feelings unconfest. (XVII, vi)

This idea of revealing unexpressed thoughts imitates Byron's attitude in *Don Juan*, yet Clason offers the theme in a more serious, pedagogical tone than Byron's flippant, "You are *not* a moral people, and you know it / Without the aid of too sincere a poet" (XI, 87).

Clason also seriously portrays Byron as a tragic, Shakespearean figure worn out by a corrupt world. After the narrator alludes to Byron's death by

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<sup>10</sup> I have been unable to discover much about Clason. Austin S. Allibone includes him in *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors*, but says only that he wrote this poem, that he was a native of New York, and that his dates were 1796-1830 (1:393). The OCLC World Catalogue Database lists several versions of this *Don Juan* continuation, one published in Oxford by Munday & Slatter in 1825 (without Clason's name). It also lists other poems by Clason: an 1820 continuation of Fitz-Green Halleck's *Fanny*, which was a satire of New York that imitated *Don Juan*, and an 1826 poem called *Horace in New York*.

anticipating his own “shroud and cerement” when “’tis like, / My heart may hide beneath this soil of Greece,”<sup>11</sup> he tells Juan,

If so it chance that I should perish, ere  
     Thy tale be told, thy fame and fate be sung,  
 Be thou my legacy, some bard my heir,  
     Around whose threshold, poisons thick have clung;  
 One who, like me, hath felt that “foul is fair,  
     And fair is foul,”—upon whose couch have hung  
 Mildews so crass, so murky, and so long,  
 They blend with thought, and breathe throughout his song. (XVII,  
 xii)

In this symbolic passing of poetic authority from Byron to Clason, Clason asserts authority because his own melancholic character, metaphorically consisting of poisons and mildews, resembles Byron’s. They both perceive duplicity in the world around them: “foul is fair, / And fair is foul.” This quotation from *Macbeth* suggests additional literary support for Clason’s writing.

Clason compares Byron with Shakespeare seemingly in order to transcend the specific historical moment and offer a more “true” commentary on the social world. For instance, the imaginary Byron’s instructions about didacticism ask the poet to “fly like the raven” over his subject without being affected by it:

Be this my will—dissect as with a prism  
     Each beam of vanity, and ray of vice  
 Spare neither Bishop’s cowl, nor Monarch’s chrism,

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<sup>11</sup> Byron was not buried in Greece, although Marchand records that his lungs were kept there (465), but he was widely represented as having died for Greece.

—To fame or fortune, make no sacrifice—

—Fly like the raven, o'er the cataclysm. (XVII, xiii)<sup>12</sup>

This intimation, however, that the poet transcends the conditions about which he writes, differs significantly from Byron's pseudo-defence of his own character through his necessitarian portrayal of Juan, and his stance of passively being swept along by his contemporary circumstances—readers, traditions, words themselves.

Clason appears, first, to believe in the concept of the poet having a superior view of the world and, second, to require this vestige of authorial power, because he also invokes Biblical backing for the poem. The poem is so "true" an image of the world,

that though thro' an

Ordeal (quenchless as that wherein the Jews

Of Babylon were tried) 'tis doom'd to pass;

'Twill speak strong truths, like Balaam's smitten ass. (XVII, ii)

Just as this allusion to Balaam grants the poem prophetic status, subsequent New Testament references equate Byron's "teachings" with Christ's:

Then Juan hail!—What though the world condemn,

And will not see thy pure and pious aim,—

The mote is in its eye, and though thy gem

Of truth may shine, (bright as from heav'n the flame

That quench'd Saul's vision,) it will still contemn,

And damn thee Juan! if but for thy name:

But this I tell the world, with all its tricks,

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<sup>12</sup> Clason footnotes the raven passage to point out its source in Genesis 8:7. The raven flew "to and fro" until the waters dried, and unlike the dove did not bring back symbols of hope to Noah waiting in the Ark.

'Twill find it "hard to kick against the pricks." (XVII, ix)<sup>13</sup>

Clason begins his eighteenth canto by echoing Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities! all is Vanity; / Thus spoke the wisest man beneath the Sun" (i). His allusion does not end with the phrase alone because he then suggests that the poet himself is a Solomon figure who has outgrown his appetites: "For I am chaste, and continent, and kind, / No longer love *Zidonian*, or *Moabite*" (XVIII, ii). Because Clason's Byron has experienced those appetites or has "compass'd every Pleasure" and "raved through half the World's insanities," he has the authority of Solomon's wisdom and can "Cry with the Preacher—Vanity of Vanities!" (XVIII, v). He now transcends those experiences.

The actual Byron, too, had quoted the second verse of Ecclesiastes—twice in *Don Juan*.<sup>14</sup> The first occurs early in Canto I in reference to Sir Samuel Romilly, the lawyer who sided with Lady Byron against Byron and who committed suicide after the death of his wife (*Juan* n.116, 675). The Biblical allusion provides ironic commentary on Romilly, not authority for the poem itself. His "suicide was almost an anomaly" for this "all-in-all sufficient self-director," and it offered "One sad example more, that 'All is vanity'" (I, 15). Later in the poem, Byron again uses the reference as social criticism:

Ecclesiastes said, that all is Vanity—

Most modern preachers say the same, or show it

By their examples of true Christianity. (VII, 6)

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<sup>13</sup>Matthew 7:3-5 contains the command to hypocrites to "first cast out the beam out of thine own eye," and Acts 9:5 relates Christ's words to Saul, whom he has just blinded: "And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."

<sup>14</sup> For tracing Byron's Biblical allusions, I am indebted to Travis Looper's *Byron and the Bible: A Compendium of Biblical Usage in the Poetry of Lord Byron*.

Byron uses this allusion, then, to support his skepticism. In a similar manner, he refers to the story of Balaam's ass in Canto XII of *Don Juan* when he discusses those with whom Juan "flirted without sin" (XII, 25):

But these are few, and in the end they make  
     Some devilish escapade or stir, which shows  
 That even the purest people may mistake  
     Their way through Virtue's primrose paths of snows;  
 And then men stare, as if a new ass spake  
     To Balaam, and from tongue to ear o'erflows  
 Quick silver Small Talk, ending (if you note it)  
 With the kind world's Amen! — 'Who would have thought it?' (XII,  
 26)

Byron uses this allusion as ironic commentary on his contemporary social world: it is they, not he, who magnify events as if gossip were as important as prophecy. Finally, Byron had like Clason alluded to the story of Saul on the road to Damascus. When Juan travels through England near the end of Canto X, the narrator describes England as

A country in all senses the most dear  
     To foreigner or native, save some silly ones,  
 Who "kick against the pricks" just at this juncture,  
 And for their pains get only a fresh puncture. (X 77)

The third line here before revision read "'kick against the pricks' <of higher station>" (p. 615). The passage satirizes the supposed freedom of Britain, and those "kicking" are those attempting to improve their freedom or social situation. Their rebellion only encourages the powerful classes to increase their oppression. Byron, then, undermines authority by using its own language ironically, while Clason, on the other hand, uses the same passage to threaten



those who rebel, and so uses existing religious hegemony as support for his positions.

Despite Clason's early emphasis on morality, the plot itself rather unabashedly continues Juan's sexual adventures. It indicates, thus, that its morality, like Byron's, lies not in avoiding "immoral" topics but rather in overturning hypocritical condemnations of indelicacy by reminding readers of their own imaginative involvement in this risqué story:

But where's her grace the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke?  
 Where Juan, whom we left upon the stair?  
 My Muse is modest, but will never skulk,  
 Nor shrink from showing things just as they are;  
 Remember reader! she was of some bulk—  
 Remember too! that Juan was quite bare,  
 Saving his night-gown as was said before,  
 And shirt, (that always,) but he had no more. (XVII, xvii)

Clason's Duchess is appropriately hesitant. She seduces Juan by "allowing herself" to be seduced:

No shriek nor scream from gentle Fitz-Fulke burst;  
 (Even virtue's tears back to their fountain flew,)  
 She knew retreat was vain, so dared the worst—  
 For what, alas! could hapless Fitz-Fulke do?  
 She sigh'd, implor'd, had wept, and once nigh curs'd  
 Herself, and even Juan, as she threw  
 Her listless form upon the couch, which stood  
 (Destined to evil, though designed for good.) (XVII, l)

Clason's representation of Fitz-Fulke as a semi-modest participant in this affair differs from Byron's picture of her more as a seasoned and aggressive

seductress (XIV 41). Although this characterization may result from the assumption that Don Juan himself, as legend insisted, was the consummate seducer, it seems instead to relate to Byron's Juan's early attraction to traditional femininity (Haidée's nurturing, Julia's and Dudu's reluctance). This Duchess resembles Donna Julia both in her semblance of modesty and in her marital situation: Fitz-Fulke is "Wedded almost in childhood, (scarce fifteen,)" to a "consort nearer sixty than sixteen" (XVII, lxxviii-ix).<sup>15</sup>

Clason's changes to Byron's Duchess suggest that he adopts a particular stereotype of women that Byron includes but treats differently. As a reader, Clason also seems to imitate completed plot lines rather than incomplete ones. Perhaps because Byron only partially develops Adeline and Aurora Raby, the two do not figure in this story at all, and merely provide examples of social reaction to Juan's affair. Juan is

In no great favour now, you may conceive  
 With Adeline, or fair Aurora Raby—  
 The first too proud, the last by far too pure  
 To pardon such "égaremens du cœur." (XVIII, lxxxix)

The climax to the story—as with Donna Julia—involves the arrival of the husband. In Clason's Canto XVIII, after various narrative digressions, the Duchess has become pregnant:

Suppose we now that night of rapture past,  
 And that some two months since, have intervened;  
 Suppose, each night a transcript of the last—  
 A truth, I fear, which can't be contravened.  
 Suppose her Grace to be approaching fast,

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<sup>15</sup> The arranged marriage theme highlights the "lesson" Hunt had seen in the poem about the dangers of these matches.

A certain state, that's not so easily skreened;—

Suppose, ye Gods! I tremble as I'm writing!

Suppose, his Grace, the Duke, is just alighting! (XVIII, xix)

Adeline's husband, Lord Amundeville, proposes to investigate the rumours "Not of flirtation—but Adultery!" (XVII, xxviii), in order to "set reports, like those, at once at rest" (XVIII, xxxii).

The ending of the story, consequently, involves an informal investigation and trial. Chambermaids provide evidence for Juan and Fitz-Fulke's indiscretion, but not enough to condemn the pair, and Clason introduces a new character in order to conclude his plot:

—But there was one, whom Juan once had loved,

(I mean, of course, that sort of love, suggested

By each fair face, to every feeling heart)

'Tis sin to share it, but 'tis pain to part. (XVIII, lxxxvii)

This girl, an "orphan Jewess, fair and young" (XVIII, lxxxviii), had attended Fitz-Fulke "not as a menial, / But rather half companion to her Grace" until "their loves becoming too congenial / She judged it prudent to resign her place" (XVIII, lxxxix). Her power hastens the plot to its conclusion when "she it was, who caused the quick return / ... Of her fair rival's Lord, from his sojourn" (XVIII, xc). Although Eva arises independent of Byron's *Don Juan*, she resembles the Byronic characters of Donna Julia and Haidée. In Julia, the "darkness of her oriental eye / Accorded with her Moorish origin" (I, 56), and Haidée too has eyes "black as death" (II, 117) and "clustering hair" (II, 116). Clason's Eva is "half Moorish and half French" (XVIII, xci), and has "deep black eyes" and "raven hair" that "Stream'd down her breast, and lay in clusters there" (XVIII, xcii).

Eva's revenge conforms to traditional feminine stereotypes when she personifies tempestuous natural phenomena: lightening, thunder, a volcano, a tornado, an earthquake, a "famish'd Tygress" or "frighted Eagle" (XVIII, cvii), and a cataract. This jealousy and rage support a Judaeo-Christian view of women as fallen seductresses. Clason's narrator wonders of Fitz-Fulke, "if the devil ever stirr'd, / Or tempted woman to such act before?" and decides, "I could in a trice, / Adduce an instance, even from Paradise" (XVII, xxii). He himself suggests that women are the only "charm" in the world, but adds, "though in her kiss, / Methinks, I still can hear the serpent's hiss" (XVII, liv). He quotes Lady Mary Wortley Montagu saying that we need fig leaves for our minds as well as our bodies (n.8, 43), and he adds an innuendo about her own sexual experiences:

And none knew better than her ladyship  
 The things pertaining both to sex and sense;  
 She thought the world a pretty farce;— a slip  
 Made by *chaste* dames, at their dear lord's expense  
 Was nothing. (XVII, xxxv)

The following stanza indicates that Clason considered this argument to be aligned with Byron. After his speaker says Montagu thought "That man's an animal so like a spaniel, / Nothing will keep him constant but hard knocks," he exclaims, in an echo of Byron's similar imperative,

Declare ye hen-pecked husbands (who, like Daniel,  
 Have fall'n into the lion's den,) what shocks  
 Your sconces have sustained! (XVII, xxxvi)

Franklin argues that Byron's poem uses the traditional argument of "woman as dangerously close to nature, a creature of insatiable appetite, an ensnarer of men" to discredit the bourgeois "new importance of woman as

guardian of society's morals" (*Heroines* 144). The satire has a political basis or marks the poet's "preference for the notoriously immoral Whig aristocratic ruling class of the past, over the present Tory administration which was influenced by the Evangelical mercantile classes" (Franklin, *Heroines* 145). Gross suggests that this treatment of women also stems from a more personal source: the gay narrator, whose "former love for women has been degraded into a casual and almost mechanical misogyny" (324). Although Gross reads Byron as displacing his gay identity onto the narrator, he distinguishes this figure from Byron himself, who "advertises his heterosexuality through a deliberate and unconvincing bravado" (Gross 329).

Clason's adaptation, however, indicates that this bravado was more convincing to Byron's readers than it perhaps was to his close friends or to Gross. Clason repeats the misogyny without the gay innuendoes; moreover, his imitation, like Bailey's, examines gender relations without considering Byron's accompanying power implications. Gross argues that Byron's animosity against women stemmed from his feeling of their power over him: he "blamed them for the repressions that were forced upon him" (339).

Clason's description of Eva resembles Byron's enraged Gulbeyaz, in whom "the deep passions flashing through her form / Made her a beautiful embodied storm" (V, 135). But Gulbeyaz is as significant for her class as for her gender. Surprised by Juan's early refusal of her, she "deem'd her least command must yield delight, / Earth being only made for queens and kings" (V, 128). After an interlude of fury that takes the narrator several stanzas to describe, the "storm it pass'd" (V, 137) and yielded to humiliation or "her sex's shame" (V, 137). The narrator comments that this state is "sometimes good for people in her station" (V, 137) because it "teaches them that they are flesh and blood" (V, 137). Her natural passions, then, undermine her authority while

they at the same time render her sympathetic to Byron's reader and to his Juan, who is subsequently moved by her tears.

Clason's Eva, in contrast, lacks the social position of Gulbeyaz and attempts to use her passions themselves as power. Through her, the poem seems to contrast female "hysteria" with male "logic." For instance, when Eva speaks she describes herself as a victim: "I feel I'm fallen—Fate hath willed it so" (XVIII, cxvi). Then she confuses her metaphors and so undermines her own attempts to portray the tragic heroine, when she contrasts a "reed" with a "shrub" when no natural contrast occurs: "The lofty reed, if trampled on, may rise— / The humble shrub, once crush'd, alas! it dies!" (XVIII, xcvi).<sup>16</sup> Juan subsequently rebukes her apparently melodramatic attempt to gain sympathy:

Here Juan interposed—"Tis vain to hear  
     This lengthened detail of female despair;—  
 Such an Exordium would require a year,  
     And then we'll be no wiser than we were;—  
 What you assert no doubt is true and clear—  
     But then the instance is by no means rare—  
 All females have their follies—you have yours—  
 But trifling cases, call for trifling cures.

Besides, your tale yields no elucidation—  
     Nay! do not interrupt!—one moment's pause!—  
 We all commiserate your situation  
     Myself the most—as being most the cause—

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<sup>16</sup> It may be that the "lofty reed" is simply an author or printer oversight, but Clason's narrator does not seem sympathetic to Eva.

But let us wave all mutual crimination—

Accommodate at once all idle flaws:—

You're not required your weakness to disclose,

Nor do I wish to hear it—Heaven knows!

If you have any circumstance to state

That can impugn the conduct of her Grace—

Or if your knowledge can substantiate

Those rumours which, (I think,) 'tis vain to trace—

If even your jealousy can conjugate—

Nay; now I see the blood mount to your face—

Why will you spoil those charms,—so heavenly fair,

With passions so malignant?—Pray, forbear!—” (XVIII, c)

This Juan, with his authoritative dismissal of Eva, seems to hold little in common with Byron's hero, who rarely speaks let alone gives commands. Clason and Byron seem to hold opposite assumptions about language: Byron presents Juan's speeches as ineffective and comical, while Clason assumes that Juan's words would affect his audience. Here, his words cause Eva to fly into her rage.

This Juan's rejection of “trifling cases,” his assumption that recriminations would be “mutual,” and his dislike of having a woman publicly disclose her “weakness” parallel historical attitudes towards seduction cases. Shortly before Eva appears, the evidence provided against Juan and the Duchess reminds the narrator of trials for criminal conversation and breach of promise:

So far the Proof but rested on slight Grounds;

Yet half this proof had served a modern Jury,

(Whose Chivalry of late transcends all Bounds,  
 Quixotic Champions of each lew'd-eyed Hour!)—  
 T'award [sic] a Verdict of some *thousand Pounds*.—  
 They lay it on with such unsparing fury,  
 In cases of *Crim. Con.*; but doubly dear,  
 When "Breach of Promise" can be made t' appear. (XVIII, xxxv)

Byron had discussed the "natural pleasure" of Houris (VIII, 113), but Clason adopts the term pejoratively for sexually voracious women whom the masculine "chivalry" of juries has rewarded instead of curbed.<sup>17</sup>

Clason's satire of these juries has basis in contemporary cases, his footnote points out. He suggests that seduction, adultery, and breach of promise trials "are continuing daily to increase both in England and America" (93), yet they do so because juries are too willing to believe in female sexual chastity. Clason on the other hand, like Byron, argues that "where virtue is surrendered, the attack must be more lively than the defence" (93). This military language, suggestive of conquest and gain, seems apt for an argument that highlights the significant financial losses men undergo. Among the actual cases he cites, Clason includes what appears to be that of the actor Edmund Kean, sued for adultery by his ex-mistress's husband and charged damages of eight hundred pounds in January 1825. Although criminal conversation lawsuits were brought by men against men, Clason represents them as female-male wars and describes Kean as the "dupe of the artifice of a corrupt and mercenary wife" (95). He seems to mean here not Kean's own wife, but his mistress Charlotte Cox, and so he reiterates the defence argument at the trial. James Scarlett, Kean's lawyer, claimed that he "would prove that the plaintiff

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<sup>17</sup> Ginger Frost outlines both the objections to and support for breach of promise. Male advocates often "retained a chivalric view of women" as needing protection (146). Clason's position against the action also portrays a common argument.



was either in collusion with his wife and had selected the defendant as his victim, because he was able to pay heavy damages, or that he was so negligent that he cared not what she did, or that he and she were colluding together to obtain a divorce, in order that she might live with Whatmore [Robert Cox's ex-secretary]" (Fitzsimons 189-90).<sup>18</sup>

Clason contrasts Kean's case with that of another performer, female, "avowedly a mistress, and evidently an 'intriguante,' who had endeavoured to cajole into a union some 'lovesick fool of a Roderigo' while actually 'enceinte' by her paramour, — who ... 'fobb'd' the same 'silly gentleman' ... out of the sum of thirteen thousand three hundred dollars" (95). He might have been referring to Maria Foote, Countess of Harrington and an actress, who sued Joseph Hayne for breach of promise in December 1824. The trial included love-letters and correspondence between a Colonel Berkeley and Foote, yet Hayne was ordered to pay £3000 damages.<sup>19</sup>

According to the account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (December 1824), at issue in the trial was not the sexual impurity of Foote, but Hayne's knowledge of it before he proposed. Foote had two children by Berkeley, with whom she lived as a mistress for five years. Although Hayne had proposed to Foote, he first broke off the engagement after Berkeley informed him of his

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<sup>18</sup> Both Playfair and Fitzsimons suggest that Robert Cox decided to sue Kean after discovering Charlotte's affair with Whatmore, although neither provides the precise source of this information. According to Fitzsimons, when Charlotte left to live with Whatmore, she left behind all Kean's letters (178). He also suggests that the general Kean-Byron connection, included by both Lamb and Clason in their continuations, extends to Byron's final poem in particular. In 1824 Kean was "enjoying his reputation as a great lover. The last three Cantos of *Don Juan* were published that year, and he saw himself as the embodiment of Byron's hero, charming, handsome and unprincipled" (Fitzsimons 182).

<sup>19</sup> According to D.C.M. Platt in *Foreign Finance in Continental Europe and the United States, 1815-1870*, the exchange rate for that period was roughly £1=\$5 US, and Global Financial Data narrows that latter figure for 1825 to varying from \$4.66 to \$4.91 US (<[www.globalfindata.com](http://www.globalfindata.com)>). Even the low amount of \$4.66 would make Clason's "thirteen thousand three hundred dollars" lower than Hayne's £3000 in American dollars (\$13980 to \$14730), and Clason's reporting in dollars might indicate an American trial. Yet the figure seems close enough and the facts of the trial similar enough to warrant a comparison with Foote vs. Hayne.

former relationship to her. Subsequently, however, Hayne encouraged her to give custody of her children to Berkeley, and when she did so he renewed his proposal.<sup>20</sup> It was this particular promise, given with Hayne's full knowledge of Foote's relationship to Berkeley, that the jury decided he broke.

This trial differs significantly, then, from Kean's situation, and breach of promise and criminal conversation actions in a general way involve very different issues. Economically, criminal conversation stems from the idea of a wife as her husband's property, and according to Susan Staves upper-class plaintiffs in the eighteenth century generally demanded and received higher damages than lower-class ones (280). Ginger Frost suggests for breach of promise, alternatively, that the majority of plaintiffs and defendants were from the lower middle and upper working classes (9), and damages often accounted for women's property concerns—most plaintiffs were women, who made labour choices based on their betrothals, and whose marriageability decreased with age and with sexual impropriety.

Clason, however, sees the trials as comparable because both cases he reads as extortion. His poem early suggests a search for male sexual freedom when it criticizes marriage for its repression: it “conquers love, and is its tomb” and is a “whirlpool ... / Which swallows Hope, and Love, and Freedom too” (XVII, xlv). But the narrator's abhorrence of marrying a widow indicates the different standard for women:

What! wear the Flower, another has destroyed—  
Stol'n its sweets, and sip'd its virgin dew,  
And left stem, and withered leaf to you? (XVIII, lxii)

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<sup>20</sup> The *Gentleman's Magazine* refers to Foote “surrendering the custody of the children to the Colonel, to which Mr. H. urged her” (638).

Essentially, then, Clason supports the ideal of women needing to be morally superior to men, and he objects to the way traditional male sexual freedom has become commodified by women who profit by it. The successes of these suits “reward ... A Breach of Chastity” (xli) and “strengthen Prostitution’s tide, / Paving her shores with Gold” (xxxvii). He thus objects to female sexual commercialism:

What is so merchantable now as *kisses*?

What half so marketable as the *favours*

Of Wives, or Widows, Mistresses, or Misses?

Virtue’s a bubble—where’s the fool would save hers?

(XVIII, xlii)

In objecting to women’s economic interference as well as their sexual improprieties, Clason reinforces his middle-class demand that women should remain separated from financial concerns—regardless of the class to which the woman belongs.

It is significant that Clason condemns the juries who allegedly reward fallen women, because he objects to men relinquishing economic power to women and assumes that men can assert control of such flagrancy through the legal system. The style of the poem suggests a poetic trial of Juan, and the narrator highlights Eva’s melodrama, not sympathy, when “So fiercely flash’d that eye, so wildly woke / The long-loud shriek, as thus she madly spoke” (XVIII, cvii). Then, the unnamed “scene of wonder” (XVIII, cxi) at the end suggests its essentially comic nature. Staves reveals that eighteenth-century plaintiffs often employed tragic rhetoric (with quotations from *Othello* being

popular) while defendants attempted comic interpretations (282-3). Clason's comic style—imitating Byron—encourages sympathy for Juan as defendant.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of the poem, readers are left in the role of fictional jurors, subtly encouraged to pardon Juan because they would not want to resemble those

... gallant Jurors, better fee'd than fed,  
 (Who dread a Fast, as Debtors dread a Jail,)  
 Rob some poor wretch, to shore some Wanton's fame,  
 And deck her forth, to batten on her shame. (XVIII, xxxvi)

After the Duke of Fitz-Fulke enters the room to hear Eva declaring Juan and the Duchess to be adulterers, the narrator leaves the reader to imagine the scene:

... Pencil bath'd in such celestial hues,  
 Or Pen whose gleaming point is dipp'd in flame,  
 Brighter than that recording angels use  
 To register the ransom'd Sinner's name—  
 Must paint the scene of wonder which ensues.  
 Like that which o'er Belshazzar's revel came—  
 A scene whose mighty splendour shall transcend  
 All Hogarth pencil'd, and all Homer penn'd. (XVIII, cxi)

This treatment of the ending—besides suggesting the sublime—seems to pay homage to Byron himself by subtly referring the reader to his narrative conclusions. Juan had twice before ended an intrigue because male authority (Julia's husband Alfonso and Haidée's father Lambro) appeared to punish him.

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<sup>21</sup> *Don Juan* was a particularly anti-sentimental poem, a stance Byron saw as explaining women's dislike of it: "The truth is that *it is too true*—and the women hate every thing which strips off the tinsel of *Sentiment*—& they are right—or it would rob them of their weapons" (*Letters* 7:202).

The “Belshazzar” reference specifically suggests Haidée, who with Juan decorated their room with “oriental writings on the wall” that make Byron’s narrator think of the “words which shook Belshazzar in his hall, / And took his kingdom from him” (III, 65). In Clason, these allusions appear within a context that, like the beginning of the poem, reiterates the transcendence of the author and so emphasizes the artistic and moral authority of its contents. The apparent indeterminacy of Clason’s ending appears to grant readers power as jurors yet actually manipulates their response. The opening of the poem warned “Beware of sending Juan to the devil!” (XVII, xiv), but the end of the poem works not through threats but through appeals to reader identification.

While the plot replays earlier Don Juan adventures, Clason’s ending increases sympathy and respect for the poem itself by incorporating aspects of the “Byron” personality. Clason’s narrator mimics Byron by concluding self-consciously, claiming to be only resting, denying that the poem is permanently ended, and yet registering his famed indifference towards a continued relationship with readers:

But rest my Harp awhile—I loose thy string  
 Nor grieve to hear thy dying notes expire:  
 Though soon across thy chords the Bard shall fling  
 His kindling touch, and wake thy slumbering wire  
 Soon shall my Muse replume her eagle wing—  
 Soon shall her eye resume its wonted fire—  
 Prepare a flight far longer and far higher  
 With eye that winks not—wing that cannot tire.

Reader we part—perchance again to meet—  
 Or perhaps never—’tis the same to me—

But even in parting there is something sweet  
 (As Wives and Husbands know, who disagree.)  
 So fare thee well!—that sound with which we greet  
 Even those we hate at parting,—but to thee,  
 A kind farewell!—Believe me 'tis no lie—  
 If you are weary, Reader! so am I. (XVIII, cxii-xiii)

The indication of future poetry, and, indeed, future poetry that will supersede the past, imitates several *Don Juan* canto endings, as does the direct address to the reader.<sup>22</sup> The lines also, of course, echo Byron's famous separation and farewell poem to his wife, "Fare Thee Well!," both in the verbal repetition of the phrase and the parenthetical comment about wives and husbands.

The farewell also resembles the final stanza of *Childe Harold's Canto IV*:

Farewell! a word that must be, and hath been—  
 A sound which makes us linger;—yet—farewell!  
 Ye! who have traced the Pilgrim to the scene  
 Which is his last, if in your memories dwell  
 A thought which once was his, if on ye swell  
 A single recollection, not in vain  
 He wore his sandal-shoon, and scallop-shell;  
 Farewell! with *him* alone may rest the pain,

If such there were—with *you*, the moral of his strain! (IV, 186)

Byron's instructions in this concluding stanza carefully delineate the reader's role. Harold will "dwell" in readers' memories as they recall a "thought which once was his." Readers will not only give Harold continued life by repeating his

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<sup>22</sup> The "eye that winks not" and "wing that cannot tire" also sound to me rather like an epitaph for Byron.

adventures in their memories, but, in addition, assign a moral to the poem or decide on its didactic point.

Clason performs similar acts as reader of *Don Juan*. Because he quotes Medwin's *Conversations* in a Canto XVIII footnote, he likely had read Byron's plans for the continuation of the poem. Yet he does not attempt to fulfill these poetic projections but rather to repeat elements of the existing poem and of Byron's earlier poems, particularly *Childe Harold* and "Fare Thee Well." He uses these established plots, finally, to offer his own moral about the contemporary justice system.

The conclusion to Clason's previous canto, as well, owes more to Byron's previous poetry and personal life than to any plans for *Don Juan*. Clason's narrator speaks to Byron's daughter Ada:

Meanwhile, my own dear Daughter! long, too long,  
 A Father's Pity, and a Father's Prayer,  
 Have breathed their Blessings, albeit but in Song,  
 Far from thy Home, although my Heart was there. (XVII,  
 xcix)

The narrator laments their separation and her probable alienation from him:

Hast thou been taught to syllable my Name?  
 Ada! my Child!—too well I know thou hast not:  
 To thee my name is Blackness, and my Fame,  
 A Blight, a Bubble, or perhaps a Blot:  
 And must it, can it ever be the same?  
 The Child forget, the Parent who begot?  
 Will nature's intuition ne'er reveal  
 What Folly, Malice, Hatred, would conceal? (XVII, c)

These stanzas obviously draw on Byron's biography, while they also closely mimic the conclusion to *Childe Harold's* third canto:

My daughter! with thy name this song begun—  
 My daughter! with thy name thus much shall end—  
 I see thee not,—I hear thee not,—but none  
 Can be so wrapt in thee....

... though dull Hate as duty should be taught,  
 I know that thou wilt love me; though my name  
 Should be shut from thee, as a spell still fraught  
 With desolation,—and a broken claim....

....Fain would I waft such blessing upon thee,  
 As, with a sigh, I deem thou might'st have been to me! (III, 115-  
 18)

Byron's conviction that his daughter will love him becomes suppressed in Clason's "Byron." After the statement that to Ada her father's name is a blot, Clason footnotes Medwin's *Conversations*, which records Byron's comment, "I hear that my name is not mentioned in Ada's presence; that a green curtain is always kept over my portrait, as over something forbidden, and that she is not to know that she has a father till she comes of age—of course she will be taught to hate me, she will be brought up to it" (Clason 49; *Conversations* 116).

In Clason's poem, such ideas highlight Byron as a tragic and abused figure. The canto's final stanza idealizes Byron's image even further by combining his love for his daughter with his passion for the freedom of Greece: "Ada! be thou as beautiful, and free, / As Greece once was—and once again shall be" (XVII, ciii). In part, these lines elegize the deceased Byron in the same



way the Greek funeral oration on him, recorded in Medwin, did. M. Spiridion Tricoupi, in an oration delivered in Messolonghi, claimed that the “names of [Byron’s] only and much beloved daughter, and of Greece” were “deeply engraven on his heart,” and even as he was dying he exclaimed “My daughter! ... ‘Greece!’ ... and his spirit passed away” (Medwin, Appendix, xcvi).

Just as Byron’s projected conclusion to *Don Juan* relies on tradition, Clason’s endings too are predetermined by Byron’s own reputed ending, his earlier poetry, and his sentimental reputation. Clason shares with Byron a portrayal of women as naturally passionate, but in supporting and invoking the very hegemonies Byron undermines, he uses Byron to argue for male economic and legal dominance. Byron himself, although not a proponent of female emancipation, had tended to criticize all power structures and devalue all types of authority, including his own. Clason, in contrast, assumes that language has power and uses literary tradition, Biblical allusions, and “Byron” as author as hegemonies for his own poem—Byron’s “authority” as author (directed at Clason’s morals, of course) actually increases through Clason’s usurpation. Ultimately, he demonstrates the way Byron’s very renegade yet sympathetic reputation could be used as support for the emerging bourgeois morality and polarized gender roles that Byron (in many twentieth-century readings) stood against.

Indeed, many of Byron’s early readers used gendered language to discuss him. Byron himself used the femininity of his poem to stress its lack of power, but consequently readers viewed him as Clason viewed his female plaintiffs. The 1819 *British Critic* review of *Don Juan*, I-II, equates Byron with prostitution when it describes him as “a character which owes its advancement to a brilliant, wild, but meretricious irregularity” (Reiman 296). The review concludes by commenting of Byron’s leaving his name off *Don*

*Juan's* title page that "this is not the first time that his Lordship has played off that piece of coquetry with the public" (Reiman 300). In a similar vein, the *British Magazine* remarks at the beginning of a review of *Don Juan*, VI-VIII, "So gratuitous, so melancholy, so despicable a prostitution of genius was never perhaps before witnessed" (Reiman 390). Thus, not only did Byron not labour as he should as a poet, but the "coquetry" and "prostitution" of his approach suggest a woman with both sexual and economic transgressions.

Clason deals with Byron's poem's "promiscuity" by asserting masculine control over it. In explaining his "Muse's peccability" his narrator reasons:

All female nature's prone to go astray:

This is my first or "major" proposition;

My Muse is female—that dare none gainsay;

And so my "minor's" prov'd past opposition. (XVIII, lxxvii)

Clason's narrator, then, describes his female poetic style in male terms: the logic gleaned in a classical education. Moreover, the poet capitalizes through the writing and publication of the poem on the very female sexuality that he criticizes in his female characters, but in doing so he asserts, significantly, the economic control that Clason fears women have been usurping.

Medwin's *Conversations* opens with the statement that "A great poet belongs to no country; his works are public property, and his Memoirs the inheritance of the public.' Such were the sentiments of Lord Byron" (vii). Significant in this statement is not the nationalism question about which country might possess Byron but the assumption that the poet will be possessed by someone, by his public.<sup>23</sup> The public possession of Byron,

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<sup>23</sup> Imitators "possessed" Byron even for marketing purposes. An 1832 publication by "A Minor" includes the author's poem "Stanzas in Continuation of 'Don Juan'" on the title page of the work, even though the stanzas compose only a paltry section of the volume. Bailey's play, similarly, points out on the title page the story's basis in Byron.

moreover, resembled moral idealizations of women because authors and women were generally assigned similar rules: they were to work for moral, social edification rather than for money, and when behaving properly, they were honoured as powerful allies to human improvement.<sup>24</sup>

In *Don Juan*, Byron attempts to use these “gendered” reading and writing conditions for his own purposes. His narrator emphasizes audience authority with his portrayal of a tradition-fixed tragic ending, a necessitarian Juan, an active reader, and a poetic dependence on tradition and reader expectation. In other words, he attempts to reverse the author-reader didactic relationship. Like Godwin, who finally posits a Falkland-like, knowledgeable and mature reader, Byron imagines a cultivated audience who will not imitate his characters and opinions. He attempts, then, to adopt himself the role of passive and impressionable reader. Necessity does exist, he argues: I and my poem are proof of it.

If eighteenth-century didacticism relies on necessity—the molding of the reader—then Byron essentially does not challenge the concept but merely transposes it. His readers, more diverse than the upper-class readers he addressed, seem not to have recognized his reversal. They assume that he means to be teaching the reader something specific—about democracy, about marriage, or about criminal conversation trials. Lady Caroline Lamb’s imitation satirizes greed and includes Byron himself in her condemnation; Bailey’s adaptation privileges Byron’s sentimental popularity and recommends middle-class marriage; Clason’s continuation uses Byron’s masculinity to satirize female plaintiffs. They suggest that despite an author’s apparent intentions, his works would still be interpreted through the lens of an accepted

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<sup>24</sup> The most impressionable readers are described, interestingly enough, as akin to children.

“authorial role.” In their appropriations, however, perhaps they do act as Byron’s poem claimed his readers did. They *are* involved in the creation of the poem, and they *do* fashion images of Byron’s persona. They ultimately, then, reinforce Byron’s own self-portrayal as publicly made—just as Juan is to be killed by his own side, the author is effaced by his own popularity.

The end therefore which at present calls forth our efforts, will be found, when it is once gained, to be only one of the means to some remoter end. The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure, but from hope to hope.

(Johnson, *Rambler* No. 2, March 24, 1750, 7)

## Conclusion

In *Is Heathcliff a Murderer? Great Puzzles in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (1996), John Sutherland investigates enigmas in literary texts. He refers to these problems as “forbidden territory” (ix), presumably because such questions would seem to provoke wild, unsubstantiated speculations from readers. Sutherland’s own critical investigation of these literary gaps or difficulties, however, conforms to common twentieth-century critical practices. He looks at historical contexts, close readings of the novel, and extra-textual authorial commentary when he proposes solutions. In *Caleb Williams’s* mysterious chest, Humphry Repton saw an enigma similar to those Sutherland investigates, but his method of addressing this gap differs significantly from Sutherland’s. Repton uses his own assumptions about society, the social function of literature, and literary integrity to imagine a solution, and he rather quickly assumes that Godwin’s failure to expose definitively the contents of the chest results from author error rather than legitimate authorial intentions. Echlin offers a similar questioning of the author in her alternative ending to *Clarissa*, and the respondents to Goldsmith’s and Byron’s poetry also privilege their own attitudes and assumptions about the work over those of the author. In a basic sense, these rewritings were only possible because neither authors nor readers see the author as complete controller of the discourse.

These reader reactions would seem to indicate story-driven readings, in Vipond and Hunt's delineation, rather than point-driven ones. Story-driven readings prize narrative and interest and tend not to analyze authorial nuances of intention and irony. But these eighteenth-century readers do appear intensely interested in the point of the work. They suggest a historical variation on the categories Vipond and Hunt propose: their point-driven readings take into account some authorial intentions but often dispute, dismiss, or transform them.

This study has suggested that the definition of closure is far from closed. Closure in a basic sense refers to a psychological satisfaction with an ending that leaves one willing to move away from the text or the situation. Under this definition, the readers examined in this thesis do not experience closure in the works they read because they feel impelled to rewrite them. Hindrances to closure include aesthetic unease (Repton), moral objections (Echlin, Repton), political or ideological agreement combined with a further sense of social urgency (King, Robinson, Clason), and other combinations of similar categories. In other words, either liking or disliking a work could lead to a desire not to leave it "settled" where it is. These issues indicate that while defining textual closure on the basis of aesthetic characteristics is useful for a formal study of an individual work, it is not sufficient for a study of literary periods or historical development.

The number of works examined here has not been large enough to offer generalizations about the literary periods. But the combination of various genres that characterize the long eighteenth century—novel of sensibility, Augustan poems, radical-Romantic novel, and Romantic fragment poem—has been meant to investigate a continuity of thought through varied genre and time. Lucy Newlyn mentions two central binaries that for many critics have

distinguished Romantic aesthetics from eighteenth-century ideals. The first contrasts Romantic poets with their earlier predecessors: “two models of creativity—the open and the closed, the suggestive and the didactic” (229).<sup>1</sup> Romantic writers—rebels and reactionaries, to use Marilyn Butler’s terms—were “open” and “suggestive.” They espoused a freedom from prescriptive texts and a faith in the power of poetry’s suggestive nature to inspire thoughts of the sublime or the unimaginable. The agenda of Romantic politics, generally speaking, was to rebel against authority figures who would prescribe behaviour and regulate social hierarchy. Both of these elements, the sublime and the political, suggest open-ended poetry, free from boundaries or limitations.

This model of the Romantic poet has, of course, been questioned and been criticized for its exclusion of other groups—those groups that did not immediately achieve the canonical status of the six main male poets themselves. My study has questioned the binary of open-suggestive versus closed-didactic itself and argued that, like earlier authors, post-1789 writers still desired a particular response from their audiences. In two of the period’s most vocal political and moral rebels, Godwin and Byron, didacticism remained a central aspect of their focus and assumptions. Didacticism was related to necessity in that it posited people being influenced or molded by an outside force. Godwin struggled over how *Caleb Williams* should and could affect its contemporary reader, and many of his concerns resulted from questions about who his audience actually was: young, educated Jacobin sympathizers or older, prejudiced, Falkland-like conservatives. His last-minute changes to the ending suggest not that he changed his desire to influence his audience but rather that he modified his idea of that intended audience. Like Richardson’s ending to

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<sup>1</sup> Newlyn raises these binaries in order to reexamine the notion of Romantic indeterminacy, not to reassert the contrasts themselves. I use her terms because they concisely summarize critical attitudes towards the Romantic project.

*Clarissa* and Goldsmith's endings to *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, his novel uses drama, sympathy, and potential personal application to encourage the reader to learn from the work.

Byron's *Don Juan* might seem to be less polemic than *Caleb Williams*. However, the poem, first, attempts to attract reader sympathy by portraying Juan as vulnerable and endearing, and yet reminding readers that "they" have already damned him (as they had damned Byron himself). Second, the poem speaks to an elite audience that would recognize the social situations Juan encounters, and it accuses contemporary readers of hypocrisy. Finally, it rhetorically reverses the didactic model by arguing that the poet, poem, and main character have been molded far more than the reader will be. In that argument, however, Byron accepts the necessitarian basis for didacticism and simply uses didacticism's rules as further proof of his argument. His audience resembles Godwin's adult reader: one who tends to be prepossessed and experienced, not innocent and impressionable.

In terms of Marianna Torgovnick's closural categories, most of these endings seem congruent with audiences' literary or narrative expectations. Byron immediately invokes literary tradition for his "future" ending. Godwin's ending reverses the direction of the pursuit narrative, but such reversals were not uncommon in eighteenth-century novels and Falkland's repentance did not surprise his contemporary audience. Goldsmith's endings, with their spiritual and familial advice to the reader, seem to reinforce moral ideals that his audience approved of—his reviewers disagreed with his politics but agreed with his morality. Richardson's ending is not congruent, however. He confronted audience expectations for a happy ending, and although he eventually and lengthily prepared the reader for the final deaths, he challenged readers to revise their assumptions.



Although Richardson's is the only confrontational ending here, the relationship between body, ending, and audience has another dimension. Richardson's confrontational ending follows a beginning that seems completely congruent with tradition and genre. His readers were shocked precisely because he follows literary precedent in setting up Clarissa's family members as villains and Lovelace as potential rescuer. Goldsmith's and Godwin's works, on the other hand, more immediately challenge dominant modes of economic and political thought, and their endings, in a sense, need to recover possibly lost reader sympathy. Byron similarly invokes the traditional ending within a narrative that repeatedly flouts expectations for a sentimental, moral story. These endings, then, balance the combination of challenge and appeasement in the works as a whole.

From Pope to Byron, authors' treatments of closure depend on their imagined or intended audiences and their potential actions and reactions. Richardson is perhaps the most self-conscious of these writers about the difficulty of molding several types of reader—young female, young male, and older parent—with one fiction. In part for this reason, his three major works seem to rewrite each other, as in each he “corrects” the potential misapplication of the previous work. *Clarissa* discourages women from accepting the marital situation *Pamela* presents, and *Grandison* attempts to present a both good and attractive man who will correct readers' misplaced admiration for the rakish Lovelace. Richardson's ending to *Clarissa* was influenced by a scepticism about audience response and an assumption that if he left his heroine alive her future would be wrongly imagined by misguided readers who wanted their beliefs reinforced rather than changed.

In both *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*, Goldsmith addresses the controversial topic of depopulation, yet his endings offer moderate advice

rather than strident argument. His poetic endings demonstrate literal social collaboration in their input from Johnson, solicit sympathy from readers who might not agree politically with the poems' arguments, and offer to a specific, educated, middle-class reading audience particular advice on how to live. While Goldsmith wrote about what he considered to be a significant social problem, he has to mould his solutions not for authorities but for his mid-gentry readers. Some of these readers might hold offices or have some power over land conditions, but many would not, and for this reason, it seems, Goldsmith speaks to his readers in a personal, familial capacity rather than an institutional one. Although authors' intended audiences change throughout the long eighteenth century, the purpose for an ending, to inspire readers to action or change, remains relatively constant.

Goldsmith's poetry, for instance, came out of a tradition of endings that were concerned to advocate or suggest some type of reader action. This didacticism does not assume a naive or immature reader. Rather, it suggests that the author was akin to a guide, a consultant, or an advising friend. The type of advice and the kind of tone would, of course, depend on the particular audience addressed. Those with financial power might build infrastructures; those with political power might introduce laws; those with only familial power might cultivate family harmony. In Pope's epistles, he addresses a particular person and so can tailor his closing to very specific social circumstances. As audiences became more diverse and faceless, however, and as authors considered themselves to be addressing this range of people, concluding advice seems to have become more general.

The traditional contrast, then, between open and closed texts obscures the importance of didacticism to both eighteenth-century and Romantic writers. The second part of Newlyn's description resembles the first but applies

to the role of, or attitude towards, the eighteenth-century and the Romantic reader: “tensions between closure and indeterminacy, authorial restrictions and interpretive rights” (230). Critics have often interpreted the “open-ended” work as offering a freedom of interpretation for the reader that the “closed” or prescriptive text denies. Marjorie Levinson points to this model of the active reader when she suggests that the Romantic fragment poem might have arisen as a response to consumerism: poets intended poetic openness to inspire reader participation instead of slavish consumption.

But early eighteenth-century poetry focuses on reader participation, so such collaboration was not a distinctively Romantic phenomenon. Moreover, the Romantics do not seem to have been struck by a crisis over consumption any more than their predecessors were. Both eighteenth-century and Romantic writers referred to their readers as in one way or another mindless consumers. To Aaron Hill, Richardson wrote of “that indolent (that lazy, I should rather call it) world” (Carroll 98). Johnson stresses readers’ youth in the *Rambler* No. 4, when he argues that novels are written “to the young, the ignorant, and the idle” (21).<sup>2</sup> Godwin disparages the young when he refers to his book being “hastily gobbled up” by boys and girls, “swallowed in a pusillanimous and unanimated mood, without chewing and digestion” (*Fleetwood* xiii). In 1801 he wrote to Coleridge that he cannot decide whether to write his play *Abbas, King of Persia* as “a testification of all I am able to perform” or “fit ... for the ears of the mob-monster” (To Coleridge 256). These portrayals of consumerism take various forms, but they usually describe a refusal of labour on the part of the reader or viewer, an inability to discern right from wrong, and a mental susceptibility to negative impressions. The example

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<sup>2</sup> Johnson’s choice of preposition stresses the importance of audience. Books are not written *for* someone but *to* someone.

of Byron, importantly, demonstrates that the accusation could reverse: readers themselves could charge authors with laziness, selfishness, and uselessness.<sup>3</sup>

There undoubtedly were many readers who simply read for entertainment, although, technically, reading cannot be a strictly passive endeavour. Both the eighteenth-century and the early nineteenth-century readers outlined here, however, respond to a text with labour. In some ways, these readers do exactly what the author intended his reader to do. Richardson wished to inspire readers' contemplation of morality, prudent marriages, and peaceful deaths. Echlin rewrites the novel to highlight precisely those issues. Goldsmith and Johnson wanted readers to sympathize with exiled villagers and shun luxury in their private lives. Barbauld, King, and Robinson reiterate these sentiments. Godwin wants to inspire readers' discussions of character and social structure. Repton and Seward debate these issues and contemplate their significance to others. Finally, Byron wants people to address hypocrisy and also, perhaps, retract their extreme condemnation of his "immorality." Lamb subsequently satirizes hypocritical Regency society, while Clason, too, highlights hypocrisy and requests vindication for his Juan/Kean/Byron figure.

In some ways, then, these reader rewritings continue the labour that the original author started. But in that labour, these readers—even Echlin, who did not publish or ever intend to publish—write with other readers in mind. In other words, they do not demonstrate any sense that they are themselves the authors' didactically intended reader. Repton's ideas, for instance, reiterate the

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<sup>3</sup> Debates about reader impressionability still rage today. A recent A & E documentary on talk shows interviewed specialists who believe violent shows can trigger violence in young viewers. Other specialists and several "young viewers" themselves, though, denied that these shows influence (*It's Only Talk* Sept. 18/99). In a similar context, some attribute recent school shootings to the influence of video games, Web sites, and other entertainment.

black-and-white interpretations of character that characters within Godwin's novel express, yet he does not seem aware that he might be one of the novel's didactic targets. Although readers' responses combine personal reaction with political and moral beliefs, then, they prize moral social usefulness to an "other" more than aesthetic pleasure to themselves or personal lessons learned. They switch easily from reader role to author role because they focus upon other people's potential reactions to the work—other "ends" the work might encourage.

Because of this focus on ends, readers' assumptions about audience are part of their horizon of expectations for the work and part of the focus of their rewriting. The writer often seems to be attempting to mitigate a perceived threat, and the rewriting results from the fact that the reader sees a threat (to himself, herself, or to others) which is not the one the author saw. For Richardson, an immoral aristocracy threatens morality, while for Echlin the threat is a non-class-based irreligion. For Godwin the threat is government and systems of power, while for Repton, as it was for Goldsmith, the threat is both mercantile classes and wealth in general. For Byron, the threats are political ineptitude and moral hegemonies. For Clason, however, the threat is a gendered one: female encroachments onto traditionally male areas of control.

These fears may stem from the basic belief that the literary work will produce action; that is, these authors and writers fear readers' actions subsequent to a work, not specifically the text itself. Endings tend to reinforce tradition and cooperation, and rewritings often downplay social differences. Echlin's aristocratic and bourgeois characters reconcile and teach each other. In *Barbault*, *King*, and *Robinson*, Goldsmith's peasants become models for middle-class behaviour. *Bailey* and *Clason*, similarly, turn Byron's aristocrats into middle-class lovers or characters who are unconscious of class

importance. Lord Byron the author is manipulated much like his characters: adopted, transformed, and used for various reader purposes.

The authors and readers examined here suggest that literary production and reception contained an important contradiction. Writers wrote to particular intended audiences and addressed specific social issues. Readers, similarly, wanted works to improve select situations and readers. But interpretation itself did not follow this pattern. Any reader, not only a specific one, could assume authority over a work's meaning and usefulness. Reviewers cultivated the assumption that because the "public" was the new literary patron, the public was a literary judge. Readers who appropriate a work do so without regard for their social difference from the author or the work's intended reader. Despite the importance placed on literature, not simply to reflect but to influence social relationships, the author function itself was not granted the centrality that we tend to give it today.<sup>4</sup>

The binaries that have been used to define the Romantic project, finally, not only inaccurately represent these writers' relationship to their predecessors but, more importantly, hinder our attempts to analyze how texts developed. If literary works did not merely reflect the social world but potentially formed it, then we need to examine more closely how such influences might have occurred. As it turns out, eighteenth-century writers themselves debated that very issue. Even authors who might not have espoused philosophical necessity believed that language had some degree of influence over people. But readers' responses indicate the complexities of that influence, because readers themselves are as much intent on others' reactions

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<sup>4</sup> We currently have widespread educational infrastructures that are built up around the importance of the author—criticism, courses, and departments. Poststructural questionings of the writer's power have, it seems, sometimes replaced the author's role with that of language itself. But, essentially, they have tended to substitute for the author's authority the critic's—not authors' contemporary private and public readers.

and on changing a work to suit their own ideologies as on simply accepting entertainment or aesthetic pleasure. There is little closure in the works studied here because the endings focus on relationships: to previous texts, to readers, and to readers' actions. Endings offer perspective and meaning, but even references to death itself have a continuing purpose or look to the future. Byron's notorious flippancy in *Don Juan* does not dismiss endings as irrelevant or meaningless but rather uses them to highlight meaning or to educate the reader. Immediately after the narrator asserts that the journey, not the destination, is the real pleasure, he points out to the reader the implications of death that the Bedral fails to see:

They saw at Canterbury the Cathedral;  
           Black Edward's helm, and Becket's bloody stone,  
 Were pointed out as usual by the Bedral,  
           In the same quaint, uninterested tone:--  
 There's Glory again for you, gentle reader! All  
           Ends in a rusty casque, and dubious bone,  
 Half-solved into those sodas or magnesias,  
 Which form that bitter draught, the human species.  
 (*Don Juan X*, 73)

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