

ABSTRACT

Title of dissertation: MARY SHELLEY AND UTOPIAN DOMESTICITY

Melissa Jo Sites, Doctor of Philosophy, 2002

Dissertation directed by: Professor Neil R. Fraistat
Department of English

In her seven novels and other writings, Mary Shelley critiques traditional restrictive domestic ideology while developing a feminist utopian vision of domesticity. She begins with Wollstonecraft's prescription for women's education and adds Godwin's ideas of simplicity, frankness, and forgiveness. Domesticity fosters these very conditions. Ernst Bloch's theory of the utopian function within ideology shows how the false consciousness of domestic and Romantic ideology can bear a utopian impulse.

To provide a historical context of domesticity in feminist and reform thought, I discuss the emphasis on education, the importance of community, and the life of the mind in companionate marriage in Mary Astell, Sarah Scott and Margaret Cavendish; I then show how *Adeline Mowbray* by Amelia Opie and *The Empire of the Nairs* by James Lawrence illustrate the effects of putting Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's theories into practice. I look at Shelley's exploration of Romantic ideology in *Frankenstein* while countering prevalent critical misreadings of its nascent ideal of utopian domesticity. I then explore how *Mathilda*, *Midas*, *Proserpine*, and *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot* develop contrasting ideas of utopia and dystopia around isolation and community. In her political novels, *Valperga*, *The Last Man*, and *Perkin Warbeck* Shelley developed Wollstonecraft's feminist theories and focused on women's relation to political power.

Valperga's Euthanasia exemplifies the powerful Wollstonecraftian *citoyenne* and Shelleyan Romantic hero. *The Last Man* illustrates the priority of personal over public concerns, while *Perkin Warbeck* questions the legitimacy of political ambition. In her domestic novels, *Lodore* and *Falkner*, Shelley creates utopian domesticity by modifying Godwin's political system and by revising the Byronic Romantic hero; in *Falkner*, she rewrites Godwin's *Caleb Williams* according to a feminist idea of social justice. I conclude by looking at *Persuasion* by Jane Austen, *Records of Woman* by Felicia Hemans, and *Helen* by Maria Edgeworth, which demonstrate awareness of the potential benefits and drawbacks of domesticity, but were less concerned than Shelley with feminist critique.

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by

Melissa Jo Sites

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Advisory Committee:

Professor Neil R. Fraistat, Chair
Professor Jane Donawerth
Professor Susan Sniader Lanser
Professor Claire Moses
Professor Donald H. Reiman
Professor Orrin N. C. Wang

DEDICATION

To Ian Blackwell Rogers
and James Raven Rogers-Sites

... and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn;
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

--Percy Bysshe Shelley,
from the Dedication to *Laon and Cythna*

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To my son Jamie, I offer a simple apology that this work kept me from him sometimes; perhaps he'll forgive me and even look it over some day.

To my husband Ian, I give my thanks and undying love.

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Mary Shelley and Utopian Domesticity: Introduction

Mary Shelley's feminist critiques in *Frankenstein* of Romanticism and of women's position in society have been recognized and explored by many scholars. Her other novels, however, have not yet received sustained critical attention.¹ In them, Shelley examined two of the dominant ideologies of her time, domesticity and Romanticism, developing over time a model for social reform I describe as utopian domesticity. While revising the theories of her parents and husband, Shelley developed a vision of women in society that is both feminist and utopian. Utopian domesticity is a model for social reform entailing radical reorganization of the most basic level of society, the family, and centering around the home. In utopian domesticity, women are not restricted to the home, nor is the home considered best for them alone. Men and women are educated as equals and work together for social justice--a situational justice based on individual judgment, not on the expectations of the unreformed world. Relationships are based on friendship, not necessarily on romantic/marital entanglements or familial blood ties. Both men and women shoulder the responsibilities they bear toward their intimates rather than pursue glory, ambition, or individual rights; this attitude of responsibility is then turned outward to affect the larger community through benevolent actions and by

¹ For example, Mary Poovey, in her highly influential *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, briefly mentions *Falkner* and does not discuss *Lodore* at all. Anne Mellor, in *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, devotes only the final chapter to *Mathilda*, *Valperga*, *Lodore* and *Falkner*, "those works . . . which most strikingly manifest the contradictions inherent in Mary Shelley's idealization of the bourgeois family" (xiii). The 1993 collection entitled *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein* contains fourteen articles, only two of which (by Barbara Jane O'Sullivan and Kate Ferguson Ellis) discuss *Lodore* or *Falkner*. Pamela Clemit, in *The Godwinian Novel*, does not discuss *Lodore* or *Falkner*, only mentioning that they "show an increased conformity to social and financial pressures" (139 note). Recent collections, including *Iconoclastic Departures* (1997, ed. Syndy Conger, Frederick Frank, and Gregory O'Day), *Mary Shelley in Her Times* (2000, ed. Betty Bennett and Stuart Curran), and *Mary Shelley's Fictions* (2000, ed. Michael Eberle-Sinatra), have begun to reflect increasing scholarly interest in the rest of Shelley's work.

example. Such virtuous examples of utopian domesticity affect not only their fictional surroundings, but serve the Godwinian purpose of illuminating the truth, thereby educating readers and gradually improving the real world.

One of the hallmarks of patriarchal culture is the attempt to restrict women to domesticity. Shelley saw that a perfected human society could be developed around a model of domesticity, but she was also well aware of the pitfalls of the restrictive domesticity prevalent in her day. Restrictive domesticity posits the home as a feminized haven in which idealized women provided a relaxing retreat for men who strive in the hectic public world.² This idea of “separate spheres,” which by the Victorian period had strongly taken hold, is reinforced in restrictive domesticity: women are denied entry to the public world, while men are supposed to excel outside the home.³ In her earlier career,

² For a succinct description of restrictive domesticity, see Marlon Ross (117). Eve Tavor Bannet argues that Matriarchal feminists, such as Hannah More, used the supposedly restrictive ideology of domesticity to further their own feminist goals: “with their studied conventionality and their cautious, step-by-step and sphere-by-sphere approach, [Matriarchal feminists] often succeeded in carrying points which had originated among the more impatient, openly ambitious, and sweeping revolutionary Egalitarians. . . . and successfully implemented every plank of the seventeenth-century egalitarian platform” (9). Although Shelley used the concept of domesticity as her basis for reform, she followed Wollstonecraft in its egalitarian implementation.

³ Jane Aaron succinctly sums up critical understanding of Victorian separate spheres ideology as follows:

According to Davidoff and Hall, this developing segregation had become entrenched by the 1830s: ‘it was recognised that men would be preoccupied with business, and domesticity had become the “woman’s sphere” rather than . . . a way of living for both men and women’ [*Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, 181] Mary Poovey, discussing the same polarisation, argues that it was strengthened and in part brought about by the need to retain a sacrosanct area of personal relationship within increasingly impersonalised methods of production: ‘as competition and confrontation replaced the old paternalistic alliances of responsibilities and dependence, women . . . as exemplars of paternalistic virtues . . . were being asked to preserve the remnants of the old society within the private sphere of the home’ [*The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, xv]. (12)

Aaron concludes that “In Mary Shelley’s own society, too, women were excluded by an enforced passivity from bringing the values of love and relation - left to them to maintain in the domestic sphere - into the public domain” (20). This, of course, is exactly the

Shelley provides many scathing examples of the ill effects of restrictive domesticity, both on the men who find themselves forever alienated by and excluded from the feminized haven, and on the women who are trapped within it, powerless to affect the public world which nevertheless impinges upon their lives. As her career proceeds, Shelley continues to condemn restrictive domesticity in her narratives, even as she develops the seeds of utopian domesticity present in her earliest work. As a feminist, Shelley investigates domesticity as a utopian social model in order to revise away its patriarchal restrictiveness, not only for women, who were expected to maintain ideological control over the house, children and servants so that the husband would be presented with a clean and well-ordered universe when he returned from his day of important work in the real world, but also for men, who were excluded from human relationships by the expectation that they should single-handedly achieve worldly success. Shelley's ideal of utopian domesticity is not based on the modern nuclear family but depends on the ability to recognize others as community/family members and to consolidate their rights and responsibilities as part of an extended community.

Utopian domesticity entails the formation of a community in which equality, responsibility, simplicity, and forgiveness determine the actions of its members. Shelley was influenced by the political theory of her parents in the development of this model for social reform. She takes from Wollstonecraft the pivotal idea that women should be educated to the same high standard as men so that women may become productive citizens, and she argues that men must respect women as autonomous individuals and as respected partners in marriage and in the larger community. From Godwin she takes the idea that such a social revolution could only be achieved through gradual educational

problem that Shelley critiques and that spurs her to create a counter-model in her own writings.

efforts,⁴ when each person realizes the importance of responsibility towards others instead of personal ambition and individual rights. Shelley's idea of the perfect community depends on three basic elements laid out by Godwin in *Political Justice*: simplicity of lifestyle, perfect frankness, and forgiveness towards wrongdoers.

The ideological dangers of domesticity must be acknowledged in order to appreciate Shelley's transformative contribution to feminist thought. Joan C. Williams has theorized that the self-sacrificing mode of domesticity was constructed as a complementary and oppositional ideology to self-interest. Shelley modifies the ideas of Wollstonecraft and Godwin to develop a position on liberal, Lockean natural rights that does not favor the male over the female, because she understands the importance of the presence of both sexes in both the public and domestic spheres. The radical Wollstonecraft insists on the liberal concept of "natural rights" in her work, but, ironically, her demand for women's rights operates as a parallel to the self-interested liberalism which some men of her day were already using in their favor. According to Wollstonecraft, the woman's natural right to education enables her more perfect citizenship, thereby making her a more perfect wife and mother. The duties of the mother to the child are explicit and the ambitious distanced husband is implicit: thus domesticity supplements liberalism. As men progressed forward by natural right, women could easily be left behind in the restrictive domestic sphere, from within which they were to support the man and provide a haven for him from the competitive world. The natural

⁴ In propounding his theory of justice as it gradually manifests, Godwin states, "Every community of men, as well as every individual, must govern itself according to its ideas of justice. What I should desire is, not by violence to change its institutions, but by discussion to change its ideas" (784 [*Political Justice*, Book VIII, Chap. X, "Reflections"]). He further states that "the progress of truth is the most powerful of all causes" and that "That which we can be persuaded clearly and distinctly to approve will inevitably modify our conduct" (791 [Book VIII, Chap. X]). According to these precepts, Shelley writes novels that illuminate political philosophy and advance the cause of Godwinian reform.

right of the man to achieve his ambition is super-inscribed over the duty of the woman to care for the children and to preserve domestic harmony. But Godwin's ideas of responsibility to others were directly opposed to natural rights, and man's natural right to ambition is denied. Shelley spends a great deal of time in all of her novels implicating men in the success of domesticity. For Shelley, the man's primary role becomes one of responsibility to respect the wife and to share their lives and concerns with her as an equal. Godwin, who focused the efforts of his male citizen on a smaller, more private world, and Wollstonecraft, who sought to open up the larger public world to her female citizen, provided effective templates for their daughter to transgress traditional gender boundaries.

In all her narratives, Shelley devotes considerable time to outlining the education and background of her characters, in the belief she shares with her parents that these factors are all-important in understanding how character evolves and how it can be reformed. Critiquing the Romantic idea of the solitary genius, Shelley shows how such an isolated figure, no matter how good its intentions, would always fail, sometimes with disastrous results. She contrasts the ambitious, corrupted Byronic Romantic hero with the perfected, benevolent Shelleyan hero, whose qualities of genius are devoted more to community than to self-aggrandizement. Gender complicates these types of the Romantic hero, and Shelley investigates how women who transgress prescribed gender roles, such as those who take on the role of the Byronic Romantic hero, are threatened with the loss of their class position as well.

The utopian domesticity of Shelley's ideal is undeniably based on middle-class conditions, most importantly a comfortable domicile and enough leisure for study and self-improvement, such as was out of reach for the majority of people in the working classes. Shelley's fictions would be consumed by a class who had the leisure and the extra resources to read for pleasure, and her stories in the gift-book annuals were clearly

consumer products for the middle-class. Ownership of property such as a house or even a small garden, though not strictly required by Shelley, is also a common feature of her utopian ideal which was usually out of the reach of the working classes. Shelley's utopian model does not propose a class revolution, but it is reformist, for it argues that privilege begets responsibility, and urges (in Godwinian fashion) the voluntary redistribution of resources from those who have more than they need to those who do not have enough. By choosing a simpler way of life, and by acting according to the principles of disinterested friendship and benevolence, like the characters in Shelley's books, readers could improve society at large.

The ideal of using one's resources responsibly, through patronage or paternalistic oversight of one's dependents or employees, was imported into middle-class ideals from the aristocratic code of chivalry; in early feminist thought, such a sense of social duty works in tension with Paineite individualism. Whereas the individual's duty to community is sometimes interpreted as a sign of Burkean conservatism in Shelley, it is more directly derived from the duty of giving of assistance to those in need, as outlined by Godwin. Godwin's and Shelley's ideal of social responsibility may be distinguished from the kind of conservative paternalism advocated by Burke, in that while both systems stress the duties of the fortunate toward the less fortunate, in Burke the less fortunate are expected to reciprocate by supporting the superiority of their benefactors by service and by fidelity. Although neither Godwin nor Shelley ever advocate revolution, neither do they support the unquestioning loyalty felt by the subjects of Burkean paternalism. Shelley instead transforms the paternalistic aspects of middle-class responsibility into a more concrete sense of community and family formation: for example, she strongly criticizes the failures of the Frankensteins and the De Lacey's to recognize the familial ties

created between them by the devoted service of Justine and the Creature, respectively.⁵ In later works, Shelley does not depict hierarchical service relationships so directly, but focuses instead on the precariousness of class positions held by such characters as Fanny Derham, whose family has fallen into the lower strata of the middle classes. Shelley focuses on the reform of the upper classes--the re-education of moneyed characters such as Cornelia, Falkner, and Gerard Neville--but also includes middle-class figures like Fanny, who devotes her limited leisure and resources to study, self-improvement, and acts of benevolence, and who is rewarded at the end of *Lodore* by financial support in the form of patronage. In this way Shelley models the ideal of responsible redistribution of resources at various class strata, both in the upper classes through charity and patronage, but also in the middle and working classes, by the devotion of valuable leisure and resources to the assistance of one's chosen circle of friends.

Shelley did not argue for the reorganization of class hierarchies,⁶ but her utopian model for the reformation of domesticity does reconceive gender relations at the most basic levels. Although the word "feminist" is a modern historical concept, it is an

⁵ The aspect of choice in the formation of family relationships is key to Shelley. Ruth Perry points out, however, that the emphasis on choice in family formation--specifically the choice of a marriage partner--was tied to a move away from the recognition of women's property rights through relations by blood. Shelley does not differ greatly from other novelists in her reflection of the changing nature of family in that her orphaned women heroes, Ethel Lodore and Elizabeth Raby, certainly fit Perry's paradigm of orphaned girls who stabilize their positions by reinstitution under the protection of male power. Shelley does insist, however, that the power for positive change inherent in one's choice of family relationships should not extend only to the one-time choice of a spouse, but to the conscious formation of deep friendships and community responsibilities carrying the same fervor as blood relationships.

⁶ Shelley's complacent attitude toward class is similar to that of such other early feminists as Cavendish, Astell, and Scott, whom I examine in Chapter One. Wollstonecraft, who does critique class, primarily aims not at improving the conditions of the working classes but at condemning the corrupted and selfish values of the upper classes (see for example, Barbara Taylor's discussion of Wollstonecraft's class hostilities, 207-212).

appropriate descriptor for Shelley because she worked toward a transformation of those societal structures that keep women on the periphery of power, diminishing their ability to control their own lives or contribute meaningfully to the society in which they live. Traditional domesticity is the necessary other required by the isolated male genius of masculinist Romanticism: just as the wife preserves a quiet haven in the home, so domesticity creates a solid ground against which Romantic *sturm und drang* appears all the more dramatic.⁷ Shelley challenges masculinist formations of Romanticism primarily in two ways: by placing women in the cultural center in her accounts of utopian domesticity, and by dramatizing their conspicuous absence or marginalization in traditional restrictive domesticity.

A new understanding of domesticity will provide a new and deeper understanding of women's contributions to and critiques of the ideas of Romanticism. Scholars Anne Mellor and Marlon Ross pioneered a theory of Romanticism that takes gender into account, identifying cultural factors that discouraged women from participation in Romanticism or in the larger literary sphere.⁸ Encouraged to write by her father and

⁷ According to Joan C. Williams, the self-sacrificing mode of domesticity functions as a "dangerous supplement" to self-interest, natural rights, and "possessive individualism," the idea that a person's success is based on competition and defeat of others. Traditional domestic ideology essentializes and naturalizes women as possessing the traits liberalism required, such as charity, compassion, and beneficence.

⁸ Anne Mellor, in her anthology *Romanticism and Feminism* (1988) and book *Romanticism and Gender* (1993), and Marlon B. Ross, in *The Contours of Masculine Desire: Romanticism and the Rise of Women's Poetry* (1989), used difference feminism to argue that Romanticism had not been adequately theorized to include women. They define a masculine Romanticism in which Nature is gendered feminine and women themselves are as seen as Other and loved narcissistically. According to Mellor, Romantic period women emphasized the idea of the "ethic of care" developed by Carol Gilligan, as opposed to the masculine Romantic Ideology outlined by Jerome McGann and elaborated by Ross. Another important anthology of critical writing aiming to include women in the theorization of Romanticism is Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner's *Re-visioning Romanticism* (1994). Gary Kelly theorizes the Romantic novel to take women into account, primarily in his *Women, Writing and Revolution* (1993), but also in *The English Jacobin Novel* (1976) and *English Fiction of the Romantic Period* (1989).

husband and by her mother's example, Shelley transgressed the cultural dictates of her prescribed gender role by participating in literary production to effect political outcomes.⁹ Her transgressive gender position distanced Shelley from Romanticism, placing her in the role of "outsider within" and allowing her a clearer critical perception of Romantic ideology than men, who were not thus distanced from it. For example, writing novels rather than poetry (a more acceptable activity for women) led Shelley to deeper exploration of her women characters than her poet counterparts. The alignment of gender with certain cultural activities should not be taken too far, however. It is tempting to assign, as Mellor does, certain valorized belief systems, such as an "ethic of care" or "belief in community," to the feminine gender, but the concept of "separate spheres" was eroded for Shelley not only by the ideas of Wollstonecraft, but also by the contributions Godwin and P. B. Shelley. And of course, Shelley responded to the issues raised by Romanticism and domesticity with critical thought, not merely in a manner determined by her gender. By gaining a fuller understanding of how women (Shelley, Wollstonecraft) and men (Godwin, P. B. Shelley)¹⁰ contributed to the construction of both Romanticism and domesticity, we can come to an understanding of these terms that allows us to theorize an ideology as complicated as Shelley's while remaining fully cognizant of

⁹ Reviews of *Frankenstein*, for example, turned away from their attention to Godwinian politics and toward treatment of the novel as a Gothic production of a "female author" once Shelley's gender was revealed. As Betty Bennett notes, "From this point, the contemporaneous critical reception of Mary Shelley's works largely eradicated her reformist sociopolitical agenda" ("Not this time" 16). Not Shelley's participation in novel writing *per se*, but her attention to political concerns in her novels, was transgressive and therefore overlooked by critics.

¹⁰ Romantic-period writers Amelia Opie and James Lawrence (in Chapter One) and Jane Austen, Felicia Hemans and Maria Edgeworth (in Chapter Eight) will also be considered in my study of domesticity and feminism.

gender, class, sexuality, and race.

In her engagement with the ideas of Romanticism, Shelley does not simply reject Romantic tropes but contrasts the negative qualities of one type of Romantic character with the positive qualities of another. It is important to understand the kinds of characters portrayed by Shelley in order better to understand her contributions to Romanticism as a woman writer. Shelley focuses on the contrasts between ambitious, self-centered, and isolated Byronic heroes, and benevolent, enlightened Shelleyan heroes.¹¹ The Byronic Romantic hero breaks down the bonds that form community through heedless, selfish acts, while the Shelleyan hero attempts to assist others. Shelley's portraits of these characters are not tied simply to gender, either: both the Byronic and the Shelleyan heroes may be male or female (though the female Byronic hero faces a different, more perilous fate than her male counterpart). Mellor did groundbreaking work in attempting to theorize possible differences between masculine and feminine Romanticism. In *Romanticism and Gender*, she tends to conflate the Romantic hero and the male Romantic poet, asserting of the Romantic poet that "What he most deeply desires is absolute possession of the beloved; but since this desire is never realizable in life, his quest always fails, leaving him frustrated, forlorn, sinking, trembling, expiring, yet still yearning for his impossible ideal" (*Gender* 27). Mellor also argues that, for example, "Percy Shelley carried to an extreme [a] dual strategy of deifying the male ego even as it cannibalized the attributes of the female" (*Feminism* 7), deepening her metaphor by saying that "Positive feminine characteristics--sensitivity, compassion, maternal love--are metaphorically appropriated by the male poet, while attributes of difference--independence, intelligence,

¹¹ Betty Bennett, describing Shelley's opposition of the Shelleyan and Byronic Romantic heroes, points out that Shelley's novels frequently tell the story of a "type" of anti-hero such as Lodore, who was contrasted with a Shelleyan hero, "his Eton friend, Derham, 'slender,' 'effeminate,' 'gentle,' who had 'wild fancies and strange inexplicable ideas' but mastered 'the abstrusest philosophy' [*Lodore* 31]" (*Introduction* 96).

willpower, aggressive action--are denigrated" (*Gender* 29). She ultimately defines feminine Romanticism as founded on the philosophy of Wollstonecraft:

The rational woman, rational love, egalitarian marriage, the preservation of the domestic affections, responsibility for the mental, moral and physical well-being of all the members of the family--these are the cornerstones of Wollstonecraft's feminism, what we would now define as a "liberal" feminism, one that is committed to a model of equality rather than difference. . . . By selecting the image of the egalitarian family as the prototype of a genuine democracy, a family in which husband and wife not only regard each other as equals in intelligence, sensivity, and power, but also participate equally in childcare and decision-making, Wollstonecraft introduced a truly revolutionary political program.

(*Gender* 38)

Mellor argues that feminine differs from masculine Romanticism because it features "a mind relocated--in a gesture of revolutionary gender implications--in the female as well as the male body" (*Gender* 2). Mellor's assertions about the effects of Wollstonecraft's philosophy on Romantic-era woman writers are especially relevant to the novels of Shelley, who consciously followed a Wollstonecraftian program.¹² However, Mellor's interpretation of Percy Shelley's Romanticism as emblematically masculine needs questioning, because images of Romantic perfection appearing in his poetry are used by Mary Shelley in her own revisions of the Romantic hero toward perfection, and because Shelley also models her perfected heroes on a mythologized version of Percy Shelley she

¹² Mellor recognizes Shelley's utopian project by briefly mentioning *Lodore* as "a celebration of the egalitarian family as the basis of the successful nation-state [in which] Shelley subtly follows her mother's revolutionary political vision" (*Gender* 69-70).

herself largely fashioned through her editions of his poetry.¹³ The description of this type of hero as “Shelleyan,” then, appropriately blurs the distinction between the two Shelleys whose ideas commingle in its creation.

Mary Shelley’s visions of the perfected Romantic hero do not differ so much from Percy Shelley and his creations as they differ from the “Byronic hero”—a more robust, willful, self-destructive type, mad, bad, and dangerous to know, who does not even attempt to “cannibalize” female attributes, but simply treats “his” women as he likes—and in Shelley’s works, he suffers the consequences. Shelley did not simply reject Romanticism or the masculine Romantic hero; instead she presents iterations of male and female Byronic and Shelleyan characters, attempting to investigate both the effects of the Romantic ideology and gender on characters in different configurations, including her explorations of the processes necessary for men and women to transform themselves to achieve Shelleyan perfection.¹⁴

Critical narratives currently attempting to theorize Shelley’s work have fallen mainly into two groups. The first group, exemplified by Mary Poovey and Anne Mellor, identifies Shelley’s early work as her best, and sees her later work as increasingly conforming to a socially orthodox, “separate spheres” domestic ideology.¹⁵ These

¹³ For more on Mary’s creation of an idealized Percy through her editions, see, for example, Neil Fraistat and Mary Favret. See also Annette Cafarelli’s excellent discussion of Percy Shelley’s feminism as well as its shortcomings.

¹⁴ The problem of associating Mary Shelley’s critique of Romanticism with her critique of prescribed gender roles is taken up by David Vallins, although he continues to follow Poovey and Mellor in the belief in Shelley’s “loss of youthful optimism” and her “moral and political conservatism” (166).

¹⁵ As Kate Ferguson Ellis summarizes, “. . . the feminist attention that has been directed to Shelley’s later [domestic] novels has found in them too little, rather than too much rage. Mary Poovey sees in Mary Shelley’s later fiction an accommodation to the constraints on women summed up in the figure of the ‘proper lady’ who suppresses,

scholars, although sympathetic to Shelley, assert that social pressures made Shelley back away from the bolder political stances of her intellectual circle. But by constructing a critical narrative in which Shelley's work devolves from *Frankenstein*, the masterpiece, into later work lacking in originality or philosophical integrity, these critics do little justice to the complexity of Shelley's thought: regarding the domesticity valorized in *Lodore* and *Falkner* as a conservative retrenchment treats Shelley's complex processing of disparate ideologies as a simple concession to monetary needs and societal pressures.

A second group of scholars, still mostly focusing on *Frankenstein*, have identified Shelley's critical attitude towards domesticity, as opposed to her adoption of the domestic ideology. Susan J. Wolfson, for example, reads *Frankenstein's* restrictive domesticity as a critique of "the liability *inherent* in women's domestic role" (my emphasis). Susan Allen Ford also identifies Shelley's negative critique of domesticity in *Mathilda*, while Kate Ferguson Ellis attends not only to *Frankenstein* but also *Lodore* and *Falkner*. Finding no hint of the utopian, Ellis claims that Shelley was aware of the isolating and stultifying effects of the retreat from the world to the domestic haven, arguing that even when marriages in Shelley's works end happily, the characters become casualties of domesticity. This critical narrative has the advantage of granting Shelley more agency in developing the ideas expressed throughout her work. However, in identifying only the negative critique in Shelley's work, such critics neglect her efforts to construct a theory of her own.

An alternative to these critical narratives has been suggested by Betty T. Bennett. Responding to Poovey and Mellor, Bennett writes that "even today Mary Shelley is often depicted as a victim of conventional expectations for women, the inherent dissonance of

perhaps even annihilates, the radical impulses that animated the author's younger self. More recently, Anne Mellor has continued and developed Poovey's narrative, exploring what she sees as Shelley's ambivalent idealization of the bourgeois family, the constitutive institution of the proper lady" (220-1).

her works glossed over as ambiguous subservience or psychological affliction” (*Introduction* 121). As early as 1978, Bennett had suggested that Mary Shelley does not diverge so widely from the radicalism of Wollstonecraft and Godwin as has been portrayed, a claim with which I agree.¹⁶ Shelley chose at an early age to align herself with the radical elements of her society. Following the revolutionary precepts of her mother and father, Shelley disregarded the decrees of custom and acted according to her own conscience. Living openly with a married man outside wedlock (from the elopement, 28 July 1814, until their wedding, 30 Dec. 1816, after the suicide of Harriet Westbrook Shelley), and penning the audacious *Frankenstein* (1818) aligned “the daughter of Godwin and Mary” with her parents’ 1790s style radicalism. Although time took its toll, leaving her with only one child after five pregnancies and without the husband she had loved, outcast from respectable society, and dependent on a hostile father-in-law for monetary support for her son until 1844,¹⁷ Shelley continued to write according to her original reformist philosophies, but she wrote within generic conventions (the historical novel, the *roman á clef*, the domestic novel) that may disguise her reformist program.

Bennett explores the close connections between Shelley’s work and that of her parents: “Mary Shelley modeled her life and works on her parents’ belief in the power and responsibility of the individual to effect change [and] on their own activist and risk-taking engagement with their society” (*Introduction* 2). Bennett posits that Mary Shelley adheres to her parents’ philosophies and to what she calls Percy Shelley’s model of

¹⁶ See especially Bennett’s enumeration of Shelley’s adoption of Godwinian and Wollstonecraftian ideals in the education of Euthanasia (“Political Philosophy” 360-61).

¹⁷ At that time Sir Timothy died and Percy Florence inherited the title of baronet along with the heavily indebted estate.

universal Promethean love. The idea of love, in this context, is rational and Godwinian in its emphasis on justice and forgiveness. The concept of universal love, however, is somewhat vague, sometimes seeming to be closely connected to romantic love. I wish to focus attention more strongly on the ways in which domesticity works as a perfected but concrete social structure, as often associated with friendship and filial love as with romantic love.

Shelley's refusal to adopt the doctrine of "separate spheres" for men and women, a doctrine that grew stronger into the Victorian era, is key to her reform of the ideology of domesticity. Jurgen Habermas has provided terminology for the discussion of separate public, private, and intimate spheres. The most basic model of the public sphere, as Habermas defines it, was a political sphere within which property owners, the aristocracy, were empowered to make decisions about government. This public sphere of politics and government was affected by two other sorts of public sphere, the sphere of public opinion and the sphere of sphere of letters and the press.

The private sphere for Habermas is the sphere around the home, but it is also associated with economics and trade. Habermas gives the term "intimate sphere" to the ideological structures surrounding the inter-relations of members of the (patriarchal) bourgeois conjugal family: he describes the "family's self-image as a sphere of humanity-generating closeness [and] the ideas of freedom, love, and cultivation of the person that grew out of the experiences of the conjugal family's private sphere" (48). Habermas states that "In the intimate sphere of the conjugal family privatized individuals viewed themselves as independent even from the private sphere of their economic activity--as persons capable of entering into 'purely human' relations with one another" (48). He argues that intimate, private and public spheres are inter-related and help to support one another ideologically. Whereas the private sphere has its public face, such as the salon or family room, even the intimate sphere can negotiate the public through, for example, the

literary form of the letter (47-49). As writers of "personal letters" meant for private or public reception, or as professional writers of other literary forms, especially novels, then, women could enter into the public sphere of writing without violating their position as "official" (ideologically appropriate) residents of the private or intimate spheres.

As a resident of the domestic sphere (a semi-permeable conflation of intimate, private and to some extent the public spheres), a bourgeois woman was a naturalized "expert" on intimate relationships, and a woman writer could even posit as a sort of duty the creation of literature in which her intimate, private or domestic experiences were oriented toward a public audience. This orientation of the private toward a public audience (which Habermas notes, 49) could be extended to a variety of public sphere matters--but it was not always clear when the contributions of a woman writer would be deemed acceptable or transgressive. Ideology in its simplest forms dictated clear-cut boundaries between the spheres of letters, public opinion, and governance which in practice were somewhat harder to delineate.¹⁸ As a male-dominated arena, the sphere of public opinion was closely guarded against encroachment by women, and, of course the field of governance--even the right to vote--was entirely denied to them. It was women's encroachment on the sphere of public opinion from within the public sphere of letters that triggered ideological alarm bells, but women writers who wished to comment on public

¹⁸ Scholars including Joan Landes and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have attempted to refine Habermas's sphere theories in terms of gender. Landes argues that "the exclusion of women from the bourgeois public was not incidental but central to its incarnation" (qtd in Jones and Wahrman 9). Landes has more recently argued that "public-sphere theory needs to take account of the gendered construction of embodied subjectivities within both public and private life" (7). Davidoff and Hall use empirical data to show how ideological forces reshaped middle-class women's material realities within the home, divorcing them from earlier, eighteenth-century models of cottage economy. More recently, Davidoff has argued that women's involvement in charitable associations should complicate our assumption about the ways in which women were ideologically bound to the home over the course of the nineteenth century.

matters could, in fact, create a paradigm from within which to do so.¹⁹

Godwin's consideration of political associations parallels Habermas's investigation of the public spheres of opinion, letters, and political decision making. Godwin strongly warns against the formation of "party spirit" and the substitution of a part for the whole in political decision making, but he argues that the open communication of ideas in individual conversation (and to a lesser extent in print) increases public knowledge without the risk of revolution.²⁰ Godwin argues that although formal associations tend to decrease inquiry, conversation among two or three gathered informally will tend to increase it; furthermore, though books are "cold" or uninviting, they have the capacity to distribute knowledge and to store it up for future preservation.²¹ Shelley, in writing novels, adheres to the principle of Godwinian intervention into public discourse by avoiding public harangue yet still putting forward her ideas in a durable and inviting format for the individual perusal of her readers.

Historically, women exploring feminist ideas recognize their restrictions within domesticity as a central problem. The critique of restrictive domesticity and the desire for a regenerated utopian domesticity coexist and inform one another in Shelley's work. These two apparently contradictory positions can coexist because of the close connections

¹⁹ For example, Helen Maria Williams, in her *Letters from France*, was able to couch her early support for revolutionary principles within anecdotes largely personal or domestic in nature.

²⁰ See Book IV, Chapter III, "Of Political Associations" (288-295). See also Carl Fisher's application of Habermas to Godwin, 52, 62.

²¹ Godwin discusses the durability and wide distribution of knowledge due to the discovery of printing in the conclusion of his chapter on revolutions (280 [Book IV, Chap. II]).

between ideology²² and utopia identified by such thinkers as Ernst Bloch.²³ Bloch discovers in ideology a thread of the utopian, a realizable hope for a better world. Fredric Jameson also identifies ideology's promise of utopian outcomes by positing that "the effectively ideological is also, at the same time, necessarily Utopian" (286). Focusing on utopia's function as a critique of the present and spur for future improvement, Bloch hypothesizes a utopian principle of hope that runs throughout all human endeavor. For Bloch, concrete utopia is the result of "anticipatory consciousness," as opposed to abstract utopia, which is merely compensatory, a product of wishful thinking that placates the thinker. The principle of hope suggests that utopia will become concrete as a real future possibility. In the case of Shelley, Bloch's theories help illuminate the realizable (concrete) utopian elements Shelley extracts from domestic ideology to envision utopian domesticity.

Bloch's theory may be used to interrogate the intersection of two ideologies, domesticity and Romanticism, in Shelley's utopian project. In each of these ideologies a utopian thread exists that Shelley's work attempts to make concrete. The idea of the utopian function within ideology helps clarify how the false consciousness of domestic or Romantic ideology can bear a genuine utopian impulse for a creative and critical thinker such as Shelley. Bloch especially illuminates Shelley's ideal of utopian domesticity,

²² "Ideology" is usually defined as "false consciousness;" I use the term to refer to an overarching system of ideas that purports to provide an ordered explanation for the ways things are, while glossing over and veiling its own defects.

²³ See Bloch's 1959 three-volume *chef d'oeuvre*, *The Principle of Hope*, translated from the German in 1986 by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. See also *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, translated by Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg (1988). For criticism of Bloch, see Vincent Geoghegan, *Utopianism and Marxism* (1987); Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (1990); and *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch* (1997), edited by Jamie Owen Daniel and Tom Moylan, a volume that includes the articles from the issue of *Utopian Studies* devoted to the consideration of Bloch (1.2 1990) as well as additional material.

because he identifies egalitarian marriage as a precursor or model in miniature of utopian socialist society (*Principle of Hope* I, 325-27), thus helping us get beyond the traditional Marxian critique of marriage as a bourgeois institution in order to understand Shelley's own insistence on the utopian, even radical, power of a revisioned domesticity to serve as a new model for society and basis for societal change.

After historically situating the linkage of utopian feminism, reform, and domesticity in Chapter One, as outlined below, I explore in Chapters Two and Three how Shelley exploits the figure of the isolated Romantic creative genius to give her works passion and impetus. This creative genius, isolated from family and community, provides a locus for Shelley's double critique at the intersection of Romantic and domestic ideology. It is easy to identify the utopian function (that is, the desire to work toward a perfected society) within the Romantic ideology as Shelley develops it in *Frankenstein* (1818, rev. 1831), *Mathilda* (c. 1819), or *The Last Man* (1826). Victor Frankenstein seeks to grant a great boon to humanity by overcoming the spectre of death. Mathilda, writing in her lonely hut, seeks to find the meaning of her suffering and to transmute it into literature as great as that of Dante. Adrian and Raymond seek to marshal their powers as political leaders for the good of their country, and eventually, Lionel Verney seeks simply to survive as a repository of some of the lost greatness of humanity (or at least his own western culture). These Romantic narratives exemplify a faith in the power of the word to convey its meaning, to survive the storyteller, that is at the heart of the Romantics' ideological belief in the timeless and transcendent power of literary genius. At the same time, such faith carries a utopian moment of genuine hope in its own power to convey meaning faithfully and to survive.

In tragic works such as *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda*, Romantic ideology tempts characters to reject or restrict domesticity in order to achieve greatness alone, and this restricted domesticity cannot deliver the better world it promises. In these works Shelley

develops a well-recognized negative critique of domesticity, demonstrating the flaws of an ideology in which she nonetheless recognizes a utopian potential. In *Frankenstein*, these flaws primarily spring from the persistent tendencies of exclusion which define traditional domesticity: patriarchal exclusion, in which women are both protected and stifled by their immersion in the home, as well as exclusions of “others” based on class and race. In Bloch’s terms, Shelley refuses to accept an abstract utopia, in which such flaws are glossed over by mere wishful thinking, and subjects her utopia to the demands of the concrete--would the utopia survive an exposure to the real, or dissolve under its pressures? Chapter Two focuses specifically on *Frankenstein*, in which Shelley looks closely at the destruction brought about by the ambition of the solitary genius, and the effects of a restrictive domesticity upon those who are confined and/or excluded by it. The De Lacey household is Shelley’s first portrayal of domesticity with utopian potential, but because the De Laceys perceive the Creature as an intruding monster rather than a fellow outsider, this potential is destroyed. In Chapter Three I look at how *Mathilda*, continuing Shelley’s examination of Romantic self-involvement, demonstrates the outcome of a domesticity warped by solipsism and the unnatural idealization of the female and deepens Shelley’s critique of gender tensions operating within the Romantic paradigm. I also consider here some important shorter pieces written around 1820, including the mythological dramas, *Proserpine* and *Midas*, and the recently uncovered children’s story, *Maurice, or the Fisher’s Cot*, in which Shelley first fully imagined the effects of an unrestricted, utopian domesticity on individuals and their community.

Shelley’s feminism and growing commitment to female characters across the span of her career impels her to confront the feminine-gendered, separate sphere of domesticity. But Shelley refuses to restrict either the female to domesticity or domesticity to the female. After her initial period of works constructed primarily around Romantic topoi (*Frankenstein*, *Mathilda*), Shelley’s historical/political novels form a cohesive

“middle period” in her career: *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man*, and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830). In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I consider Shelley’s focus on the ambition for power and its effects in these novels and her exploration of how power may be wielded in the public world according to a revised, feminist model of utopian domesticity. Shelley focuses a new harshness on the masculinized public sphere, holding up domesticity as a model for the public relations for all citizens, male and female.

In her political novels, Shelley compares the model of utopian domesticity with other political models, especially tyranny (in which a solitary leader seeks personal glory) and chivalry (in which men seek military glory while upholding women as angelic ideals). In *Valperga*, Shelley describes several examples of utopian domesticity, while contrasting the rational and benevolent Euthanasia, a Shelleyan Romantic hero, with the hyper-masculine ambition and treachery of Castrucchio and the ultra-feminine, victimized Beatrice, both examples of the passionate Byronic hero. While *Valperga* and *Perkin Warbeck* investigate a domestic model for civil authority, *The Last Man* occupies a pivotal moment of transition between a continued (elegiac) engagement with Romanticism and a concentration on the artificial divide between the feminized domestic and masculinized public spheres. In *The Last Man*, Shelley emphasizes the critical importance of interpersonal connections above all other human cultural constructs, and continues to study the contrast between the disinterested benevolence of the Shelleyan hero and the passionate genius of the Byronic hero. In *Perkin Warbeck*, Shelley finally condemns chivalry, individual patriarchal rights, and the concept of the “just war,” holding up the ideal of domesticity while closely exploring the requirements necessary to make domesticity utopian.

Chapter Seven considers Shelley’s last two novels, *Lodore* (1835) and *Falkner* (1837). In these domestic novels it is especially clear how utopian domesticity is to be realized by the perfection of both male and female Romantic heroes and the establishment

communities based on relationship, respect, and justice. While *Lodore* demonstrates specifically how Shelley constructs the possibility of utopian domesticity out of the ashes of the old masculinist Romanticism, *Falkner* shows Shelley rewriting the story of *Caleb Williams* to give it a happy ending through the mediation of the well-educated daughter, Elizabeth, transforming Godwin's theories to create a feminist form of social justice. The full-fledged utopian domesticity of *Lodore* and *Falkner* has been misread as an acquiescence to conservative ideologies; even critics who understand Shelley as the radical writer of *Frankenstein* contrast her early career with her later novels to support this narrative of supposed devolution. But the domesticity of *Lodore* and *Falkner* should not be read as Shelley's abandonment of the radical impulses of *Frankenstein* nor as a fulfillment of perceived seeds of conservatism in Shelley's earliest work. Whereas Shelley's earlier work focuses on what is wrong with domestic ideology, her later utopian domestic novels provide a countermodel, exemplifying not only the dangers of domesticity, but teasing out utopian threads from within the ideology. The utopian domesticity Shelley describes in *Lodore* and *Falkner* makes more recognizable the less fully-realized utopian moments throughout her earlier work.

Shelley was, of course, preceded by other women writers in her interest in the reform of women's situation, including domesticity. In the first and last chapters of my dissertation, I seek to place utopian domesticity in a historical context ranging from the late seventeenth century to Shelley's day. In Chapter One, I consider early women thinkers who recognized the dangers of enforced domesticity but at the same time used women's traditional realm as the basis for their utopian ideas. These writers viewed women as men's intellectual equals and sought to demonstrate how women could live outside the restrictions of men's control. Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673) explored the life of the mind in companionate marriage and in female friendship in her science fiction romance, *The Blazing World* (1666), and in her play,

The Convent of Pleasure (1668), laying out the terms for utopian male/female partnership. Mary Astell (1666-1731) emphasized women's education and independence in her polemics, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1698) and *Some Reflections on Marriage* (1700), regarding a single, chaste life as preferable to the married state, and advocating above all the life of the mind for women. Sarah Scott (1723-1795) explored the importance of community in her feminist utopia, *Millenium Hall* (1762), in which she portrayed communal living and good works as crucial. I continue in Chapter One by looking at two responses to the philosophical theory of Wollstonecraft and Godwin: *Adeline Mowbray, or, the Mother and Daughter* (1804), by Amelia Opie, and James Lawrence's *Empire of the Nairs* (1811). Lawrence, who idealized Wollstonecraft, focused on free love and matrilineal property inheritance in his chivalric utopian tale. Opie, a realist, critiqued the hypothetical effects of Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's tenets were they to be acted out in contemporary life, arguing that it is naive to assume that society will laud an individual because she maintains her integrity and her philosophical principles.

In order to relate the feminist/reformist nature of Shelley's work to the standards of her own time, I conclude in Chapter Eight by comparing her with her direct contemporaries, Jane Austen, Felicia Hemans, and Maria Edgeworth. In *Persuasion* (1818), *Records of Woman* (1828) and *Helen* (1834), these well-regarded women writers demonstrate the potential benefits and drawbacks of domesticity with sympathy and depth. They were less concerned than Shelley, however, with a thorough critique of social systems and more willing to imply that individual circumstances were sufficient to ameliorate the potential hazards of traditional domesticity. Their differing levels of engagement with feminist and reformist critique highlight Shelley's own career-long project of imagining the revolutionary effects of a perfected domesticity.

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Domesticity in Early Utopian Feminism and Fictional Explorations of Philosophical Reform

The reimagination of domesticity is a central problem for the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century feminists and reform thinkers who preceded Shelley in their critique of women's subordinate position in society. The groundwork for Shelley's political fictions was laid by Wollstonecraft and Godwin and by other utopian, feminist, and reform thinkers engaging the problems of domesticity within the English literary tradition. For early utopian feminists, like Margaret Cavendish, Mary Astell, and Sarah Scott, the revision of domesticity is a key issue: the realm of the home, the family, and sometimes marriage, which has traditionally been naturalized as women's sphere, is reenvisioned as a site of women's empowerment. Such thinkers argue that the revision of domesticity must include thorough education for women, revision of gender expectations, an emphasis on women's friendship and a community-centered model of social benevolence, resulting in a feminist revision of how society conducts itself. These early feminists are relevant to Shelley's utopian project because their work reveals patterns of common concerns with persistent patriarchal structures, as well as similar solutions.¹ These writers can be described as feminist because they portray women as active agents in their own destinies and vital participants in the lives of their communities; they argue for control of economic resources and revised education for women; they understand gender and gender relations to be socially constructed; and in their work, marriage is not regarded as "natural" or sacrosanct, but is examined closely for its positive and negative effects on women's lives. Exploration of these early feminists' revision of domesticity

¹ Although I do not attempt to show direct influence of these early feminists upon Shelley, Jane Donawerth and Carol Kolmerten hold that utopias by women "constitute a continuous literary tradition in the West from the seventeenth century until the present day" [1]), and the similarity of Shelley's ideas demonstrates her part in this continuity.

helps us to identify the potential for utopia which forms the core philosophical thrust of Shelley's diverse work.

Later explorations of domesticity by Amelia Opie and James Lawrence focus on the problems of marriage and theories of marriage reform in response to the work of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Whereas mid- to late-nineteenth-century feminism would take up issues of political representation and suffrage, at this time the education of women and the revision of marriage and property laws were considered the most important issues in the betterment of women's lives.² Opie, placing the theories of Godwin and Wollstonecraft in conversation, demonstrates the tragic outcome of applying Godwin's antimatrimonial theory in an unreformed, prejudiced society, but she also demonstrates the applicability of some of Wollstonecraft's most important theory regarding woman's place in family and society. Lawrence promotes a utopian vision based on the absence of marriage, also including many of Wollstonecraft's ideas about the education of women, but he retains retrogressive political and economic structures (especially ideas of chivalry and masculine military glory) which undermine his accuracy in reflecting Wollstonecraft's ideas. Shelley's strong commitment to a feminist reform vision is illuminated not only by the contrast of her reform ideas with Opie's more conservative feminist response to Godwin and Wollstonecraft, but also with Lawrence's chivalric misreadings of Wollstonecraft, which influenced even Shelley's feminist-tending husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. By looking at how early feminists and reform thinkers up to Shelley's day understood domesticity as it affected women's position in

² The Infants Custody Act of 1839 was the first law that went onto the books giving women some rights within marriage. This legislation was passed two years after Shelley wrote her last novel. Shelley's friend Caroline Norton led agitation which led to the passage of the Infants Custody Act. Other rights within marriage, such as rights to property and to divorce, were not gained until much later. For more on the progress of nineteenth-century legal reform, see Joan Perkin, A. James Hammerton, and Mary Lyndon Shanley.

society, we will be better able to understand the use of domesticity in Shelley's own ideas of feminist reform.

Margaret Cavendish

In her utopian science fiction, *A Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666), Cavendish demands woman's intellectual freedom and makes "excellent conversation" the basic premise for utopian friendship and marriage. In her play, *The Convent of Pleasure* (1668), Cavendish describes a separatist women's utopia and critiques the problems of marriage, while also showing that it may be possible to overcome women's problems by educating men about women's concerns. Cavendish hints that disregarding gender expectations and basing utopian marriage on friendship are key to creating utopian relationships.

In *The Blazing World*, Cavendish's main character is a woman who is transported to a new world where she becomes Empress. Cavendish writes herself into the story as the Duchess, who becomes not only the Empress's scribe, but also her adviser and friend. In her description of the friendship of the Empress and the Duchess, Cavendish uses the term "Platonic" to describe their souls as disembodied, but she also uses the term playfully, blurring its precise meaning. The term also seems to express a disregard of gender: the Empress, the Duchess and the Duke are less clearly gendered in the Platonic realm of souls, so that their friendship and love for one another is purified of worldly expectations of exclusivity or jealousy.³

In *The Blazing World*, Cavendish's marriage to William Cavendish, the Duke of

³ The Empress selects the Duchess to be her scribe partly because she is a lady: "neither will the Emperor have reason to be jealous, she being one of my own sex" (306). But spirits, representing worldly opinion, point out that "husbands have reason to be jealous of Platonic lovers, for they are very dangerous, as being not only very intimate and close, but subtle and insinuating" (306). Lee Cullen Khanna rightly points out the "subtly erotic" undertones of this interplay (22-25).

Newcastle, is portrayed as utopian. The Duke and Duchess have such a good partnership based on excellent conversation that it easily expands to accommodate the Empress. When the Empress and the Duchess travel to visit the Duke, they actually enter into his body:

. . . and then the Duke had three souls in one body, and had there been but some such souls more, the Duke would have been like the grand-Seigneur in his seraglio, only it would have been a Platonic seraglio.

But the Duke's soul being wise, honest, witty, complaisant, and noble, afforded such delight and pleasure to the Empress's soul by his conversation that these two souls became enamoured of each other, which the Duchess's soul perceiving, grew jealous at first, but then considering that no adultery could be committed amongst Platonic lovers, and Platonism was divine, as being derived from the divine Plato, cast forth of her mind that idea of jealousy.

Then the conversation of these three souls was so pleasant that it cannot be expressed. (319)

The conversation of the three friends is not exclusive, exemplifying one of the most important features of utopian domesticity. The friendship of the Empress and the Duchess survives the Empress's attraction to the Duke and, likewise, the marriage of the Duchess and the Duke is hospitable to the Empress. It is key that both her marriage to the Duke and her friendship with the Empress are based on their respect for the Duchess's intellectual powers. Cavendish hints that the Duke, if he were less "wise, honest, witty, complaisant, and noble" might take advantage of his situation, like the sultan of a seraglio; in this manner, she gently reminds the reader that men must exhibit qualities like the Duke's so that utopian domesticity may come into being.

For marriage to be utopian for Cavendish, the wife must be regarded as an intellectually equal partner. Both Cavendish and her husband considered her literary

output to be an important contribution to their marriage, and Cavendish, seemingly with her husband's support, explicitly states that her writings were to be considered as her offspring.⁴ Cavendish used her literary work to speak in public on her husband's behalf. Her fictional counterpart, the Duchess, asks the Empress to arrange for a trial in the Blazing World, and the Duchess uses the opportunity of the fictional trial to exonerate the Duke.⁵ Cavendish also produced a literary biography of her husband, which (until new critical attention turned her way) was regarded as her best literary output (Shaver 7). Cavendish's defense of her husband reveals her own intellectual powers, proving her equality within marriage and also contributing to the household economy.

The utopian potential of marriage shown by Cavendish in *The Blazing World* is balanced by her understanding of the dystopian possibilities faced by married women in the seventeenth century. In her play *The Convent of Pleasure*, Cavendish presents a

⁴ In *Poems, and Fancies* Cavendish writes, ". . . of these Nine Months . . . [I] wrote this work. . . . being so fond of my Book, as to make it as if it were my Child" ("To the Reader," np). The epitaph written for Cavendish by her husband states, "Here lyes the Loyall Duke of Newcastle and his Dutches, his second wife, by whome he had noe issue; her name was Margarett Lucas, youngest sister to the Lord Lucas of Colchester; a noble familie, for all the Brothers were Valiant and all the Sisters virtuous. This Dutches was a wise, wittie and learned Lady, which her many Bookes do well testifie; she was a most Virtuuous and a Loving and carefull wife, and was with her Lord all the time of his banishment and miseries, and when he came home never parted from him in his solitary retirements" (qtd in Ferguson 311). Ferguson responds unfavorably to the epitaph, noting that Newcastle gives "pride of place" to the fact that Cavendish is the Duchess "by whom he had noe issue" (311). An equally valid response is that the Duke had come to terms with his lack of heirs by the Duchess, allowing him to openly acknowledge that fact and to place equal consideration on the valuable contributions she did make to his estate and to his happiness.

⁵ Newcastle had been regarded as a traitor to the royalist cause for leaving the country after his men were slaughtered at the battle of Marston Moor in 1644 (Mendelson 19). In November 1651, Cavendish unsuccessfully petitioned Parliament to receive the sales proceeds of her husband's sequestered lands (Miller 37-8). Her bashfulness may have prevented her from actually speaking in the courtroom (Rose 253). In Cavendish's narrative, her husband's case is convincingly presented, but even in the fiction, no ruling is given.

separatist female utopia in which the rich Lady Happy declines to marry and decides to retire with as many other women as her fortune can sustain, to live together, pursuing comfortable, pleasant lives in a utopian domestic setting free of men. Cavendish uses an “anti-masque” or series of dystopian scenes to educate the Lady Happy and her friend the Princess about the negative ramifications of marriage for women. Central to Cavendish’s philosophical work throughout her career is her commitment to the presentation of a variety of plausible arguments for any question. Throughout Cavendish’s work is the dynamic dissonance between women’s imagined freedom and their constraints in reality. For Cavendish, power lies in personal intellectual freedom and imagination. True to form, in *The Convent of Pleasure* Cavendish sees utopian possibility in potentially dystopian marriage by destabilizing the gender definition of “man.” Cavendish recognizes the mutability of gender roles and suggests that men, properly educated, can *also* change.

The Convent of Pleasure embodies several contradictions: on the one hand, it depicts a utopian domesticity--a free association of women who establish a home together based on likemindedness--that is free of the inequalities faced by women in marriage; on the other hand, that utopia is dismantled by the marriage and perhaps the silencing of the heroine at the end.⁶ The revelation that Happy’s beloved Princess is really a Prince in disguise destroys the women’s utopian Convent. Lady Happy marries the Prince, and although the Prince promises to keep the convent open, Lady Happy no longer qualifies to live there as a virgin. Although the separatist women’s utopia that Cavendish created is brought down, utopian possibility may survive in the hope that the Prince has received a feminist re-education during his time in the convent. Through the character of the disguised Prince, who is successful in his effort to woo Lady Happy, the play

⁶ Editor Anne Shaver points out that Happy speaks less and less as the play closes (13-14).

investigates the potential for men to be reformed by women's critiques of marriage and, in this way, points to the potential for a utopian domesticity that includes men and marriage.

There are three possibilities indicating utopian potential in Happy's relationship with the Prince(ss). The first lies in Lady Happy's personal inclination toward the Prince(ss). Even though "she" turns out to be a Prince, Happy falls in love. Cavendish writes of herself, "though I did dread Marriage, and shunn'd Mens companies, as much as I could, yet I could not, nor had not the power to refuse him [William Cavendish], by reason my Affections were fix'd on him, and he was the onely Person I ever was in love with" (*Natures Pictures* 375). Like Cavendish, Happy also "shunn'd Mens companies" yet finds a mate who seems unlike (other) men. By relying on her own intuitive desires, Lady Happy has a chance to be as fortunate as Cavendish was in her own match.

Second, the Prince(ss) is successful at his disguise until a messenger arrives who reveals the secret. That Lady Happy is to marry a man who is successful at adopting the traits of a virtuous lady surely bodes well for him in a story that valorizes a feminine ideal.⁷ Dolores Paloma points out that in several of her other plays, Cavendish writes about women disguised as men, revealing their capacities outside prescribed gender roles. Cavendish's emphasis on the power of the imagination to determine reality and her willingness to destabilize the idea of gender are undoubtedly linked. With the Prince(ss), Cavendish tries to strip away the dichotomy between gender roles, leaving an ungendered subject with the best characteristics of both sexes who is restricted by the prescribed roles of neither.

⁷ *Convent of Pleasure* editors Sylvia Bowerbank and Sara Mendelson emphasize that "in the play, one man -- the Prince as the Princess -- does perform woman in subtle and instructive ways" and urge the reader to ask such questions as "Has the Prince changed in any substantial way, given the range of gender-bending experiences he has undergone during the play?" (20), a question Cavendish seems intent both upon asking and leaving open for argument.

Third, perhaps most importantly, the Prince(ss) witnesses the didactic play-within-a-play and lives among the women for some time before he is revealed. Cavendish attempts to educate not only women, but also men, about the restrictiveness of their gender roles and the necessity for justice. The Prince is initially resistant to the argumentative thrust of the antimasque, but politely conforms his opinion of it to Lady Happy's, and eventually, concludes that he and Happy have merged toward a union of minds. Happy argues that her relationship with the Prince(ss) is different from the fickleness and discontented marriages of other courtly or pastoral lovers. The Prince(ss) concludes that, "We shall agree, for we true Love inherit, / Join as one Body and Soul, or Heavn'ly Spirit" (IV. i. 157-8). Though Happy still thinks of the Prince(ss) as another woman, this scene (IV. i. 148-158) functions as a wedding ceremony. By the end of the play, then, the two lovers are one, and are figuratively merged in the person of the androgynous Prince(ss). Sophie Tomlinson alerts us that the *dramatis personae*, printed at the end of the play, reveals that the Prince is to be acted by a woman (157). This further complicates the valences of Lady Happy's absorption by the Prince. Because we cannot see "him" as wholly masculine at the end of the play, we must admit that "he" is at least as feminine as masculine--perhaps posing a figural enactment of the very joining together of male and female that is heterosexual marriage.

In these utopian writings, Cavendish insists upon respect for women's intellectual powers and for women's equality in human relationships, and places women on center stage in reimagined domestic situations. An empress finds it possible to run a world based not only on the rational progress of philosophical enquiry, but upon the advice of her woman friend. A husband and wife find it possible to admit a third party into their relationship by ignoring the preconceived notions of gender that would create enmity and discord. A prince becomes a princess and receives lessons on how to be a better husband. In all these situations, traditional ideas of domesticity and gender are reimagined to create

the possibility of utopian domesticity.

Mary Astell

Astell made the advancement of women the subject of two pioneering feminist tracts: *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest, by a Lover of her Sex* (1694) (followed by *Serious Proposal Part II* in 1697), and *Some Reflections upon Marriage* (1700). The women's community Astell strives to create is, like Cavendish's, modeled on a utopian view of what marriage should be like: a newer, better kind of marriage, in which women are not bound with unbreakable vows, not forced to bear numerous offspring, and not required to obey tyrannous husbands. In *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*, Astell imagines a domesticity in which women live together in religious and academic retreat, and argues that ladies who did not wish to marry be allowed to withdraw from society to be given "an ingenuous and liberal Education, the most effectual means to direct them into, and to secure their progress in the ways of Vertue" (145). Astell believes in women's ability to influence larger realms from within a domestic women's realm, expanding outward to affect a wider public circle.

Astell and Cavendish had in common their belief that women should be free to obtain a thorough education, but Astell worked to found the utopian separatist communities that Cavendish plays with in her fictions. Astell's most important difference from Cavendish is her belief that women can achieve power not only over their own minds, but through intellectual and charitable work, over the world as well. Although Astell found that worldly power was difficult and perhaps inappropriate for women to obtain, Astell agreed with Cavendish that gender had no bearing on a person's intellectual or spiritual potential--the realms Astell considered of preeminent importance.

Astell recognized from the beginning the social construction of women's supposed inferiority: "The Incapacity, if there be any, is acquired not natural. . . .

Women are from their very Infancy debar'd those Advantages, with the want of which they are afterwards reproached, and nursed up in those Vices which will hereafter be upbraided to them. So partial are Men as to expect Brick where they afford no straw" (*Proposal* 143). Astell described herself as "a lover of her sex" and recommended that women exceed the boundaries of prescribed gender roles. Astell thought that power lay in training the body, mind, and soul to a life of intellectual and spiritual devotion. Astell blamed men for distracting women with trivialities such as dress and entertainment, keeping them from attaining their full intellectual and spiritual potential.

Astell describes her utopian retreat in religious terms, but also states that it was to be primarily "academical." Astell argues that only by giving women adequate allowance for spiritual and intellectual growth could their full potential in society be realized. Astell insists that the development of a woman's individual soul is of the utmost importance, but she also claims that women who are well-educated can be of greater use to society and in the raising of children. For Astell, domesticity--woman's intimate sphere--is only restrictive when defined by the vows of marriage. From Astell's utopian retreat, women's influence would expand into the public sphere, and the excellent example provided to the rest of the world by godly women would materially improve the nation.

Alessa Johns argues that Astell's utopianism is forged from the desire to create a community of woman, each of whom is a reflection of the glory of God, and that the conflict between loving earthly creatures and loving God was one the primary factors which led Astell to develop a system of utopian thought. Freed from the distractions of men, women together in a utopian setting could conduct lives devoted to God, emulating one another in holy love. Astell's single life gave her a clear-sighted vantage point from which to assess men's authority over women. Not tempted by the practicalities of the marital state to forgive the faults of a husband, she advised women not to marry, stating that they "need not be confin'd to what they justly loath" (*Proposal* 150). By avoiding

marriage in Astell's "*Religious Retirement*," at least for a while, women would be more fit "to attend the great business they came into the world about, the service of GOD and improvement of their own Minds" (150), two ends that were one and the same in Astell's understanding. Astell describes the triviality of the sacrifices women would make in her Retirement: "You will only quit the Chat of insignificant people for an ingenious Conversation; the froth of flashy Wit for real Wisdom; idle tales for instructive discourses" (150). To Astell, men are "insignificant people" or worse, "bold importunate and rapacious Vultures" (165), whereas women approach the epitome of Christianity in their friendships, because in the Retirement, women friends are able to "look into the very Soul of the beloved Person, to discover what resemblance it bears to our own, and in this Society we shall have the best opportunities of doing so" (164). In this way, Astell progresses from advising against marriage to questioning the very possibility of friendship with men, while emphasizing the utopian qualities of true friendship among women, who live together in a retired, domestic state.

In theorizing a utopia for women, Astell is not at all concerned to include men within it.⁸ Still, she includes in her treatise a practical and patriotic (while religious) motivation to win other people's (men's) support: her Retirement would be "a Seminary to stock the Kingdom with pious and prudent Ladies, whose good Example it is to be hop'd, will so influence the rest of their Sex, that Women may no longer pass for those little useless and impertinent Animals, which the ill conduct of too many has caus'd 'em to be mistaken for" (152). In her attempt to convince men of their own self-interest in women's improvement, Astell prefigures (or perhaps influences) what would be Wollstonecraft's central argument in the *Vindication*, writing that it would "go a great

⁸ Eve Tavor Bannett classifies Astell among the "Matriarchal" feminists, who believed in the virtuous superiority of women over men, as opposed to Egalitarian feminists like Wollstonecraft, who believed in men's and women's equality (3).

way towards reclaiming the men, [since] great is the influence we have over them in their Childhood, in which time if a Mother be discreet and knowing as well as devout, she has many opportunities of giving such a *Form* and *Season* to the tender Mind of the Child, as will shew its good effects thro' all the stages of his Life" (167).

Astell has great respect for vows, and because of this, supports the absolute authority of the husband within marriage: "A Woman that is not Mistress of her Passions, that cannot patiently submit even when Reason suffers with her, who does not practice Passive Obedience to the utmost, will never be acceptable to such an absolute Sovereign as a Husband" (*Reflections* 115). She therefore warned women not to undertake to marry unless they were able to submit their will entirely to that of their husband. In *The Wrongs of Woman, or, Maria*, Wollstonecraft explicitly condemns the unavailability of divorce. Astell seems to describe the situation in which Wollstonecraft places Maria when she writes:

To be yok'd for Life to a disagreeable Person and Temper; to have Folly and Ignorance tyrannize over Wit and Sense; to be contradicted in every thing one does or says, and bore down not by Reason but Authority; to be denied ones most innocent desires, for no other cause but the Will and Pleasure of an absolute Lord and Master, whose Follies a Woman with all her Prudence cannot hide, and whose Commands she cannot but despise at the same time she obeys them; is a misery none can have a just Idea of, but those who have felt it. (*Reflections* 90)

Astell and Wollstonecraft agree in their assessment of how bad marriage can be, but disagree when Wollstonecraft urges women to consider a bad marriage breakable. An important facet of Astell's utopia was that women would not have to make irrevocable vows to become members of the community. The omission of vows not only signifies a difference between Astell's religious retreat and more traditional nunneries or monasteries, it also provides a point of extreme contrast with the state of marriage. The

lack of vows indicates Astell's respect and acknowledgement for women's need for self-determination. Instead of the steel-trap method of irrevocable vows, women's rationality and pious devotion would attract them to her retreat for as long as they needed it.

Astell strongly believed in women's intellectual powers and argued forcefully for the establishment of social institutions that would provide women with rigorous academic and religious educations. Astell argued that marriage as it existed in her day subjected women to tyranny, and she reimagined women's intimate sphere in terms of a separatist utopia in which women could explore their own potential among friends, without the stricture of unbreakable vows. Astell argued that were such a utopian community established, women would not only improve themselves, but that society at large would feel the beneficial effects of its newly empowered women citizens.

Sarah Scott

Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762) closely adheres to the Christian values promulgated by Astell, but is rather more flexible and secularized. *Millenium Hall* features a utopian community set up by gentlewomen who, rather than marrying, choose to expend their fortunes in the service of other women who lack the resources to make their own way in the world. The atmosphere of Millenium Hall is one of order, usefulness, cooperation, leisure, learning, and charity. The community of Millenium Hall provides an alternative education for women of varying ages and of several different social orders and allows them to learn sobriety and industry; for example, industrious girls from the neighboring community are trained in order that eventually they may manage a house or children. Scott reinforced many of the expected eighteenth-century gender roles for women, holding up as ideals the well-managed household, charitable pursuits, and regimented time well-spent, but her women require no supervision by a husband, father, or other masculine authority. Her utopia was a reprieve for single

women (unmarried women or widows) who wished to combine their resources with other gentlewomen. Millenium Hall builds a utopian model for society based on women's living together in friendship; most importantly, they use their combined resources to better one another's lives and actively engage the community around them. Scott argued that men would do well to follow the example of the ladies of Millenium Hall, arguing that the charity practiced by the ladies was not specific to women.

Scott's understanding of power was at once idealistic and exceedingly practical. She held that women who were independently wealthy could direct the courses of their own lives. Scott's utopia was created by wealthy women who wished to share their economic privilege with those around them through enlightened charitable projects. Scott's analysis of the proper uses of economic power is identifiable as feminist, because in her work, women combine resources, lessen inequality, and work to better one another across class lines. The ladies of Millenium Hall have dedicated their financial means to secure a good home for themselves and for many other women. Not only do they provide a means for women with independent fortunes to leave the world; they also provide that haven for those who are interested in a temporary respite.

Hierarchies are not broken down in Scott's utopia, but are, rather, strictly enforced; however, women share their resources across social rank but are educated according to their rank in order that they might attain economic self-sufficiency. Although the lower classes might seem to absorb all the benefit but transmit none to those above them, Scott demonstrates that if it is better to give than to receive, those who receive confer the greater benefit to their benefactors by giving the benefactors a chance to do good works. The hierarchical structure of the ladies' society is closely tied to economics. In general, women could not, legally or informally, exert sufficient control over their economic situations to enable them to flout the social order. Scott's idea that ladies who had independent wealth should pool that wealth for the communal good was a

revolutionary idea in itself, even without the notion that wealth and rank should be equalized across class barriers.

In *Millenium Hall*, female friendship and unity of property occurs horizontally-- friends own in common, not according to the magnitude of their donations. Hierarchy is preserved, but the degrees of hierarchy are significantly flattened. Habermas notes that the privatization of the eighteenth-century home was reflected by the division of the communal hall into smaller privatized rooms (44-5): Scott, however, retains the centrality of the common hall, emphasizing an older "public" model for the management of "private" affairs but at the same time blurring the distinction between ranks which is signified primarily by differences in dress. "Unity of property" was discussed explicitly and agreed upon by the schoolmates Miss Mancel and Miss Melvyn (later Mrs. Morgan) (41), but was also agreed upon by all the ladies who join their society. Between Miss Mancel and Miss Melvyn, the two romantic friends, unity of property is a dramatic pledge of their love for one another, emblematic of and modelled upon marriage.⁹ In *Millenium Hall*, the rules governing this sort of "marriage" between women are socially regulated, codified, and improved. Entry into the society is on a trial basis and is fully reversible, with the woman receiving back her initial capital should she quit the society. Women unfit for the society could be expelled--upon the marriage model, this is a sort of divorce, a safeguard against women whose own consciences are not fully developed enough to recognize their own insufficiencies in the society.

Scott delivers a strong critique of marriage through the women's personal narratives, but she does not decry marriage in general because it seemed necessary for those not independently wealthy. Although Scott's protagonists are not married at the time of the relation of their narrative, Mrs. Morgan states that "We consider marriage as

⁹ See George Haggerty on romantic love in *Millenium Hall*.

absolutely necessary to the good of society; it is a general duty" (115). Still, Mrs. Morgan does claim that those who are fortunate enough to be able to maintain themselves outside marriage should be free to do so. Scott confounds expectations for the romance/marriage plot because we know that none of the ladies are married by the time we meet them. Essentially she has created an "anti-romance" plot that ensures that the woman in question will *not* be married by the end of her narrative. Scott argues that many marriages end in disaster because both men and women are ill-educated and ill-acting. During time spent at Millenium Hall, women experience such felicity in the company of other women that there is no need for them to marry precipitously: they are secure financially, and enjoy companionship, mental exercise, spiritual growth, useful occupations, and amusing diversions. Scott's vision for women includes time for them to overcome past difficulties and provides remedial education that will allow the women either to remain among themselves or to reenter the world on their own terms.

According to Dorice Williams Elliott, much philanthropic effort in the eighteenth century was dedicated to the reformation of "fallen women." Elliott points out that women's charitable contributions, traditionally rural and neighborly, were joined in the eighteenth century by a new practice of businesslike, male-dominated philanthropic institutions. By organizing their own philanthropic efforts in a systematic, institutional way, the ladies redefine the restrictive ideology of domesticity according to their own interests and escape the confines of a tightening private/domestic sphere. Rather than deal directly with the reformation of prostitutes, Scott emphasizes that women can recover themselves from sexual danger or actual "falls" without the help of philanthropic men. In a tone of concession, Spencer notes that "On one level . . . the novel upholds the restrictive ideal of woman as a naturally virtuous creature who gets by without direct power, because she can influence men towards good by her example" (xv). Under patriarchy, women are indeed perceived through a false dichotomy to be naturally either

virtuous or vicious, virgin or whore. Scott counters this patriarchal assumption by painstakingly demonstrating how the women of the novel are educated by their friends and by experience, showing that women are not “naturally virtuous” but that their virtue must be achieved. Furthermore, Scott complicates and derails the virgin/whore dichotomy by showing that the sexually “fallen” woman can be redeemed: Mrs. Selvyn’s mother, though “fallen,” is rewarded (after a lifetime of repentance) by her eventual reunion with her loving daughter (166-174). Scott demonstrates her understanding of the social construction of virtue by showing that the women’s society is run by conscious, rational action. Far from merely restricting their actions to example, influence, or indirect power, the women’s entire way of life is explicitly under their own control. Their sphere of influence reaches throughout their neighborhood and continues to expand at the close of the novel.

The ladies’ good domestic management soon becomes public, as it begins to influence the surrounding countryside and, through the male narrator, the real world (see Spencer xi). The estate soon becomes a shining example, and the neighborhood nearby is transformed. Soon neighboring estates are taken into their sphere of influence, first when the ladies decide to acquire a second manor for gentlewomen, and later when Sir George Ellison follows up on his intention, stated at the end of *Millenium Hall*, “to imitate [the ladies] on a smaller scale” (207). Ellison’s later actions are related in *Millenium Hall*’s companion novel, *The History of Sir George Ellison*; as Vincent Carretta points out: “Inspired by the example of the Hall, Ellison decides that . . . the feminine standards of benevolence and virtue should prevail, and to institute [similar] reforms” (318).

“Influenc[ing] men towards good by her example” is Scott’s goal for her novel. Influence could be understood as indirect power, but Scott demonstrates that influence, specifically in terms of ideas arrived at through philosophical or spiritual study, is a powerful guiding force in society. The reformation of Lamont, the young coxcomb, is

indicated at the book's close by his being found reading the New Testament (206). Lamont had been "convinced by the conduct of the ladies of this house that their religion must be the true one" and that "the purity of its precepts . . . could thus exalt human nature almost to divine." Reading the New Testament is put forth as a way of imbibing the purest precepts for social behavior; by analogy, similarly pure precepts (modeled after those of the New Testament) have been instilled into the mind of the reader by Scott's own novel. Lamont's perusal of the New Testament is directly followed by Sir George Ellison's recalling the frame of the novel to the reader's conscious notice, as he directs his closing paragraph to the attention of the editor to whom he is sending his account of Millenium Hall: "If what I have described may tempt anyone to *go and do likewise* I shall think myself fortunate in communicating it. For my part, my thoughts are all engaged in a scheme to imitate [the ladies] on a smaller scale" (207).¹⁰ As Linda Dunne notes, "it is understood that this conversion of the male visitors represents the potential for general societal reform extending beyond the boundaries of the female community and the book" (56). Similarly, reform ideas could influence readers from within their fictional context, advancing the Godwinian idea of the "general illumination" of society by rational philosophy.¹¹

Scott's community is based on a measure of openness, or willingness to be inspected, which looks forward to the attitudes of Godwin. This openness occurs at the juncture of public and private, muddying the division of the spheres which at first glance

¹⁰ Ellison paraphrases Jesus's command at the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:37 (my italics).

¹¹ *Political Justice* 738 (Book VIII, "Of Property," Chap. IV, "Objections to this System from the Frailty of the Human Mind"). See also Carl Fisher, who states that "Godwin hoped to reform the people through examples and principles of reasoning. The novel form would be ideal for this duty. Reading a novel is an individual act and allows for reflection" and might result result in "a wide[r] distribution of his ideas" than he could hope for with books of pure philosophy (62).

seems clear. In his list of basic principles for *Political Justice*, Godwin states that “Justice requires that I should put myself in the place of an impartial spectator of human concerns” (76 [“Summary of Principles”]). As Dunne shows, Scott not only places her characters’ lives under the scrutiny of the inquiring male visitors, but she, in a sense, allegorizes the mode of spectatorship by including within her utopian compound a settlement of “monsters”—dwarves and giants. The word *monster* is derived from the Latin *monstrare*, to show. Godwin’s conception of the public realm extends down into the private, as does Scott’s, because the things that are private are nonetheless available for show. Although their privacy is guaranteed, the monsters agree to be seen (21). There is a strong connection between the monsters, who had previously been immured in cages and displayed for profit, and women in general, who are trapped in marriage without control of their own economic resources. In Scott’s utopia, the monsters are given the decision, and they choose to be shown—as in Godwin’s utopian system, in which citizens will not attempt to hide their actions or their assets from their neighbors.

Life on the country estate, as it was imagined by Sarah Scott in the mid-eighteenth century, may appear nostalgic or even naive by the 1820s and -30s, when industrialization had begun to undermine the system of country estates such earlier utopias are built upon. Davidoff and Hall assert that rural cottage life is anachronistic and unattainable by the 1830s, but they also point out that some thinkers, like landscaper John Loudon, were beginning to reconceive the cottage ideal in the suburbs (180).¹² But the reliance of early feminists like Scott, Cavendish and Astell on the aristocratic holding of property as a source for women’s self-determination is carried over into early-nineteenth-

¹² Loudon writes in *The Suburban Gardener*, “We shall prove in this work that a suburban residence, with a very small portion of land attached, will contain all that is essential for happiness” (8; qtd in 189). As Davidoff and Hall note, “Initially he had assumed that all would seek the joys of country life and that the working household should operate in a rural setting” but “he soon realized that rural life was possible for few” (189).

century middle-class thinking, with dreams of small holdings of property, a “small comfortable house and a good-sized garden,”¹³ which would provide middle-class individuals with enough independence to insulate them from the struggles of the workings classes without conveying the sense of waste and luxury they condemned in the upper classes. In class terms, a retreat to country life indicates the desire for a closer connection between production and consumption. The lives of utopian characters, as long as they retain enough leisure for study, are enhanced by their close connection to bucolic nature, as well as by a reasonable measure of productive labor. Men and women who choose a simple, natural life may find abundance, serenity and beauty in nature. In gender terms, the picture of the utopian cottage, well-managed by the careful housewife, valorizes woman’s traditional skill at creating a comfortable home and maintaining ties of community, as Scott shows.

Scott frames her utopia around women’s friendship and shared commitment to community benevolence. By pooling their resources, women are empowered not only to help themselves, but to help others in similar situations, as well as those at different class levels. Scott subtly adjusts the philanthropic focus on “fallen” women, arguing that if given sufficient resources, women can re-educate themselves. She reiterates this point with her portrayal of the monsters’ enclave: these extraordinary individuals are able to live satisfying lives once they are freed from restrictive social expectations about their intrinsic

¹³ Qtd in Davidoff and Hall, 17, from James Luckcock’s *Sequel to memoirs in humble life* (Birmingham, 1825), 28. After leaving his business as a jeweller, Luckcock retired to a “modest white stuccoed house, on one side attached to its neighbour. . . . in Lime Grove, in the residential suburb of Edgbaston” (17). Other example of the appeal of the cottage are found by Davidoff and Hall, who argue that the wide appeal of Princess Charlotte, the heir to the throne who died in 1817, was connected with “her pleasure in simple domestic duties, charitable activities, and the creation of a beautiful home and garden for herself, her husband and her prospective child” (153). Davidoff and Hall also call to attention Cowper’s “central themes” of “the humility, comfort and peace to be found in the whitewashed cottage” (157), or “pretty little cottage” of lesser-known Mary Ann Hedge (*My Own Fireside* [Colchester, 1832], 44, qtd in 178). Cottage themes are also important in the poetry of Felicia Hemans, as I explore in chapter three.

natures based on their external appearances. Scott applies feminist principles to the model of the country estate, explicitly linking the welfare of the privileged to those they assist. Even those with greater resources benefit from the community created by their friends, and the beneficial effect of the establishment of such a community radiates outward to affect the world at large.

Amelia Opie

Adeline Mowbray; or, the Mother and Daughter (1805) is Amelia Alderson Opie's contribution to a debate about marriage that was begun by her old friends William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft in the 1790s. After Wollstonecraft's reputation was destroyed by her husband's revelatory posthumous memoirs (1798), overt feminist argument was sanctioned by cultural conservatives, and the debate about marriage might have been thought closed. But Opie attempts a fair evaluation of the New Philosophy through her fictional character's attempts to put Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's ideas into practice. Tragic, dystopian, but thorough and even-handed, Opie's novel places Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's theories side by side in philosophical conversation, demonstrating the value of some of their radical theories while at the same time arguing against their naive application. Godwin and Wollstonecraft themselves had revised their opinions regarding marriage before the birth of their child, the future Mary Shelley. Opie had seen Godwin marry twice by the publication of her novel (as Roxanne Eberle points out, 127). The change of heart which led to Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's marriage does not come soon enough for Opie's radical heroine, Adeline.

Throughout Opie's novel, various characters argue that what may seem alluring in theory may be pernicious in practice. Whereas Godwin, in his *Political Justice* (1793, revised 1796, 1798) held that "The abolition of the present system of marriage appears to

involve no evils" (763),¹⁴ Opie argues that this is not the case. Opie opens her novel with the terse pronouncement, "A little experience is better than a great deal of theory" (5), and throughout her novel seeks to show how a woman who has chosen to disregard society's rules for her behavior is badly treated, despite her actual virtue. While showing that she believes marriage to be flawed, Opie defends the concept of marriage and denies that philosophy should edge out experience as the guide to right action. Opie is clearly critical of characters such as Berrendale, Adeline's bad husband, of whom she writes that he was "no advocate for the equality of the sexes, . . . [and] thought it only a matter of course that he should fare better than his wife" (184). But Opie still warns against rash innovation and argues that even though marriage may be abused in individual cases, the custom of ages should be respected.

Opie pits her own language against Godwin's quite early on in the novel, in a section in which she outlines Glenmurray's true reasons for wanting to marry Adeline. In an infamous section of *Political Justice*, Godwin had stated,

Marriage, as now understood, is a monopoly, and the worst of monopolies. So long as two human beings are forbidden, by positive institution, to follow the dictates of their own mind, prejudice will be alive and vigorous. So long as I seek, by despotic and artificial means, to maintain my possession of a woman, I am guilty of the most odious selfishness. (762)

Opie's narrator, unveiling Glenmurray's innermost psychology, echoes but subtly redefines Godwin's terms, asserting that

The true and delicate lover is always a monopolizer, always desirous of calling the woman of his affections his own: it is not only because he considers marriage as a holy institution that the lover leads his mistress to the altar; but because it gives

¹⁴ Godwin's discussion of the system of marriage occurs in Book VIII, "Of Property," Appendix, "Of Cooperation, Co-habitation and Marriage" (756-767).

him a right to appropriate the fair treasure to himself, - because it sanctions and perpetuates the dearest of all monopolies, and erects a sacred barrier to guard his rights, - around which, all that is respectable in society, all that is most powerful and effectual in its organization, is proud and eager to rally. (38-39)

Opie redefines Godwin's "worst of monopolies" as "the dearest of all monopolies" and changes his "odious selfishness" to "a sacred barrier." What Godwin calls the "despotic and artificial" prejudice of "positive institution" (his anarchist term for non-situational law), Opie sanctions as that "around which, all that is respectable in society, all that is most powerful and effectual in its organization, is proud and eager to rally." Toward the beginning of the book, the narrator is able to attribute such glowing praise to the subconscious dreams of Glenmurray, whereas toward the end, such uncomplicated panegyric (though precise in its response to Godwin) would sound much less convincing.

Although Opie is generally suspicious of reform theory, she supports Wollstonecraft's argument that women must be well-educated if they are to be fit mothers and wives (see Eberle 128-9). The relationship between mother and daughter is foregrounded by the subtitle and central to the plot of the novel. It is Editha Mowbray's faulty handling of her daughter's education that gives root to Adeline's philosophical opinions. As Rachel Pemberton, a sympathetic Quaker moralist, states, "Thy daughter's *faults* originated in thee! her education was cruelly defective . . . Thou ownest that thou didst openly profess thy admiration of the sentiments which she adopted . . . she set thee the virtuous example of acting up to the dictates of conscience" (257, 258).

Wollstonecraft has predicted as well the source of division between Adeline and her mother: "The mother will be lost in the coquette, and, instead of making friends of her daughters, view them with eyes askance, for they are rivals--rivals more cruel than any other, because they invite a comparison, and drive her from the throne of beauty, who

has never thought of a seat on the bench of reason” (VRW 49). Although Editha did study philosophy, her rivalry with her daughter over Sir Patrick O’Carrol, whom she marries, overrides any philosophical strength Editha might have had, and blinds Editha from the possibilities of retrieving her daughter from the brink of disaster. Opie presents Editha merely dabbling in philosophy, rather than considering the full ramifications of its application, as problematic throughout the novel.

By the conclusion, Adeline has repented of her philosophical stance against marriage (although her eventual recantation has clearly been tortured out of her), and in a letter to Colonel Mordaunt, an erring suitor, she outlines her new defense of marriage (243-4). Adeline puts Godwin and Wollstonecraft at odds, using arguments similar to Wollstonecraft’s from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* to counter Godwinian ideas, asserting that marriage is necessary to preserve the social structure, primarily for the sake of children. Adeline argues that marriage “has a tendency to call forth and exercise the affections, and control the passions” and that “it is on the cultivation and influence of the *affections* that the happiness and improvement of social life depend” (243). Amelia Alderson had had conversations with Godwin in which she found his understanding of the affections lacking; she wrote to describe Godwin’s surprise that on a visit, she remained with relatives in Southgate instead of residing in London:

at last I told him I had not yet outlived my affections, and that they bound me to my family at Southgate. But was I to acknowledge any other dominion than that of reason? - ‘but are you sure that my affections in this case are not the result of reason?’ He shrugged disbelief, and after debating some time, he told me I was more of the *woman* than when he saw me last. (a letter of Sept. 1794, qtd in St. Clair 148)

Opie is sure that reason and the affections can and must work side by side harmoniously, while Godwin is stalwartly prepared to subordinate the affections to reason no matter

what the cost--he must always save Fenelon and sacrifice the chambermaid.

Echoing Wollstonecraft's more complicated arguments about passion, reason, and sensibility (which eventually influenced Godwin as well), Opie invokes affection as a keyword for the strong but calm social attachments to which both passion and reason are subordinated. Having already observed "that whatever is likely to induce parents to neglect the education of their children must be *hurtful* to the welfare of the community," Adeline sounds most Wollstonecraftian when she asks,

"What then, in such a state of society, would be the fate of the children born in it? - What would their education be? Parents continually engrossed in the enervating but delightful egotism of a new and happy love, lost in selfish indulgence, the passions awake, but the affections slumbering, and the sacred ties of parental feeling not having time nor opportunity to fasten on the heart, - their offspring would either die the victims of neglect, and the very existence of the human race be threatened; or, without morals or instruction, they would grow up to scourge the world by their vices, till the whole fabric of civilized society was gradually destroyed" (244-5)

For Opie, affection is a kind of social glue which binds people together in community when fickle passion or cold reason cannot. To an extent Godwin agrees; he alludes to affection in his defense of marriage based on friendship:

if by friendship we understand that affection for an individual which is measured singly by what we know of his worth . . . Friendship therefore may be expected to come in aid of the sexual intercourse to refine its grossness, and increase its delight. All these arguments are calculated to determine our judgement in favour of marriage as a salutary and respectable institution, but not of that species of marriage in which there is no room for repentance and to which liberty and hope are equally strangers. (763-4)

For Godwin, affection is a key ingredient in a good marriage, but he feels that only marriages with “room for repentance” have much positive potential. By “repentance,” Godwin alludes to divorce. Godwin believes that the availability of divorce would influence couples to strengthen their ties of affection and friendship in order to preserve their marriages, whereas Adeline wishes marriages to be indissoluble, and urges patience and forbearance as the key to happiness, or at least peace: “to BEAR and FORBEAR I believe to be the grand secret of happiness . . . a lesson so needful in order to perfect the human character, that I believe the difficulty of divorce to be one of the greatest blessings of society” (220). Opie uses Godwin’s own language of perfectibility to make her point. In identifying the affections as the key bonds of society, Opie recognizes this issue as the reconciliation point between the disparate marriage theories of Wollstonecraft and Godwin. The bonds of affection and friendship (urged by Wollstonecraft) are simpler and more genuine than the bonds of law or custom (derided by Godwin) and must be present in order to elevate a relationship to the utopian level.

In line with Wollstonecraft’s general argument about the importance of a girl’s education, Opie emphasizes Adeline’s education when, to the shock of all present, Adeline first makes her pronouncement against marriage in company: “With an unreserve which nothing but her ignorance of the world, and the strange education which she had received, could at all excuse, she began to declaim against marriage, as an institution at once absurd, unjust, and immoral, and to declare that she would never submit to so contemptible a form, or profane the sacred ties of love by so odious and unnecessary a ceremony” (28). Wollstonecraft’s accusation that women are educated for the pleasure of men is given a strange twist, in that it is Adeline’s supposedly progressive thought that precipitates her downfall. Glenmurray allows Adeline to make decisions he knew to be ill-advised, letting passion overrule him and using faulty reasoning to support his desire for her: “He knew, though Adeline did not, the extent of the degradation into which the

step which her conscience approved would necessarily precipitate her" (38). By allowing Adeline's education to produce his own gratification, Glenmurray follows in the footsteps of Rousseau, whom both Wollstonecraft and Opie (57-8) condemn (Eberle 129).

As the novel progresses, Adeline's convictions are eroded by her experiences with the disapproval of society: "How strange and irrational," thought Adeline, "are the prejudices of society! Because an idle ceremony has not been muttered over me at the altar, I am liable to be thought a woman of vicious inclinations, and to be exposed to the most daring insults" (120). Her doubts become stronger when she realizes the extent of the condemnation she is expected to endure: "surely, surely, there must be something radically wrong in a situation which exposes one to such a variety of degradations!" (122). Opie makes the erosion of all her social attachments the sign of both society's intransigence and Adeline's error. Rachel Pemberton, the wise voice of custom, makes the strongest arguments in the novel against putting theory into practice.¹⁵ Opie manipulates the character of Rachel Pemberton very skillfully, using her penchant for Godwinian forthright criticism to illustrate her problems with Godwin's own ideas. Furthermore, as a Quaker, Mrs. Pemberton is framed as a character who obeys the dictates of external authority only when her own judgment persuades her it is right to do so.

Adeline's wholehearted adoration of Glenmurray leads to a concern for his fame which connects Opie's novel to Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), in which Caleb's character, like Adeline's, is destroyed to protect the reputation of a well-respected man. Adeline asks, "shall I scruple to give up for his honour and fame the petty advantages which marriage would give me? Never - his honour and fame are too dear to me" (92). Adeline's readiness to "think no sacrifice too great, . . . to disregard all personal

¹⁵ See for example her exchange with Adeline 125-126.

inconveniences rather than let him forfeit, for her sake, his pretensions” cause Dr. Norberry to compare her with “a Malabar widow, who with fond and pious enthusiasm, from an idea of duty, throws herself on the funeral pile of her husband” (93). Just as Falkland, a murderer, betrays his better nature by persecuting Caleb because of his love of his own good fame, so does Glenmurray betray his better nature by failing to act wisely with regard to Adeline--eventually leading to her recantation and sorrowful death.

Eventually, Glenmurray changes his tune, but with reservations, and too late for Adeline: “I will own that some of my opinions are changed . . . as the mass of society could never *at once* adopt them, they had better remain unacted upon, than that a few lonely individuals should expose themselves to certain distress, by making them the rules of their conduct” (153). Glenmurray’s position leads to a kind of stasis, in which the bravery of social pioneers (like Adeline) is seen as futile. Nevertheless, Godwin’s own sentiments on marriage, obviously, had changed, resulting in his marriage to Wollstonecraft, as his 1797 letter to an unknown correspondent indicates: “I find the prejudices of the world in arms against the woman who practically opposes herself to the European institution of marriage . . . I found that the comfort and peace of a woman for whose comfort and peace I interest myself would be much injured if I could have prevailed on her to defy those prejudices” (9 May 1797 b229/I, qtd in St. Clair 172-3). Godwin, not so foolish as Glenmurray, protected the legitimacy of his lover’s offspring through marriage, but he was less circumspect in his publication of the *Memoirs* which were to be used against the cause of women’s rights for years afterward. In the first case, Godwin was willing to subordinate theory to his concern for his beloved, but in the latter case, he was blinded by his convictions into assuming that the public would accept and even admire the controversial life Wollstonecraft had led.

The ideas of openness and sincerity, the willingness to subject oneself to public scrutiny, are among Godwin’s most basic principles in *Political Justice*. Part of his

argument against marriage is its tendency to transform the aptitude for inconstancy into clandestine falsehood:

Inconstancy, like any other temporary dereliction, would not be found incompatible with a character of uncommon excellence. What, at present, renders it, in many instances, peculiarly loathsome is its being practised in a clandestine manner. It leads to a train of falsehood and a concerted hypocrisy, than which there is scarcely anything that more eminently depraves and degrades the human mind. (764)

In response to Godwin's argument, Adeline argues that "in men especially, a new object can excite new passion," and that the lack of marriage would produce "unbridled licentiousness." Adeline has learned this from the vicious behavior of her husband, Berrendale: "his fidelity to his wife had not been proof against a few weeks' absence; but then, being, like most men, not over delicate in his idea on such subjects, as soon as Adeline returned he had given up the connexion which he had formed, and therefore he thought she had not much reason to complain" (189). Opie, however, seeks to demonstrate in her novel that even constancy can be forced to remain clandestine due to public censure of supposedly private affairs. Adeline, indeed, is severely tempted to falsehood when she has the chance to deny her servant Mary Warner's allegations in order to retain her teaching position (171). Adeline feels that the privacy of her union with Glenmurray should invite no public scrutiny or outrage. In her conversation with Mrs. Pemberton, Adeline disregards the opinion of the public world, asking, "But surely you will allow that in a family quiet and secluded as ours, and in daily contemplation of an union uninterrupted, faithful, and virtuous, and possessing all the sacredness of marriage, though without the name, it is not likely that [Mary] should have imbibed any vicious habits or principles?" But Mrs. Pemberton identifies the clandestine nature of Adeline's union with Glenmurray as part of its hypocrisy: "But in contemplating thy

union itself, she has lived in the contemplation of vice; and . . . by having given it an air of respectability, thou hast only made it more dangerous" (124-5). Adeline's "air of respectability"--since respect can only be conferred by the world--is deceptive in itself, and at worst, hypocritical or vicious.

Godwin believes that the sincerity of well-meaning people will gradually reform the world. But Opie argues that people are often treated in ways that disregard whether they are sincere or insincere. The spiteful Maynard sisters and the Norberrys are harsh and quick to criticize those they consider fallen, yet conduct themselves according to a double standard based on appearances. Glenmurray's disdainful female relatives carry on affairs, but are supposedly too good to be introduced to Adeline. Villains, such as Sir Patrick O'Carrol and Berrendale, who are insincere, suffer little public censure (although the author punishes them with death). In contrast, Adeline's virtue is powerless against the deprecations of public opinion: Mrs. Beauclerc states,

I should consider your example as a warning to all young people; and to preserve my children from evil I should only wish them to hear your story, as it inculcates most powerfully how vain are personal graces, talents, sweetness of temper, and even active benevolence, to ensure respectability and confer happiness, without a strict regard to the long-established rules for conduct, and a continuance in those paths of virtue and decorum which the wisdom of ages has pointed out to the steps of every one. (172)

Wollstonecraft had attempted to defend "fallen women," pointing out that "The woman who is faithful to the father of her children demands respect, and should not be treated like a prostitute" (71). She also makes the connection between women who "must marry advantageously" arguing that they are "often legally prostituted" (60). An attitude like Wollstonecraft's is reasonable and charitable, but rare.

Opie, in agreement with Godwin, makes the illusory split between public and

private a central point in *Adeline Mowbray*. Editha's dabbling in philosophy, although she does not act upon her ideas, damages her reputation in society, as people are shocked by her ideas and her willingness to associate with philosophers such as Glenmurray. Adeline, who does act on her ideas, is even more shocking. Adeline's most intimate relationships, such as with her mother, her oldest friend Dr. Norberry, her well-wishers Rachel Pemberton and Mrs. Beauclerc, and even with her eventual husband Berrendale, are riven because Adeline applies her beliefs before the eye of an unaccepting public. What might be considered Adeline's private beliefs about the conduct of her own life are in fact radically public.

Throughout the novel, Opie supports the idea that Adeline's virtue is genuine. However, Opie's comparison of Adeline with religious enthusiasts (37, 94), although favorable, may lead the reader to feel that Adeline's inspiration may have been mistaken, as the not entirely positive term "enthusiast" indicates: "Who that had seen her countenance and gesture at that moment, could have imagined she was calling on heaven to witness an engagement to lead a life of infamy? Rather would they have thought her a sublime enthusiast breathing forth the worship of a grateful soul" (37). In fact, as with her example before Mary Warner, her goodness is deceptive, for it obscures her error: "What a glorious champion would that creature have been in the support of truth, when even error in her looks so like to virtue!" (93).

Adeline has no footing to regain personal power because she is cut off from family and society by her actions. Society denies her power because she refuses to capitulate to its demands. Adeline depends on her associates for monetary support; she receives money from Glenmurray, Glenmurray's publisher, the Norberrys, Berrendale, and even Savanna, who purchases presents of good food for Adeline with her own money (184). The affecting scene where Adeline insists that Langley, the insulting lawyer, keep his fee is an example of her refusal to be drawn into an illicit economy (178-

80). Her gift of three guineas to Savanna--all she had, and money she needed to care for Glenmurray--is rewarded by Savanna's lifelong service. Savanna sums up the relation between power and money in the realistic world of *Adeline Mowbray*: "'This it be to have money,' said Savanna, as she saw the various things prepared and made to tempt Adeline's weak appetite: - 'poor Savanna mean as well - her heart make all these, but her hand want power'" (272).

The following paragraph from *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* describes Adeline's situation almost perfectly:

. . . highly as I respect marriage, as the foundation of almost every social virtue, I cannot avoid feeling the most lively compassion for those unfortunate females who are broken off from society, and by one error torn from all those affections and relationships that improve the heart and mind. It does not frequently even deserve the name of error; for many innocent girls become the dupes of a sincere, affectionate heart, and still more are, as it may emphatically be termed, *ruined* before they know the difference between virtue and vice:--and thus prepared by their education for infamy, they become infamous. Asylums and Magdalenes are not the proper remedies for these abuses. It is justice, not charity, that is wanting in the world! (71)

Opie's book, far from condemning Wollstonecraft's philosophy, seems to bear it out, but with a sense of tragic warning rather than with a reformer's zeal.

If Opie agrees with Wollstonecraft about the need for justice instead of charity, then on this point she may agree with Godwin as well. In *Political Justice*, Godwin argues that owning property creates in the owner a debt to those in need, not an

opportunity for “a show of generosity.”¹⁶ Adeline’s commitment to justice in the form of charity is the incontrovertible demonstration of her virtue, and the lack of means to provide charity is one of her most severe losses. The contrast between Adeline’s ability in her native Rosevalley to give charity and her poverty-stricken situation after she elopes with Glenmurray is noted by Rachel Pemberton: “It was thine . . . to diffuse happiness around thee, and to enjoy wealth unhated, because thy hand dispensed nobly the riches which it had received bounteously . . .” (128). Opie shows that women’s ability to use their property wisely depends upon social expectations about their behavior; because Adeline has disregarded social mores, she no longer has access to her accustomed means of benevolence. Opie shows how women’s charitable intentions may be thwarted at will by bad men. When Editha marries Sir Patrick, for example, she relinquishes control of her fortune (51) and is unable to provide Adeline with means of relieving the distress of neighbors near Sir Patrick’s abode (58-60). Sir Patrick does take action, but seemingly only to impress Adeline—in line with Godwin’s criticism of the rich who dispense charity merely as a show instead of establishing justice.

Examining the end of the novel, Eberle identifies a potential utopian space in Rosevalley, a community made of re-empowered, re-educated women. Eberle warns, however, that the space seems “entirely cut off from the masculine ‘public sphere’” (187). When Rosevalley is compared to the forbidding public sphere inhabited by

¹⁶ Godwin argues that “the rich . . . hold their wealth only as a trust [and] are strictly accountable for every atom of their expenditure . . . they are merely administrators, and by no means proprietors in chief. But, while religion thus inculcated on mankind the pure principles of justice, the majority . . . have been but too apt to treat the practice of justice, not as a debt, which it ought to be considered, but as an affair of spontaneous generosity and bounty.

The effect . . . is to place the supply of our wants in the disposal of a few, enabling them to make a show of generosity with what is not truly their own, and to purchase the submission of the poor by the payment of a debt. Theirs is a system of clemency and charity, instead of a system of justice” (707-08 [Book VIII, “Of Property”, Chap. I, “Preliminary Observations”]).

Berrendale, this is so. However, as in Sarah Scott's utopia, Opie's scheme reallocates both social and economic power to females, who, it is hoped, will emulate Adeline from the beginning of the novel, dispensing their benevolence according to the dictates of justice. Lifelong support promised to Savanna, and livings offered to Miss Woodville and Mary Warner (upon mending their ways) indicate that this may be the case.

Writing in 1805, Amelia Opie's assessment of the possibility for utopian reformation of marriage and domesticity is grim. She agrees with Wollstonecraft's assessment of the importance of good education for women but warns against inculcating in them any enthusiasm for radical, new, or untried philosophy. Opie asserts that arguments which weaken marriage may in fact play into the hands of those who would take advantage of women's trust, and, moreover, their weak position under contemporary law and in the actual arrangement of society. Eroding the idea that inner satisfaction can override an individual's experience of social injustice, Opie points out that charitable impulses also require the support of social structures. While Opie praises Adeline's real virtue, her narrative ultimately supports a conservative stance, warning against "innovation" and bleakly critiquing women's place in marriage without offering substantial alternatives.

James Lawrence

James Lawrence, in *The Empire of the Nairs; or, the Rights of Women, a Utopian Romance* (published in German 1801, first published in English 1811), makes explicit his respect for and homage to Mary Wollstonecraft. Although Lawrence's elaborate utopia, based on differences in education and sexual customs, is meant to demonstrate the benefits of Wollstonecraft's suggestions for change in *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, his novel is flawed by the retention of gendered restrictions on the activities of men and women. Despite his respect for Wollstonecraft, his partial adoption of her

argument results in men's retention of chivalrous behavior, hierarchical structures, and war, and women's greatest honor is not to be great in their own right, but to bear numerous heroic sons and to educate great men.

Lawrence only partially adjusts the balance of power between the sexes. By freeing both men and women from the restrictions of marriage, he removes the role of "husband as turnkey," a complaint shared by many marriage reformers including Godwin and P. B. Shelley. Lawrence's removal of marriage from society, however, is based on a belief that women are naturally best fitted for domestic duties, especially childrearing, while men are unfit for these duties. In Lawrence's view, men should be freed of the restraints of caring for the home and children, in order that they may achieve glory in the public sphere. Women are ceded economic security and security in their own persons, but their relationship to the structures of political power remains unchanged.

Lawrence's feminism is evanescent and amounts to an essentialist chivalric glorification of women's supposed nature. His romance leaves political and warlike power in the hands of men, while women are understood to influence future leaders through their kind and benevolent nurturance: in other words, "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world--" such ideas were used throughout the nineteenth century to deny the necessity of women's right to vote.

Because Lawrence's story is fanciful, the reader is not meant to wonder what might happen should men wish to seize the property of the women by force, or to enact more restrictive laws against them. Lawrence pits the Paradise of the Mothersons against an enemy, the Mahometans, whose culture is meant to be understood as the system with the most severe restrictions on women. Lawrence's Nairs are fierce, crusading knights, out to rescue as many women as they can from the clutches of Islam. By pitting his knights against an outside enemy, he attempts to draw the mind of the reader from dangers inherent in the Nairs' own society. He attempts to convince the reader that the

Nairs' gentle education ensures that they could never perpetrate crimes against women. Lawrence fails to realize that the very concepts adored by the Nairs form the basis of the English ideology critiqued in his romance. Without political power, women's supposed protected sphere is precarious.

Lawrence's strongest point of agreement with Wollstonecraft is that women and men should be educated together from the time they are children. In this respect, Lawrence wholeheartedly adopts Wollstonecraft's arguments and relates many examples of the beneficial effects of coeducation on both women and men. Solid relationships between men and women which last a lifetime are formed in school (see for example book ii, 128-130). Men's respect for women is increased when they see how women excel as their equals. In Lawrence's book as in Wollstonecraft's theory, women's equal education makes women better companions and enables them to wisely govern their families (if not their country). Lawrence agrees with Wollstonecraft's arguments, stated clearly in the following:

... to improve both sexes they ought, not only in private families, but in public schools, to be educated together. If marriage be the cement of society, mankind should all be educated after the same model, or the intercourse of the sexes will never deserve the name of fellowship, nor will women ever fulfil the peculiar duties of their sex, till they become enlightened citizens, till they become free by being enabled to earn their own subsistence, independent of men . . .
Nay, marriage will never be held sacred till women, by being brought up with men, are prepared to be their companions rather than their mistresses. (165)

Lawrence also agrees with Wollstonecraft that women should be able to maintain their own subsistence. On this point, though, Lawrence and Wollstonecraft diverge, because Lawrence believes that women should be restricted to domesticity. Speaking with open didacticism in his Introduction, Lawrence states,

Though the female be not designed for the camp, the senate, or the bar, let her receive such an education as will enable her to superintend the first instruction of the future lawyer, general, and politician; for the same uncertainty which destroys the whole claim of the child to the possessions of the father, absolves the father from all obligations of educating and maintaining the child: the care and management of the child must therefore entirely and exclusively devolve on the mother. (xxviii; echoed by Mrs. Montgomery at book vii, 83)

Lawrence not only confines women to domesticity, but essentially defines women as existing only to produce great men, and does so on the assertion that women cannot be trusted to name the fathers of their children. Even Mrs. Montgomery, a figure of Wollstonecraft as the author of a tract on the rights of woman (book vii, 36, 80, 84), "is convinced that domestic life is the province of a woman" despite her portrait hall of great ruling ladies (book vi, 194).

Wollstonecraft believes that women have domestic duties--duties she extends to men as well--but she argues, of course, that they should not be restricted to domesticity. Wollstonecraft lists by name a number of professions that should be open to women: "Women might certainly study the art of healing, and be physicians as well as nurses, [and should engage in] midwifery . . . How many women thus waste a life away the prey of discontent, who might have practised as physicians, regulated a farm, managed a shop, and stood erect, supported by their own industry" (148-9). Although men possess "superiour strength of body," this should not be seen as a women from "acquir[ing] sufficient to enable them to earn their own subsistence, the true definitions of independence" (85). Wollstonecraft strongly hints (but does not openly assert) that women should be given a role in government:

In France or Italy, have the women confined themselves to domestic life? Though they have not hitherto had a political existence, yet, have they not illicitly had great

sway? corrupting themselves and the men with whose passions they played. In short, in whatever light I view the subject, reason and experience convince me that the only method of leading women to fulfil their peculiar duties, is to free them from all restraint by allowing them to participate in the inherent rights of mankind. Make them free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous.

(175)

Full participation in "the inherent rights of man" frees women from confinement to a domestic life, but at the same time makes them better able to "fulfil their peculiar duties." Wollstonecraft explicitly argues against the idea of regulating women's behavior according to a public/private split: "In order to render [women's] private virtue a public benefit, they must have a civil existence in the state, married or single" (148-49). Stating that "natural affection . . . I believe to be a very faint tie" (152), Wollstonecraft further denies that women are naturally good mothers or that they are naturally drawn to nurture and care for their babies--an idea that was contradicted by the evidence of her day, when many mothers sent their children away or hardly saw them. By denying the *natural* affection of women to babies, she reconstructs that affection as a socially constructed trait, and lays the groundwork for the idea that men might have just as important a relationship with their offspring. Wollstonecraft's idea of citizenship for both men and women is also the same: "man must necessarily fulfil the duties of a citizen, or be despised, and . . . his wife, also an active citizen, should be equally intent to manage her family, educate her children, and assist her neighbours" (146); therefore it is proper to conclude from her arguments that women should take similar positions in government to men--quite the opposite of Lawrence's portrayal of the Nair women's transmission of ruling office to their brothers and sons.

In Lawrence's utopian scheme, men's hereditary lines are carried on through their sisters' offspring; the men are known as Phoenixes because successors seem to magically

spring from the ashes of the old heroes: "The phoenix is a fabulous bird, at the death of which its successor rises from its ashes: hence it was selected with great propriety to distinguish the shield of our emperor, and to be the national badge of our country. Every man here is unimpeded by children in the path of glory, as long as he lives; but at his death his nephews arise, as if from the ashes of their uncles, to carry on his name, and sustain the honor of his family" (book ii, p. 95). Even though men are "unimpeded" by childcare, children still perpetuate their name. It is important to note that the flag of the country bears the men's emblem and not one meaningful to women. Lawrence even goes so far as to assert, in direct contradiction to Wollstonecraft's project, that "A wife is a dead weight, which retards one's progress in the path of glory" (book xii, 203). Wollstonecraft points out that men have a duty to perform in the rearing of their children, and that mothers who are forced by the death of a husband to raise their children alone have a "double duty of being the father as well as the mother" (50, and similarly on 48). Wollstonecraft argues that women cannot be expected to fulfill their duties as mothers "till men become attentive to the duty of a father" (6); further, she asserts that their ability to achieve full citizenship is conditional on men's cooperation not only politically (as with the Nairs) but within the family: "make women rational creatures, and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives, and mothers; that is--if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers" (178). Nair men value their women relations--the Samorin's joy at recovering the lost Osva looks like tender family love (book vii-ix, especially ix, 202-3)--but the Nair males' appreciation for females is inextricably tied to the perpetuation of the male line, as Neff notes: "the matrilineal and matrilocal features of Nair society . . . would ease male anxiety by replacing wary 'fathers' unsure of their biological ties to their offspring, with proud 'uncles' who would maintain emotional but not direct economic ties" with their sisters' offspring (207).

The idea of chivalry is extolled by Lawrence as the basis of the Nair men's

devotion to their female relations, and to women in general. Their zeal for a heroic reputation is fed by their attacks on the neighbouring Mahometans. Upon assumption of her status as princess, Osva (formerly Camilla Harford, who had grown up in England unaware of her true lineage) encourages the Nairs to attack the Mahometans, and “a thousand swords darted from their scabbards . . . Who could describe the indignation of the Nair army at the sight of a seraglio? The sight of the bastille would not have filled a Briton with greater wrath” (book x, 6, 8). Lawrence echoes the very moment in Edmund Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* which epitomizes the passionate tenor that Wollstonecraft mocks so harshly in her *Vindication of the Rights of Men*:

I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened [the queen] with insult.--But the age of chivalry is gone. . . . The glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more, shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. (Burke 89)

Wollstonecraft, using Burke’s own words, condemns chivalry as a system of “romance and folly” (VRM 25). Far from adhering to the heroic, chivalric behavior asserted by Lawrence, and alluded to nostalgically by Burke, Wollstonecraft expands her critique from chivalry to the military mindset in general, asserting that “A standing army . . . is incompatible with freedom; . . . A spirit inspired by romantic notions of honour . . . can only be felt by a few officers” (VRW 17).

Lawrence insists that men in his society should be freed to do great and heroic deeds. Wollstonecraft directly contradicts this idea, quoting Francis Bacon on the detrimental effects of family on great men as a negative example:

When I treat of the peculiar duties of women, as I should treat of the peculiar

duties of a citizen or father, it will be found that I do not mean to insinuate that they should be taken out of their families, speaking of the majority. 'He that hath wife and children,' says Lord Bacon, 'hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men.'¹⁷ I say the same of women. But, the welfare of society is not built on extraordinary exertions, and were it more reasonably organized, there would be still less need of great abilities, or heroic virtues. (63-64)

Wollstonecraft begins her rebuttal of Bacon by applying to women the widely accepted idea that they should not leave the domestic sphere, but ends by applying that same idea to men--but not without asserting that freedom from family responsibilities would benefit women to the same extent that it has benefitted men.

Wollstonecraft insists that a man has responsibilities to a woman and her children, even if he is not married to her:

when a man seduces a woman, it should, I think, be termed a *left-handed* marriage, and the man should be *legally* obliged to maintain the woman and her children, unless adultery, a natural divorcement, abrogated the law. And this law should remain in force as long as the weakness of women caused the word seduction to be used as an excuse for their frailty and want of principle; nay, *while they depend on man for a subsistence*, instead of earning it by the exertion of their own hands or heads. (71; latter italics added)

Lawrence and Wollstonecraft dispute a key point here: Lawrence asserts that the Nair women are economically self-sufficient, and that therefore they do not need men's support in raising a child; in addition, he states that "every mother receives a sum out of

¹⁷ Editor Carol Poston identifies the source of the Bacon quotation as Essay VIII, "Of Marriage and the Single Life."

the public treasury, according to the number of her children” (97). Despite the utopian or romantic nature of Lawrence’s story, the economic self-sufficiency he describes seems dangerously fragile, as men in his narrative retain political and military power.¹⁸

Although Lawrence creates a utopia in which women own property, are well-educated, and are universally respected for their care of children and establishment of well-run homes, Lawrence’s belief in chivalry and masculine glory leaves the division of gender roles unquestioned. His antimatrimonialism creates a world where men enjoy the benefits of sexual relations without bearing the consequences. Women maintain their domestic duties without becoming full citizens or gaining any power in men’s political and military systems. Without any real shift in the ideological systems dividing women from men--systems which center power in masculine structures of politics and war--women have only maternal influence and the ideals of chivalry to rely on.

From open feminist utopia to more cautious feminist critique of society to mere chivalry and antimatrimonialism, the narratives described here illustrate over a century of attempts to reimagine domesticity in ways that would benefit women. Writers of feminist utopia run the gamut from imagining the possibility of utopian marriage, to decrying marriage as tyranny, to cautioning that women should be well-prepared to find marriage a less than perfect situation. Cavendish, Astell and Scott all insist, regardless of their opinions on marriage, that women’s intellectual powers deserve respect and that women should have the opportunity for thorough education. In different ways, these three writers also agree that improving the situation of women will improve society generally: Cavendish argues for the active rehabilitation of men by freethinking women; Astell

¹⁸ In actual fact, Nair women in what is now the state of Kerala in India did possess most of the land, which was, and to a large extent still is, inherited matrilineally; see Neff, 204-5.

argues for the beneficial effect of virtuous women's societies; and Scott argues that women's benevolence will be felt both directly by their communities and indirectly by example. The utopian feminists focus on improving the situation of women and end with the potential for feminist revision of society in general.

In response to the radical reform ideas presented in the 1790s by Wollstonecraft and Godwin, Opie and Lawrence also focus on the possibility of perfecting domesticity. Opie recognizes the value of many of Wollstonecraft's feminist arguments, but argues that unreformed society would destroy individual freethinkers who dared to live according to radical philosophical principles. Opie critiques women's position in society and in marriage but argues that women should conform themselves to society's expectations in order to be sure of the safeguards society offers, few though they may be. Lawrence, spinning his antimatrimonial utopian tale, attacks the idea of marriage but does not provide women with any new social safeguards to replace it, leaving political and military power in the hands of men while relying on the code of chivalry to protect women in their idealized domestic role.

As an inheritor of the ideas of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, Shelley also inherits a place in a literary tradition that includes both the feminist utopianists and writers who responded to her parents' ideas. Shelley upholds the feminist principles laid out by her mother--principles which remained faithful to many of the precepts of her feminist predecessors--and in her own responses to Godwin and Wollstonecraft, Shelley presents a socially realizable model (in line with the concerns of the more conservative Opie) and takes on the concepts of chivalry and male-dominated systems of power (ideas key to Lawrence) in her own revisions of domesticity and the Romantic men and women who populate her fictions.

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Frankenstein and the Possibility of Utopian Domesticity

In his Preface to the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, Percy Bysshe Shelley identifies the centrality of domesticity to Mary W. Shelley's text: writing as the author, he says, "my chief concern . . . has been . . . the exhibition of the amiableness of domestic affection, and the excellence of universal virtue" (8). In *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley hints at the possibility of utopian domesticity: a perfected society based on the equality between the sexes prescribed by Wollstonecraft, and situated, as stipulated by Godwin, not at the level of state power, but around the most basic social connections. Shelley follows Godwin in his community-based theories of anarchism, believing that society could be improved by changing its basic structures on an individual basis. A devotee of Wollstonecraft's feminism, Shelley sees domesticity as the site of this transformation, a space to be inhabited by both sexes on an egalitarian basis.¹ As her career progresses, Shelley explores the political ramifications of utopian domesticity in *Valperga*, *The Last Man*, and *Perkin Warbeck*, giving her fullest portrayal of this model in the late domestic novels *Lodore* and *Falkner*. Although the earliest fully-blown portrayal of her utopian domesticity is found in her 1820 children's story, *Maurice, or, The Fisher's Cot*, in

¹ For support of the close connections between Shelley's work and that of her parents, see Betty Bennett, especially her most recent *Introduction* (1998): "Mary Shelley modeled her life and works on her parents' belief in the power and responsibility of the individual to effect change, on their own activist and risk-taking engagement with their society and on their ability to recognize transition--in themselves and in the society--and to respond accordingly" (2). Bennett also identifies Shelley's primary belief in Promethean "universal love," as exemplified in P.B. Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* and *Prometheus Unbound*. I wish to focus attention more strongly on the ways in which domesticity works as a structural model for Shelley as she attempts to revise Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's theories and bring them into reality. Responding to Poovey and Mellor, Bennett writes that "even today Mary Shelley is often depicted as a victim of conventional expectations for women, the inherent dissonance of her works glossed over as ambiguous subservience or psychological affliction" (121). For a contextual description of Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's utopian theories and their effect on P. B. Shelley, see Michael Scrivener's Introduction (xi-xiii) and "Visionary Radicalism and Radical Culture" (3-34) in *Radical Shelley*.

outnumbered and politically shackled. Percy Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1813) was a veritable primer of radical theory, Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's included, but acting on such beliefs, as Mary and Percy did in their elopement, led to social ostracism--even by Godwin himself. Shelley composed for an immediate audience consisting mostly of well-educated and sympathetic men of letters--P. B. Shelley, Godwin, Byron, Hunt, even Tory Sir Walter Scott--but a broader public was likely to be more hostile to the portrayal of a radical utopia. Outside the Shelleys' immediate circle, contemporary literary responses to Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's writing included Amelia Opie's pessimistic and moralizing *Adeline Mowbray* (1804) and James Lawrence's perversely chivalric *Empire of the Nairs* (1811), considered in Chapter One. Rather than follow the naive romance template of Lawrence, the bitter morality story of Opie, or even the enthusiastic radical casebook of her husband, Shelley took her cue from the gothic horrors of her father's *Fleetwood* and *St. Leon* to create a cautionary tale, an instructive picture of horror seeded, as Ernst Bloch theorizes: is possible in ideology, with a tiny germ of utopian hope.²

Shelley's complex understanding of domesticity is demonstrated in *Frankenstein* by its two central narratives: in both, utopian potential is destroyed by a too-restrictive definition of domesticity. Victor Frankenstein rejects domesticity as diametrically opposed to his ambition for personal greatness. Shelley's debt to Godwin in *Frankenstein* is well-recognized,³ but it is important to emphasize that Shelley specifically takes from Godwin elements of character and plot formation that reinforce the negativity of Victor's

² See my discussion of Bloch in the Introduction. I base my reading of Bloch on his 1959 *The Principle of Hope*, trans. 1986, and *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. 1988.

³ *Frankenstein's* similarity to *St. Leon* was noticed immediately by reviewers including Walter Scott. For discussions of the similarities between Godwin's and Shelley's work, see Pamela Clemit, Katherine C. Hill-Miller, and Colleen Hobbs.

solitary project. Echoing *St. Leon*, Shelley patterns Victor's personal habits after the alchemist heroes of his youth, men who in deadly secrecy sought to unravel the secrets of nature for personal gain. Echoing Falkland in *Caleb Williams*, Victor deliberately cuts himself off from contact with others and shuns his own Creature as a monster. Both Falkland and *St. Leon* have the potential for greatness but are destroyed by the isolation they create around themselves, as is Victor.

The Creature finds utopian domesticity in the De Lacey family, but their utopia is so narrowly defined by those who enjoy its benefits that it is not capable of expanding to include one so different as the Creature, even though he is benevolent and desperately needs human contact. What begins as a utopian portrait metamorphoses into a description of how ideology interferes even with the most basic human interactions—even when that ideology stems from the supposedly enlightened thinkers who were heroes to the Shelleys.⁴ From Plutarch, Volney, and Goethe, the Creature learns just how much he lacks in terms of human society; neither can he fit within the divine mythology of Milton. The Creature's attempt to set up his own utopian domestic scene in South America is also prevented, as I describe in more detail below.

The critical reception of *Frankenstein* has not acknowledged the validity of Shelley's utopian vision within the overall negative critique of her novel offers. Marlon Ross identifies the utopian suggestions in *Frankenstein* but misinterprets their meaning: "Shelley's perfect domestic spaces . . . turn out to be fantasies. Because they remain *patriarchal* havens, they cannot protect their inhabitants from the assault of masculine

⁴ The reviewer for the *British Critic* evaluates these selections as an "extraordinary stock of poetical theology, pagan biography, adulterous sentimentality, and atheistical jacobinism" (436), just as might be expected from an opponent of the Godwinian school, while the slightly more sympathetic *Edinburgh [Scots] Magazine* reviewer describes these works as producing an education in "German sentiment, ancient heroism, and Satanic sturdiness" (822 [252]). The sarcastic *Quarterly* reviewer, John Wilson Croker, finds the explanation for the Creature's longing for a mate in that "the Sorrows of Werter had, its seems, given him a strange longing to find a Charlotte, of a suitable size" (765 [381]).

conquest, being the origin and effect of such conquest. Because they are feminized *havens*, they are not strong enough to protect their inhabitants from the assault of masculine conquest” (117, original emphasis). But Shelley’s utopian hints are not merely fantasies. They are suggestions for what domesticity might become. Although *Frankenstein* treats the domestic ideal “negatively . . . in terms of romantic irony” (Kelly 188), domesticity is not abandoned as an ideal. *Frankenstein* offers a critique of existing conditions as well as a visionary prescription, and the flaws of exclusion Shelley clearly recognizes in domesticity are not glossed over but allowed to reach their logical outcomes.

Critical understanding of how gendered ideologies play out in *Frankenstein* began with Kate Ellis’s essay targeting the domestic affections as a veil covering “the separation of male and female spheres of activity characteristic of the bourgeois family” (124), for the purpose “of maintaining the purity of the family and the sanctity of the home” (140). Ellis rightly identifies Shelley’s critique of the arbitrary gendered separation of spheres, but she over-extends this critique onto a domesticity defined exclusively as bourgeois. An understanding of Shelley’s portrayal of families as “subversive” (126) does not explain the real need of the Creature for human interaction and the evil which arises from the denial of a place for him precisely within a nurturing domesticity--be it one constructed by the De Laceys (whom Ellis recognizes as somewhat less concerned with gendered divisions, 125), with Victor, or with the nameless pair the Creature attempts to assist in the forest.

In her influential psychological/biographical reading of *Frankenstein*, however, Mary Poovey fits *Frankenstein* into a critical narrative of growing conservatism only staved off initially by the influence of Percy Bysshe Shelley, reading Shelley’s argument as “conservative” (122) and “conventionally feminine” (125, 131). That Shelley’s revisions for the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein* support a narrative of growing

conservatism, as Poovey argues, is made more doubtful by the fact that Shelley had intended to revise her first two chapters long before 1831. In the Thomas text,⁵ Shelley wrote a footnote to the end of chapter two: "If there were ever to be another edition of this book, I should re-write these two first chapters. The incidents are tame and ill arranged - the language sometimes childish. - They are unworthy of the rest of the <w> <book> narration" (34 note a [Thomas I, 77]). Shelley emphasizes the need for revision of style and for the inclusion of more interesting events--not a revision of ideological content. Charles E. Robinson suggests this notation might have been made as early as 20 December 1818 (xcvii). These first two chapters are the most heavily revised for the 1831 text and include the extensive revisions concerning Victor's childhood and Elizabeth's origins. Ascribing the 1831 changes primarily to a conservatism of later life contradicts the textual evidence that proves Shelley already intended to revise the first two chapters--perhaps soon after first writing them, and certainly within five years, while P. B. Shelley was still alive. It also discounts the fact that not even the most hostile of *Frankenstein's* reviewers single out the so-called incest motif (in the 1818 version, Elizabeth is Victor's cousin) as a basis for attacking the novel⁶--so Shelley would probably not have been inspired to change Elizabeth's origins to appease "conservative" critics. The 1831 version, in which Elizabeth becomes an orphan, unrelated to Victor, who is given to him as his future wife while still a child, serves as a more damning critique of traditional domestic ideology. Secure in the knowledge that Elizabeth is "his," Victor leaves her and

⁵ "Thomas" refers to a marked-up copy of *Frankenstein's* 1818 first edition that Shelley gave to Mrs. Thomas, a friend in Genoa, no later than July 1823; the volume is now held by the Pierpont Morgan library.

⁶ Had Victor and Elizabeth's relationship been deemed incestuous, the failure of hostile reviewers to decry it would have been even more astounding considering the willingness of gossipmongers to describe the relationships between the Shelleys, Clair Clairmont and Byron as a "League of Incest."

neglects to communicate with her, settling for formal bonds instead of attempting to maintain their relationship as friends and equals.

Poovey argues that, both biographically and in her novel, Shelley felt a “tension . . . between the self-denial demanded by domestic activity and the self-assertiveness essential to artistic creation” (138). Shelley, however, presents a persuasive case for “self-control and moderation,” but does not reject the value of genius out-of-hand, either in her personal life or in her novel. Despite Shelley’s establishment of herself as a professional author alongside her husband, and later without him, Poovey argues that Shelley’s 1831 revisions and especially her Preface indicate Shelley’s rejection of her own authorship and reluctance to put herself forward in print. Poovey does not take into consideration the strictures about the Shelley name appearing in print that Shelley’s father-in-law had placed upon her, strictures Shelley had to subvert until his death in 1844. Contrary to Poovey’s reading, Shelley published throughout her career under the name of “The Author of *Frankenstein*,” and the great popular success of her novel and its inclusion alongside her father’s work in Bentley’s Standard Novels would not have convinced her that her work was “a failure” (139).⁷

The question of genius impinges on Shelley’s vision of utopian domesticity because of the association of genius with solitary masculinity, but whether genius can improve or can only harm society is never fully resolved in *Frankenstein*. The reviewer for *La Belle Assemblée*, for example, finds some ambiguity in the moral: “We hope . . . that the writer had the moral in view which we are desirous of drawing from it, that the

⁷ Shelley’s own lifelong image of herself as an author would have been reinforced by familial attitudes such as were later expressed by Claire Clairmont: “in our family if you cannot write an epic poem or a novel that by its originality knocks all other novels on the head, you are a despicable creature not worth acknowledging” (*Clairmont Correspondence* I, 295). Indeed the context of this quote (Claire is defending her late brother Charles’s lack of literary talent) point out the strong expectations that both sons and daughters in the Godwin household should succeed as writers.

presumptive works of man must be frightful, vile, and horrible; ending only in discomfort and misery to himself. But will all our readers understand this?" (42 [139]). This review shows that some contemporary readers were not sure of Shelley's opposition to the "presumption" of genius. Other more negative (usually politically motivated) reviews are more certain of the novel's allegiance with genius (read as humanist impiety). The more positive reviewer of the *Edinburgh [Scots] Magazine* finds a balance in the "harsh and savage delineations of passion, relieved in like manner by the gentler features of domestic and simple feelings" (819 [249]).

If Shelley means to tell the tale of "The Modern Prometheus," the price for human advancement might in fact be the sufferings of the individuals involved--but *Frankenstein* is about the way in which genius *in isolation* "necessarily" brings about destruction. Walton, the recipient of Victor's contradictory advice, never comes to a conclusion as to the value of his own quest for glory. Discussing Walton's interactions with Victor, Marlon Ross identifies solitary masculine genius as "relentlessly aggressive, anarchic, and destructive" unless tamed by domestic affection (114). The tragic outcomes in *Frankenstein* do not insist that greatness must not be desired, but do insist that there must be another way to achieve greatness than by rejecting domestic ties.

Shelley's portrait of Victor Frankenstein vacillates between revolutionary transcendence and egoistic self-righteousness, avoiding an easy resolution of the problems of genius and personal ambition. Noting that Romantic period fiction betrays a mixed attitude of attraction and repulsion to characters of genius, Gary Kelly describes a cultural context for *Frankenstein*, less dependent on gender ideologies, that took interest in the "Romantic" individualistic project:

The exploration of excessive selfhood marked a deep ambivalence, a revulsion against yet a fascination with this central theme of Romantic culture, for excessive selfhood could be seen as a transcendence of merely social categories and values,

yet still somehow associated with courtly and aristocratic egotism and paradoxically, with the self-righteous individualism of revolutionary transgression against traditions and laws. (184)

Kelly characterizes later (i.e., "second generation") Romantic novels as "preoccupied with themes of excess and transgression" (184), a description well-suited to *Frankenstein*. Bloch's theory of the utopian function of ideology serves again to help unravel the paradox of "excessive selfhood" as both transcendence and egotism at the same time: Victor's (Romantic) genius is supposedly dedicated to the benefit of mankind, towards achieving a utopian control over life and death, but the traditional divide between public ambition and domesticity separates him from his friends. Victor's ideological blinders reinforce his belief in his own powers of genius, leading him not to maintain close bonds of communication with his friends nor to form the slightest bond of interaction with his creature. Thwarted by egotism, the utopian potential of Victor's Romantic "transcendence" is lost. Shelley will later explore this question of the uses of Romantic genius for the betterment of society in her opposition of the benevolent Shelleyan Romantic hero and its counterpart, the Byronic Romantic hero, of whom the ambitious, passionate, and isolated genius, Victor Frankenstein, is Shelley's first, prototypical iteration.⁸

Although Anne Mellor recognizes Shelley's attraction to domesticity, and devotes a chapter to Shelley's critique of the gendered division of spheres, her own critique in terms of the bourgeois private sphere denies the utopian possibility that Shelley located in an expanded, non-gendered private sphere that took a reformed domesticity as its primary

⁸ No other character in *Frankenstein* opposes Victor as a Shelleyan antitype, nor does Victor evolve into a Shelleyan hero. In the Creature, as in *Valperga*'s Castruccio, Shelley delineates a devolution from the potential for Shelleyan benevolence and the capacity to contribute to utopian domesticity into violence and destructive isolation. I explore Shelley's opposition between Byronic and Shelleyan Romantic heroes more fully in later chapters, especially in terms of *Valperga*, *The Last Man*, *Lodore* and *Falkner*.

model. Mellor speaks of Shelley's interest in what she terms the

profound contradiction inherent in the very concept of an egalitarian bourgeois family for the bourgeois family is founded on the legitimate possession and exploitation of property and on an ideology of domination--whether of the male gender over the female or of parents over children--that render it innately hierarchical. (*Mary Shelley* xii)

Certainly Shelley's thinking was influenced by bourgeois pressures. But because the dominant family structure of her day is identifiable as bourgeois does not mean we should assume that Shelley's own domestic model exactly matched that of her society.

Additionally, according to Bloch's utopian theory, that Shelley's work is influenced by bourgeois ideology should not invalidate its contributions to the imagining of the utopian. As a utopian thinker, Shelley attempted imaginatively to reconfigure the social structures that surrounded her, as well as to bring to light the flaws of existing structures, which, as Mellor acknowledges, she so admirably does in *Frankenstein*.

In contrast to the domestic vacuum Victor has created around himself, Shelley allows the Creature to imagine a domestic utopia--one, however, that he will not be allowed to realize. The creature compellingly describes the utopian existence he and his mate would create:

I will go to the vast wilds of South America. My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion will be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us as on man, and will ripen our food. The picture I present to you is peaceful and human, and you must feel that you could deny it only in the wantonness of power and cruelty. . . . If I have no ties and no affections, hatred and vice must be my portion; the love of another will destroy the cause of my

crimes, and I shall become a thing, of whose existence every one will be ignorant. My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor; and my virtues will necessarily arise when I live in communion with an equal. I shall feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to the chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded. (109, 110 [II, 147, 150])

As in utopian moments elsewhere in Shelley's oeuvre, the natural world reflects the utopian relationship imagined for the two mates. In this domestic utopian vision, Shelley invokes the New World both as a site for republican experiments and as a natural Eden ready to be populated by a new race of noble savage. Note that the Creature defines his utopia as "human"--asserting not only his own humanity but also the invisibility of sexual dualism within the overarching paradigm of the human. The radical vegetarianism of the Creature conforms to that outlined in Percy Bysshe Shelley's utopian *Queen Mab, A Philosophical Poem, with Notes* (1813), and both are derived in part from the "peaceable kingdom" prophesied in the book of Isaiah (11:1-10), of which the central cornerstone is justice. Here, the beast of prey who subsists on vegetarian food is the Creature, rather than the lion or the wolf: to make this reference overt, the Creature specifically promises not to menace the lamb or the kid. The promise of utopia is also bolstered by details from Greek mythology: editor Nora Crook points out that the Creature's food of acorns and berries is "the food of the Golden Age, according to Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I. 103-6" (109).

The Creature himself asserts that "the love of another" will make this utopia possible. The problem undermining this utopian potential lies in the assumption that the female will love the Creature. Both the Creature and Victor conceive of the female with less than complete understanding of her autonomy. Victor finds the possibility of her autonomy an unacceptable risk, indicating his underlying misogyny, whereas the Creature assumes that he will be able fully to mold her personality as he intended to do

with Victor's little brother, William. Because of these attempts to pre-determine the fate of the female, domesticity is clouded by its ideological veils before it even has a chance to become utopian. In a direct parallel, the fate of Elizabeth was determined when she was given to Victor as a small child. Her happiness, wrapped up entirely in Victor's, is precarious at best, and she dies because of his misdeeds: by destroying the Creature's bride, Victor incites the Creature to destroy his own. Both domestic situations, overdetermined and restrictive, result in misery, and the potential for utopia is lost.

Of all the characters in the novel, it is the Creature who most highly values human companionship, the very thing forever denied to him. The De Lacey family provides the clearest portrait of utopian domesticity to be found in the novel; indeed, the *Edinburgh [Scots] Magazine* reviewer asserts that the Creature's "natural tendency to kind feelings, and the manner in which they were blighted,--and all the domestic picture of the cottage, are very interesting and beautiful" (823 [253])--a contemporary identification of the utopian promise afforded by the De Laceys. When the Creature demands Victor's attention after meeting him at the summit of Montanvert, he immediately points out that the heart of his misery stems from the isolation he suffers:

"I was benevolent; my soul glowed with love and humanity: but am I not alone, miserably alone? You, my creator, abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing? They spurn me and hate me. . . . On you it rests, whether I quit for ever the neighbourhood of man, and lead a harmless life, or become the scourge of your fellow-creatures, and the author of your speedy ruin." (75 [II. 27, 30])

He then begins to tell Victor his story, which quickly comes to focus on the De Laceys. Discouraged by his two previous encounters with humans (he meets a peasant who runs from him and enters a village where he is attacked), he hides himself within the hovel adjacent to the De Laceys' cottage and begins cautiously to observe them. He is

emotionally affected by his observations of the family from the very beginning, and particularly values the gentleness of Agatha and the benevolence of her father--two characteristics which dominate the description of De Lacey's. For her introductory scene, Shelley carefully presents a tableau of shared domestic tasks: Felix appears and relieves Agatha of her bucket of milk, then goes for wood while Agatha tends the house and garden. Later, they share the task of preparing a meal. The Creature notices the old man within the cottage: "The silver hair and benevolent countenance of the aged cottager, won my reverence; while the gentle manners of the girl enticed my love" (81 [II. 48]). The Creature begins to feel a part of the tableau he is witnessing and is strongly empathetic to the emotions of the De Lacey's. As the old man plays sweet music, distressing Agatha, "the fair creature, leaving her work, knelt at his feet. He raised her, and smiled with such kindness and affection, that I felt sensations of a peculiar and overpowering nature: they were a mixture of pain and pleasure, such as I have never before experienced" (81 [II. 48]). After his first day of observation, the Creature remarks, "What chiefly struck me was the gentle manners of these people; and I longed to join them, but dared not. I remembered too well the treatment I had suffered the night before from the barbarous villagers" (82 [II. 53]). The genuineness of their emotional bonds is what affects the Creature so strongly. Their "gentleness" suggests to him that he might be able to join them, but because of his prior experiences, he is too afraid. Although the family are distressed, their attempts to share each other's burdens and provide comfort to one another suggest the foundations of utopian domesticity.

The Creature regards his own miserable hovel, a pigsty, as a "paradise" (80 [II. 45]) because it is warm and dry and floored with clean straw. How much more so does he regard the De Lacey's situation: "They possessed a delightful house (for such it was in my eyes), and every luxury; they had a fire to warm them when chill, and delicious viands when hungry; they were dressed in excellent clothes; and, still more, they enjoyed

one another's company and speech, interchanging each day looks of affection and kindness" (82 [II. 55]). The "looks of affection" are accompanied by acts of self-sacrifice, as Agatha and Felix give up their own food to make sure their father does not go hungry. The Creature is inspired to his own acts of benevolence, and begins providing their firewood. Editor Nora Crook notes that when the Creature allows Felix more time to cultivate the garden, Shelley echoes the end of Voltaire's *Candide*, in which cultivation of the garden represents "the means whereby to attain contentment on earth" (83n).

The De Lacey's cottage represents a bucolic setting of utopian domesticity that appears throughout Shelley's work, reflecting wide-spread early-nineteenth-century middle-class nostalgia for a rural mode of life.⁹ Usually, such nostalgia did not fully acknowledge the poverty and back-breaking labor such a life entailed, but here, the Creature uses his unnatural strength to shoulder the burden of heavy labor actual peasants would have had to bear. His violent rejection at the hands of Felix, then, partly indicates a deep aversion on the part of the middle and upper classes to acknowledging their dependence on the working poor for providing them with the leisure to pursue study and the arts. Victor exhibits a similar aversion when he attributes the Creature's providing him with sustenance in the Arctic to "the spirits" (155 [III. 141]).

The symbolic names of Felix and Agatha ("happy" and "good" [84n]), and signal their importance as representatives of utopia in the novel. Safie ("wisdom") represents the capacity of women to escape patriarchal tyranny in order to make their own decisions and arrange their own lives: "When alone, Safie resolved in her / own mind the plan of

⁹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall present such findings in their *Family Fortunes*, as I note in Chapter One.

conduct that it would become her to pursue in this emergency" (94 [II. 95-6]).¹⁰ Over and over, the Creature's narrative reiterates their gentle manners and benevolent actions even in the midst of the distresses of poverty: he says, "I looked upon them as superior beings" (85 [II. 66]). The small society they form is marked by respect, shared responsibility, and love. Their travails are eased by the enlightened recreations of reading and music--hallmarks of utopian domesticity throughout Shelley's works. Yet the Creature is still excluded from their company:

"I admired virtue and good feelings, and loved the gentle manners and amiable qualities of my cottagers; but I was shut out from intercourse with them, except through means which I obtained by stealth, when I was unseen and unknown, and which rather increased than satisfied the desire I had of becoming one among my fellows. The gentle words of Agatha, / and the animated smiles of the charming Arabian, were not for me. The mild exhortations of the old man, and the

¹⁰ Safie's importance to the novel is signalled structurally, symbolically, and thematically. The structure of the novel, bounded by the editorial activity of Margaret Walton Saville, centers around the innermost narrative of Safie. (For an extended discussion of the frame structure, see Beth Newman's 1986 article.) Many have noted that the initials of Walton's editing sister are those of Mary W. Shelley, but Safie also has a claim to the status of Shelley double. The names of Safie and Margaret Saville are linked: the French pronunciation of "Saville" and "Safie" are very similar (Lew 282; see also Robinson, I, lxxiv n.38); in addition, "Safie" is derived from *Sophia*, meaning *wisdom*, and "Saville" may derive from the verb *savoir*, to know.

The name De Lacey is an amalgam derived from the names of De Grey and Lacy from Lawrence's *The Empire of the Nairs*. Safie's story parallels that of Lawrence's Camilla, who is the daughter of a woman explicitly compared to Wollstonecraft. Just as Lew suggests a parallel between William Godwin (outraged at his daughter's flouting of marriage) and the Turk (who married a Christian but refused to allow his daughter to do the same), the figure of Safie's mother can be seen to represent Wollstonecraft, in that she urges her daughter not to remain in the seraglio, but to obtain the comparatively greater freedom of Europe (92 [II.89]). Wollstonecraft explicitly refers to "Mahometanism" and "the seraglio" as exemplars of woman's degradation in the Introduction to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (73, 76). Reading *The Empire of the Nairs* in 1815, Shelley might have seen a parallel between the daughter of a Wollstonecraft figure and herself, and created a similar figure in Safie. See also Joseph Lew, who interprets Safie as racial other in the novel, and Roswitha Burwick, who points out how Safie's otherness is absorbed into the European standard of the De Lacey (51).

lively conversation of the loved Felix, were not for me. Miserable, unhappy wretch!" (90 [II. 81-2])

The section of *Frankenstein* during which the Creature relates his experiences with the De Lacey's contains the most overtly political content of the book. Felix instructs Safie from Volney's *Ruins of Empire*. Attending to the lesson, the Creature not only learns to read written language, but learns to read his own position, or lack thereof, in society. He learns about the distinctions of property and "all the various relationships which bind one human being to another in mutual bonds" (90 [II. 82]). At the same time, he begins to learn about good and evil: "Was man, indeed, at once so powerful, so virtuous, and magnificent, yet so vicious and base?" (89 [II. 78]) These lessons increase the Creature's despair, as he realizes all his lacks and differences. Later, he finds the package containing *Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch's Lives*, and the *Sorrows of Werter*. These books fill him with "extreme delight" but "more frequently suck [him] into the lowest dejection" (95 [II. 99, 100]). The books expose the Creature to greater knowledge than he has practical experience to understand, causing him great confusion and distress, as opposed to his observations of the cottagers: "These were the reflections of my hours of despondency and solitude; / but when I contemplated the virtues of the cottagers, their amiable and benevolent dispositions, I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues they would compassionate me, and overlook my personal deformity" (98 [II. 106]). The utopian domesticity observed by the Creature is heightened by the influx of material wealth brought by Safie, and as the weather begins to turn cold, utopian conditions prevail against the hardships of the previous winter: "They loved, and sympathized with one another; and their joys, depending on each other, were not interrupted by the casualties that took place around them" (98 [II. 110]).

The relation of the history of the De Lacey's and Safie is also overtly political.

Their efforts to assist Safie's father after his unjust trial reinforce the tendency to see the De Laceys as agents of enlightenment and justice. Safie's leaving her corrupt father to join the De Laceys represents the tendency of those who are enlightened to come together and join forces--in this case, to strengthen and further establish utopian domesticity. The De Laceys' history is further testimony to their gentleness and benevolence, supporting the clearest statement of the De Lacey household as an example of utopian domesticity:

"I learned, from the views of social life which [their history] developed, to admire their virtues, and to deprecate the vices of mankind. And yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil; benevolence and generosity were ever present before me, inciting within me a desire to become an actor in the busy scene where so many admirable qualities were called forth and displayed." (95 [II. 98])

The utopian domesticity the Creature so admires is shattered when Felix "protects" his family by violently driving the Creature away. Felix's actions unveil uneven power relations hidden inside the scene of seeming equality. The "gentleness" of the De Laceys masks a code of conduct that is both chivalric and patriarchal. Felix and Agatha love their father and sacrifice their own welfare secretly to feed him when they don't have enough for themselves. Felix also desires to help Agatha and to protect her from the severity of their labor. These practices of self-sacrifice and protection, based in love but conforming to codes of patriarchy and chivalry, shape Felix into an agent of exclusion.¹¹ The Creature has used his powers of reason to appeal to the father and is kneeling before him clutching his knees in an attitude of supplication, but his appearance still seems to be so horrible that Agatha immediately faints and Safie runs from the

¹¹ Leila Silvana May suggests that the sibling relationship between Agatha and Felix yields the most egalitarian and utopian community in *Frankenstein* (675; see also Mellor, *Mary Shelley* 44), but this sibling relationship is disrupted when Felix displaces Agatha, his equal, with Safie, whom he teaches to become a European woman and wife, a displacement foreshadowing Felix's violent expulsion of the Creature.

cottage. The scene assaults Felix on both vulnerable fronts. His chivalric urge to protect the females is triggered by their distress. Furthermore, Safie, whom Felix has regained after long separation, is driven out by the sight of the Creature, threatening Felix's connection with her. Felix's place in the patriarchal system is also threatened by the Creature's supplication to the father. Shelley makes these valences clear in the Creature's recollection of the scene: "The horrible scene of the preceding day was for ever acting before my eyes; the females were flying, / and the enraged Felix tearing me from his father's feet" (102 [II.123-4]).

The Creature's further attempt to find a society for himself leads him to seize the child William in order to re-educate him. But William reveals that he is already well-schooled in his own upper-class familial placement: "My papa is a Syndic!" (106 [II, 138]). A child well-placed in his family hierarchy meets a child who has been harshly disowned. Domesticity at its most ideological is used to bolster and solidify class stability in *Frankenstein*.¹² The Creature has learned from Felix's lessons to Safie that he "possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property" (90 [II, 80]). His lack of the things Felix has taught him he needs adds to his despair. His education is not designed to help him foster relationships, but rather emphasizes his alienation both spiritually and materially from humanity.

The case of William Frankenstein should help to clarify some interesting points raised by Anne Mellor, who argues that "Mary Shelley's celebration of the loving and egalitarian bourgeois family as the basis of political justice--embodied in *Frankenstein* by the De Laceys--fails to take into account the innate injustice of the hierarchical structure of the bourgeois family" (*Mary Shelley* 88). Whereas Mellor's identification of the Burkean sublime with the Creature's appearance (130-31) is convincing, her suggestion that this

¹² See, for example, Anca Vlasopolos and Margo V. Perkins on class in *Frankenstein*.

family-based political ideology is derived from the ideas of Edmund Burke is less so (86; *Romanticism and Gender* 65). When William is faced by the Creature, he immediately alerts the Creature that his father has political power, and that he is under his powerful father's protection. This is certainly a Burkean model of the family as it reflects and is reflected by a similarly patriarchal government.¹³ But it is hard to hear William's statement with a sympathetic ear. Using William, Shelley makes plain that she understands the patriarchal family to be a closed-off, uninviting system; she has already made this point clear with Felix's expulsion of the Creature, showing that counter to Mellor's point, she *precisely* recognizes the "injustice of the hierarchical structure of the bourgeois family." Mellor's focus on Burke as the only theorist of the family ignores Wollstonecraft's more powerful influence on her daughter's ideas about the potential for well-educated women, in partnership with men, to create egalitarian families. Shelley does not view the family as innately hierarchical, but critiques the family as a patriarchal institution as well as a class product. Mellor's alternative working-class model "in which children are raised to pass into adult responsibility and to contribute to the financial resources of the household as quickly as possible" (88) may function as an alternative to the so-called bourgeois family, but inasmuch as it does so, it *supports* Shelley's main point: if the Creature had been successful at entering into economy, instead of being denied his exchange of labor for acceptance with the De Lacey's, he would not have been driven to murder.

The effects of class upon the degree to which Justine and Elizabeth are invited within the "domestic haven" must be acknowledged: Justine, as a lower class girl, is accepted primarily as a servant, whereas the 1831 Elizabeth is expected to join the family,

¹³ As Pamela Clemit states, "While [Shelley's] imagery of familial transgression suggests [her] Burkean sympathies, elsewhere in the narrative she remains deeply skeptical about the integrity of the patriarchal family, the basis of Burke's hierarchical order" (165).

although her origins lie outside it. A woman's entrance into the family of her husband, whereupon she takes on his name, is a contractual, and not a blood relation; Safie also enters the De Lacey household by a contractual agreement. To a certain extent, Shelley may be arguing for a more liberal interpretation of family ties, based on the tangle of different relationships she herself had experienced as part of the Godwin household.¹⁴ But the Creature, lacking blood relations, finds no way to make an entrance into contractual relations either. Bernard Duyfhuizen points out that although a pattern is established for welcoming orphans (Caroline, Elizabeth, Justine) into the home, the acceptance is based on personal attractiveness, which the Creature lacks (482-3). The Creature's lack of a place within the family can also be contrasted with the women in that while they are clearly marked with gender and class determinants, the Creature is less clearly marked. His origins are both unnatural and unnaturalized. Even his race (or species) does not fit into any pre-existing societal mold. The Frankenstein family, for all

¹⁴ The Godwin household was an amalgam of children, not all of whom were related by blood; according to Penny Kane's study, nineteenth-century families were often broken up by death, and amalgamated families like the Godwins were common. Mary's older sister, Fanny Godwin, was Mary Wollstonecraft's child by Imlay, but Godwin had raised her as his own. Mary's step-siblings, Charles and Mary Jane (Claire) Clairmont, were children of two different fathers brought into the household through the marriage of Godwin and Mary Jane Vial. William Godwin, Jr., was the offspring of Godwin and his second wife, giving Mary her second blood sibling. This amalgamated family experienced a great deal of friction, with Mary deeply resenting her step-mother and carrying on a lifelong rocky relationship with Claire. The murder of young William Frankenstein is often read as a retaliatory act against the difficult, even usurping, younger brother. (See for example, U. C. Knoepfelmacher's psychological reading of several of Shelley's novels. William Crisman extends this thesis into an elaborate argument about sibling rivalry which involves most of the novel's cast of characters.) However, it is William's secure place within the Frankenstein family, Victor's love of him, that inspires the Creature's rage. Elizabeth Lavenza experiences William's death both as a sister and a surrogate mother--regardless of whether she has been written in as a first cousin in 1818 or a noble orphan in 1831. If the Frankenstein family, with Elizabeth and even Justine as adoptive members, is read as a reflection of the Godwins, we must acknowledge that blood ties are not central to the establishment of familial relations. Although Shelley sees potential for human empowerment in families created by choice, Ruth Perry argues that the replacement of blood relationships by affinal (chosen) marital relationships seems to have been linked with women's disinheritance from property ownership over the course of the long eighteenth century.

that it seems to welcome new members into the fold, does so (like the De Lacey's) only insofar as they can clearly be fit into the stable hierarchy the family has created.

Although the Creature desperately longs for a domestic, companionate situation, and Frankenstein and Walton both clearly suffer (Walton acknowledgedly so) for the lack of it, the suffering caused by the exclusionary flaws of traditional domesticity in the novel cannot be denied. The most evident case of this harmful restriction is that of Justine. Framed by the Creature for William's death, Justine finds her adoptive place within the Frankenstein family to be unstable. She internalizes the blame for William's death, accusing herself with a false confession: "I almost began to think that I was the monster that he [her confessor] said I was" (62 [I, 174-5]). Victor never speaks up to save her, and she is hanged. Elizabeth delivers a passionate speech in the 1818 version regarding the lack of justice available to Justine. This speech is omitted from 1831, more narrowly restricting Elizabeth to seemingly, female-gendered behavior, such as the speech to the court on Justine's behalf that is retained in the 1831 text.

Mary Wollstonecraft's posthumously published novel fragment, *The Wrongs of Woman, or, Maria*, has a direct bearing on this scene, making it Shelley's most unveiled accusation of gender prejudices in the novel. Shortly before Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel closes, Maria attempts to defend herself by having a defence she has written read in court. The judge disregards the testimony, decreeing women's testimony unseemly, and finds against Maria. In 1818, Elizabeth's passionate Godwinian speech about Justice may convince the reader but fails to prevent the fatal outcome of Justine's trial. The unheard plea of Wollstonecraft's Maria, is echoed by Elizabeth and Justine and by the Creature himself, who delivers a long and convincing vindication of himself but is denied the right of testimony: Victor warns Walton not to listen to the Creature because he is too convincing. The creature's act of framing Justine demonstrates how easily patriarchal narratives can distort justice.

The 1831 revisions, especially as described by Hill-Miller, show Shelley remodelling the character of Elizabeth from a more outspoken, independent woman, into a more docile "idealized" angel in the house (88-93). This refashioning takes the character of Elizabeth farther out of the text, to be sure; but it makes the absence of a vital female presence in the novel that much more conspicuous. The 1818 Elizabeth ventriloquizes Godwin, but her fiery speeches are ineffective. Moreover, they are conspicuously polemical in an otherwise politically unsophisticated character. In the 1831 version, Shelley changes her tactics. Rather than propound the principles of "justice" only to have them ignored, Shelley places more commonplace sentiments in Elizabeth's mouth. To show how such social commonplaces fail to comfort is a more subtle attack than loud declaiming against injustice, and demonstrates the inadequacies of the female who has been defined by the bounds of traditional domesticity. The 1831 Elizabeth, modelled on supposedly benevolent social norms, has no power to save Justine, much less Victor or herself. As Betty Bennett notes, Elizabeth is chastened by Justine's unjust death, and fades into silence ("Not this time" 7-8).

The domestic sphere is often described as a haven, from which the public world is carefully excluded, but Elizabeth is excluded from any world of Victor's, even his intimate world. Despite their lifelong betrothal, she is forced to ask, "Tell me, dearest Victor. . . . Do you not love another?" (144 [III, 98]). Elizabeth, denied the truth about her fiance's pursuits, is strangled by the monster after surviving the deaths of William and Justine. The responses of Victor to the deaths of his friend and his new wife are telling: the death of Clerval, which is unexpected, sends Victor into a nervous breakdown and weeks of delirium, whereas the murder of Elizabeth, against which the monster had given him a warning which he obtusely misinterpreted, does not cause such an immediate breakdown. In fact it is Victor's father who succumbs after Elizabeth is killed. Victor has excluded Elizabeth from his life to the extent that even the bonds of traditional

domesticity--the bonds of betrothal--have begun to break down.

Clerval, however, inhabits a privileged realm closer to Frankenstein: he has entry to the academic world where Victor is studying and is able to nurse Victor through a nervous breakdown. The Creature's destruction of Clerval shows that he recognizes Clerval to be a kind of mate to Frankenstein (see Ross 114). Because Clerval is not a woman, he is not separated from Victor by proscribed spheres of gendered activity (though there are divisions between him and Victor due to class status). Victor's own narrative recognizes the closeness of this friend, and describes their relationship in more attractive terms than the terms, primarily of ownership, by which he describes Elizabeth.

Whereas the genders of Victor, Elizabeth, and Clerval seem to determine, to a large extent, the way they will interact, the characterization of Walton blurs the lines of gendered behavior in the novel. As an explorer and a scientist, his ambition for individual glory and his willingness to turn aside from his domestic ties are similar to Victor's. But instead of entirely shutting himself off, he is willing to form attachments: with his sister, to whom he writes; with Victor, to whom he listens; with his crew, to whom he eventually capitulates in their desire to turn around; and even with the Creature.¹⁵ When the Creature visits Victor's dead body like a grieving son, the genuineness of the Creature's grief is clear to Walton, and it is with Walton that the Creature has his only

¹⁵ See Marjean Purinton's study of cross-gender characterization in *Frankenstein*, especially her discussion of Walton (54-55). Although Purinton claims that the novel "collapses the gender-determined spheres of domesticity and discovery, of private and public activities" (53) in that men in *Frankenstein* are not gendered in strictly "masculine" ways, females are still relegated to a confining sphere and denied their contributions to the advancement of knowledge, as a result of what Shelley calls a "sexual education." Because men seem to embody gender characteristics associated with both sexes, women are deemed both deficient and superfluous, and domesticity, which could be realized as utopian for the benefit of both sexes, is restricted by the individualistic desires for attainment that men have aspired to realize on their own. In keeping with Shelley's other works, *Frankenstein* on the whole demonstrates that if individualistic attainment is allowed to create such extreme self-centeredness, utopian domesticity can never be established.

calm, rational, two-sided conversation. This openness to communication is the prerequisite for Shelley's utopian ideal, lending utopian potential to Walton's relationships with both his sister and Victor. The way Shelley bends gendered behavior in Walton sets the stage for her later, more fully realized utopian domesticity, in which gender expectations must be shucked by both men and women for utopia to be established.

Still, although Walton continues to write to his sister, the utopian potential of their relationship is downplayed, as his sister evidently does not fulfill all his requirements for perfect friendship. Walton longs to meet a *man* who, like himself, struggles for new knowledge. When Walton finds such a man in Victor, utopian potential based on equality and shared goals is hinted at but rendered unstable when Walton is unable to learn whether Victor's search for knowledge is worthwhile or foolish. It is Victor's own inability to communicate honestly and consistently that destroys any utopian potential: at one point, Victor advises Walton against the thirst for unattainable knowledge, while at another point he raves against Walton's men, who would abandon their quest. Walton never makes his own decision, but is forced to return by the threat of mutiny spurred by the crew's insistence on survival. Walton is unable to attain his goal, and he also loses his friend. However, he is successful in relating his narrative to his audience, Margaret Walton Saville, and is able to preserve the community he feels with her through communication, one-sided though it is. It is through Margaret Saville, the recipient of the letters, that the community of the novel is then extended to include the reader. Walton's relationship with his sister provides a site where utopian domesticity has the potential to grow.

Shelley's ideal of utopian domesticity is reflected by her model of personal autonomy within collaboration while working on the *Frankenstein* MS. This professional cooperation revises the traditional domestic model in which the husband's work is seen to

be primary whereas the wife's work is to prop up and support the efforts of her husband. Evidence of the Shelleys' interactions establishes that while Shelley welcomed Percy Shelley's assistance, she maintained authority over the text.

Shelley's writing practices reflect an attempt to restructure expected gender roles in the professional relations between herself and her partner, both for *Frankenstein* and for *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817, compiled after the completion of *Frankenstein* but published earlier). This co-authored volume includes her travel writing and letters as well as her husband's letters and the first appearance of his major poem, "Mont Blanc," there entitled "Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni." According to editor Jeanne Moskal, part of this volume, the journey through Holland, is taken from drafts for *Frankenstein* (3). Shelley and PBS¹⁶ co-edited each other's work for the volume, and Shelley appended the volume, somewhat dismantled, to her 1840 edition of PBS's *Essays, Letters from Abroad*. Shelley considered "The Journal of A Six Weeks' Tour" (volume 2, pages 5-46) her own, marking it with her initials even while including it in a volume of her late husband's works. When considered alongside the co-authored Journal that they had shared, and which provided source material that Shelley absorbed and rewrote, the textual history of *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* helps illuminate the complexities of authorship and editorial revision practiced by the two Shelleys when Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*.

The shared production of both *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* and *Frankenstein* indicate an attempt by the Shelleys to create a utopian intellectual partnership. Thematically, *Frankenstein* explores isolation and domesticity, but textually, the work should be read as a document of domestic cooperation. A middle ground (such as Bette

¹⁶ Percy Bysshe Shelley is referred to by his initials in this section, for clarity, brevity, and in keeping with the practice of Robinson in his edition of the manuscripts under consideration.

London's) should be developed between the polarized positions of Mellor and James Rieger in their discussions of the shared authorship of *Frankenstein*, neither adopting Rieger's disparaging tone toward Shelley nor Mellor's attitude that her text must be defended or "corrected" from PBS's revisions. The manuscript revisions made by PBS (and by Godwin in the 1823 second edition) must inform critical understanding of the text, but the fact of authorial collaboration must be acknowledged at a deeper level. The Shelleys' authorial collaboration is evidence of the extent to which they shared an intellectual project to which both were important contributors and that was central to their own domestic arrangements.

Textual evidence from the draft and fair copies of *Frankenstein* can illuminate the extent to which the Shelleys worked together, and to some degree, can indicate Shelley's attitude toward her husband's involvement in the text. Charles E. Robinson, in his edition of the *Frankenstein* Notebooks, gives a thorough survey of the history of the assessment of Percy Shelley's involvement in the text (I, lxvii-lxix).¹⁷ Robinson concludes that

PBS's contributions to *Frankenstein* were no more than what most publishers' editors have provided new (or old) authors or, in fact, what colleagues have provided to each other after reading each other's works in progress. . . . (1) PBS suggested and made alterations to the text of *Frankenstein* for the purpose of improving an already excellent narrative (in [?February 1818] he wrote a review that judged the published novel 'one of the most original and complete productions of the day') and . . . (2) MWS accepted the suggestions and alterations that she agreed with. (I, lxvii)

Robinson argues that the manuscript evidence is most accurately described by a collaborative model between the Shelleys: "There are times in the manuscript when you

¹⁷ See also Johanna M. Smith's exploration of the ambiguities of interpreting their collaboration.

can actually 'see' MWS and PBS at work on the notebooks at the same time, possibly sitting side by side and using the same pen and ink to draft the novel and at the same time to enter corrections." He cites, for example, evidence on folio 3v of Notebook A in which both Shelleys wrote in the manuscript in an unusual light grey ink (I, lxx).

Shelley's degree of acceptance of PBS's alterations and suggestions may be assessed using her surviving Fair Copy manuscript pages.¹⁸ Shelley's handwriting smoothly incorporates most of PBS's changes as she copies her text from the draft into the fair copy. She does not seem to wrestle with the suggestions as she incorporates them, but neither does she slavishly adopt PBS's language in all cases. The MS evidence of PBS's involvement in *Frankenstein* should be regarded as a measure of his appreciation of Mary Shelley's abilities, and of their attempt to work together as equals, rather than evidence of her subordination.¹⁹

The Shelleys' collaboration, beyond the mere fact that they did work together on the text, must affect critical understanding of the novel's ideological allegiances, especially with PBS and his brand of Romanticism. To read *Frankenstein* as an attack on PBS, rather than as a work in conversation with many of his ideas, is to ignore his heavy involvement in the text itself and his high approbation of the finished product. PBS's

¹⁸ See Robinson, II, 646-777. See also parallel texts of the draft and fair copy (II, 780-817). Illustrations too lengthy to quote here may be found in II, 788-89, in which Shelley accepts some of PBS's language while emending some of it; Shelley modifies her own language instead of PBS's; Shelley takes a cue from PBS that the language should be changed but provides her own substitution; and PBS's latinate style is adopted by Shelley herself, showing that, in general, she approved of it stylistically.

¹⁹ In several ways, Shelley's position as a writer was subordinated to her husband's: she was younger, her education had been less formal, and he had already published several volumes of his own work. PBS probably slipped easily into the role of editor, as he had strongly encouraged his sister Elizabeth to write, and with her had co-authored the volume, *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire* (1810). The work of Mary Godwin, his future wife, was much more substantial, and he not only helped by editing the novel, but also supplied stylistic changes and corrective notes.

most obvious contribution to the 1818 volume (although he contributed language throughout the novel--Robinson estimates "more than 4000 words" [I, lxviii]) was the Preface, where he asserts that prose work can approach the goals of poetry from the likes of Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton. He contrasts Mary Shelley's novel with "a mere tale of spectres" such as the juvenile Gothic novels he himself had produced (*Zastrozzi* [1810] and *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian* [1810]), and he believes that it "affords a point of view to the imagination for the delineating of human passions more comprehensive and commanding than any which the ordinary relations of existing events can yield" and that it may "preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature, while . . . innovat[ing] upon their combinations" (7 [I, viii]). This high praise indicates that PBS believes the novel to serve a common purpose with his own work.²⁰

Mary W. Shelley is certainly "the author of *Frankenstein*," as she was to style herself throughout her career, but she participated in fashioning authorship as a joint project. With a balanced understanding of PBS's intentions (and psychological quirks) as he worked with his wife's text, comes the opportunity for a clearer understanding of Shelley's reception of his interventions: she need not be viewed as "excessively deferential" (London 258). One must strike a balance between PBS's high-handed responses, his calling her "Pecksie" (Robinson I, 300-301), and his adoring portrayal of

²⁰ He composed the preface in September 1817 just as he was finishing a long work of his own, *Laon and Cythna, or the Revolt of the Golden City, a Tale of the Nineteenth Century* (1817, revised and republished in 1818 as *The Revolt of Islam*), which he prefaced with an autobiographical and adulatory fourteen-stanza dedication "To Mary --- ---", in which he pays tribute to both Godwin and Wollstonecraft, famously calls Mary the "child of love and light" and describes her as "beautiful and calm and free." PBS seems to have patterned the real hero of his poem, Cythna, after Mary Shelley, giving her irresistible rhetorical powers in a Wollstonecraftian project of freeing women from domestic tyranny and thereby prompting the great Revolution for which he longed.

his new mate as the embodiment of ideal philosophy.²¹ Unlike Victor Frankenstein, PBS was in communication with and available to his immediate domestic circle at this point in their careers. If we read the authoring of *Frankenstein* through the lens of the moral of the tale itself, this must be a good thing. Perhaps Shelley might have wished to have participated more fully in the composition of her husband's works, as she later did with *The Cenci* and as she admirably fulfilled the responsibilities of joint authorship in her posthumous editing of PBS's works.

The common project shared by the Shelleys can be examined in the similarity of subject matter between *Frankenstein* and PBS's *Alastor, or, the Spirit of Solitude* (1816). Both Victor and the Poet seek solitude. PBS shows how solitude gradually destroys the Poet over the course of the 720-line poem. But Shelley is more interested in challenging Victor's solitude and secrecy by exposing him to the interventions of family and friends. Within the generic constraints of the novel, Shelley has more room to explore isolation in a complex, nuanced, and psychologically thorough manner.²² Thus, in comparison with Shelley's novel, PBS's short, lyrical vision tends to be read as a milder

²¹ PBS was never quite clear-sighted about any woman he was attracted to, vacillating sometimes wildly between adoration and hatred. For example, he turned from inviting correspondent Elizabeth Hitchener to live with him to referring to her as "the Brown Demon" (*PBS Letters*, I, 336).

²² The Creature's tragic isolation is strongly felt by a late contemporary reviewer (in *Knight's Quarterly Magazine*, August 1824):

The justice is indisputably on his side, and his sufferings are, to me, touching to the last degree. Are there are [sic] any sufferings, indeed, so severe as those which arise from the sensation of dereliction, or, (as in this case) of isolation? . . . what is it to feel oneself *alone in the world!* Fellow-feeling is the deepest of all the needs which Nature has implanted within us. The impulses which lead us to the physical preservation of our life are scarcely stronger than those which impel us to communion with our fellows. Alas! Then to have no fellows!--to be, with feelings of kindness and beneficence, the object of scorn and hate to every one whose eyes lighted on us!--to be repaid with blows and wounds for the very benefits we confer!--The poor monster always, for these reasons, touched me to the heart. (499-500 [198-199])

critique of isolation, if read negatively at all.

Jane Blumberg asserts that Shelley subversively critiques Godwinian ideas of human perfectibility and revolution in *Frankenstein*. To the contrary, Shelley's novel closely resembles Godwin's own stories that were designed to revise the arguments in *Political Justice* and to make them more understandable. Godwin continued to revise *Political Justice* after its initial publication in 1793, putting the work through three editions in the 1790s and commenting on it again in the preface to *St. Leon* (1799). The most important new idea in Godwin's later work, especially in *St. Leon* and *Fleetwood*, is his argument for the importance of domesticity. As Clemit states in her introduction to *St. Leon*, Godwin was exploring "a sustained opposition of public and private values based on central aspects of Wollstonecraft's writings" (xvi); Shelley's revision of Godwin's schema was much less oppositional. The stories of both father and daughter demonstrate the futility of attempting to control societal outcomes without taking time to introduce improved philosophical understanding among the general populace--the basis of Godwinian understanding of both perfectibility and "revolution," or rather, as Godwin would have it, the falling away of restrictive laws and gradual improvement of society over time. Blumberg argues that "In all the hundreds of pages of *Political Justice* and in the optimistic belief in man's potential shared by Godwin and PBS, Shelley could not find any treatment of the problem of egoism [and] personal ambition" (53). It is, however, precisely the point of both *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon* to explore the detrimental effects of personal ambition and a "preoccupation with the search for truth" (36) at the expense of all else; it is also PBS's project in *Alastor* to critique the isolating effects of personal ambition.

Godwin's new appreciation for domesticity is made evident by a passage in his *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) that he copied into his preface to *St. Leon*:

True wisdom will recommend to us individual attachments; for with them our minds are more thoroughly maintained in activity and life than they can be under the privation of them; and it is better that man should be a living being, than a stock or a stone. True virtue will sanction this recommendation; since it is the object of virtue to produce happiness, and since the man who lives in the midst of domestic relations will have many opportunities of conferring pleasure, minute in the detail, yet not trivial in the amount, without interfering with the purposes of general benevolence. Nay, by kindling his sensibility, and harmonising his soul, they may be expected, if he is endowed with a liberal and manly spirit, to render him more prompt in the service of strangers and the public. (*St. Leon*, xxxiv; *Memoirs*, 274, from a passage in chapter six rewritten for the second edition [1798])

Shelley reacted to her father's expanded appreciation of domesticity by making its problems and potential the theme of her work.

As *Frankenstein* progresses, the positive and negative aspects of domesticity are thoroughly explored. The utopian potential of domestic relationships is suggested, then snatched away. The horrifically destructive effects of isolation, either internally and externally enforced, are insisted upon throughout the book. Restrictive ideologies of gender, both feminine and masculine, result in the decay and destruction of potential utopian spaces. The possibility for change must find its own place outside the scope of the novel. Farther outside the novel--among its reading audience--must lie the real arena for the social change that Shelley, like other members of her circle, wrote to effect. Her novel is not merely an exciting tale of pursuit and Gothic horror, but focuses on the problems of the domestic ideology arising among the newly professionalized middle class, as well as the problems posed for the Romantic artist seeking to realize utopian goals of genius and transcendence without succumbing to exclusion and isolation. The

problems of gender, genius, advancement and isolation are clearly laid out, but, in this, her earliest mature work, Shelley does not provide clearcut solutions.

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The Development of Shelley's Utopian Thought

from *Mathilda* to *Maurice*

Between the publications of her novels *Frankenstein* (1818) and *Valperga* (1823), Mary Shelley completed several shorter works, including *Mathilda*, a novella, *Proserpine* and *Midas*, two dramas, and *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot*, a short story. In these works, utopian and dystopian themes play out through the trope of personal loss and the counterpoised effects of community and isolation: utopia is indicated by loving communication with family and friends, often reflected by a paradisaical natural setting, whereas dystopia is brought on by isolation and the loss of loved ones (as in *Frankenstein*). Through differentiating between utopia and dystopia in each work, Shelley engages the psychological difficulties of reconciling the beauty of the external world with deep emotional trauma, a battle she personally was fighting: the composition of these four pieces occurred during the period of depression Shelley experienced after the death of her son William on 7 June 1819, preceded a scant nine months earlier by the death of her daughter Clara on 24 September 1818. *Mathilda*, *Proserpine* and *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot* are deeply concerned with themes of death and the separation of parent from child. *Midas*, in its way, also plays out the theme of separation by focusing on the curse of Midas's unwisely wished-for golden touch. In *Maurice*, Shelley works through these problems to formulate her first fully-realized vision of utopian domesticity.

These narratives were written as Shelley made the transition from shorter, Romantic narratives (*Frankenstein*, *Mathilda*) that look at personal ambition set against the desire to belong to a larger community, to longer, historical novels (*Valperga*, *The Last Man*, *Perkin Warbeck*) that examine the individual within the context of that larger community, especially in terms of the wielding of political power. The stories discussed here serve as testing grounds for Shelley's utopian theory in general as well as for the

utopian moments that Shelley works into all her novels. In Bloch's terms, such utopian moments function to point out the best possible hopes within the ideological structures against which Shelley is applying pressure.¹ Shelley's theory of utopian domesticity plays out in these stories involving a small cast of characters and relatively restricted plot development.² Indeed, *Proserpine*, *Midas* and *Maurice* were written in a simplified style explicitly intended for children.³ In these narratives, Shelley creates utopian domesticity in miniature, so that the "happy household" (or its demise) can stand in for society at large. In *Maurice* especially, Shelley presents some of her core ideas in very straightforward terms.

In addition to those mentioned above, Shelley may have written several additional stories between 1818 and 1823.⁴ Of these, "Valerius, or the Reanimated Roman"⁵ is of

1 See my discussion of Bloch in the Introduction.

2 Tillotama Rajan, for example, has challenged the notion that *Mathilda* is a narrative, much less a short novel with character or plot development.

3 Charles E. Robinson suggests that Shelley conceived of the dramas as children's literature, and he connects the composition of the dramas to that of the later *Maurice*, in that all three tales were inspired by Mrs. Mason's publication of juvenile fiction and the audience represented by her two daughters.

4 In their note on the "story for Laurette" (328, n.3), Paula Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert attempt to sort out which of "several short tales" might have been written in 1820-21; they mention *Maurice*, which was in fact the "story for Laurette" as Robinson had speculated (xviii, n. 12). They also mention "in the Bodleian Library (MS. Shelley Dep. e.229) . . . the manuscript of an unfinished story for children entitled *Cecil*" Robinson does not print this fragment, but describes it as "an unfinished 31-page manuscript . . . a child's story with two chapter designations ("I--The Boy" and "II--The Youth")" (xix, note 12). Feldman and Scott-Kilvert next mention a short story sent to Hunt for the *Indicator*. As Bennett's edition of Shelley's letters reveals, this turns out to be not an original story but a transcript in Italian of "Formal Duel of Two of the Florentines" from Marco Lastri, *L'Osservatore Fiorentino* (letter to Hunt, 17 April 1821; *MWSL* 189-97). "An Eighteenth-Century Tale" (345-46) is "an untitled and fragmentary 6-page holograph" (399) from the Abinger collection which Robinson dates to before 1824. Robinson point out that this fragment forms part of the source material for "Recollections of Italy" (23-31). Both "Recollections of Italy" and "The Bride of Modern

greatest interest, because in it, Shelley begins to investigate utopia and dystopia and provides a basic model of utopian domesticity. Shelley proposes that the benefits of true friendship may ameliorate Valerius's mourning for the glories of ancient Rome (from which he has come) compared to the degradations of nineteenth-century Italy.

The recovery of Valerius from his deepest despair is initiated by his platonic friendship with Isabell, who requests that he consider her his daughter (338). This sort of freely-chosen relationship is at the heart of Shelley's theory of utopian domesticity: it is an open extension of friendship that invites the recipient into a caring household where he "will be cherished and honoured" (338). The figure of Isabell remains merely a sketch and so resembles the standard "angel" of domestic ideology: the story focuses on Valerius and the benefits he will gain from Isabell and her domestic haven. What differentiates this scenario from the usual domestic plot is that Isabell creates a welcoming social sphere for Valerius outside accidental bonds of kinship or marriage/sexual attraction. Isabell's friendship is not proffered as part of an economy of exchange; although she gains Valerius's gratitude and love, she does not gain social status or economic support from him, as would be usual for women (wives, daughters, maiden aunts) who take part in a standard domestic economy. Also importantly, he demands nothing more of her than what she freely offers. Their "father/daughter"-style relationship is freely chosen, based

Italy" (32-42) seem to have been written after the death of PBS (and almost certainly after the completion of *Valperga*) and were published in the *London Magazine* for January and April 1824. "A Tale of the Passions" (Robinson 1-23), published in the *Liberal*, number 2, January 1823, is an offshoot of Shelley's research for *Valperga*, and might have been written either before or after the novel's completion.

⁵ Found in Robinson, 332-44, "an untitled 62-page holograph in the collection of Lord Abinger" (397; from the same notebook as "An Eighteenth-Century Tale," [345-46]), "Valerius" consists of two fragments, one from the point of view of the Roman and other from the point of view of Isabell Harley, a married woman who has befriended him. Both Nitchie (103) and Robinson (397) date this fragmentary tale as belonging to 1819, based on its subject matter and similarity to Percy Bysshe Shelley's story, "The Coliseum."

on friendship and generous open-heartedness.

As a fragment, "Valerius" does not resolve the question of whether friendship could eventually have conquered the isolated Roman's melancholy, but his relationship with Isabell is the one bright spot in his life:

. . . from that day began that friendship which is the only hope and comfort of my life. If on my return to earth my affections had never been awakened, I should not have lived long. But Isabell has softened my despair and nursed with angelic affection every wound of my heart. I cannot tell you how much I love her--how dear the sound of her voice is to me. . . . You cannot know half her virtues or half her wisdom. She is so frank-hearted, and yet so tender, that she wins my soul and binds it up in hers in a manner that I never experienced in my former life.

She is Country, Friends--all, all, that I had lost is she to mē. (339)

If Valerius experiences a sexual attraction to Isabell, he submerges it within his feeling of grateful love for her. As the fragment breaks off, Valerius remains mournful, but he has agreed to travel with a friend in order to learn of the modern world. Shelley inserts a Godwinian moment when she has Valerius state, "I want before I again die to examine the boasted improvements of modern times and to judge if . . . man is nearer perfection than in my days" (339). Although Rome is acknowledged to be superior to Italy, Isabell argues that the possibility of perfectibility still exists as the degraded Italians preserve and honor the glories of the previous civilization. The mournful tone of melancholy and sorrow which pervades "Valerius" is similar to that of *Mathilda*, and the double setting of Rome and the Elysian Fields framing the narrative is strikingly parallel to that of *The Fields of Fancy*. The character of Valerius is also similar to that of Mathilda: he "dwell[t] . . . on the most mournful ideas" (341) and "He felt deeply, but little joy mingled with his sentiments" (343).

Shelley's exploration of utopian domesticity is complicated by her willingness to

consider its opposite--a love relationship that has become stifling and destructive. To do this, in *Mathilda*, Shelley uses the common Gothic trope of incest.⁶ The plot of *Mathilda* was probably affected by Shelley's close mental involvement with several other projects. Her husband had urged her to write a play based on the tragic history of Beatrice Cenci, and she remained involved with the project, though she persuaded him to write it instead.⁷ In the meantime, she had been studying playwriting and began a translation of

⁶ Incest is a common theme in Gothic horror, and Shelley would have found precedent for her story in novels such as Elizabeth Inchbald's *A Simple Story* (1791) and Mary Robinson's *The False Friend* (1799). See Susan Allen Ford's "'A name more dear': Daughters, Fathers, and Desire in *A Simple Story*, *The False Friend*, and *Mathilda*."

⁷ Percy Bysshe Shelley's play, published in 1820, was, like *Frankenstein*, an instance of collaboration between Shelley and her husband. In this case, the poet turned to his wife for advice rather than vice versa. In her note on *The Cenci*, Shelley wrote, "This tragedy is the only one of his works that he communicated to me during its progress. We talked over the arrangement of the scenes together" (*Works of PBS*, II, 274). Shelley's note to *The Cenci* in her monumental edition of her husband's works provides additional reflections Shelley had of the time period covered by this essay, which I quote here at length:

He [PBS] often incited me to attempt the writing a tragedy—he conceived that I possessed some dramatic talent, and he was always most earnest and energetic in his exhortations that I should cultivate any talent I possessed, to the utmost. I entertained a truer estimate of my powers When in Rome, in 1819, a friend put into our hands the old manuscript account of the story of the Cenci. We visited the Colonna and Doria palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found, and her beauty cast the reflection of its own grace over her appalling story. Shelley's imagination became strongly excited, and he urged the subject to me as one fitted for a tragedy. More than ever I felt my incompetence; but I entreated him to write it instead; and he began and proceeded swiftly We suffered a severe affliction in Rome by the loss of our eldest child, who was of such beauty and promise as to cause him deservedly to be the idol of our hearts. We left the capitol of the world, anxious for a time to escape a spot associated too intimately with his presence and loss. Some friends of ours were residing in the neighbourhood of Leghorn, and we took a small house, Villa Valsovano, about half-way between the town and Monte Nero, where we remained during the summer. . . . Universal approbation soon stamped the Cenci as the best tragedy of modern times. (272-79)

The copy of the Cenci manuscript from the Palazzo Cenci archives in Rome belonged to the Gisbornes, and Shelley copied this on 23-25 May 1818. The Shelleys viewed the portrait of Beatrice Cenci at the Palazzo Colonna on 22 April 1819, and visited Casa Cenci itself on 11 May 1819. Clear from this note is the heartbreak suffered by Shelley at the loss of her son; her unshakable belief in her husband's literary powers and

Alfieri's *Myrrha*, which was based on the Ovidian story of father-daughter incest.⁸ P.B. Shelley's *The Cenci*, published in 1820, was replete with scenes of torture as well as a horrific and politically loaded portrayal of father-daughter incest; *Mathilda*, in its treatment of similar taboo subject matter, is relatively restrained. While *The Cenci*, a kind of companion piece to *Prometheus Unbound*, portrays an evil father's intentional corruption of his virtuous daughter, *Mathilda* instead focuses on how the education and life histories of father and daughter, and a domesticity too isolated and restrictive, produces in them a love too passionate. Shelley echoes *The Cenci* when Mathilda realizes the nature of her father's passion: she "felt as if stung by a serpent, as if scourged by a whip of scorpions which drove me--Ah! Whither - Whither?" (28).⁹ This echo signifies the terrible trap of restrictive domesticity from which Mathilda can find no escape.

Shelley sent the fair copy manuscript of *Mathilda* to Godwin in 1820 via her friend Maria Gisborne as an offering to help him pay his debts, but he refused to have it published.¹⁰ Gisborne records Godwin's response to the novella:

underestimation of her own is also evident.

⁸ On 14 September 1818, Shelley records "Begin to translate A" (*MWSJ* 226), that is, Alfieri. Her notation "write" on the 15th of March 1819 through the 20th night indicate her continuation of this translation (*MWSJ* 253-4).

⁹ Giacomo, Count Cenci's son, has failed to obtain remedy from the Pope against his sadistic father's cruel injustices, and says, "we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire. / What should we do but strike ourselves to death?" (*Cenci*, Act II, scene ii). Beatrice, awaiting her execution for Cenci's murder, also fears that there can be no escape from their father's malevolent influence: "Who ever yet returned / To teach the laws of death's untrodden realm? / Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now, / Oh, whither, whither?" (V.iv)

¹⁰ Shelley produced *Mathilda* after her son William's death on 8 June during a concentrated period of writing in August 1819, completing it before February 1820. Although Shelley had kept a copy (perhaps the *Fields of Fancy* draft--see Murray's edition of the portion of the draft in Bodleian MS. Shelley d. 1, and Clemit 1 for complete information on the draft manuscripts) which she read to Edward and Jane Williams on 5

The subject he says is disgusting and detestable, and there ought to be, at least if [it] is ever published, a preface to prepare the minds of the readers, and to prevent them from being tormented by the apprehension from moment to moment of the fall of the heroine; it is true (he says) that this difficulty is in some measure obviated, by Mathildas [*sic*] protestation at the beginning of the book, that she has not to reproach herself with any guilt; but yet, in proceeding one is apt to lose sight of that protestation; besides (he added with animation) one cannot exactly trust to what an author of the modern school may deem guilt. (Gisborne *Journals* 82, qtd in Harpold 63)

Godwin's distrust of the modern author was probably deepened by his soured relationship with his son-in-law, and he evidently did not share his daughter's estimation that stories like *The Cenci* or *Mathilda* were composed of fit material for literary works of the highest caliber.

Brother-sister love might be thought to have some utopian overtones. For example, P. B. Shelley's portrayal of an idyllic brother-sister relationship in *Laon and Cythna* suggests the rapport that might grow between men and women were they educated and brought up together in Wollstonecraftian fashion. Shelley herself, in *Frankenstein*, had depicted a close and loving relationship between first cousins Victor Frankenstein and Elizabeth Lavenza. But in Shelley's narratives, such close association (as in the cases of Castruccio and Euthanasia in *Valperga*, Richard of York and Monina de Faro in *Perkin Warbeck*, or Rupert Falkner and Alithea in *Falkner*) seems to reinforce the man's sense of ownership of the woman rather than leading to a working romantic relationship. In *Frankenstein*, Elizabeth is destroyed by Victor's deadly secret, which he

August and 4 September 1821 respectively, the novella remained unpublished until it was brought out in 1959 by Elizabeth Nitchie. Shelley repeatedly attempted, through Maria Gisborne, to retrieve her manuscript from Godwin. See letters of 1822 dated 18 January, 7 March, 6-10 April, and 2 June (*MWSL* 215, 224, 229, 237).

promises to reveal after their wedding (but indeed, believing the monster will kill him, he does not really intend to reveal the secret). Elizabeth's life is frittered away as she waits for Victor to return from his studies, and their tragedy prefigures that of Mathilda and her father, revealing the flaws in restrictive patriarchal domesticity. Likewise, Mathilda waits a lifetime for the return of her father, only to be destroyed by his equally deadly secret: "There was too deep a horror in my tale for confidence. . . . I must shrink before the eye of man lest he should read my father's guilt in my glazed eyes: I must be silent lest my faltering voice should betray unimagined horrors. Over the deep grave of my secret I must heap an impenetrable heap of false smiles" (41). The secret, transmitted from father to daughter, makes a monster of Mathilda: a "monster with whom none might mingle in converse and love" (61).¹¹ Both Mathilda and Elizabeth suffer from a relationship that has become too close, too restrictive, and indeed, incestuous: their society has become too narrow to allow for a healthy life, furthering Shelley's critique of the problems of domestic ideology and negating the utopian potential of domesticity.

The utopian possibilities of a passionate sibling relationship must be contrasted with the entirely negative overtones of father-daughter incest. While the sibling relationship posits a measure of equality, the distribution of power in a parent-child relationship is disastrously uneven. The father controls the daughter and mandates a dangerous exclusivity in the daughter's social life. Shelley attacks such structures of control and isolation in all her work.¹² Susan Allen Ford accurately credits Mary Shelley with the understanding that "the ideal family, with its emphasis on the bonds of love and filial obedience to the patriarch, is . . . dangerous--and terrifyingly so--in its very

¹¹ Susan Lanser explores many parallels between *Frankenstein* and *Mathilda*, both structural and thematic in terms of the "monster" (164-172).

¹² In *Lodore*, Shelley again focuses specifically on the perils of educating the daughter to please the father.

strengths" (69).¹³ Anne Mellor recognizes Shelley's critique of the inhibiting closeness of the father-daughter relationship in *Mathilda*, as well as how this critique unmasks a repressive element in societal domestic ideology, but reads *Mathilda* as a celebration of the bourgeois family skewed by Shelley's "revenge" and "pure wish-fulfillment" against Godwin and P. B. Shelley (194). But Shelley's model of utopian domesticity is not a simple idealization of the bourgeois family. In *Mathilda*, she exposes the threats inherent in the traditional "patriarchal" or restrictive model of domesticity, while at the same time mourning the possibilities that have been lost. It is less useful to view the incestuous passion of Mathilda's father in psycho-biographical terms, and more consistent with Shelley's other work to interpret the incestuous relationship in *Mathilda* as a warning about the ideological structures which allow passionate romantic love to become too exclusive, preventing maturation and the individual's ability to oppose adversity. Shelley specifically attacks the idea that a woman can survive unscathed an education that tailors her to the desires of her father (or of any man). Since the father and daughter have been all to one another, there is nowhere for Mathilda to turn, and since she has spent her entire life preparing herself to be a companion for her father, she loses her identity upon discovering he wants her to be something she cannot be.

The original draft of this novella, entitled *The Fields of Fancy*, is a didactic tale emphasizing the value of utility in overcoming grief. It features a first person narrator who is enticed away from her sorrow by the spirit of Fantasia. This narrator is very similar to Shelley herself, and Shelley later records the therapeutic value of writing *Mathilda*: "Before when I wrote Matilda, miserable as I was, the inspiration was

¹³ Other scholars also recognize Shelley's critique of oppression in the father-daughter relationship. Janet Todd sees Shelley's feminist critique when she notes that in *Mathilda*, the theme of father-daughter incest "suggests patriarchal oppression through both class and gender on a personal and political plane" (xxii). Margaret Davenport Garrett shows that "The incest tale that Mathilda tells becomes a metaphorical narrative representing . . . any woman's excessive dependence upon a male protector" (45).

sufficient to quell my wretchedness temporarily" (27 October 1822; *Journals* 442). Fantasia takes the narrator to the Elysian Fields to receive the wisdom of Diotima, the female tutor of Socrates and who is, as Janet Todd notes, an image of Wollstonecraft. The instructions of Diotima are meant to draw the narrator/Shelley out of her own sufferings into the contemplation of a life of utility. Diotima next hears the sorrowful life story of the young, newly dead Mathilda. Mathilda's story is one in which utility is rejected, a point made more explicit in *The Fields of Fancy* by Diotima's lessons, but still subtly present in *Mathilda*. In revision, Shelley drops this framework,¹⁴ addressing the story as a posthumous letter to the young poet Woodville who has befriended Mathilda in her seclusion. Both Diotima and Woodville insist that a life of usefulness can defeat the stubborn power of despair, but Mathilda has been crippled by a lifetime of isolation and is unable to recover.

In *Mathilda*, the story of Mathilda's parents is more fleshed out than in *The Fields of Fancy*: Mathilda's mother, Diana, is given more attention and absorbs some of the Wollstonecraftian nature of Diotima. She is older than Mathilda's father and more mature: "her knowledge was of a deeper kind and laid on firmer foundations. . . . She was his monitress as he learned what were the true ends of life" (8, 9). Starting out as a fine example of utopian domesticity, their friendship begins in childhood and strengthens into love. But when Diana dies in childbirth, Mathilda's father is unable to bear up under the loss and leaves the country, leaving Mathilda under the care of her maiden aunt. Without a mother or any other friend to become attached to, Mathilda can only long for the day when her father will return, shaping herself into someone she hopes will please him: "the

¹⁴ Elizabeth Nitchie details significant changes between draft and fair copy in the notes to her edition. Overall, these revisions read as a shift from an artificial didactic mode to a more naturally-flowing first-person narrative. In revision, Shelley's many references to Dante worked to create an ambitious aesthetic and artistic tone, as Arlene Bowen has shown.

idea of [my] unhappy, wandering father was the idol of my imagination" (14). Shelley contrasts Mathilda's isolation, the result of her careless father and uncaring aunt, with the love her dead mother is unable to give her.

As in *Frankenstein*, isolation is at the heart of dystopia. Shelley opens *Mathilda* by situating the heroine on a barren wintry heath, which externalizes the dystopian effects of her despair at having lost her father due to his incestuous desire for her; the story closes as Mathilda isolates herself on the heath because she cannot bear the company of other people.¹⁵ Shelley portrays Mathilda's younger self as a Wordsworthian child, loving to be outdoors, playing the harp, and benefitting from reading the great poets.¹⁶ But this seemingly pleasant solitude cannot compete with the joys of companionship, and moreover, it allows Mathilda to spend her time dreaming about her future with her father and focusing all her hopes on him. When her father returns, "All around me was changed from a dull uniformity to the brightest scene of joy and delight" (15). The presence of the loved one transforms the Romantic landscape, deepening and enriching its utopian qualities, but Mathilda's Wordsworthian reliance on Nature is critiqued in that her solitary upbringing, rather than helping her, proves debilitating and leaves her unable to cope with the catastrophe when her father's love is lost.¹⁷

¹⁵ Like many victims of sexual assault, Mathilda perceives herself to be soiled. She feels that she is poisoned and pestilential. For a more extended discussion of the sexually transgressive female as a vector of pestilence, see Chapter Five on *The Last Man*.

¹⁶ Charlene E. Bunnell points out the resemblance between Shelley's portrait of Mathilda and "the Wordsworthian child of nature" (79).

¹⁷ In her passionate and imaginative nature, Mathilda resembles Shelley's female Byronic Romantic heroes, but she lacks the ambition of that character type, which Shelley will explore more fully in *Valperga*'s Beatrice of Ferrara and *The Last Man*'s Evadne Zaimi. Like Beatrice and Evadne, Mathilda falls into isolation and toward madness and death, illustrating the structural vulnerability faced by women who transgress gender expectations, especially sexual mores.

The father's own solitary life has also been unhelpful to his development: his wanderings through "Persia, Arabia, and the north of India" (15) have furnished him with a wealth of interesting stories, but his romantic wanderings have impeded his growth to maturity, and the influence of the wise Diana has fallen away:

My father was very little changed from what he described himself to be before his misfortunes. It is intercourse with civilized society; it is the disappointment of cherished hopes, the falsehood of friends, or the perpetual clash of mean passions that changes the heart and damps the ardour of youthful feelings; lonely wanderings in a wild country among people of simple or savage manners may inure the body but will not tame the soul, or extinguish the ardour and freshness of feeling incident to youth. The burning sun of India, and the freedom from all restraint had rather increased the energy of his character: before he bowed under, now he was impatient of any censure except that of his own mind. He had seen so many customs and witnessed so great a variety of moral creeds that he had been obliged to form an independant one for himself which had no relation to the peculiar notions of any one country: his early prejudices of course influenced his judgement in the formation of his principles, and some raw colledge ideas were strangely mingled with the deepest deductions of his penetrating mind.

The vacuity his heart endured of any deep interest in life during his long absence from his native country had had a singular effect upon his ideas. (16) Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his short essay "On Love," states that love "is the bond and sanction which connects not only man with man, but with every thing which exists" (*Poetry and Prose* 473). The poet further writes

I know not the internal constitution of other men. . . . I see that in some external attributes they resemble me, but when misled by that appearance I have thought to

appeal to something in common and unburthen my inmost soul to them, I have found my language misunderstood like one in a distant and savage land. (473)¹⁸

P. B. Shelley argues for universal redemptive potential in the power of love, but under certain circumstances, he seems to realize, the power of love fails. His *Alastor Poet*, for example, pursues to the death an imaginary love while remaining unaware of the potential for real love with the Arab maiden. Nevertheless, P. B. Shelley forges his masterwork, *Prometheus Unbound*, from his belief in an all-forgiving universal love. Betty Bennett uses the concept of Promethean universal love, a love that hopes all, as a key to understanding Mary Shelley's integration of her husband's philosophical standpoint into her own reformist worldview.¹⁹

But in *Mathilda*, it is clear that, again, love fails both Mathilda and her father. The problem is, in fact, that their love is not universal, but too tragically personal. Rather than condemn the idea of universal love because of this personal failure, Shelley swings her exploration of the problem of the failures of love from the failure of two individuals to keep their love on the empyrean, Promethean/universal level, to focus instead on the structures in and around the domestic situation that caused their love to sprout a seed of corruption.

Mathilda's father finds nothing in common with the inhabitants of "a distant and savage land" and fails to create close relations with the foreign inhabitants precisely because those relations are not domestic. He fails to extract a code of his own from their

¹⁸ Mary Shelley could have been aware of this fragmentary essay, since it was probably composed in 1818 (as Reiman notes, based on its inclusion in Bodleian Shelley MS adds. e. 11), well prior to the composition of *Mathilda*. It was among the first of P. B. Shelley's prose pieces to be published by Mary Shelley (in the *Keepsake for 1829*). I became aware of the usefulness of this passage for my work while reading it in the context of Forest Pyle's discussion of Edward Said's theorizations about exile as applied to P. B. Shelley.

¹⁹ See, for example, Bennett's *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction*.

ethical systems because he sees the foreigners as separate from and alien to himself. It is not so much a failure of universal love, as a problem of a lack of structures and pathways through which to channel love. The idea of utopian domesticity gives a structure and a name to the thing that Mathilda's father lacks: not love itself, but the means by which to love. His failure with his daughter is even more insidious, then, because he supposes that his relationship to her guarantees him the right to control her life, who she sees, and even what she feels. He perverts the ties of domestic love into ties of punishment and denial, thus thwarting P. B. Shelley's universal love and destroying the house Mary Shelley would built for it. It is interesting to note that even the "disappointment of cherished hopes, the falsehood of friends, or the perpetual clash of mean passions" have a "taming" and "civilizing" effect on the soul when structured within the bounds of relationships. As Wollstonecraft states in her *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, "If we mean, in short, to live in the world to grow wiser and better . . . we must attain a knowledge of others at the same time that we become acquainted with ourselves--knowledge acquired any other way only hardens the heart and perplexes the understanding" (112). Shelley argues along with Wollstonecraft that passions, even painful and disruptive ones, can bring us into closer community and are not necessarily isolating by nature. It is when passion is divested from the structure of community, argues Shelley, that it becomes destructive.²⁰

Shelley uses the language of colonialism to describe Mathilda's father's travels. The influence of the "burning sun of India" is compared negatively to that of "his native country;" "a wild country" and "people of simple or savage manners" do nothing to contribute to Mathilda's father's socialization, since maturity demands "intercourse with civilized society." Colonialism insists upon its own "civilized society" as a standard against which to judge other societies--implicitly, to judge them inferior--and here,

²⁰ See Orrin Wang's *Fantastic Modernity* for a more detailed discussion of Wollstonecraft's understanding of the passions (122-140).

colonialism functions as a double for the restrictive domestic ideology to which Mathilda's father will adhere in his treatment of her. The exclusive boundaries of his "domestic circle" (like his colonialist explorations) define all outsiders as "other." His Romantic qualities--both "the ardour and freshness of feeling incident to youth" and "the deepest deductions of his penetrating mind"--develop untempered by the schooling he would have received in a domestic situation had Diana survived. In his short time with her, he learned no one central creed by which to evaluate the "many customs and . . . a variety of moral creeds" to which he is exposed, having to rely on mere schoolboy prejudices. "Intercourse with civilized society"--which does not, then, mean just any "civilized" society, such as school, but rather a caring domestic interaction--seems unavailable to him after the death of his wife, and unable to imagine a broader community for himself, he eventually returns to create a mockery of his original domestic happiness by substituting his daughter for his departed wife.

Shelley constantly qualifies Mathilda's period of utopian companionship with her father with intimations of its dissolution: "My life had been before as a pleasing country rill, never destined to leave its native fields, but when its task was fulfilled quietly to be absorbed, and leave no trace. Now it seemed to be to be as a various river flowing through a fertile and lovely landscape, ever changing and ever beautiful. Alas! I knew not the desert it was about to reach" (17); and again: "Like Psyche I lived for awhile in an enchanted palace, amidst odours, and music, and every luxurious delight; when suddenly I was left on a barren rock; a wide ocean of despair rolled around me: above all was black, and my eyes closed while I still inhabited a universal death" (18). Shelley here first mentions the story of Proserpine as an emblem of the abrupt transition from utopia to dystopia: Mathilda says "I have compared myself to Proserpine who was gaily and heedlessly gathering flowers on the sweet plain of Enna, when the King of Hell snatched

her away to the abodes of death and misery" (19-20).²¹ After Mathilda takes up her solitary life, she again roams amidst Nature, but no longer experiences that joy and love of life she had previously (45). The cyclical return of May noted by Mathilda does not indicate for her a hopeful return like Proserpine's (Bowen 81). For Mathilda, the alternation between utopia and dystopia illustrated by the Proserpine myth has been shut down by death. In *The Fields of Fancy* we were told that Mathilda would eventually learn, in the afterlife, how to transcend the sorrows of her life, but in *Mathilda* we are given no promise of this.

The dystopian nature of Mathilda's story results from a too-restrictive domesticity. Further evidence of this may be found in her later relationship with Woodville. Woodville is Mathilda's platonic friend, a poet who shares the suffering of having lost a loved one, his wife. Friendship has come too late for Mathilda, since she has come to believe that the only meaningful relationship she could ever have had was with her father.²² Mathilda has been schooled to expect an all-or-nothing relationship from the only people she has ever been close to: both her father and her aunt. She is unable to conduct her friendship with Woodville on a moderate scale: "I began to reap the fruits of my perfect solitude. I had become unfit for any intercourse. . . . my temper was utterly spoilt. . . . I viewed all he did with jealous eyes. If he did not visit me at the appointed hour I was angry, very angry, and told him that if indeed he did feel interest in

²¹ The link between Mathilda and Proserpine had already been made in the works of Dante, to which Shelley often refers in *Mathilda* (Bowen 75).

²² Critics posit different roles for friendship in Mathilda's life, but most do not consider Woodville a viable option. Rosaria Champagne argues that Woodville "should have been her suitor" (55). Janet Todd notes that "In *Mathilda* no female friend is allowed to mitigate the harm of the confining family for the heroine, who simply embodies the notion that a girl has no other role but as loving daughter and desiring wife" (xxvi); Todd is explicit in her theory that Mathilda should have a *female* friend. While William Brewer agrees that Woodville's "masculinity may well present a barrier to communication," he also notes that "it is unlikely that anyone would be able to penetrate her reserve" (400).

me it was cold" (55). Mathilda's desire for Woodville is the desire for an audience to her tragedy, as Charlene Bunnell explores, and not as a potential romantic partner. She is already "in love with death" and wishes to join her father in the afterlife. She becomes so selfish that she entreats Woodville to join her in a double suicide, but he responds by laying out at length his Godwinian theory of utility. Mathilda abandons the suicide attempt, but Woodville's disquisition fall on deaf ears, and she never recovers her spirits. Eventually, when Woodville goes away, Mathilda falls ill from being caught in a rainstorm, and pens her story for him as she dies.

Mathilda's relationships with both her father and Woodville display Shelley's conception of power. Mathilda's father's power over her lay in her upbringing, which separated her from any close human contact and made her solely dependent on his love. His ability to shape Mathilda's life reveals him as Shelley's embodiment of the social structures that worked to shape women into suitable daughters and wives. When his love is a bond between them, it makes Mathilda happy without really strengthening her. His love is intrusive even before he admits its passionate quality, when he becomes angry and turns coldly away from her at his recognition that she has attracted a suitor. After he admits his passion, his love is even more intrusive: it demands a response that Mathilda can never give, yet to deny her father is something she was never trained to do. The most terrifying moment of her plight comes when she hears her father approaching her room. Her room symbolizes the only sovereignty of self that she possesses--yet it is a room in his house, and only his own self-control keeps her safe from him. She is entirely at his mercy, within the sphere of his power.

By fleeing to the remote heath, Mathilda seeks to gain some power over herself, but it is merely negative--only by avoiding others does she keep them from having power over her. When she meets Woodville she finds herself slipping back into the expectations she had had with her father, insisting that Woodville devote himself entirely to her as she

and her father had done with one another. But Woodville cannot be brought under Mathilda's control--Shelley's symbol of how difficult it is for women to reverse societal structures which give men power over them. Further, Woodville has not been crippled by socialization as a female, which Shelley tropes as an education imparted in almost complete isolation, centered around the idealization of one love object. He will recover from the loss of his wife and will probably go on to love again, leaving open the possibility of utopian domesticity for him and a future wife--as the restrictive domestic ideologies surrounding Mathilda assure that for her it is not. Janet Todd asserts that "As Mathilda refuses the rational utopianism of Godwin, so she rejects the utopianism of Shelleyan love . . . and insists . . . on the reality of misery" (xxi). Mathilda may reject utopianism, but Shelley does not. In writing *Mathilda*, Shelley explores this very divide between utopia and misery, seeking to unravel their intertwined causes. She holds out the benefits of Godwinian utility as an ameliorative to suicidal despair and explores the rapture of Shelleyan love even as she points out its precarious underpinnings. Shelley provides the parallel case of Woodville to show that if rationality and love are paired, then the fall from utopia is less certain.

Mathilda's father leaves her his last lesson in his suicide. Rather than attempt to survive by becoming part of society again, her father drowns himself. This lesson is deeply impressed upon Mathilda, causing her to consider her short time in society after his death an agony. She fakes her own death in order to withdraw into isolation. In *The Fields of Fancy*, Mathilda is still stuck at the feet of Diotima because she has not learned enough to move on, the lesson that Woodville attempted to teach her: Woodville is able to survive his own loss because he believes he still has some good to offer the world. Mathilda, to the contrary, believes she has nothing to offer anyone now that her father is gone: "Mine was an idle useless life; it was so; but say not to the lily laid prostrate by the storm arise, and bloom as before" (45). The final lesson of *Mathilda* is that human

relationships indeed promise utopia but also threaten dystopia: the selfish abuse of power must be recognized and condemned. At the same time isolation must not be the resort of the grieving mind. Instead, the griever must reinvest in the community in order to forge new loving relationships. Shelley takes up this theme more strongly in *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot*.

In 1820, Shelley composed two dramas on mythological subjects taken from Ovid, *Proserpine* and *Midas*.²³ *Proserpine* and *Midas* are milder in tone than *Mathilda*, yet the dramas continue to engage the nature of utopia and dystopia. Shelley refers to the idea of Proserpine in *Mathilda*; thematically, the two are very similar explorations of the fall from innocence into experience, but *Proserpine* has a more hopeful ending. Although *Midas* is a more light-hearted tale, it remains focused on the transmutation of a seeming blessing into a curse.

The drama of *Proserpine* begins by situating Proserpine amid the beautiful flowery fields beneath the mountain of Enna. Ceres, Proserpine's mother, is called away to serve at a feast by Jove, and leaves two nymphs, Ino and Eunoe, to guard her daughter. Susan Gubar points out the utopian nature of the gathering of women: the scene "represents a time of nurturing sisterhood between mother and daughter, a pastoral time of communality between all women, young and old" (303).²⁴ The flowery fields, though

²³ Shelley "read Ovid on 26 April [1820], one week before completing *Proserpine* on 3 May; and she read Ovid again on 4 May, as if she were preparing for the writing of *Midas*" (Robinson, *BSM* X, 11). Although the drafts of *Mathilda* witness no intervention by P. B. Shelley, the pattern of collaboration the Shelleys established in the composition of *Frankenstein* continues in these dramas. PBS contributed, for *Proserpine*, Ino's song about Arethusa (I.82-171) and Proserpine's song to her mother (I.208-219), and, for *Midas*, the songs of Apollo (I.42-77) and Pan (I.78-113). P. B. Shelley's contributions indicate that even in the troubled atmosphere during the composition of these works, the Shelleys continued to regard themselves as collaborative intellectual partners.

²⁴ Alan Richardson expands this reading by pointing out the female deities' solidarity in wishing to dwell in Hell with Proserpine and in Arethusa's attempt to rescue her from Pluto (129-130).

beautiful, are not presented as a paradise; much more important to Proserpine's happiness is the presence of her mother. Proserpine and her nymphs gather flowers to make a wreath for Ceres when she returns, dedicating the natural beauty of the place to her mother as the more important source of happiness. Gubar and Richardson both note that the myth of Ceres/Demeter and Persephone/Kore is and has been a central one for feminist writers and mytho-historiographers. For Shelley scholars to recognize her choice of this myth is especially important because of the dearth of mother-daughter relationships in Shelley's oeuvre.²⁵ Shelley was both a daughter who had lost her mother, and a mother who had lost her daughter, and the subject seems very personal at this time, but Shelley is able to expand the subject matter to include not only the theme of loss, but also, her ongoing investigation into the boundaries of utopia and dystopia.

While wandering to gather flowers, the nymphs stray from Proserpine, and when Ceres returns, the nymphs have lost her. Ceres's sorrow causes a blight to fall on the land. Ultimately, Proserpine may spend half the year with her mother, but must reign as Pluto's queen for the other half, because she has eaten the seeds of a pomegranate. In Shelley's version of the tale, it is not so much a legalistic interpretation of the pomegranate seeds--one month for every seed she has eaten--but Ceres's heart-rending prayer and, indeed, as Gubar notes, her threats to make the earth barren because of her sorrow, that cause Jove to decree that Proserpine may return for half the year. In *Proserpine*, unlike *Mathilda*, a resolution of grief and loss is achieved through community effort: Ceres and the nymphs band together to petition for Proserpine's return.

Shelley has deliberately chosen a tale that literalizes the division between the utopian feeling created by the presence of the loved one and the barren, dystopian state of despair caused by forced separation:

²⁵ Shelley explores the mother-daughter relationship again in *Lodore*, notably in a context of estrangement and loss.

When Enna is starred by flowers, and the sun
 Shoots his hot rays strait on the gladsome land,
 When Summer reigns, then thou shalt live on Earth,
 And tread these plains, or sporting with your nymphs,
 Or at your Mother's side, in peaceful joy.
 But when hard frost congeals the bare, black ground,
 The trees have lost their leaves, & painted birds
 Wailing for food sail through the piercing air;
 Then you descend to deepest night and reign
 Great Queen of Tartarus, mid' shadows dire . . . (II.243-252)

Although Proserpine has become a queen, and her new husband is now said to rule half the world ("Thus has black Pluto changed the reign of Jove, / He seizes half the Earth when he takes thee" [II.300-1]) there is absolutely no hint of domestic felicity in their relationship. Pluto has stolen Proserpine by force; as she is carried away she is heard to cry "My Mother!" (II.77). Proserpine's primary relationship remains with her mother, and her friends are the female nymphs who play with and protect her. It is with these women, and not with Pluto, that Proserpine establishes a utopian relationship, made tangible by the beauty of Summer. Gubar states that "The grievous separation of mother and maiden implies that in a patriarchal society women are divided from each other and from themselves" (305): Shelley's choice of this myth and the nature of her adaptation of it make clear her not only her deep feelings of grief at the separation of mother and child, but also her condemnation of relationships based on abuse of power rather than community and love. Shelley's feminist understanding of the myth allows her to illustrate her most basic points about utopia and dystopia in very simple terms--especially useful if, as conjectured, children were her intended audience.

The play between feelings of utopia and dystopia is also present within *Midas*.

When Midas prefers the song of Pan, his own god, to that of Apollo, Apollo gives Midas ass's ears. There is a very subtle interplay on the nature of utopia present in this contest and its outcome. The utopian world-view of Apollo, which focuses upon his own light and goodness, is destabilized, whereas Pan's modest claims are more believable, and though melancholy, more peaceful and attractive. Tmolus, the god of a bare hill, is the official judge of the contest. When he votes in Apollo's favor, Pan accuses him of partiality: "you think by this / To win Apollo with his sultry beams / To thaw your snowy head, & to renew / The worn out soil of your bare, ugly hill" (I.120-3). Although Pan is older, Apollo is a much more powerful god than Pan, as their songs (written by P. B. Shelley) attest. Apollo has already taken music and poetry as his special province, and Tmolus, who may indeed be partial, merely seconds the proclamation of the other gods. Midas, however, is also a partial judge: as he indicated before hearing the gods sing, "My judgement is made up before I hear; / Pan is my guardian God, old-horned Pan, / The Phrygian's God, who watches o'er our flocks; / No harmony can equal his blithe pipe" (I.38-41). But to a great extent, Apollo is to be awarded the crown because it is his own definition of poetry and song by which the contest is judged. Midas, judging by the older standard, chooses Pan: as king of a pastoral land, he decides in favor of a pastoral god. Apollo's claims to benevolence are belied by his immediate revenge upon Midas.

Although Midas's judgment derives credibly from a utopian pastoral worldview, it is also depicted as faulty, for when Bacchus grants Midas a wish for showing courtesy to Silenus, Midas chooses the golden touch rather than to have his human ears restored. Midas for a time revels in his wealth, but soon realizes that he cannot enjoy the simplest pleasures, such as eating, drinking and sleeping. Bacchus says, "I found you rich & happy; & I leave you, / Though you know it not, miserably poor" (I.350-1). Again the pastoral landscape is preferred to the wealth of gold Midas has transmuted: "Now shall we tend our flocks and reap our corn / As we were wont, and not be killed by gold. /

Golden fleeces threatened our poor sheep, / The very showers as they fell from heaven / Could not refresh the earth; the wind blew gold, / And as we walked the thick sharp-pointed atoms / Wounded our faces" (II.187-193). Midas has the gold dumped into the sea, proclaiming: "we will make all echoing heaven ring / With our loud hymns of thanks, & joyous pour / Libations in the deep, and reach the land, / Rich, happy, free & great, that we have lost / Man's curse, heart-bartering, soul-enchanting gold" (II.288-292). *Midas* teaches the simple lesson that overt symbols of power such as a wealth of gold or the reign of the brilliant but arrogant and vengeful Apollo may not be preferable to the simpler, more peaceful existence of utopian pastoralism. Such pastoralism, with its inherent simplicity and reliance on a community-based way of life, is often featured in the more complicated portraits of utopian domesticity found elsewhere in Shelley's work--in, for example, the utopian domesticity represented by the soldier farmer Guinigi of *Valperga*. In this instance, Shelley's middle-class nostalgia for pastoralism is also aligned with a critique of gold and power and their association with empire.²⁶ Midas's enlightened rejection of gold in favor of simpler pleasures is allegorically connected with more overtly radical systems, such as Percy Shelley's argument that a simpler diet would not only make people healthier, but would undercut the pernicious empire of trade in luxury goods and render humanity less barbarous in general.²⁷

Like *Proserpine* and *Midas, Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot* was intended for

²⁶ As Richardson points out, "Midas errs not in rejecting Apollo's song, but in failing to reject as well his element and all its stands for: power, acquisition, the golden crown of empire. By divesting himself of these through the power of Bacchus, Midas is able by the drama's end to become once more a member of the 'festal band' escorting 'Silenus to his woods again' (62)" (133).

²⁷ See P. B. Shelley's note to Canto VIII, *Queen Mab*, "No longer now / he slays the lamb that looks him in the face."

children.²⁸ *Maurice*, as Tomalin points out, has a happy ending but a melancholy tone overall. Although Maurice is restored to his true parents, he is never relieved from his nostalgic longing for the old fisherman, Barnet, who took him in and gave him a real home in the old cot. In the end, even the cot crumbles away. The subtitle of *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot*, identifies the utopian scene at the heart of this melancholy tale. The boy himself, Maurice, carries a shifting, multiplicitous identity, but the cot lingers as a scene of utopian domesticity even after it has physically been destroyed by time and the elements.

Despite their poverty, age, and physical complaints, Old Barnet had lived in the little cot with his wife for many years in domestic tranquillity. His wife had not only made a welcoming home for her husband, but had reached out into her community to effect some good:

His dame was so lame that she seldom moved from the old, worsted, high-backed armchair where she used to sit mending the nets, and hearing a few children read, who came to her from the neighbouring farmhouses. . . . She would not be paid for this, calling it merely a good neighbourly turn. . . . When he came home wet from fishing, during the stormy winter days when every wave almost broke over his boat, she would contrive to have the fire lighted for him and the little old cottage set in order for his supper. [But] the old cottage under the cliff had become quite hateful to him since his dame's death. (78-79, 80)

The death of the old woman destabilizes the utopian scene, but the appearance of the young boy, Maurice, reaffirms it. As is the case throughout Shelley's work, utopian

²⁸ In her journal entry for 10 August 1820, Shelley records "Write a story for Laurette" (MWSJ 328). This story was given as a gift to the eleven-year-old child of Mary Wollstonecraft's former pupil, Margaret Countess Mountcashell, who, living quietly as "Mrs. Mason," was the friend of the Shelleys in Italy. *Maurice* has been recovered and published by Claire Tomalin (1998).

domesticity does not require heterosexual pairing or strictly male/female gendered coupling: in *Proserpine*, utopia is established among mother and daughter and their community of women; in *Midas*, utopia is recognized when Midas and his men recognize the value of simple pleasures in preference to power or gold. Barnet and his wife made a happy home, but so do Barnet and Maurice.

Barnet sees a chance to create a new family by welcoming a homeless boy. As we discover, Maurice has belonged to several households. His origin, as a child of wealthy, loving parents, has been lost to him. He leaves the couple who raised him because the father beats him. He has little better luck with his second master, who works him too hard so that he falls ill. He is rescued by a poor woman, but she is too poor to maintain him for long. So the boy has already had a string of placements before he finds a real home in the fisher's cot. Barnet thinks to himself:

"I have no child upon earth: my only relation is a brother who disdains a poor old fisherman like me. My name is dead, and I am alone without anyone to help me if I am sick or to say a cheerful, 'Good bye, God send you luck!' when I go a fishing. Surely this boy seems sent by heaven to me, and it seems to me that I love him already as if he were my own son. He shall stay with me; I can maintain him as I maintained my poor wife who is gone: he can put my cottage in order, mend my sails and nets, and on windy evenings who knows but he may be able to read the bible to me as my dame used." (82-3)

This arrangement works out well, and since the young boy is more spry than the old woman had been, the cottage is better maintained than it had been before. The boy takes up the woman's charitable duties in instructing other young children to read. He is "always ready to do a good turn for the poor as well as the rich" (83).

To an extent, the boy is feminized by the old man's treatment of him as a wife. There is a certain parallel between his case and that of Mathilda's in that both fathers

attempt to create surrogate wives. But in Shelley's narratives, the acceptance by men of lives of "womanly" service is seen as wholly positive. The Shelleyan revised masculine hero is always willing to serve others, and often his service takes place within the realm of domesticity, as is the case with Guinigi, the warrior turned farmer in *Valperga*, or Neville, the young Shelleyan hero in *Falkner*. To further differentiate their cases, the old man is frank about his intentions to employ the boy in wifely duties, in strong contrast to Mathilda's father's deep harboring of his dark secret. The boy and the old man combine their resources: the old man provides a home and an income while the young boy provides labor, in a domestic economy that, for example, the Creature would have envied. Their shared leisure activity, reading the Bible some nights, is also familiar from the utopian scene viewed by the Creature, and is a very basic example of the Godwinian principle of using leisure time to pursue intellectual improvement.²⁹ Old Barnet's frankness and Maurice's willingness to be useful both exemplify Godwinian aspects of Shelley's utopian domesticity.

To answer the questions of the Traveller to whom Maurice's story is revealed, the landlady of the local inn describes Maurice as "a kind of servant or apprentice" (77), focusing on the economic aspect of the arrangement. A young countryman, who is more familiar with the situation, identifies Maurice as "the best creature in the world" (77), implying that the arrangement between Maurice and Barnet grows organically out of

²⁹ In this instance there is little sense, as there certainly is in *Frankenstein*, that the reading material being perused leads to a highly skewed outlook. In Godwin's utopian ideal, sharing property and labor produces the leisure for intellectual improvement: "If superfluity were banished, the necessity for the greater part of the manual industry of mankind would be superseded; and the rest, being amicably shared among the active and vigorous members of the community, would be burthensome to none. Every man would have a frugal, yet wholesome diet; every man would go forth to that moderate exercise of his corporal functions that would give hilarity to the spirits; none would be made torpid with fatigue, but all would have leisure to cultivate the kindly and philanthropical affections, and let loose his faculties in the search of intellectual improvement" (730). For discussion placing this quotation in the context of Shelley's treatment of class difference, see Chapter Five on *The Last Man*.

natural goodness. The countryman, without recognizing the irony of his own neglect, relies on this intimation that good will naturally come to the good when he speculates regarding Maurice's fate: "I do not know; but he is so much loved that I do not think he will come to want. For my part I am now leaving the country for a few weeks . . . but when I return the first question I shall ask is what is become of Maurice" (84). Somewhere between these two is the opinion of old Barnet himself. Barnet identifies the boy as a worker, but recognizes as well the benefits he can confer on the boy. Seeing in him a potential heir, Barnet thinks of him "as if he were my own son." Barnet understands the complexity of an economic relationship but also the potential for love to transform the relationship beyond the economic. Within the old cottage Barnet and Maurice forge a family relationship based on mutual choice, mutual benefit, and love: utopian domesticity.

The revision of the family based on association by mutual free choice is central to Shelley's utopian domesticity. Eve Tavor Bannet, in her study of enlightenment feminisms, argues that egalitarian feminism, such as that for which Wollstonecraft is the best known representative, usually features a revision of the family centering on "marital partners [who] make their contract freely and as a result of rational choice" (51). Bannet presents the egalitarian feminist family as modeled on "a voluntary compact between people of equal worth to enter into one community for mutual assistance and the good of all [with] governors [who] only govern with the consent of the ruled and for as long as they fulfilled their trust" (51). In this egalitarian model of the family, "men and women live together as persons of equal sense, who have the same right and authority to direct each other's conduct. Both sexes exhibit the same human nature--a compound of 'masculine reason' and 'feminine softness'--and obey the same models of conduct" (51). When Shelley focuses on heterosexual relations, this model is reasonably similar to hers. Throughout her work, Shelley certainly upholds the idea that men and women have equal

potential and a nongendered human nature. But Shelley goes beyond egalitarian feminists' emphasis on free choice of marriage partners, seen here as a central feature by Bannet and also present in the early feminists Cavendish, Astell³⁰ and Scott (described in Chapter One). In the creation of a family relationship between Old Barnet and Maurice, Shelley pictures the formation of utopian domesticity in extra-legal terms. The "voluntary compact" entered into is not the legal contract of marriage, but an agreement between parties who agree to uphold their own responsibilities outside the inflexible statutes of "positive institution." Later examples of utopian domesticity include the female friendships of Euthanasia and Beatrice in *Valperga* and Katherine and Elizabeth in *Perkin Warbeck* and the revised family models adopted by Elizabeth, Neville, and Falkner in *Falkner*, and by Cornelia in *Lodore*, when she places the welfare of her daughter her daughter's family above her own personal worldly position.

These non-heterosexual models are important because they avoid two pitfalls common to feminist revisions of the family: idealization of the father, and idealization of the mother. As Bannet notes, the father in egalitarian families was liable to be viewed as a "benevolent patriarch," who cared for his dependent children, felt for the suffering of others, helped his poor or unfortunate neighbours and friends, and governed his social and domestic inferiors with justice mitigated by compassion" (52). Shelley openly critiques the patriarchal family in *Frankenstein*, depicting Old De Lacey as benevolent but blind, and demonstrating the violence inherent in the system in Felix's attack on the Creature. The suffocating love of the patriarchal father is also literalized in the incestuous relationship between Mathilda and her father. The patriarchal family is depicted with sympathy in *The Last Man*, but Shelley carefully describes how it is dependent upon

³⁰ Astell, as what Bannet calls a "Matriarchal" feminist (one who argues that women are actually superior in virtue to men), warns that women should be prepared fully and voluntarily to obey their husbands should they enter into marriage.

restrictively gendered code of chivalry; she further dismantles the values of chivalry in *Perkin Warbeck*. Shelley finally reckons with the image of the "benevolent patriarch" in both *Lodore* and *Falkner*, casting *Lodore* as a well-intentioned but hopelessly self-centered father who gives his daughter a dangerously gendered education, and *Falkner* as a passionate but reluctant father who only becomes fit after his daughter re-educates *him*.

Mary G. Dietz critiques the idealization of the mother in her response to the social feminism of Jean Bethke Elshtain. Elshtain's feminism is based on "the social practice of mothering" and on viewing women *as mothers*, rather than as citizens who act outside the realm of the family. Tavor also investigates early feminists, whom she terms Matriarchal feminists, who emphasize women's superior virtue and the benefits resulting from their rule over the family. Shelley avoids idealization of the mother in two ways. In her many critiques of restrictive domesticity, Shelley demonstrates the dangers faced by the self-sacrificing wife, mother and daughter: in *Caroline Frankenstein*, *Elizabeth Lavenza* and *Justine Moritz*, who all die because of their gendered roles; in *The Last Man's* *Idris* and *Clara*, whose mothering roles lead them to despair; in *Elizabeth of York's* dashed expectations regarding her position as wife to *Henry VII* and mother of his children in *Perkin Warbeck*; in *Cornelia's* disastrous marriage to *Lodore*; and in *Alitheas*' bad marriage in *Falkner*. Shelley also avoids idealizing woman's role as mother by focusing on the utopian potential of other roles. As mentioned above, she looks at the utopian potential of female friendship; in the character of *Euthanasia*, she looks at woman's capacity for political leadership without relying on the maternal as model or metaphor; in the character of *Fanny Derham*, Shelley models woman's capacity for scholarly excellence. In instances where motherhood does become woman's role--as with *Cornelia*, her daughter *Ethel*, or *Falkner's* *Alitheas*--Shelley is careful to portray a realistic, rather than an idealized, portrait of the joys, sorrows, and conflicting motivations resulting from motherhood. In short, Shelley is more likely to portray an idealized mother in her critique

of restrictive, negative domesticity, just as idealization of the role of father is liable to indicate her critique of the patriarchal family and chivalric ideals. For utopian domesticity to come about, men and women must create community bonds, like those of a family, voluntary and equal in nature, without idealizing restrictive gender roles. Shelley's is not an apolitical, "private" paradigm which focuses only on familial roles, but one which uses the family as a model to reconceive society at its most basic level.

The death of Old Barnet again deprives Maurice of a home. Barnet's brother, who inherits the cot, does not recognize Maurice as anything but a servant and gives him one week to vacate. Maurice is stricken with sorrow, but still the shadow of his domestic happiness with Barnet is reflected in the beauty he sees in the old cottage as he describes it to the Traveller:

Although it is poor and very old, yet taking it altogether I do not think there is a prettier [cottage] in all the country round. The trees fall over and shelter it, a number of pretty flowers grow beside the brook which comes running down from the tall, red cliff. And nothing to mind can be more beautiful than the moss and lichens, yellow, green, white and blue, that grow on the old thatched roof, making it look finer than a slated roof could possibly be. In the spring yellow wallflowers grow there, and the green before the door is covered with daisies. Besides if you come round to the other side where the cottage faces the hill you will find a pretty lattice grown over with honeysuckles and several geraniums in the stand outside the window. The geraniums were the great favourite of old Barnet's dame, and he loved them for her sake. (92-3)

Shelley makes clear how a beautiful natural scene becomes invested with human meanings: Maurice's attachment to the geraniums, which he intends to purchase with his only two shillings, stems from Barnet's affection for them and from the old woman's affection, linking her to him even though he never knew her.

As Maurice and the Traveller talk, another utopian scheme is outlined. This one is introduced by the Traveller, and is based on the radical principles of Shelley's family and circle (simplified for a children's audience). They talk "of the beauty of the little birds, and the cruelty of those who kill them," which partially reflects the Shelleys' vegetarianism. They talk of an agrarian lifestyle of healthy exercise, reflecting the utopian ideal foretold by Godwin in *Political Justice*. They also discuss reading "entertaining books, telling them of how the earth is cultivated, and how various countries bring forth various fruits: of the sea, and how different voyages and discoveries have been made on it: of the sky, and how the beautiful stars which we see at night move, and the signs they make of winter and summer" (96). These books of scientific knowledge and exploration are very similar in topic to those which influenced Shelley to create *Frankenstein*. The Traveller goes on to describe "books more delightful than these which told of what good and wise men had done a great many years ago; how some had died to serve their fellow-creatures, and how through the exertions of these men everyone had become better, wiser and happier" (96-97)--in a nutshell, a simplified account of Godwinian necessity and perfectibility. The Traveller then offers to share this way of life with Maurice.

The Traveller is a happy revision of the wandering poet of *Alastor*. "The son of a professor of mathematics at the University of Oxford," the Traveller is very well educated. He is full of the poet's love of nature, but also shares Victor Frankenstein's scientific curiosity without his corrupting alienation. His love of the beautiful old temples of antiquity prompts him to become an architect: "my kind father sent me abroad to Asia, Italy and Greece to visit the remains of the old temples that still exist, and I passed five years in this happy manner, dwelling among foreign nations, often in desert places" (102). Unlike the *Alastor* poet, the Traveller returns home, marries, and has a son. This son, again with shades of *Frankenstein*, is lost from the care of a nurse who has fallen asleep, and the Traveller has spent eleven years looking for the boy. After relating how

his boy was stolen, the Traveller says, "If I never find my darling boy you shall be a son to me, and if I do find him--" (110). Perhaps by hearing the story of how Barnet had accepted the boy as family, the Traveller is inspired to do so as well. In a fairy tale ending, Maurice turns out to be Henry, the Traveller's lost son, and so the family relationship is shored up. The Traveller purchases the old cottage from Barnet's brother and they make a summer home of it.

The centrality of Old Barnet and the cottage to the utopian nature of the story is striking. Even though it is no longer the boy's home, the cottage retains some of its utopian air: "When they were at this cottage Henry always went by the name of Maurice, and he would go about among his friends whom he had known when he lived with old Barnet, helping and consoling them if they were sick or afflicted, and doing all the good a little boy could do, or by the help of his father making people happy when poverty or misfortune had made them miserable" (113). The identity of Maurice, Barnet's helpful boy, is more fully realized in the story than the fairy-tale prince Henry, so that when Henry wants to help his old friends, he has to do so as Maurice. Shelley seems to insist that Henry remember his identity as Maurice because it was as Maurice that he learned the possibility of utopian domesticity, and from him his father learned it before he even knew that Maurice was Henry, his son.

The cottage becomes the home of Dame Smithson, the woman who had stolen Henry but who genuinely had loved him. In the final pages of the story, Shelley dismantles the old cottage. While Henry is away travelling, Dame Smithson dies and the cottage falls down. As a traveller, Henry moves away from his utopian site and it is lost, but not irrevocably. The utopian effects of "old Barnet's that he loved so well" are refashioned as Henry builds a new house for another family who were afflicted.

Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot is a tale of the hard realities of poverty and loss and of unstable, shifting identity. But it is also a tale of utopian possibility through the

forging of a loving community, the possibility of making choices about family relationships and taking a hand in the creation of one's own identity, and in these ways it is the very opposite of the pessimistic story of *Mathilda*. The gender differences between Maurice and Mathilda are important, but Shelley lessens these differences by making Maurice a child, and one incapable of hard physical labor. Whereas Mathilda remains entrapped by the lessons of her gender, Maurice has not imbibed these restrictive lessons--but neither is he empowered by his masculinity, which remains unformed. Despite the beatings received at the hands of his false father, Maurice has not lost the ability to forge new relationships as Mathilda has. Suffering the grief of loss in the old cot (as Mathilda suffered in her retreat), Maurice determines to overcome his idleness and remain useful. Through this resolve he is reunited with his true father. The possibility of utopia which had been so precarious given the isolation and crippling power structures of *Mathilda* are reaffirmed by Shelley and brought to completion for the first time in *Maurice*.

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Foundations of Utopian Domesticity in *Valperga*

Utopian Domesticity in Shelley's Political Novels:

Valperga, The Last Man, and The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck

"The writer of romance is to be considered the writer of real history," wrote Godwin; Percy Bysshe Shelley, in his letter to Charles Ollier concerning *Valperga*, suggests that it captures the "romantic truth of history."¹ For Mary Shelley as well, the importance of history is not located in bare facts, but in the creative act of the author, whose setting forth of the feelings and motives of historical actors has the capacity to effect readers' moral and political edification. In Shelley's political novels, the lessons of the past are interpreted through the lens of the present, and set forth for the good of the future. Although *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826), and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830) are all tragedies, Shelley explores in them, as in her other works, the idea of utopian domesticity as a vision for social reform.

In her political novels, Shelley contrasts utopian domesticity with the more conventional political systems of republicanism and tyranny. Utopian domesticity, with its foundation in family, home and the local, is antithetical to the absolute sway of the authoritative tyrant. Yet Shelley insists that violent overthrow of the tyrant is to be avoided. In *Valperga*, Euthanasia offers Castruccio a truce, swearing that she will not allow her fortress to be used against him. Even after he has betrayed her, she only joins a plot against him in order to save his life. In *The Last Man*, Raymond's military campaign against Constantinople, though it brings about universal peace, inspires Lionel to a sick contemplation of his quick enthusiasm for military glory. And in *Perkin Warbeck*, Richard's just claim against Henry VII, portrayed as a cold, cruel, and unforgiving

¹ Godwin, in his essay, "Of History and Romance," qtd in Rajan, "Romance" 90; P. B. Shelley, *PBSL* II, 353, qtd in Rossington 104.

tyrant, is harshly and thoroughly condemned by Shelley as wrongheaded and destructive. In all three novels, the reform of society occurs from within utopian domesticity, not from violent rebellion against tyranny. Utopian domesticity is based not only on freely chosen bonds of love, formed on a model of family, but also on forgiveness, which must apply to the tyrant as well.

In *Perkin Warbeck*, and to some extent in *The Last Man*, the strictly gendered system of chivalry is contrasted with the disregard of gender roles required by utopian domesticity. In order to show how traditional, restrictive domesticity can be reformed, Shelley demonstrates the damaging effects on both men and women of traditional, restrictive gender roles, and shows how both men and women should aspire to the role of the Shelleyan Romantic hero--a hero motivated by disinterested friendship, benevolence, forgiveness, and simplicity of lifestyle. In contrast, she examines the Byronic hero, whose ambition and isolation leads to destruction despite his--or her--creative genius and personal magnetism. Shelley examines the differences between the male and female Byronic heroes--Beatrice and Castruccio in *Valperga*, or Evadne and Raymond in *The Last Man*--by showing how women are situated more precariously in gendered social structures, so that a passionate risk may cause their social downfall, leading to madness and death, whereas men may couch their passionate ambition in social structures which actually validate and reward risk, even when it leads to danger and destruction. In the case of Lionel Verney, Shelley explores how the Byronic hero may be schooled and transformed to emulate the Shelleyan, whereas in the case of Monina de Faro, the female Byronic hero avoids death when her own reason, along with the chivalrous code of Richard, save her from the madness and social downfall resulting from utter abandonment and betrayal. Shelley will more fully explore the transformation of the Byronic into the Shelleyan Romantic hero in her domestic novels, *Lodore* and *Falkner*.

As Shelley's first historical novel, *Valperga* inaugurates her open discussion of the intersections between domesticity and politics. As the fictionalized history of a real prince of Lucca, *Valperga* does not restrict itself to reporting the facts about the corruption of a tyrant, but lends emotional impact to extolling the virtues of an imaginary woman Republican. Euthanasia, the heroine of *Valperga*, is a politically empowered woman in a struggle against tyranny. Utopian domesticity is manifested in Euthanasia's conduct throughout the novel as the antithesis of the tyrannical power embodied by her corrupted lover, Castruccio. Although, ultimately, tyranny prevails in *Valperga*, Shelley uses the work to present several important models of utopian domesticity as imagined but attainable social ideals.

The first depiction of utopian domesticity in *Valperga*, the education of Euthanasia by her father, contains both the elements of free, voluntary association and the necessity of freedom from gender assumptions in education. The depiction of domesticity adopted by Castruccio's friend, Guinigi, shows the importance of a simple life--its association with the pastoral, but especially its rejection of military glory--and the formation of an alternative model for masculine virtue. Euthanasia's care for her subjects and her understanding of the County of Valperga primarily as a home yields further dimensions to Shelley's portrait of utopian domesticity. Finally, the relationships between Euthanasia, Castruccio and Beatrice allow Shelley to explore the true meaning of "love" as it contributes to utopian domesticity and to further refine her treatment of gender roles and her depiction of the Shelleyan and Byronic Romantic heroes.

As early as 1978, Betty Bennett argues that Shelley, like her husband, should be read in terms of her reform politics.² Bennett argues that, especially in *Valperga* and *Perkin Warbeck*, Shelley uses the concept of "Promethean" universal love as her ideal, in

² Bennett recaps her 1978 article, "Political Philosophy," in her 1998 monograph, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction*, 54-61.

response to the philosophies of Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and Percy Shelley. Bennett's concept of universal love is an important facet of my exploration of utopian domesticity.³ Most scholars who have since published work on *Valperga* have acknowledged its political nature, but still regard it as profoundly pessimistic. Critics such as Mary Poovey have argued that as Shelley's career progresses, Shelley begins more and more to conform with the ideology of the Proper Lady. Mentioning *Valperga* in passing, Poovey refers to it as Shelley's last novel "that show[s] most clearly the influence of her mother's self-confidence and Percy Shelley's aesthetics," after which she "began to use her literary career both to defend her behavior and, more significantly, to so characterize it that it would need no defense" (116). Poovey's work has been so influential that some later critics, although acknowledging *Valperga's* open concern with republicanism and tyranny, read *Valperga* as though its primary project were conservative.

Anne Mellor focuses on Shelley's appraisal of the bourgeois family and the ideology of domesticity, but does not situate Shelley within the context of the utopian thinkers with whom she was in dialogue. In a short overview (210-11), Mellor argues that *Valperga* "is primarily an attack on male ambition and egotism" but also that it "emphasizes the inability of women, whether as adoring worshippers (like Beatrice) or active leaders (like Euthanasia), to influence political events or to translate an ethic of care--whether embodied in the domestic affections or in a political program of universal justice and peace--into historical reality" (210). Shelley does attack ambition and egotism--but not only in men, as Beatrice's misplaced belief in herself as *Ancilla Dei* (the

³ Bennett associates Promethean universal love with "making choices that benefit the most people" ("Political Philosophy" 364) or a "democratic, activist ideal of love" (367); Promethean love must also be a factor in her arguments that "In *Valperga*, a conscious struggle is depicted, in which the forces of liberty are pitted against the forces of repression" (368) and that Mary Shelley's statement, "I wish no injury to any human being" constitutes "the echo of *Prometheus's* most radical idea" (369). I attempt to bring a more concrete definition to Bennett's concept by relating it specifically to utopian domesticity.

handmaiden of God) shows. The horrors of war, partisanship and superstition are Shelley's targets in *Valperga*. The "ethic of care" I describe as "utopian domesticity" is not put forward only by women, but also by men, as demonstrated by the just teachings of Euthanasia's father and Castruccio's friend Guinigi. Euthanasia, as an independent thinker, is much more in control of her own fate than is Castruccio, whose ambition and self-justification lead him farther and farther into corruption and self-deceit. Euthanasia's is a "noble death" because she has acted according to her ideals,⁴ but Castruccio's amassed temporal power collapses, and he dies in spiritual emptiness. Finally, by inventing the stories of Euthanasia and Beatrice, Shelley makes an important revision of what counts as "historical reality."⁵ As Betty Bennett writes, "Shelley introduces the idealized Euthanasia into the life of Castruccio to give voice to a socio-political value system committed to justice and freedom" ("Machiavelli's" 148).

Critics including Barbara Jane O'Sullivan and Joseph Lew focus on the political potential of *Valperga's* transgressive women characters, concentrating on the challenges faced by Beatrice as a sign of "the troubled history of female spiritual and imaginative power which is buried alive beneath the surface of Western culture" (O'Sullivan 141). O'Sullivan and Lew, like Poovey, view Beatrice as a voice of women's oppression that overcomes Shelley's urge to repress it, suggesting that to identify Beatrice's rebellious nature is to read against the grain of Shelley's intended narrative. On the contrary, Shelley puts Beatrice forward as an ultra-feminine type of the Byronic Romantic character,

⁴ Kari Lokke argues that Euthanasia dies not only at peace in her own mind but also experiencing bliss within nature (168).

⁵ See Curran, Introduction. See also James P. Carson's interesting discussion of Shelley's treatment of popular culture in *Valperga*, in which he concludes that "*Valperga* represents a new kind of historical novel, one in which sentiments are events" (186), and Tilottama Rajan, who argues that "*Valperga* may well be the first feminist historical novel" ("Mathilda" 62).

balancing Castruccio's masculine representation of the type. Gender is important in understanding Beatrice's nature, but it is especially interesting in terms of how it complicates her figure as a Romantic hero. Both O'Sullivan and Lew recognize the utopian possibility inherent in Euthanasia. Although Lew labels Euthanasia's concern for domesticity "anonymous," it is really at the heart of her public life. As Lew states, Euthanasia's "management of her own estate helps to establish the material preconditions necessary to an almost Godwinian perfectibility" (177) and he raises the idea that *Valperga* represents "a lament for a time--simultaneously 'lost' and 'imagined'--before the differentiation of 'separate spheres' of activity, a time when men and women could participate fully in both the private and public realms" (160). O'Sullivan also notes, though referring to Shelley's later novels, that "By domesticating female power, Shelley finally finds an acceptable way to write about it" (154).

Even expanding *Valperga*'s context slightly by reading it beside more of Shelley's novels may still lead to inaccurate conclusions about Shelley and her commitment to reformist ideals. Focusing on *Frankenstein*, *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, Jane Blumberg is led to view Shelley's work as intensely pessimistic. Because the plots of these three novels end in tragedy, Blumberg finds them to be at odds with the optimistic utopian writing of Godwin or Percy B. Shelley. Yet Godwin and Shelley themselves wrote works ending in tragedy: for example, Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon* (1799) both feature protagonists brought down by their own moral failings; P. B. Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* and *The Cenci* both feature martyred heroes unable to overcome the moral failings of those surrounding them.⁶ Wollstonecraft also wrote novels that seem much more pessimistic than her polemic; her unfinished *Wrongs of*

⁶ Laon and Cythna perish uncorrupted and are lauded after death, but Beatrice Cenci, unable to endure her father's monstrous evil, internalizes her father's patriarchal logic and having arranged his death, argues that Cenci has been killed according to the will of God, leaving herself blameless.

Woman, or Maria, ends with a trial scene in which the protagonist is pronounced by a judge to have no right to speak for herself. Wollstonecraft outlined several bleak endings for the tale, including suicide.⁷ Syndy McMillen Conger notes *The Wrongs of Woman* as “one of Shelley’s favorites among her mother’s works” (83); comparing Beatrice’s story to Maria’s, she too argues that it “recapitulates the dark fears for women that are central to *Maria*--miseducation and oppression; madness, misogyny, and persecution; love and betrayal--and it represents Mary Shelley’s greatest moment of doubt about women’s capacities--however gifted they may be--to liberate themselves from the ‘iron cages’ in which they ‘starve’” (85). Unlike Blumberg, Conger goes on to conclude that “Shelley’s novel forges covert links to her mother’s ideas . . . Shelley has erased her heroine’s culpability [and] has extricated her from the twin burdens of debilitating guilt and self-doubt” (85). In other words, Beatrice’s story illuminates social ills Shelley recognized and which she counters in her condemnations of Castruccio’s and praise of Euthanasia’s behavior towards Beatrice.

Just as in these tales by Wollstonecraft, Godwin and P. B. Shelley, the tragic outcomes of Shelley’s own novels represent not the failure of reformist ideals, but the results when these ideals are ignored. The primary model of reform presented time after time in Shelley’s work is utopian domesticity: a blueprint for societal reform requiring gender equality, community responsibility, and a preference for justice over power, revenge and worldly custom. Shelley’s early novels show the dire consequences of ignoring and/or destroying utopian domesticity, while her later novels show the personal and community benefits of its adoption. Blumberg acknowledges that in *Frankenstein*,

⁷ Wollstonecraft’s 1788 *Mary, A Fiction*, precedes her polemic writing, and as an embryonic romance, probably has little bearing on the interpretation of her mature political thought, but like *The Wrongs of Woman* ten years later, it also ends in the female protagonist’s isolation, disappointment and death. Rajan takes up the issue of the story’s influence on Shelley, specifically in terms of her novella, *Mathilda* (“Mathilda” 56-61).

“Shelley was already committed to the idea of domestic responsibility and one’s accountability to others” and that “Shelley initiated a fundamental criticism of . . . the Romantic myth” (54). Shelley’s ability to see the problems of revolutionary thought and of Romanticism should not be confused, however, with the idea that “her real vision of human potential is dark and pessimistic” (54).⁸ Tilottama Rajan notes that *Valperga* “evokes the deferred utopianism of more ‘radical’ histories by Percy Shelley and Godwin” (62-3), yet she concludes that Shelley’s “darker vision is the unconscious of Percy’s increasingly qualified idealism which, in turn, remains the mobilizing force behind her pessimism” (61). Shelley is unwilling to gloss over harsh realities and often explores the tragic consequences of societal injustice, but she also suggests remedies in her fiction. In *Valperga*, Euthanasia does die, and she has made mistakes, but the reader is made to approve continuous efforts to effect what she feels is justice.

The education of Euthanasia by her father is the first depiction of utopian domesticity in *Valperga*. Although Euthanasia and her father are blood relatives and bound together by family ties, the true ties of utopian domesticity are voluntary, not social, legal, or even familial in the traditional sense. Euthanasia’s association with her father is of a voluntary nature: her tutelage is not enforced as a condition of his love for her, for example. Shelley makes this clear in the implicit contrast between Euthanasia’s willing and active participation in helping with her father’s studies, and the story of Milton, whose daughters are mere amanuenses.⁹ Shelley also contrasts Euthanasia with her brothers, who have been sent away to school, and her mother, who is uninterested in

⁸ Blumberg calls *Valperga* “the darkest and most profoundly pessimistic novel that [Shelley] ever wrote” (76).

⁹ Katherine C. Hill-Miller contrasts Euthanasia to Milton’s daughters in her study of father-daughter relationships in Shelley’s work; Hill-Miller concludes that Euthanasia does benefit from her father’s tutelage, stating that she “acquires . . . intellectual vigor, a taste for abstract learning, and the ability to act decisively” (130).

study: it is Euthanasia alone who undertakes to assist her father in his blindness.

Shelley here disagrees with some of the views put forward by Godwin in *Political Justice*. Godwin is suspicious of cooperation and cohabitation, preferring the sincerity which operates between strangers as more open, free, and likely to lead to improvement. For Godwin, humans should strive for self-sufficiency and should avoid the “thwarting, bickering, and unhappiness” that result when people who naturally “vary in their habits, preferences, and views” (761 [Book VIII, “Of Property,” Appendix, “Of Co-Operation, Cohabitation, and Marriage”]) attempt to cooperate or cohabit. But even Godwin admits that “conversation, and the intercourse of mind with mind, seem to be the most fertile sources of improvement” (760-1). Godwin admits as well that even the self-sufficient may find pleasure in the “luxury” of society, friendship, and love (761). For Shelley, however, social connections are a basic necessity, never a luxury, and the withdrawal from society into isolation is always negative. Still, Godwin’s suspicion of cooperation leads Shelley to emphasize the critical importance of the voluntary nature of association. It is because Euthanasia and her father enter into their association with similar goals, both intending the good of the other, that their association is positive, even utopian. Throughout Shelley’s works, utopian domesticity is formed by the voluntary association of likeminded individuals who bond together to seek one another’s improvement.

Euthanasia’s education is free of gender restrictions, according to the precepts of Wollstonecraft.¹⁰ Euthanasia does not perceive any impropriety or difficulty arising from her gender in her study of classical knowledge. Arguing that she would enjoy and benefit from reading to her father, she states, “I think I should be able to understand these difficult authors” (18 [I. 28]). Her father “forgets” her age (and sex) and pours out the

¹⁰ As William D. Brewer notes, “Euthanasia is the kind of rational woman that Wollstonecraft, in *Vindication*, hopes will become the norm when women are given proper educations” (“Triumph” 113).

“high strains of that ennobling spirit which he felt in his inmost heart” (19 [I. 29, 30]). Because no restrictions are placed on her, Euthanasia soaks up knowledge and becomes an inspired utopian: “Her young thoughts darted into futurity, to the hope of freedom for Italy, of revived learning and the reign of peace for all the world: wild dreams, that still awake the minds of men to high song and glorious action” (19 [I. 30]). This description of the young and hopeful Euthanasia is a clear example of the difference between concrete utopian thought and mere “wishful thinking” as defined by utopian Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch.¹¹ Euthanasia holds in her mind a vision of perfected society--a utopian vision--and it is this vision which inspires her and others not only to create utopian art (“high song”) but to actively engage in working toward the creation of utopia (“glorious action”).¹²

Euthanasia is the first of Shelley’s characters actually to benefit from her studies. The fruits of utopian domesticity are not confined to the immediate domestic circle, but rather spread out into the larger community and into the world. Unlike Victor Frankenstein, who studies in order to gain unique knowledge that will set him apart from the rest of humanity--even though he intends to use that knowledge for good--Euthanasia understands her own position in the world to be relative to the efforts of many others and subject to continuous change over time:

The effect of this education on her mind was advantageous and memorable; she did not acquire that narrow idea of the present times, as if they and the world were the same, which characterizes the unlearned; she saw and marked the revolutions

¹¹ See my discussion of Bloch in the Introduction.

¹² This passage is cited by Bennett as evidence of the Shelleys’ shared utopian vision: “Euthanasia reflects the Shelleys’ cyclical view of history that, as in P. B. Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound*, can bring a new era of social justice despite temporary setbacks” (*Introduction* 56).

that had been, and the present seemed to her only a point of rest, from which time was to renew his flight, scattering change as he went; and, if her voice or act could mingle aught of good in these changes, this it was to which her imagination most ardently aspired. She was deeply penetrated by the acts and thoughts of those men, who despised the spirit of party, and grasped the universe in their hopes of virtue and independence. (18[I. 28-9])

Euthanasia's study of history leads her beyond "politics" to "perfectibility"--the Godwinian desire to gradually effect positive change in the overall state of humankind, rather than to place one's own group--or one's individual self--in a position of power.¹³ Euthanasia's position is the antithesis of tyranny.

In this context the source of her name becomes clear. "Euthanasia" represents the Godwinian falling away of government as responsible citizens increase overall good and decrease the need for rule. According to the footnote provided by Nora Crook, Euthanasia's name comes

from the Greek, with overtones of 'noble death', 'good death'; also so used by Godwin when urging that with the annihilation of ignorance and blind subservience would come the demise of the state and thus 'the true euthanasia of government' (*Political Justice*, I, III, vi, 'On Obedience'; *PJV*, p. 114. 281); Godwin here engaged against David Hume, to whom the 'true *Euthanasia* of the British constitution', would be its replacement by absolute monarchy (*Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* (1753-6), pt I, vii). (16)

Lew's derivation of Euthanasia's name from sentiments in Hume leads him to follow

¹³ As Michael Rossington indicates, Shelley's choice of historical novel allows for this sort of transhistorical musing on Republicanism.

Anne Mellor in asserting Shelley's "disdain for and fear of the lower classes" (162).¹⁴ On the contrary, Euthanasia struggles to use her power responsibly, both to benefit and protect her peasants and to preserve the good she perceives in Castruccio. Her refusal to bow to the wishes of Castruccio as he becomes a tyrant represents "the annihilation of ignorance and blind subservience" referred to by Godwin. At the same time, however, the overtones of absolute monarchy which come to the name from the source in Hume, while not representing a full picture of Euthanasia's nature, have important resonance in the problems the novel explores. As a Countess, Euthanasia is burdened with a responsibility to her subjects similar to that of an absolute monarch--her decisions to a large extent determine the welfare of her subjects.

The second depiction of utopian domesticity in *Valperga* is Shelley's account of the lifestyle adopted by Guinigi, the retired soldier friend of Castruccio's father, to whom Castruccio goes after he has been orphaned. Guinigi exemplifies one of the central concepts of Shelley's utopian domesticity: that domesticity, as opposed to concern for worldly power or glory, is the ideal for everyone, men as well as women. Guinigi's utopian character as a masculine role-model provides a vital contrast to the hyper-masculine Castruccio. In Machiavelli's story of the historical Castruccio, Guinigi "teaches him the art of war" (Nora Crook 22, footnote), but Shelley pointedly refigures the character, who attempts to dissuade Castruccio from warfare by showing him the contentments of the simple life and the pointlessness of the ravages of war. Rather than seeking to reverse the fortunes of his party, or seek revenge as Castruccio will, Guinigi attempts to contrast his peaceful and simple pastoral existence with the chivalric glory and the way of the soldier that Castruccio plans for himself.

¹⁴ Unfortunately, Lew did not locate the source of the name in Godwin, and stated that "Shelley derived her countess's name from Hume's Essay 7, which she had read December 12, 1817 (*MSJ*, 87)" (162). James P. Carson persuasively counters this assertion.

Shelley describes Guinigi as a man who has completely left behind his former warlike pursuits: "The sparkling intelligence of his eye was tempered by gentleness and wisdom; and the stately / mien of the soldier had yielded somewhat to his late rustic occupations; for, since his exile he had turned his sword to a ploughshare, and he dwelt with much complacency on the change" (24 [I. 45-6]). Guinigi does not necessarily defy expected gender roles, but he does act the role of a loving parent to his son, Arrigo, and he has abandoned the "hyper-masculine" aggression of the soldier for the peaceful masculine role of the farmer.¹⁵ At the same time, Shelley's providing Guinigi as an example of utopian domesticity should challenge our habitual conceptions of domesticity as exclusively feminine.¹⁶ Shelley has Guinigi acknowledge the differences between Castruccio's enactment of gender and his own, which lie primarily in Castruccio's attraction to the glory of chivalry:

"You come to the dwelling of a peasant who eats the bread his own hands have sown; this is a new scene for you, but you will not find it uninteresting. To my eyes, which do not now glance with the same fire as yours, the sight of the bounties of nature, and of the harmless peasants who cultivate the earth, is far more delightful than an army of knights hasting in brilliant array to deluge the fields with blood, and to destroy the beneficial hopes of the husbandman. But these are new doctrines to you; and you perhaps will never, like me, in the deep sincerity of your heart, prefer this lowly cottage to yonder majestic castle." (25 [I.

¹⁵ James P. Carson correctly identifies Guinigi with utopia, using the term "radical agrarianism" to characterize the belief Shelley shared with Godwin, Wollstonecraft and historian Sismondi, in which labor on small independent farms is celebrated (170).

¹⁶ For example, Daniel White asserts that Guinigi and Arrigo should be considered representatives of the "feminine" (84, 91) because they are shown to inhabit a peaceful domesticity.

45-6)).

Guinigi's eyes do not dance with the hyper-masculine "fire" of joy in warlike trappings. Shelley also emphasizes Guinigi's Godwinian sincerity--his attempt to convince Castruccio of the rightness of his own moral creed. Shelley employs the authority of the narrator to describe Guinigi's society as "characterized by a simple yet sublime morality, which resting on natural bases, admitted no factitious colouring. Guinigi thought only of the duty of man to man, laying aside the distinctions of society, and with lovely humility recognized the affinity of the meanest peasant to his own noble mind" (25 [I. 48]). Shelley's emphasis on the peasant's way of life that Guinigi has adopted is part of the Godwinian nature of this example of utopian domesticity.¹⁷ Guinigi's adoption of a simple, peasant's way of life becomes an infinitely replicable model--a model which could (assuming an equal distribution of resources, an admittedly tall order) be adopted by all of humanity.

Guinigi explicitly views the pastoral countryside as utopian: "When I would picture happiness upon earth, my imagination conjures up the family of a dweller among the fields, whose property is secure, and whose time is passed between labour and intellectual pleasures" (27 [I. 53]). Shelley's utopian vision, like many feminist utopias (especially as exemplified in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*, discussed in Chapter One), often includes an environmental or pastoral element, focusing on the Edenic bounty of nature rather than the perfected commonwealth often seen in male writers' utopias:

"What a Paradise is this!" he said. "Now it is bare; but in the summer, when the

¹⁷ Editor Isaac Kramnick has noted Godwin's "rural nostalgia and the longing for the simplicity of a frugal economy and a face-to-face society" (31), themes which are confined to neither radicalism nor conservatism. As Adela Pinch notes, "It is easy to imagine what a popular novel of the 1790s might be nostalgic for: a landscape different from the changing countryside of agrarian capitalism; . . . rather than a countryside in which relations between classes displaced and threatened many; . . . an idealized, unanxious leisure. . . . Nostalgia [is] not simply a conservative, Burkean sentiment. . . . Nostalgia is a cultural practice that has no determinate content" (118).

corn waves among the trees, and the ripening grapes shade the roads; when on every side you see happy peasants leading the beautiful oxen to their light work, and the sun, and the air, and the earth are each labouring to produce for man all that is necessary for his support, and the ground is covered with vegetation, and the air quickened / into life, it is a spot, on which the Creator of the world might pause, and be pleased with his work. . . ." (26-7 [I. 51-2]).¹⁸

This utopian pastoralism first appears in Shelley's writings around 1820, in the children's story "Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot" and her two mythological dramas, *Proserpine* and *Midas*. A later example may clearly be seen in the peaceful garden and cottage created by Alitheia's mother and loved by Rupert Falkner in Shelley's last novel.

Guinigi's utopian Paradise is threatened by the warlike activity Castruccio longs for. Castruccio, a creature of party spirit, longs to revenge the exile of his political party and seeks glory and power through the actions of war. As Bennett notes, Castruccio "begins as a sensitive, caring being" but becomes politically corrupt because of his exile as a Ghibelline and his service with military conquerors (*Introduction* 55). Even in philosophical discussions, Castruccio is self-aggrandizing and aggressive:

When Guinigi and Castruccio became intimate, the youth would reason with him, and endeavour to prove that in the present distracted state of mankind, it was better that one man should get the upper hand, to rule the rest. 'Yes,' said

¹⁸ It was in response to such ideas as this that Coleridge and Southey formulated their Godwinian Pantisocracy, intending to found their utopia upon the banks of the Susquehanna. Godwin had claimed that "Half an hour a day employed in manual labour by every member of the community would sufficiently supply the whole with necessities" (*Political Justice* 746 [Book VIII, "Of Property," Chapter VI, "Objection . . . from the Allurements of Sloth"]), and Percy Shelley echoes this claim (*Queen Mab*, Note to Canto V, "And statesmen / Boast of wealth!"), but gives the necessary time as two hours a day. Mary Shelley's portrait of utopia does not speculate upon how land would be redistributed in order to make such a vision reality, but instead seeks to paint a philosophical picture of the attractiveness of a simpler life to a reader already well-off in means.

Guinigi, 'let one man, if it be forbidden to more than one, get the upper hand in wisdom, and let him teach the rest: teach them the valuable arts of peace and love.'

Guinigi was a strange enthusiast. Men, like Alexander and other conquerors, have indulged the hope of subduing the world, and spreading by their triumphs refinement into its barbarous recesses. Guinigi hoped, how futilely! to lay a foundation-stone for the temple / of peace among the Euganean hills. He had an overflowing affection of soul, that could not confine itself to the person of his son, or the aggrandizement of his country, or be spiritualized into a metaphysical adoration of ideal beauty. It bestowed itself on his fellow-creatures; and to see them happy, warmed his heart with a pleasure experienced by few. This man, his imaginative flights, his glowing benevolence and his humble occupations, were an enigma that Castruccio could never solve. (26 [I. 49-50]).

Guinigi's utopian vision centers around domesticity: love for his son, contentment in the simple tasks of a farmer. He has already tried and rejected the paths of warfare and conquest, and now concentrates his actions on local efforts, centering around his cottage and farm, which he hopes will become "a foundation-stone for the temple of peace." The primary thrust of the passage is to compare Guinigi's desire that "wisdom . . . peace and love" be taught to all, so that the effects of his actions will not be confined to the love of his son, or country, or even abstract ideals. Shelley herself attempts to teach the virtues of Guinigi's system to all through the distribution of her "historical" novel. But Castruccio is unable to sympathize with Guinigi's contentment outside the system of political and military rank. And it is because of Castruccio, and others like him, that Guinigi's hopes for a peaceful Italy are futile; Shelley's calling him "a strange enthusiast" indicates at least a measure of skepticism as to the practicability of his ideas. It may also be that Guinigi's retired lifestyle does not allow him enough influence to affect change, as

opposed to the way that Euthanasia wishes to add her voice and action to the side of change for good. But Guinigi's "imaginative flights" are clearly meant, like "his glowing benevolence" and his pleasure at others' happiness, to be admired by readers as a good example.

The third depiction of utopian domesticity in *Valperga* lies in Euthanasia's care for her subjects and her understanding of the County of Valperga as primarily a home rather than merely as a political district or power base for herself. As Rajan notes, "Euthanasia functions effectively as long as she practices a local and domestic form of government" ("Romance" 100). Valperga is portrayed as Euthanasia's personal birthright, inherited from her mother and governed wisely because of the patrimony of education received from her father. Euthanasia's conduct is indicative of how utopian domesticity works as a model for political action in Shelley's novel. It is both her private home and her public concern, functioning as an autonomous community knit together by ties of duty. Euthanasia vows to place her duty to her subjects first in all her actions; she spends her tax money for the good of the community (even, at one point, in pageantry, which she claims will rouse a beneficial feeling of civic pride in the peasants). In accordance with the theories of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, Euthanasia rules with a justice based on her thorough education and knowledge of her own rational powers. In order to maintain the independence of her people, Euthanasia must refuse to align her holding with either the nearby city of Lucca (under the control of Castruccio, a Ghibelline partisan) or the farther off but politically sympathetic Republican city of Florence. The Guelph party, to which Euthanasia owes her allegiance, represents the principles of republicanism, as its cause was local administration of smaller, independent states, as opposed to the Ghibelline party, who fought for larger alliances under centralized rule. The content and well-being of tiny, self-contained Valperga is in marked contrast to the confusing, fluctuating boundaries of the empires and city-states negotiated by Castruccio

in his ambitious rise to power.

Shelley acknowledges the contradictions inherent in Euthanasia's Republicanism and her continuing as an hereditary Countess holding dominion over her subjects.

Euthanasia obviously benefits from the inheritance of an independent holding:

. . . her mind acquired new dignity, and the virtues of her heart new fervour, from the entire independence of her situation, and the opportunities she possessed of / doing good. There was none to gainsay her actions, except the rigid censorship of her own reason, and the opinion of her fellow-citizens, to whose love and esteem she aspired. Most of her time was now spent among her dependents at Valperga; the villages under her jurisdiction became prosperous; and the peasantry were proud that their countess preferred her residence among them to the gaieties of Florence. (71 [l.169-70])

Shelley sets Euthanasia up as a woman with independence and power, and tells the reader that Euthanasia's priority is to do good. While showing how a woman could function admirably as a citizen if given the opportunity, Shelley is not concerned with the source of wealth in this novel, but uses simple inheritance to grant Euthanasia independence. Likewise, Shelley does not explore class inequality, but merely describes Euthanasia as a ruler who attempts to merit the benefits of her inheritance by attending to her responsibilities. Shelley's project is not so much to show how a woman could become Euthanasia, as to show that women would be capable of comporting themselves as well as she, given the opportunity. Despite being a woman, Euthanasia is considered one of the "first citizens" of Florence. Besides following the dictates of "her own reason," Euthanasia attempts to merit the "love and esteem" of "her fellow citizens"--she attempts to balance what she has determined to be right with the opinion of others she respects, in accordance with Godwinian principles. In this manner she transforms an autocracy--an "absolute monarchy" in miniature--into a type of republic by applying the Republican

principle that general opinion (along with reason) should determine the best course of rule.

But Euthanasia's Valperga goes beyond republic to represent utopian domesticity because Euthanasia makes Valperga her home and disregards the "gaieties of Florence" to live a simpler life. The peasantry are not only "prosperous" but "proud"--their spiritual welfare is as important as the material. The tyranny of Castruccio represents a threat not to the material safety of the peasants--Castruccio will not destroy their farms and homes, because they will be absorbed into nearby Lucca--but to their spiritual well-being. The peasantry are willing to fight and die to preserve Euthanasia as their Countess because the alternative is to submit to tyranny.

Because Euthanasia cares about the spiritual well-being of the peasants, she holds a noble court to celebrate the peace in Tuscany on the first of May, raising the peasants' own celebration of Walpurgisnacht to a grand scale.¹⁹ Stuart Curran notes the utopian importance of this episode of the novel, describing "its profuse abundance, exuberant vitality, and artistic display" as demonstrating an "ideal of communal values shared by a free and peaceful people" (xxii). Euthanasia recognizes that the funds for her court come from the taxes collected from her people, and for this reason she makes sure that the courtly and the peasant are intertwined, fusing noble and peasant cultures in a utopian moment: "Nor do I think that I hurt my good people by such an extravagance: their joy on this occasion will be far greater than mine; their pride and love of pleasure will be gratified; for in arranging the amusements of my court the country people will have a full share" (101 [I. 248]).

When Castruccio demands the surrender of Valperga, Euthanasia responds with a mixture of concern for her people and conviction of her own duties toward them:

¹⁹ Walpurgisnacht is May 1, the day of the German female saint named Walperga. For more on Saint Walperga, see Lokke 164-65.

"I will never willingly surrender my power into his hands: I hold it for the good of my people, who are happy under my government, and towards whom I shall ever perform my / duty. I look upon him as a lawless tyrant, whom every one ought to resist to the utmost of their power; nor will I through cowardice give way to injustice. . . . if I wished to despoil myself of power, it would be to make my people free, and not to force them to enter the muster-roll of a usurper and a tyrant." (201, 202 [II. 222-3])

Euthanasia acknowledges her own power and refuses to transfer that power to a tyrant.

Castruccio also represents a double threat to Valperga and to Euthanasia herself. Euthanasia's body and the County of Valperga are connected in the same way that the body of the absolute monarch stands for the state--Castruccio wants to possess both Euthanasia and Valperga. Castruccio shows his lieutenant a secret way into the castle (204-6 [II. 230-235]), learned during his early friendship with Euthanasia; this secret way is used to bypass the castle's defenses. Although it occurs after Euthanasia has abjured Castruccio due to his execution of one of her friends, this breach of Valperga marks a point of no return: a metaphoric rape of Euthanasia herself and the destruction of Valperga's utopian qualities in what Pamela Clemit terms the novel's "pivotal act of treachery" (179).

Valperga itself is a metonym for utopian domesticity. "Valperga is your refuge," Castruccio's mother warns him upon his initial banishment (10 [I. 9]), signifying the importance of Valperga as a utopian site even for Castruccio, though Castruccio's and Euthanasia's families were politically opposed. Castruccio could have found a home in Valperga with Euthanasia, but his corruption and military ambition destroy this possibility. When the castle has fallen to Castruccio's men, Shelley describes Euthanasia's leave-taking:

She walked unhesitatingly through the hall, long the seat of her purest happiness.

Her infant feet had trodden its pavement in unreproved gaiety; and she thought for a moment that she saw the venerable form of her father seated in his accustomed place. But she proudly shook the softening emotion from her, and looked with a tearless eye upon the hearth, round which the soldiers of her enemy stood, profaning its sacredness by their presence. The inner court of the castle was filled by a / number of women and children, the wives of the peasantry who depended on her, who, as they saw her advance, raised one cry of grief . . . (218-9 [II. 271-2])

Shelley contrasts Euthanasia's happy memories with her painful present by focusing on the hearth and the inner court, clearly evoking the theme of the utopian domesticity that Castruccio's soldiers have destroyed. The women and children, her most vulnerable subjects, most need Euthanasia's protection and sanctuary in Valperga's inner court. Since Valperga has been breached, Euthanasia must carry within herself any chance of re-establishing utopian domesticity, and she seems to absorb the utopian aura from the inner court of Valperga in this scene.

The fourth depiction of utopian domesticity in *Valperga*--and the most complicated, as their relationships evolve over the course of the narrative--takes place within the love triangle formed by Euthanasia, Castruccio, and Beatrice. The relationship between Euthanasia and Castruccio is depicted as a childhood friendship that should have developed into a utopian marriage but is thwarted by Castruccio's fall into depravity as a tyrant. The relationship between Castruccio and Beatrice depicts all the worst aspects of romantic love due to Beatrice's ignorance and superstition, and Castruccio's willingness to take advantage of her. Utopian domesticity springs up in the unexpected quadrant of the relationship between Euthanasia and Beatrice: Euthanasia sympathizes with Beatrice, cares for her, and gives her a loving home in an attempt to help her recover from the

many betrayals she has faced.²⁰ Beatrice benefits from Euthanasia's care, and Euthanasia benefits, not only from her recognition that their shared betrayal by Castruccio unites them, but also from her own charitable feelings toward Beatrice. Creating a home for Beatrice in Lucca, Euthanasia in effect creates a home for herself after Castruccio has taken her from Valperga, and Euthanasia and Beatrice unite in friendship despite worldly expectations:

Since her days of happiness had ended, Euthanasia's enthusiasm had become more concentrated, more concealed; but Beatrice again awoke her to words, and these two ladies, bound by the sweet ties of gratitude and pity, found in each other's converse some balm for their misfortunes. Circumstances had thus made friends of those whom nature seemed to separate: they were / much unlike; but the wild looks of Beatrice sometimes reflected the soft light of Euthanasia's eyes; and Euthanasia found her heart, which was sinking to apathy, awake again, as she listened to Beatrice. (248 [III. 59-60])

Although Euthanasia fails to save Beatrice from madness and death, her attempts win the reader's approval and serve to demonstrate unquestionably the superiority of Euthanasia's practical philosophy to that of the self-involved Castruccio.

As Euthanasia's negotiation of the perilous triangle of relationships in *Valperga* demonstrates, utopian domesticity involves a certain kind of love; it is important to investigate exactly what kind of love that is. Betty Bennett identifies the centrality of a "Promethean" universal love to Mary Shelley's goals as a reformer, distinguishing between "personal love" and "universal love":

²⁰ As Stuart Curran notes, "It is Euthanasia, refusing to be thrust into erotic competition, who comes to Beatrice's aid and comforts her with undemanding affection. In *Valperga*, while one woman succors the other, the men betray them both and one another" (xviii). Tilottama Rajan asserts that "Euthanasia's bond with Beatrice is the affective core of Mary Shelley's novel," ("Mathilda" 64) "the most compelling part of the novel" (63); see also Lokke 164 and Brewer, "Therapeutic."

It is not Castruccio's rejection of love which determines the course of his life (for example, had he accepted Beatrice's love, she indicates that she would not have changed him), but the rejection of Euthanasia's love on her own terms--that is, his refusal to first accept the ideal of universal love and its responsibilities. In fact, Castruccio does not reject Euthanasia's love; it is she who rejects his. Their love relationship fails in political terms; a personal love would not suffice. ("Political Philosophy" 363)

Shelley demonstrates that personal feelings are at odds with political concerns, focusing on the opposition of personal and political in the lives of Castruccio and Euthanasia: close family ties, love, and betrothal, oppose differing political goals and affiliations. Bennett seems to present a choice in *Valperga* between "politics or love" while Ann Wake argues more precisely that Shelley shows "the need to reconcile the two" (250).²¹

The term "love" becomes slippery as it is deployed in Bennett's argument: Castruccio's "love," Beatrice's "love" and Euthanasia's "love" are laid out alongside the insufficient "personal love" and "the ideal of universal love."²² The term "universal love" is attractive because it would have been recognized by the Shelleys and their circle; however, I use the term "utopian domesticity" because it immediately signals its more

²¹ James P. Carson states that "For Shelley, four things may transform a person into a superior being: education, broad cultural forces, compassion, and love" (174)--this argument, though accurate, would also gain precision with an investigation of the term "love." Daniel White states that "*Valperga* plays out at length a drama of love and ambition within contemporary dynamics of gender and power" (80): this seems both a careful and accurate statement.

²² In her *Introduction*, Bennett restates, "Euthanasia's act of breaking her engagement to Castruccio illustrates her commitment to the concept of a universal love that supersedes both personal love and political systems based on power" (56). And later, along the same lines as my argument regarding Shelley's vision of utopian domesticity but with more of a nod to traditional readings of gender, Bennett states "Euthanasia symbolizes universal re-creation configured on traits often regarded as feminine--love, peace, charity. Through Euthanasia, Mary Shelley interpolates her English Romantic vision of a world in which love might ultimately defeat power" (59).

overtly political overtones, and flags itself as a critically precise term. Neither Beatrice's nor Castruccio's love create "utopian domesticity": Beatrice's love, though good at heart, is based, due to her ill-managed education, on her superstitious belief in her own special powers as a prophet, and Beatrice is deceived by Castruccio's good looks and charming manner into thinking him honest. Beatrice's love is a fairy tale, or as utopian philosopher Ernst Bloch would say, "wishful thinking." Castruccio's love is based merely on his physical attraction to the beautiful Beatrice, and perhaps in self-flattery that the charismatic and famous prophetess would "sacrifice her virtue" to him. Castruccio's love is selfish and conforms to worldly wisdom rather than consideration for Beatrice.

Euthanasia's love, however, is full of the potential for utopian domesticity. Her romantic attraction to Castruccio could be described as mere "personal love," but it is based on long-standing friendship and on the belief that the two are well-suited for one another. Euthanasia's growing recognition of Castruccio's destructive ambition, her determination that he reform, and her willingness to forgive him if he does reform, all exemplify a love that is no less "personal" for being well-considered and part of a utopian plan of action. Shelley seeks to show that tyranny is invested in a person who wields it; Euthanasia's love for Castruccio represents the necessity to act toward the tyrant with justice rather than revenge. The model of utopian domesticity describes a willingness to love and to forgive, a mode of justice which joins members of a household as family and extends in ever-widening circles into the larger community; this model describes Euthanasia's resistance to Castruccio's aggression as well as her urge to protect him by joining the conspiracy against him even after she has ceased to "love" him--or at least, no longer considers him her betrothed.

Beatrice serves to remind the reader that the novel cannot be broken down into a simple gender dichotomy (as, perhaps, feminine Euthanasia is good, while masculine Castruccio is bad). Castruccio, Beatrice, and Euthanasia represent three different

gendered modes of being. Castruccio represents an ultra-“masculine” mode of desire for glory, military conquest, and tyranny, embodying all the worst aspects of chivalry.²³ Beatrice represents an ultra-“feminine” mode of bad education, superstition, excessive emotion, naive trust in love, and victimization at the hands of men. Euthanasia represents a non-gendered attempt to achieve justice by balancing reason with personal generosity, and to seek peace within a conflicted community without sacrificing political autonomy.²⁴ As such, Euthanasia is the first fully-fledged example of the Shelleyan Romantic hero--that is, she represents qualities valorized by both Mary and Percy Bysshe Shelley. By portraying Euthanasia with the Shelleyan qualities of erudition, reason, love and forgiveness, Shelley revises not only the model of the brilliant but destructive genius of Castruccio, the Byronic Romantic hero typified by Manfred, but also Beatrice, the female Byronic hero and ultra-feminine *improvisatrice* typified by Germaine de Staël’s Corinne.²⁵ Euthanasia’s passion is no less deeply felt than these other Romantic models;

²³ *Perkin Warbeck*, Shelley’s last historical novel, examines a character who, by contrast, embodies all the best aspects of chivalry, yet who is still led astray by its militarism and emphasis on personal fame.

²⁴ Kari Lokke also makes an interesting exploration of the three primary women characters of the novel--the witch Fior di Mandragola, Euthanasia, and Beatrice--as “embody[ing] three different responses to male domination . . . explicit challenges to patriarchal literary, religious and political traditions” (161). In my opinion, Mandragola’s presence in the novel serves to block easy expectations that men are the oppressor and women the oppressed. Mandragola has been the victim of injustice but is nevertheless a monster of hatred, revenge and simply mischievous evil. Her masculine counterparts in the novel include the superstitious and somewhat enigmatic albino, Bindo; the miser, Pepi, who disgusts even Castruccio with his self-interested behavior; and worst of all, the sadistic priest, Tripalda.

²⁵ Elizabeth Nitchie, among others, identifies Castruccio as a Byronic hero, alongside Lodore and *The Last Man*’s Raymond (qtd in Blumberg 84); see also Lokke 158. Rajan identifies “the Byronic Castruccio and the androgynously Shelleyan Euthanasia” (“Romance” 88-89). Lokke explores not only the correlation between Corinne and Beatrice, but between Corinne and Euthanasia. Blumberg also associates Beatrice with the figure of the Romantic poet presented in Coleridge’s “Kubla Khan” (104).

her urge to use her genius to good effect and to leave a mark of change upon the world is also strong. But her acceptance of Godwinian gradualism as well as a Wollstonecraftian understanding of women's role in community transmute Euthanasia into a distinctly Shelleyan utopian hero, in line with P. B. Shelley's Prometheus but also culminating in the heroes of *Lodore* (Cornelia, Lady Lodore, and Horatio Seville) and *Falkner* (Elizabeth Raby, Gerard Neville, and eventually, Rupert Falkner).²⁶

Castruccio represents an ultra-masculine mode, in which strength and conquest are preferred to trust and peaceful coexistence. His role as warlord is a stereotypically masculine one, but he chooses it over other, equally viable paths traditionally gendered as masculine. Though he begins innocent and beautiful, his ill-schooling and the desire for revenge corrupt him. He seeks absolute political control of his surroundings and subordinates all other considerations to the shoring up of his own position in Tuscany. He considers Valperga a threat and has it destroyed because he refuses to trust that Euthanasia would not betray him. Castruccio rejects the role of farmer, a masculine role held honorably by Guinigi, and fails at the role of courtier, even in England, away from the corrupting influences of the feuding Italian factions. These rejected options are significant because Castruccio's identity as a man does not determine his career as a soldier and warlord; his career is not a reflection upon manhood as such, but instead,

²⁶ The "Shelleyan" hero is to a certain extent based by Mary on an idealized version of P. B. Shelley himself. As Bennett reports, the language Mary used to describe Euthanasia's death in her 1823 fiction is very similar to the language she used to describe P. B. Shelley's death in her 1839 edition of his poetry (*Introduction* 58 and note).

Katherine C. Hill-Miller states that Euthanasia "is the first female character in Shelley's novels who is utterly competent in worldly terms" and compares her with the 1818 version of *Frankenstein's* Elizabeth Lavenza and Fanny Derham of *Lodore*. Heroes such as Adrian (commonly recognized as a Shelley stand-in in *The Last Man*) and possibly even Victor and the Creature (when viewed as potential heroes brought down by the tragic complexes at work in *Frankenstein*) also represent variations of Shelley's exploration of the Romantic hero and her revision toward a Shelleyan hero.

upon his own misguided choices, based upon ambition, the desire for revenge, and the lack of a thorough education such as Euthanasia's.

Beatrice represents an ultra-feminine mode, in which inspiration and superstition, ungrounded by any tried and true knowledge, alongside passionate emotion, form the basis for her actions. Beatrice's ultra-femininity may derive from her lack of formal ties to father figures, being the illegitimate daughter of a discredited "feminist prophet," and therefore, as Katherine C. Hill-Miller convincingly argues, outside the bounds of patriarchal "protection" (130-31). This idea is echoed by Kari Lokke (163) and Barbara Jane O'Sullivan, who notes that Marsillio, the priest who raises Beatrice, deliberately deprives her of the knowledge of the identity of her mother (145), while at the same time expecting that the mother's taint of religious deviance will appear in the daughter. Beatrice's resulting ignorance thus strengthens her mystical bent and her susceptibility to "superstition." Moreover, Beatrice occupies a pivotal role as she is acted upon by both Castruccio and Euthanasia, as well as several other forces in the novel, including her overdetermined parentage, a well-meaning bishop, a sadistic torturer, and a vengeful witch. Acting as an *improvisatrice* in her role of prophetess, Beatrice resembles a negative image of the Romantic poet, allowing her untutored imagination (interpreted by her as divine inspiration) to flow unchecked and to guide her actions for good or ill. Unfortunately Beatrice's gift of prophecy is a sham, and her later vacillations between the Paterin heresy and orthodoxy illustrate that without the boundary of reason, her powers of inspiration and oratory only serve to muddle truth with doubt.²⁷ Acting on inspiration, she engages in a love affair with Castruccio, and her discovery of his wrong intentions destroys her faith in herself and eventually her very sanity. Shelley's ultra-"feminine"

²⁷ As Godwin warns, "harangues and declamation lead to passion, and not to knowledge. The memory of the hearer is crowded with pompous nothings, with images and not arguments. He is never permitted to be sober enough to weigh things with an unshaken hand" (285 [Book IV, Chap. III, "Of Political Associations"]).

portrait of Beatrice encodes passivity, susceptibility and victimization, vividly bringing to life the result of the social, political, and educational practices attacked by Wollstonecraft in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.²⁸ Such an ultra-feminine gender position is not natural to women, but socially constructed in ways Shelley makes very clear; Shelley connects such a gender position with extreme vulnerability leading to madness and death.²⁹ By focusing on the forces that formed Beatrice's character, Shelley hopes to unmask and subject them to reform.

The significance of Beatrice's affair with Castruccio also lies in the comparison of the differing ways Beatrice is treated by Castruccio and Euthanasia. Castruccio misleads and abandons her. Euthanasia, however, refuses to regard her as a rival and instead treats her with compassion and behaves toward her as a tender friend. Euthanasia embodies justice, whereas Castruccio embodies only selfishness and deceit. Castruccio took what was offered to him without any thought of giving in return, whereas Euthanasia gave of herself without any thought of recompense. Beatrice's affair with Castruccio also serves as a mirror of Castruccio's relationship with Euthanasia: his interest in each woman is subordinated to his own self-interest, eventually leading to his casting them both aside. The relationship between Castruccio and Euthanasia is not based on appearances or sudden inspiration, as it is in Beatrice's case, but on close family ties and long-standing friendship. Castruccio and Euthanasia's relationship has all the weight of a formal

²⁸ As William Brewer has argued, Euthanasia represents the well-educated woman envisioned by Wollstonecraft, while Beatrice represents "the pernicious effects of 'a disorderly kind of education'" ("Triumph" 139). Brewer quotes Wollstonecraft on women's disorderly education: "All their thoughts turn on things calculated to excite emotion; and feeling, when they should reason, their conduct is unstable, and their opinions are wavering--not the wavering produced by deliberation or progressive views, but by contradictory emotions" (*Vindication* 61, qtd in Brewer, "Triumph" 140).

²⁹ A similar fate awaits similar characters such as Mathilda and Evadne; see further discussion in Chapter Five on *The Last Man*.

engagement. But Castruccio disregards his relationship with Euthanasia as much as he disregards the legitimate expectations of Beatrice. His affair with Beatrice betrays Euthanasia, himself, and Beatrice as well.

The fall of Beatrice from her exalted position of *Ancilla Dei* to heretic, madwoman, and outcast, illuminates the links perceived by Shelley between gender and class and the relationship between reason and passion.³⁰ For Shelley, as for Wollstonecraft, passion is a strong motivator and may work in conjunction with reason to lead to personal improvement. As Orrin Wang argues, “‘superior judgment . . . and fortitude’ depend on a prior experience of emotions which allows us to learn through our mistakes and our incorrect beliefs” (134). Shelley does not align passion with femininity or reason with masculinity--women and men have the potential to be equally passionate or reasonable in her works. Traditionally, although passionate masculine characters were a hallmark of the Romantic period, the passions are aligned with women (and especially with the ungoverned sexuality of women), but also with class: the passions are associated with the lower classes, with the mob, and may lead to depravity or violence, while reason is associated with the middle classes and propriety. John Morillo makes this linkage of class and gender especially clear when he notes that “in the 1790s, enthusiasm, already feared for over a century, becomes the scapegoat for a host of concerns connected variously to the French Revolution and mass democracy, the minds of women, and the behavior of zealous believers of both sexes” (46). Shelley makes use of these traditional alignments in her characterizations as part of her feminist critique in which she shows that women’s allowing passion to motivate them can be extremely dangerous in terms of social position.

³⁰ “Passion” is defined by Godwin as “a permanent and habitual tendency toward a certain course of action” usually producing a feeling of happiness initially but quickly becoming habit (*Political Justice* 379 [Book IV, “Operation of Opinion in Societies and Individuals,” Chapter X, “Of Self-Love and Benevolence”]).

Beatrice then should not be taken as an extraordinary case. Lacking a solid education (like most women, as Wollstonecraft argues) Beatrice has only her feelings and superstitions to guide her actions, and she is easily deceived by Castruccio. When she realizes that her supernatural superiority is a sham, she can no longer rely on the guidance of her own inner voice. As Morillo notes, enthusiasm is an inwardly directed passion (98), and when it is shaken, Beatrice has no moral center to fall back on. Euthanasia, in her attempts to assist Beatrice, moves within the discourse of benevolence (theorized by Morillo in opposition to enthusiasm as an outwardly-directed passion)—but her benevolence cannot really reach the inwardly-directed, enthusiastic Beatrice. Beatrice's attempt to fashion a new identity for herself (she becomes a penitential pilgrim) exposes her as an unprotected woman (she is captured and made into a sexual slave). Catherine Decker argues that "women treated in public as mad or immoral may become mad or immoral."³¹ Without the controls of reason, then, following the dictates of feeling, intuition or passion can lead to devastating social consequences for women that are practically unparalleled for men, whose passionate actions are couched in social systems

³¹ As Decker notes, women who moved unescorted in public in the early nineteenth century were often assumed to be prostitutes and treated as sexually available. Decker argues that if "external, cultural codes do actually limit the capacity of men and women to act upon their internal, moral decisions" then "a woman can be forced into immoral behavior against her will by cultural codes that limit her options" (20, 21).

Decker also notes the cultural currency of the idea of "aristocratic men who kidnapped and raped women" (21), as happens to Beatrice. The atmosphere of suffocating, inescapable horror experienced by Beatrice compounds the inexorable progress of victimization experienced by Richardson's *Clarissa* with the trappings of Gothic horror, which depend upon the reader's sense of the vulnerability of the heroine. Shelley surpasses the Gothic in her willingness to portray the threats Beatrice faces as horribly real, with real consequences that irreparably damage her psyche; she goes beyond Richardson to portray the dismantling not only of Beatrice's corporeal self but more importantly, her moral framework as well. These ideas arose in conversation with the Washington Area Romantics Group, 2 March 2002.

that confer honor or even glory to their consequences.³²

Even Euthanasia's perceived feminine weakness to the influences of passion is fatally dangerous³³--she joins the Florentine plot against Castruccio on the condition that he not be killed. Euthanasia tempers her passionate responses (her conflicting loyalties to Florence and freedom, and to Castruccio) with reason, and takes positive action rather than passively allowing the plot to go forward for Castruccio's death, but even so she is exiled and drowned. Importantly, Shelley portrays this as a political but not a moral failure. Euthanasia is caught in a double bind created by what Godwin terms the "intrinsicly wrong" nature of associations. The group is caught up in political fervor, to which Euthanasia can only cast her lot against tyrannicide.³⁴ The corrupted nature of the group is made explicit by its blind inclusion of Tripalda, as Euthanasia immediately points out. As Wang points out, Wollstonecraft argues that passion and reason must impose dialectical limits upon each other in order for growth to occur (138); Euthanasia cannot merely observe the Florentine plot, but must take action: "The world cannot be seen by an

³² Lord Raymond dies a military hero in the destruction of Constantinople; Lord Lodore preserves his honor by being killed in a duel; Falkner attempts to die in the military action in Greece--all these men couch the suicidal tendencies resulting from their passionate behavior in masculine social behaviors that confer honor or glory. Only Mathilda's father has no recourse and openly commits suicide.

³³ Euthanasia's actions are misinterpreted and construed as more passionate than reasonable by Bondelmonti (292 [III. 181]), Tripalda (308 [III. 222-3]), and Castruccio (312-3 [III. 234-5]).

³⁴ Godwin states, "Associations, as a measure intrinsicly wrong, the wise man will endeavour to check and postpone, as much as he can" (291 [Book IV, Chap. III]). Godwin also points out that if assassination attempt fails, "it renders the tyrant ten times more bloody, ferocious and cruel" (294 [Book IV, Chap. IV, "Of Tyrannicide"]); this is the case, as Castruccio has an untold but very large number of Florentines executed when the plot is discovered, sparing only Euthanasia. Euthanasia takes the only Godwinian option available when she joins the plot, hoping to check the group's political fervor and prevent their attempt on Castruccio's life.

unmoved spectator" (VRW 112, qtd in Wang 139). Completing Shelley's cross-linkage of gender and class in her critique of passionate action, Castruccio's passions also lead to his ultimate destruction, but to his social elevation rather than his downfall. He uses a masculinized social system--the machinery of warfare--to solidify his own position so that he may act on his passions in a way that is unavailable to women. Still, Euthanasia's benevolence, an outwardly-directed passion working dialectically with reason, has the potential to change the political system around her, as is demonstrated when she moves Castruccio to tears when he is convinced she meant to save him through her participation in the plot. Castruccio's tears signify the possibility of the beneficial effects of passion, even though they come too little, too late. At the end of *Valperga*, with the deaths of all three main characters, the reader is led to conclude that Castruccio deserves blame, Beatrice pity, and Euthanasia sympathy--passions that lead, in a Wollstonecraftian fashion, to the improvement of reason.³⁵

Euthanasia represents a balance which shuns the ultra-feminine sensibility of Beatrice, as well as the cold plotting and tyranny of Castruccio. Her principles are well-grounded and she acts on them even when her actions are fraught with danger and possibly destructive outcomes. In two most important instances, Euthanasia acts according to her principles in defiance of her loyalty to Castruccio: first, when she refuses to cede Valperga to him peacefully, and second, when she joins the plot against him. In both cases, she acts on the final principle that she cannot allow his tyranny to be strengthened by her actions or her inactions. Yet, in both cases, her actions result in

³⁵ Adela Pinch argues, "We cannot assert a simple continuity between the expression of misery in women's sentimental literature and the expression of political grievance in late eighteenth-century feminist writing. The formal and epistemological dimensions of a literature of feelings must be taken into account. But doing so may in fact make it possible to see sentimental poetry as *enabling* a political discussion about personal feelings" (71). The use of sentiment in Shelley's overtly political novels must similarly bolster their impact.

Castruccio's bloody revenge. The tragic outcome of Euthanasia's well-grounded actions in the face of tyranny make *Valperga* Shelley's most philosophically challenging novel, embodying an almost fatalistic belief in the importance of doing the right thing even in the face of certain failure. In this way, *Valperga* represents a kind of allegory of Shelley's feminist utopian project: a novel may not be capable of effecting real, material change, but it does serve as an example of feminist utopian thought which *could* form the basis for real social change.

Euthanasia's character, while demonstrating what women are capable of, is also meant as a model for human behavior in general. She must be compared to other characters in the novel: she attempts, like Guinigi, to live a simple life, but unlike Guinigi, she does not shrink away from public affairs but attempts to do good by controlling the reins of state she has been handed. She does not, unlike Castruccio, attempt to broaden her sphere of influence by military conquest; she will not willingly ally herself with Castruccio after he becomes the tyrant of Lucca; and only reluctantly does she involve herself in political intrigue by joining the Florentine conspirators.

Euthanasia battles against type not only in the minds of the early nineteenth-century reader (reviewers claimed that because she is a woman, her refusal of Castruccio from patriotic motives was highly doubtful; see Bennett, *Introduction* 56 and note) but in the minds of other characters in the novel (as when certain characters, especially the evil Tripalda, doubt her motives because she is a woman and presumably swayed more by her emotions than by rationality). Euthanasia does consider the emotional import of her actions, but she also strives to act for the greater good, not as a woman, but as a "chieftain" and a powerful individual. Euthanasia is willing to participate in whole-hearted love, but her love is regulated by her belief in what is right. She finds herself unable to continue her engagement to Castruccio when he begins to attack her friends. He, on the other hand, compartmentalizes his love for her as having nothing to do with his military

campaigns. Euthanasia's resistance to Castruccio is twofold: she will not personally support him with her love if he continues his aggressions; and she will not support him politically by ceding her stronghold. This twofold resistance encompasses the complexities of the utopian domestic political model that Shelley begins to explore in *Valperga*. The personal and the political, Euthanasia insists, cannot be artificially separated.

Valperga is a dark, not a hopeful story, and its models of utopian domesticity are swept aside by the devastating power of tyranny. At the heart of the novel is the Paterin heresy of Beatrice: that the world is ruled not by a benevolent God, but by the spirit of evil. This philosophy also appears in the opening Canto of Percy Bysshe Shelley's *Laon and Cythna*, in which the weakened spirit of good is cast in the suspect form of a serpent and the spirit of evil is everywhere upheld by sanctioned state and religious authorities. If, however, Euthanasia and Beatrice both die young at the end of the novel, as a result of Castruccio's ruthless machinations, so does Castruccio himself. Shelley rewrites historical fact to mete out judgment upon Castruccio: the real-life Prince left a wife and heirs, whereas Shelley's fictional character is preceded in death by his chosen heir, the son of Guinigi, and never marries, having destroyed both of the women who ever loved him. Euthanasia, representing rationality, compassion and utopian domesticity, is lost at sea, and Beatrice, representing superstition and the untamed imagination, goes mad; but Castruccio, representing tyranny, wears himself out in continued offences against Florence and dies without leaving a solid legacy behind him. His works are less enduring than those of Euthanasia, because although the novel claims that Euthanasia was "forgotten by men" (in fact, Euthanasia and Beatrice are both entirely fictional characters), Shelley's novel *reminds* us of Euthanasia and convinces us that her path is to be preferred and emulated.

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Locating Utopian Domesticity in *The Last Man*

The Last Man, an apocalyptic tale of the destruction of humanity by Plague, might easily seem profoundly pessimistic, and indeed, prevailing critical opinions of *The Last Man*, a novel begun in 1824 after Percy Bysshe Shelley's death and published in 1826, view it as predominated by Shelley's despair over having survived her husband, her children Clara and William, and her friend Lord Byron. Critics often expand their interpretation of the novel's pessimism into an argument that *The Last Man* represents Shelley's rejection of the radical theories of Percy Shelley and of her parents, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, or, sometimes, that the text betrays Shelley's unconscious anger at these figures and her guilt about that anger. Because of the fatalism of its story--all humanity will be destroyed--*The Last Man* is hard to read as anything other than a negative critique--and it does offer, as I will argue, a negative critique of traditional gender relations as well as of political and religious agendas for attaining personal power and glory. Yet the tragedy of humanity's destruction and the complete isolation of Verney, the survivor, also emphasize the positive enduring value of human interconnectedness.

In a study of utopian domesticity in Shelley's work, the overt tragic nature of *The Last Man* need not be seen as an outright rejection of utopian possibility, despite the novel's overt pessimism. Robert Lance Snyder argues that "*The Last Man* embodies the recurrent Romantic theme of spiritual and metaphysical isolation" (446), but Shelley's point is not that this isolation is unavoidable--to the contrary, she emphasizes the importance of companionship even if that companionship exists only in memory. Snyder further argues that the Plague is an "irreducible phenomenon . . . mocking all assumptions of order, meaning, purpose and causality" (437, 436), and Lee Sterrenburg concludes that "utopian hopes prove futile in *The Last Man* because nature is impervious

to human will and human rationality . . . the demonic plague . . . cancels out the utopian rationality of Godwin as surely as it cancels out the conservative organicism of Edmund Burke" (335).¹ Criticism along these lines misses the prophetic point of *The Last Man*, which uses the Plague to emphasize what is enduringly important and what is not. Its horror lies in its ability to wipe away what is good, not only what is flawed. Human relationships, perhaps because of their very fragility, are clearly of paramount importance to Verney, the eponymous Last Man. The principles of utopian domesticity for which Verney longs remain valid, even though he describes in his narrative how the domestic relationships with which he was most familiar did not live up to that ideal.²

Volume One of *The Last Man* is given over to the complicated relationships of the family and friends of Lionel Verney, the narrator and eponymous last man, whose fate it is to survive the Plague that destroys humanity in Volumes Two and Three. The novel features a complicated cast of inter-related characters: Lionel and his sister Perdita; Lionel's friend Adrian, Earl of Windsor, whose sister Idris who becomes Lionel's wife; Raymond, who courts Idris but marries Perdita; and the Greek princess Evadne Zaimi, whom Adrian loves but who loves Raymond. Their stories explore the problems of traditional domesticity while emphasizing the importance of recognizing and striving to realize its utopian potential.

Shelley's refinements of the idea of the Romantic hero are entangled with her development of utopian domesticity and her critique of traditional gender roles. Shelley

¹ Giovanna Franci sees the Plague as symptomatic of the "profound uneasiness which followed the failure of great revolutions and the crisis of radical and liberal ideology" (183).

² As William Lomax observes, "The most intense spiritual and moral strengths, the greatest happiness, emerge from close family and personal relationships in the novel, and the greatest despair grows out of the loss of such relationships" (11).

represents two types of hero, which, importantly, may appear as either male or female characters: the passionate, magnetic, destructive genius usually known as the Byronic hero, whose tendency towards isolation undercuts community; and the enlightened, learned, usually Republican Shelleyan hero, whose benevolence helps create utopian domesticity--so-called because Shelley herself preferred this type, but also because it shares many of the characteristics she used in descriptions of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley.³ When *The Last Man* is seen primarily as a *roman à clef*, Lord Raymond has been understood as a portrait of Byron, and Adrian as Percy Bysshe Shelley. It is more useful to understand Raymond as an example of the Byronic hero, so that we may separate Shelley's portrait of Byron's person, attitudes and actions from the character she creates and the ways in which she manipulates the character. In the figure of Adrian, Shelley paints Percy Bysshe Shelley in his most angelic light, but also develops the figure of the Shelleyan hero by revealing his flaws (his fall into insanity when he learns that Evadne loves Raymond, his physical weakness, his reluctance to take public office, his final bad decision to support Clara's wish to go to Greece). Shelley's portrayals of Lionel Verney as a Shelleyan disciple of Adrian, and Evadne Zaimi as a Byronic lover

³ Betty T. Bennett also speaks of Shelley's modification of the hero, though in terms slightly different from mine; Bennett contrasts Adrian and Raymond as figures like Alastor and Napoleon, while seeing in the early Verney Shelley's critique of the "Wordsworthian ideal [of] the innocence of youth . . . in favor of Godwinian education" (148). Pamela Clemit identifies fairly accurately Shelley's "rather schematic juxtaposition of Raymond and Adrian" (200), 200-205, focusing on Raymond's "self-aggrandizing ambition" (201). Victoria Middleton notes in Shelley's work a movement away from emphasis on the self of the protagonist toward depiction of characters in relationship, a movement toward relationship and domestication she sees as coming at the expense of the Promethean or Byronic hero; since it also comes at the expense of the "self" Middleton does not perceive the need for utopian domesticity even though she does identify Lionel's (and Shelley's own) suffering from the lack of social ties. I would take pains to separate the Promethean hero from the Byronic, preferring to use the term "Promethean" as Bennett has to describe the hero originated in Percy Bysshe Shelley's dramatic poem and developed by Mary Shelley into the Shelleyan hero. Bennett, however, sees Adrian as an Alastor-figure, and not as a perfected Shelleyan hero. Sophie Thomas notes Adrian's feeling of organicism as Shelleyan (24). See also Paul Cantor's "Mary Shelley and the Taming of the Byronic Hero."

and victim of Raymond, further deepen and complicate Shelley's exploration of the Romantic hero.

A novel that features the Plague so centrally might seem antithetical to any utopian possibility, but Mark Canuel stresses how the Plague works to effect a "community of shared risk" in which "social units . . . stretch into new formations" unconfined to biological family units (162); this is a key aspect of utopian domesticity, were it not under such dire circumstances. Canuel notes how Windsor Castle "becomes 'an asylum for the unhappy' . . . a charitable institution no longer occupied by the insular family" (162), but it is not clear that this transformation deeply affects social structures. When Lionel plans to establish a "haven and retreat for the wrecked bark of human society" at Windsor, he means a retreat for his own family: "if among all my fellow-creatures I were to select those who might stand forth examples of the greatness and goodness of man I could choose no other than those allied to me by the most sacred ties. Some among the family of man must survive, and these should be among the survivors" (205 [II. 212-13]). When such a retreat does form at Windsor, Lionel says, "within the walls of the castle we had a *colony* of the unhappy" (215 [II. 243-4], emphasis added). Seemingly, the Castle takes in new members, but not on the same level as family: their community remains insular.

The degree to which the society of friends living in Windsor Forest is utopian may be investigated in two quotations. First, Lionel describes the period after Adrian, Idris, and Lionel have moved into Windsor Castle, and Raymond and Perdita live in a cottage in the Forest:

We had our separate occupations and our common amusements. Sometimes we passed whole days under the leafy covert of the forest with our books and music. . . . we rode out, and sought new spots of beauty and repose. When the frequent rains shut us within doors, evening recreation followed morning study, ushered

in by music and song. . . . Then we were as gay as summer insects, playful as children; we ever met one another with smiles, and read content and joy in each other's countenances. . . . Nor were we ever weary of talking of the past or dreaming of the future. Jealousy and disquiet were unknown among us; nor did a / fear or hope of change ever disturb our tranquillity. Others said, We might be happy - we said - we are.

. . . Idris and Perdita would ramble away together, and we remained to discuss the affairs of nations and the philosophy of life. . . .

Years past thus, - even years. . . . We talked of change and active pursuits, but still remained at Windsor, incapable of violating the charm that attached us to our secluded life. (73-75 [I. 186-92])

This passage describes an idyllic, leisured existence, which though happy, is not, by Shelley's standards, utopian. Though the friends are engaged in art and philosophy, occupied by books, song, even political discussion, they remain isolated, even stagnant. Earlier, Lionel presages their careless, uninvolved life, stating that, with no means of supporting himself, he nearly starved before he married Idris (63-4). Adrian doesn't notice that Lionel is lying when he refuses "offers of supplies," and Lionel knows that Lord Raymond, his new brother-in-law, would hold him in disdain according to his "worldly principles." The leisure of the friends is supported by their class position, and their good fortune does not extend beyond their group—or even, before he marries Idris, to Lionel himself.

The idyll is also characterized by a gender division which excludes Idris and Perdita from the philosophical discussions of the men. This gender division is emphasized by the portrayal of the friends' musical amusement as the special purview of Idris, whose talent in music "had been carefully cultivated" (73 [I. 187]). Whereas Lionel and Raymond can easily join in with Idris in her music, Idris cannot so easily join in with

them in their discussions. It is a classic example of a woman educated to develop “accomplishments” instead of a sound understanding.

After the Plague arrives in England, society is changed. Class position is eroded or toppled, and upper class individuals turn to a simpler way of life that is more observant of the needs of others. The next quotation, which describes the Windsor fellowship after Perdita and Raymond have already passed away, more closely approaches the ideals of utopian domesticity:

Among some these changes produced a devotion and sacrifice of self at once graceful and heroic. It was a sight for the lovers of the human race to enjoy; to behold, as in ancient times, the patriarchal / modes in which the variety of kindred and friendship fulfilled their duteous and kindly offices. Youths, nobles of the land, performed for the sake of mother or sister, the services of menials with amiable cheerfulness. . . . The females received them on their return with the simple and affectionate welcome known before only to the lowly cottage—a clean hearth and bright fire; the supper ready cooked by beloved hands; gratitude for the provision for to morrow's meal: strange enjoyments for the high-born English, yet they were now their sole, hard earned, and dearly prized luxuries. (240 [II. 318-19])⁴

Yet the utopian nature of this scene must still be qualified, for the cheerful services of the highborn youths are performed only for the benefit of their own mothers and sisters. Shelley's use of the word “patriarchal” in her glowing description of the scene alerts feminists that though this scene portrays the best features of chivalry, it has not gone far enough. The virtues of the cottage hearth are still strongly gendered: females remain at

⁴ Richard Albright uses these two passages in his examination of how time seems to flow in reverse in *The Last Man*, carrying humanity on a course that reverses the advances of civilization, and embodying social structures that seem more and more primitive.

home to create an inviting haven while males venture out to procure necessities from the harsh world. It is not until after the Plague has broken down traditional family structures that people band together outside these structures, and at this point, the situation is tinged with grief, horror and despair. Still, the attempt to transcend difficulties by forming community is a feature of utopian domesticity even in this extremely tragic setting.

Anne Mellor, in her discussion of Shelley's uses of domesticity, focuses on describing the behavior of men, primarily Adrian and Raymond, as narcissistic and egoistic, and the experiences of Idris, Perdita and Clara within the restricted domesticity described in the novel. Mellor significantly simplifies Shelley's characterizations, concluding that the men are villains and the females victims. While only the first volume of the book recounts the love affairs of the Windsor set, it seems clear that Shelley wished to tell a more complicated story for her characters than can be accounted for in a scheme of narcissistic, ambitious men and victimized, housebound women. It seems significant that Mellor passes over the character of Evadne, a woman whose creative genius, political ambition, and disruptive lovelife, indicate that she, like Raymond, should be regarded as an unregenerate Romantic hero. As a Byronic figure, Evadne is creative, passionate, magnetic, but ultimately headed on a course for destruction.⁵ Evadne

⁵ Lynn Wells states that "Evadne emanates a dangerous sexuality carefully abstracted from the other women characters. This double sexual menace is largely neutralized by Evadne's martyred death and Raymond's remorseful reconciliation with Perdita" (221). Wells is right to note Evadne's sexuality, and to link it with Raymond's "overweening masculine sexuality that is repugnant yet captivating," but her description of Evadne as "like the shadowy female figures in Byron's *The Giaour* and Percy Shelley's *Alastor*" fails to consider Evadne's active roles not only as lover but as artist, politician, and prophet. William Goldsmith also considers Evadne as collapsing the patriarchal order with her many roles as "foreigner, traitor, homewrecker, sorceress, madwoman, parricide, obsessive lover, and prophetess" (148). Michael Eberle-Sinatra succinctly speaks of Shelley's characterization of Evadne as an example of Shelley's attempt to "merge or exchange qualities (virtues or defects) conventionally assigned to one or the other sex" (102).

is crucial to Shelley's delineation of the Romantic hero and also to her evaluation of utopian domesticity in *The Last Man*. The function of gender is important in understanding any character, but Raymond, Lionel, and Adrian may be best understood in terms of how the conjunction of gender and Romantic roles plays out in Shelley's exploration of the Romantic hero.

In common with other Byronic figures portrayed in Shelley's works, such as Victor Frankenstein, Castruccio, or Lord Lodore, Raymond's great potential and personal magnetism comes to nothing as his tendencies toward self-aggrandizement lead to his destruction. Raymond leads Greece against Constantinople but is killed when he charges recklessly through the ominously quiet city. His moral destruction comes earlier, though, when his passions lead him into an unwise affair with Evadne, and he deceives his wife, Perdita, about it, and accuses her of unnecessary harshness towards him when he attempts a reconciliation. Raymond is a dabbler in the affections of women. He originally schemes to marry Idris, though he does not love her, hoping to strengthen his position in his goal of reestablishing the monarchy of England, with himself as King. Passionately, he abandons this plan and marries Perdita, his true love. But domestic happiness with Perdita and public utility as Lord Protector do not prevent him from secretly consorting with Evadne, whose constancy towards him after many long years he finds flattering. He is similar in many ways to Castruccio, the Byronic figure in *Valperga*, who enjoyed the attentions of the prophetess Beatrice of Ferrara, especially in his way of conforming his love life to his political ambitions and his carelessness of the consequences when women fall in love with him.

Shelley's negative portrayal of Raymond, however, should not be cast as an indictment of the masculine Romantic hero in general. These behaviors are not tied in Shelley's mind solely with the masculine. Raymond's powers of oratory, condemned in Godwinian terms, strongly associate him with the role of *improvisateur*, a role more

commonly associated in Shelley's writings with women characters such as Mathilda, Beatrice and Evadne.⁶ As Evadne illustrates, the Byronic hero may be male or female; nor do all men act like Raymond, as Adrian and Lionel illustrate; and a Byronic Romantic hero may yet transform into a Shelleyan.

Lionel Verney's early life as a criminal in the state of nature, and his reform after Adrian introduces him to friendship and study, demonstrate the transformation of the Romantic hero from Byronic to Shelleyan. In Verney, Shelley combines and reconciles the strengths of both Romantic types: as a young rogue Lionel is full of Byronic daring, magnetism, leadership, and scorn for those he perceives as wronging him, but as an adult he delights in learning, friendship, and benevolence. As a Byronic figure, Verney is strong enough to survive, and as a Shelleyan figure, his philosophical nature keeps him from suicide. The opposition of the Byronic tendencies toward isolation and solipsism versus the Shelleyan goal of devotion to family and friends is taken to its extreme in *The Last Man*. Verney's skills at survival, learned on the hills as a shepherd, and in the game reserves as a thief, are a blessing and a curse when he becomes the Crusoe-like Last Man: his robust physicality, daring, and adventuresome resourcefulness become strengths incorporated into the sometimes ineffectually angelic portrait of the regenerate Romantic hero Mary Shelley herself largely created.

Adrian's long speech after his recovery from madness, excerpted here, is central to understanding the nature of the utopianism represented by the Shelleyan Romantic hero. He begins by relating his understanding that the sorrows faced by humanity are pervasive, and that he knows this first-hand. He responds, however, not with bitterness,

⁶ Raymond wins an important debate in Parliament with a speech described as melodious, graceful, superhuman and enchanting, yet Shelley notes that "It were useless to record the debate that followed this harangue" (51 [I. 123]). As Godwin warns, "harangues and declamation lead to passion, and not to knowledge" (285 [Book IV, Chap. III, "Of Political Associations"]). See my earlier use of this quotation in relation to Beatrice as *improvisatrice* in Chapter Four on *Valperga*.

but with renewed appreciation for the blessings of life, especially the essential blessing of community:

“My lot has not been fortunate. I have consorted long with grief, entered the gloomy labyrinth of madness, and emerged, but half alive. Yet I thank God that I have lived! . . . I am glad that I have loved, and have experienced sympathetic joy and sorrow with my fellow-creatures. . . . Ye who are linked by the affectionate ties of nature; companions, friends, lovers! fathers, who toil with joy for their offspring; women, who while gazing on the living forms of their children, forget the pains of maternity; children, who neither toil nor spin, but love and are loved!” (62-63 [I. 153-154])

“The affectionate ties of nature” include familial, platonic, and romantic ties. Such relationships also include the idea of toil undertaken not in a strict economy of *quid pro quo* exchange, but for the benefit of loved ones who may or may not be able to reciprocate. This ideal of wide-reaching social responsibility is central to the utopian domesticity of the Shelleyan hero. Adrian continues by speaking of his hopes for humanity and for earthly existence:

“Oh, that death and sickness were banished from our early home! that hatred, tyranny, and fear could no longer make their lair in the human heart! that each man might find a brother in his fellow, and a nest of repose / amid the wide plains of his inheritance! . . . Sleeping thus under the beneficent eye of heaven can evil visit thee, O Earth, or grief cradle to their graves thy luckless children? Whisper it not, lest the dæmons hear and rejoice. The choice is with us: let us will it, and our habitation becomes a paradise. The will of man is omnipotent, blunting the arrows of death, soothing the bed of disease, and wiping away the tears of agony. And what is each human being worth, if he do not put forth his strength to aid his fellow-creatures? . . . I dedicate all of intellect and strength that remains

to me, to that one work, and take upon me the task, as far as I am able, of bestowing blessings on my fellow-men!" (63 [I. 154-5])

These statements have been taken as Shelley's bitterly ironic commentary on the utopianism of Godwin and P. B. Shelley. But in context, Adrian's speech includes not just the hope for a wishful dreamworld in which man, through force of will, has banished hatred, tyranny, and fear, but understanding of a more important and realizable utopia in which, through the sympathy and generosity he has earlier described, "the arrows of death," if not entirely destroyed, are blunted, "the bed of disease" is soothed, and "tears of agony," though still wept, are met with comfort and wiped away. Adrian realizes that this task will be beyond his ability, but he will "dedicate all of intellect and strength . . . as far as I am able" in order "to aid his fellow-creatures." Occurring early in Volume One, this speech outlines promises Adrian will later fulfill. Adrian's claims are not belied by the Plague: the Plague allows him the opportunity to demonstrate his tireless benevolence in the face of overwhelming adversity. Although Adrian is unable to save humanity, his efforts remain admirable.⁷ Adrian's status as a perfected Shelleyan Romantic hero depends on his attempts to better the human race, not necessarily on his success, as the similarities (described below) between *The Last Man* and P. B. Shelley's *Laon and Cythna* show. He attempts to comfort his fellow-creatures even as their ability to provide comfort to themselves through wonted networks of family, friends and lovers is destroyed. Human worth, according to Adrian, depends on giving aid to others whenever possible. The "omnipotence" of the human will is dependent upon "the affectionate ties of nature" and "sympathetic joy and sorrow;" human worth, according to Adrian, is dependent upon the extent to which we aid our fellow-creatures in adversity, and our "omnipotence" is relative to the effort we expend on behalf of others. Individually, as

⁷ As William Lomax notes, Adrian fails as a Christ-figure but not as a humanitarian (14).

Adrian acknowledges, the effort is inadequate, but if all worked together, the Shelleyan hero would argue, it would not be. When such aid is freely and generously rendered, what has previously been the hell of death, disease and agony is remade as the proving grounds of benevolence, "and our habitation becomes a paradise."

Before Shelley defines the ability to perceive opportunity in adversity as a measure of "omnipotence," she schools the reader to reconsider the definition of power. Adrian teaches Lionel, a reforming criminal and leader of rogues, about a different kind of power:

"This," I thought, "is power! Not to be strong of limb, hard of heart, ferocious, and daring; but kind, / compassionate, and soft." - Stopping short, I clasped my hands, and with the fervour of a new proselyte, cried, "doubt me not, Adrian, I also will become wise and good!" and then quite overcome, I wept aloud. (26 [L. 46-7])

Lionel's definition of power uses terms which clearly signify his advancements from a Byronic to a more perfected Shelleyan character. As editor Jane Blumberg notes (26), Lionel's tears are reminiscent of Percy Shelley's tears after he dedicates himself to the powers of good in the opening poetic Dedication to *Laon and Cythna* (stanza iv). The tears, sometimes regarded as a sign of androgyny or feminization, may more usefully be understood as a sign of purified passion in the Romantic hero,⁸ passion that has been redirected from selfish to selfless ends.

Adrian is sometimes seen as a somewhat ineffectual figure, even as a portrait of a

⁸ As James P. Carson notes, the rhetoric of sentimentalism includes male tears as "a natural, reliable, and not at all arbitrary sign: they are beyond feigning, they provide demonstration in the last analysis of an overflow of feeling, they enforce belief, and they are a 'sure indication' of deep passion" (171). Carson also contends that such tears do not indicate "the appearance of a new sympathetic and humane masculine character" (171), certainly true of the tears of Castruccio Carson is discussing, but they do, however, provide the sure evidence he mentions when they accompany a man's pledge to benevolence in Shelley's work.

narcissistic, egoistic Percy Shelley (Mellor 149). Mellor parallels such an Adrian with Merrival, the abstracted astronomer who takes his family for granted while dreaming of paradise. Mellor and others have argued that Percy Shelley's descriptions of utopia, especially those in *Queen Mab*, are parodied in Merrival's predictions of the coming of paradise in 6000 years due to the precession of the equinoxes, while his family suffer deprivations and eventually death before he notices (150). The bite of Merrival's characterization is not so much his utopianism, but his lack of connection to his family: in his preoccupation with future potential, he neglects present reality. Adrian is not so abstracted. When he discovers that Evadne prefers Raymond to himself, he temporarily goes mad, but upon his recovery, he views her with equanimity and compassion (although, like his friends, he does not act on it). Adrian's will to romance seems to fade after Evadne evades him, but his friendship with Lionel is devoted, unselfish and wholly benevolent. In fact, Adrian loses gendered characteristics along with romance, becoming far more androgynous (a feature of Shelleyan perfection for male or female) than Lionel, who is often interpreted as a cross-dressing figure for his author.

Wollstonecraft cites this dying away of sexual passion and its replacement by outwardly-directed benevolence as one of the primary reasons women should cultivate their understandings, instead of their accomplishments or mere attractive attributes, in order to become better wives, mothers, and citizens.⁹ In her revisions of the Romantic hero, Shelley is largely concerned with the transformation of what Wollstonecraft calls "those emotions which disturb the order of society" into equally strong emotions which

⁹ For example, Wollstonecraft writes, "Friendship or indifference inevitably succeeds love. . . . Passions are spurs to action, and open the mind; but they sink into mere appetites, become a personal and momentary gratification, when the object is gained In order to fulfill the duties of life, and to be able to pursue with vigour the various employments which form the moral character, a master and mistress of a family ought not to continue to love each other with passion. I mean to say, they ought not to indulge those emotions which disturb the order of society, and engross the thoughts that should otherwise be employed" (*Vindication of the Rights of Woman* 30).

strengthen and preserve it. As Adrian nurses Lionel into a newly humanized way of life, Lionel finds in Adrian a mother-figure, saying of his tutelage, "I was as a child lisping its devotions after its mother, and my plastic soul was remoulded by a master hand" (26 [I. 47]), and "under the mild sway of his dear eyes, I was obedient and good as a boy of five years old, who does his mother's bidding" (31 [I. 63]). Adrian's importance as a mother-figure is to detach from gender Wollstonecraft's ideal of the mother as the guiding hand that rears good citizens. Adrian takes on the duties of mothering in contrast to the patriarchal/chivalric system in which familial duties are strongly determined by gender.

As a mother-figure, Adrian may be usefully compared to Clara, Lionel's young niece who becomes surrogate mother to his surviving child Evelyn after the Plague has taken the rest of humanity. As the last biological female left alive, Clara is the repository of some hope for the continuance of the human race, but Shelley refuses to sexualize either Clara or Adrian. Rather than posit Adrian and Clara as a new Adam and Eve, Shelley values them for themselves rather than for their potential as breeders--the tragedy of their loss is felt by Verney personally, not as a missed opportunity for repopulation. A caregiver throughout her own childhood, Clara has been educated to be a mother, and "felt towards [Evelyn] in some degree like a young / mother" (336 [III. 269-70]). She feels like, and acts like, a mother to Evelyn, helping to create a transitory utopian domesticity in the newly formed family: "Were we not happy in this transitory retreat?" (335 [III. 267]); "and though our four hearts alone beat in the world, those four hearts were happy" (336 [III. 271]).

Shelley often emphasizes the importance of the element of choice in the formation of families with the potential for utopian domesticity. One problem with this little family may be the way in which its formation is more a feature of necessity than choice: as the last remaining survivors, they choose to remain together: Adrian and Lionel bonded together as friends before the plague began, and adopt Clara as their own: but for Clara,

the life that stretches out before her offers no other real option. Clara's role in the new family is not of her own choosing: as she matures, she grows to realize the inflexibility of the role her well-meaning friends have created for her to mature into. Adrian and Lionel name Clara "the little queen of the world," (333 [III. 261]) attending to her every need, but the adults, and eventually Clara, feel their aloneness, and cannot sustain the happiness they feel with each other. Nor can they preserve Clara's "childish gaiety:" "She lost her gaiety, she laid aside her sports, and assumed an almost vestal plainness of attire. She shunned us, retiring with Evelyn . . . She approached us timidly, avoided / our caresses" (335 [III. 268-9]). Clara's lost gaiety is followed closely by Evelyn's fever and death, and thus seems related to her fear of his mortality. Although the Plague gave Adrian a chance to act out his philosophical motherhood by lessening the sufferings of his fellow-creatures, it has denied Clara that opportunity. Evelyn's mortality convinces Clara that her behavior as a mother cannot maintain her companions' well-being. To become a sexualized being--a possible lover to Adrian¹⁰--would be to reinscribe a merely physical motherhood role for herself. Clara's lost gaiety, vestal manner and avoidance of physicality indicates Shelley's rejection of the limitations of the traditional maternal role and her understanding that domesticity must expand outward to involve the family in larger social structures in order to fulfill its utopian potential. After the fall of humanity, Clara perceives that her education solely as a mother has rendered her pointless.

The primary female characters in *The Last Man* may profitably be seen as studies of the effects of domesticity on women's lives. Clara, a young girl, forms her character

¹⁰ It is unlikely that Shelley meant the reader to posit Clara and Adrian as mates, that Clara could make the psychological switch from regarding Adrian as a father-figure, or even less that Adrian is to be faulted for not making himself available to Clara as a mate, as Mellor suggests (156-7). In Shelley's novels cross-generational love affairs turn out badly: in *Mathilda*, the incestuous love of a father for his daughter is portrayed as a devastating curse; in *Lodore*, the marriage of a Lord in his mid-thirties to a teenaged wife (barely older than his own son) leads fairly directly to his own death in a duel.

around her position as surrogate mother to Lionel's children, a role she is unable to transcend. Evadne, the passionate and creative Greek princess, serves as a female example of the unregenerate Romantic hero. Perdita, raised as an orphan servant girl, takes refuge in dreams and becomes susceptible to the allure of the Byronic hero. Idris, sister to the angelic Adrian, shares little of his desire for knowledge, and so remains a good but limited, domestic figure.

The character of Evadne makes it impossible to construe gender as determining destiny in the novel; even her political ambitions are played out in Greece just as Raymond's are in England:

She married; and, carrying her restless energy of character with her into new scenes, she turned her thoughts to ambition, and aimed at the title and power of Princess of Wallachia; while her patriotic feelings were soothed by the idea of the good she might do her country, when her husband should be chief of this principality. She lived to find ambition, as unreal a delusion as love. Her intrigues with Russia for the furtherance of her / object, excited the jealousy of the Porte, and the animosity of the Greek government. She was considered a traitor by both, the ruin of her husband followed; they avoided death by a timely flight, and she fell from the height of her desires to penury in England. (90-91 [I. 240-41])

Evadne's thwarted political ambition is not wholly condemned by the other characters of the novel--Raymond offers to clear her name in Greece--and neither is her disruptive romantic life unforgiven by the Windsor circle:

Idris had shared Perdita's ill opinion of the Greek; but Raymond's account softened and interested her. Evadne's constancy, fortitude, even her ill-fated and ill-regulated love, were matter of admiration and pity; especially when . . . it was apparent that she preferred suffering and death to any in her eyes degrading

application for the pity and assistance of her lover. (113-114 [I. 312])

Even Adrian, who had loved Evadne in his youth and was driven mad by his discovery that she preferred Raymond, is also sympathetic to her situation. It is not, then, that Evadne's political ambitions or romantic mistakes make her intrinsically evil. Precisely to the contrary, Evadne represents a moral challenge to the other characters in the novel. As with Mathilda and Beatrice, Evadne is a character who loses her social position because her passionate inclinations lead her to act outside the boundaries dictated by society. Shelley does not simply condemn Evadne's passionate impulses but also the treatment Evadne receives. According to the precepts of utopian domesticity laid out elsewhere in Shelley's novels, Evadne must be gently persuaded of her mistakes in Godwinian fashion, fully forgiven, allowed to educate herself so as to take full advantage of her human potential according to Wollstonecraft's plan (the genius of her design for a public building is squandered, for though it draws Raymond to her, their love affair causes Raymond to leave public life and abandon his public improvement schemes), and drawn into the community as a full member, like family.

Evadne's situation parallels that of *Valperga's* Beatrice of Ferrara. The most important principles of utopian domesticity are illustrated when Euthanasia forgives Beatrice for her affair with Castruccio, nurses her and tries to assuage her mental anguish, offering her true friendship and a home. The crucial difference here is that while the Windsor circle are sympathetic to Evadne's situation, no one steps forward to draw her into their community--an important indication that although the Windsor group is characterized by loving relationships, it is insular and therefore not truly representative of utopian domesticity. Indeed, Raymond, in his initial repentance over his involvement with her, abandons Evadne for nearly a month, and when he at last returns, she is nearly on her deathbed. Evadne removes herself from the scene (114 [I. 315]), and is next discovered by Lionel in Greece, deranged and dressed as a soldier, ranting about

Raymond and cursing him with Plague (144-5 [II. 32-38]). As Evadne destroys the domestic felicity of Perdita and Raymond, as well as Raymond's career in England, she is herself destroyed by exclusion from their circle, and all meet with death as a result.

Shelley stages the arisal of the Plague against the backdrop of the troubled domestic and sexual entanglements of Perdita, Evadne and Raymond.¹¹ Although this disrupted domesticity does not engender or cause the Plague, it forms an appropriate backdrop of worry and stress against which Shelley may introduce her metaphor of the disease plaguing humanity. The Plague is an inhuman agent of isolation, separation, and death, which interposes itself into every human relationship in *The Last Man*, and Shelley uses the Plague to urge the necessity of reassessing actions and value systems before it is too late. Perdita's relationship with Raymond is the first to be affected by the Plague: she had previously believed Raymond's high rank would keep him from military harm, but she begins to fear for him because of the Plague. This fear deepens her reluctant forgiveness of Raymond's betrayals, and the repair of their riven relationship is given a new sense of urgency because of the threat of loss.

The troubled domesticity framing Shelley's first mention of the Plague is framed again by the larger context of Raymond's military action. Although Raymond's campaign will bring a reign of universal peace (ironic, since the world is shortly to be depopulated), Shelley is unsparing in her critique of militarism. Shelley closely associates the Plague with the battlefield and with the depopulated city of Constantinople, but she does not assert that militarism causes the Plague. Instead, Shelley sets their horrible destructive powers side by side for comparison. Shelley uses Lionel's report of his initial militaristic

¹¹ The Plague is first mentioned in the first chapter of volume two: "One word, in truth, had alarmed [Perdita] more than battles or sieges, during which she trusted Raymond's high command would exempt him from danger. That word, as yet it was no more to her, was PLAGUE. This enemy to the human race . . . was in Constantinople" (139 [II. 19]).

enthusiasm and almost immediate sorrowful repentance to set the stage for the reappearance of Evadne as a wasted soldier who prophesies the Plague.

Lionel has joined Raymond's army and fallen under his magnetic spell: "'Now by the fells of Cumberland,' I cried, 'by all of the vagabond and poacher that appertains to me, I will stand at your side, draw my sword in the Greek cause, and be hailed as a victor along with you!'" (142 [II. 26]). Even in his own terms, this is clearly Lionel's worst moment. Lionel's portrayal of his youthful, energetic self featured more positive attributes such as leadership and fearlessness--even his disdain for authority might be seen as a valuable attribute in fighting tyranny--but "vagabond" and "poacher" describe only his worst characteristics. Being hailed as a "victor" also has distinctly negative connotations within Shelley's oeuvre. The action he professes--"I will stand at your side, draw my sword . . . along with you"--is phallic, but more to the point, hyper-masculine behavior. He is not really acting for himself, but is swept along in a frenzy of wanting to be like Raymond. He realizes all this almost immediately, changing his tone dramatically from revolutionary fervor to pacifist sorrow within the space of five pages in Shelley's first edition:

During the busy day, my mind had yielded itself a willing slave to the state of things presented to it by its fellow-beings; historical association, hatred of the foe, and military enthusiasm had held dominion over me. Now, I looked on the evening star, as softly and calmly it hung pendulous in the orange hues of sunset.

I turned to the corse-strewn earth; and felt ashamed of my species. (143 [II. 31])

"The evening star" is no mere stock image in this passage; it alludes directly to Percy Shelley's *Laon and Cythna*, in which the spirit of Good takes the form of the morning and evening star--that is, Venus, goddess of Love, or Lucifer, the light-bringer. Sight of the evening star reminds Lionel that he owes allegiance not to Raymond (whose name literally means "world king," connoting his worldly priorities) but to the Shelleyan

(Promethean) love represented by Adrian, whose values are benevolence, justice and love rather than military conquest or personal glory.

It is immediately after this that Verney hears the "piercing shriek" of Evadne, whose "form seemed to rise from the earth; it flew swiftly towards me, sinking to the ground again as it drew near" (144 [II. 32]). Evadne's "form" is noticeably dehumanized and associated with the earth. In "seem[ing] to rise from the earth" "[flying]" and "sinking to the ground again" Evadne seems more like a vapor than a solid form; this associates her strongly with the prophetic voice of ancient female oracles (like the Cumaean sibyl in the frame of the novel) who lived in caverns where they uttered prophetic words after inhaling intoxicating fumes risen from the depths of the earth. Her association with prophecy aligns her, like Beatrice, with an image of the inspired Romantic poet, especially the *improvisatrice*. Her vapor-like form suggests a spectre of the Plague itself, which her prophetic words reinforce. Evadne's words are broken, repetitious, frenzied, and prophetic--like the words the novel's framer has pieced together from Sibylline leaves.¹² Her message is this:

"This is / the end of love! - Yet not the end!" - and frenzy lent her strength as she cast her arm up to heaven: "there is the end! there we meet again. Many living deaths have I borne for thee, O Raymond, and now I expire, thy victim! - By my death I purchase thee - lo! The instruments of war, fire, the plague, are my servitors. I dared, I conquered them all, till now! I have sold myself to death, with the sole condition that thou shouldst follow me - Fire, and war, and plague, unite for thy destruction - O my Raymond, there is no safety for thee!" (144 [II.

¹² Stephen Goldsmith also links the figures of Evadne and the Sybil, but if her function in the text is that "she is always and irredeemably other" (148) this is certainly the problem Shelley is getting at. Goldsmith also identifies the "power" of Evadne's speech as well as its confusing similarities to "a lamentation, a warning, a prophecy, or a curse" (149).

"This is the end of love! - Yet not the end! - . . . there is the end! there we meet again." Evadne's contradictory words form the prophetic message at the heart of the novel.¹³ In *The Last Man* prophecy is genuine and authoritative--Evadne's words, though confusing, are full of power, and the narrative itself is emotionally convincing--but Shelley foregrounds the problems of prophecy throughout: it is notoriously difficult to decipher and likely to go unheeded. Shelley suggests that inspiration may convey truth, but unframed by reason, truth is unintelligible. This unintelligibility fosters an awful mixture of hope and doubt. The novel repeatedly contrasts an ambivalent message of no hope on earth with a wistful hope for some kind of afterlife; this ambivalence can be seen here when Evadne "cast[s] her arm up to heaven" through the strength of "frenzy"--that is, her belief in heaven is at least partially fuelled by madness. Evadne's death itself is a protracted experience, occurring repeatedly ("Many living deaths") but it also occurs "now" ("now I expire"). She buys Raymond with her death, and she has sold herself to death. She is Raymond's victim, yet "there is no safety for [him]!" Through her frenzy, Evadne communicates one thing clearly: she and Raymond are linked together by their love affair--whether Raymond realizes it or not. The meaning of the Plague again asserts itself, making clear the vital centrality of human relationships as well as the ramifications of neglect.

Although Evadne's curse does not initiate the plague--it is known to exist in Constantinople before she utters her prophecy--her curse is convincing to Raymond: "She

¹³ Samantha Webb argues that *The Last Man* deconstructs its own prophetic nature: "Rather than framing the Sibylline text as a warning and as a prophesy, the editor frames it through its gathering and assimilates it to a personalized past rather than to a terrifying generalized future. [The frame] is a resistance to using this text as prophesy, a refusal to frame the text as powerful, divinely inspired, and authoritative" (132). Goldsmith also delivers a long and interesting exegesis of the Virgilian story of the Cumaean Sybil and the inaccuracy of portraying her as a symbol of feminist power, due to her enslavement by the god Apollo.

has said nothing but what I knew before - though this is confirmation" (147 [II. 41]). Raymond acknowledges the whole truth of Evadne's utterance in a way he was unable to earlier. Yet the reader may still be baffled: why should the end of love be destruction? For Evadne, Raymond, and Perdita, love leads to destruction because it is merely passionate love, still what Wollstonecraft calls "those emotions which disturb the order of society," untempered by the ideals of utopian domesticity which reconfigure passion within a new social order. Evadne is allowed to perish on the battlefield, dressed as a soldier, appearing like an inanimate object, dehumanized; Perdita is tossed by her conflicting emotions, refusing to be comforted or to forgive, until it is practically too late; Raymond vacillates between personal romantic attachments and seeking after glory, remaining constant neither to individuals nor to public duty.

Beatrice and Evadne are both figured as *improvisatrice*, and their creative powers contribute to their formation as Byronic Romantic heroes. For Beatrice, the power of prophecy was a sham, symptomatic of her poor education and leading to her fatal trust in Castruccio. Her vacillation between faithful belief and heresy indicates the failure of her inspiration to lead to truth. Evadne, on the other hand, speaks the truth, but still in such a way as to mingle hope and despair. Mathilda also appears as a creative woman writer, trapped by passion in a position of isolation and unable to imagine a way out. Shelley places all these figures in positions of great stress as their Byronic characteristics push them out of society's framework. As a result, their pronouncements do not unproblematically reflect truth. The restrictions of society have harmed these women, and, as a consequence, their power to create and to accurately convey truth has been warped. Shelley even critiques herself as a Romantic woman writer, conveying her own doubts as to her ability to accurately reflect truth in the Preface of *The Last Man*, where she states the limitations of the editor to translate and reassemble the Sybilline leaves from which the narrative is constructed. Importantly, however, women's constructions of

"truth," however garbled, are not silenced in Shelley's work, and their limitations are clearly shown as social constructions in dire need of being rectified.

The association of pestilence and death with the sexually transgressive female is pervasive in Shelley's work and arises from women's treatment within restrictive domestic and sexual relationships. Katherine C. Hill-Miller examines Plague in *The Last Man* as a female force which "like other manifestations of the female in Western culture, robs man of his ability to rise above the physical" (134), and has identified the association of pestilence with the sexually transgressive female in several of Shelley's writings.¹⁴ Hill-Miller does not mention, however, the close association of the Plague with the sexually transgressive Evadne, whose dying words seem to curse Raymond and to promote the spread of Plague. Evadne has transgressed societal boundaries, and Shelley's characters have failed to reconfigure society in order to reintegrate Evadne amongst themselves, causing Evadne's dramatic social slippage from Princess and creative genius to foot-soldier and vindictive prophet. Like Beatrice, her class position, tied to gender constraints, is precarious and evanescent, but her creative powers of inspiration remain, though perverted by her tortured experiences. Evadne's abandonment leads to her dehumanization, and her dehumanization is aligned with the release of inhuman forces; her passionate love becomes frenzy, and her frenzy directs this twisted yet powerful emotional force back at the object of her desire. In her frenzy, Evadne becomes the vector that transmits pestilence. This vector of pestilence is not created by

¹⁴ Hill-Miller, arguing that this association springs from the incest dynamic at work within the patriarchal nuclear family, first points out "Mathilda's description of herself as a 'living pestilence'" (*Mathilda* 239, qtd in Hill-Miller 104), and shows the similarities between Mathilda's speech and that of Frankenstein's Creature, another offspring rejected as "unnatural." Hill-Miller goes on to mention *Valperga's* Wilhelmina of Bohemia and Beatrice of Ferrara as sexually transgressive females identified with pestilence: "Wilhelmina's beliefs and behavior are described as 'a living pestilence' (2:27)" while Beatrice "connects herself to the 'disease, plague, famine, leprosy [and] fever' (3:45) that are evil's manifestations" (132).

Evadne alone, but also by Raymond, her desire and her abandoner.

Evadne's frenzied passion (like Beatrice's) must be recognized as the Byronic Romantic hero's egoistic passion, but for the female Byronic hero, societal risks are much greater than for the male. The passionate risks undertaken by men are valorized even when they fail, but for the women of Shelley's day to risk acting passionately was to be both unsexed and sent into a slide from class position from which there was no recovery. John Morillo, in his discussion of enthusiasm, gives a quotation from Girondiste Jean-Baptiste Louvet, illustrating how men may culturally validate even passions the culture finds suspect or dangerous: "It is not easy to command our passions in the time of a revolution: there is indeed no instance of one accomplished without their assistance. Great obstacles are to be overcome; and this cannot be effected without an ardour, and a devotion to the causes, bordering upon enthusiasm, or tending to produce it" (49-50). Men like Louvet may couch uncontrolled passion in terms that suggest it may produce beneficial social change, but Shelley shows that passionate action not strictly tempered by reason would lead to rejection and abandonment in an unreformed society, as it does for Evadne or Beatrice.¹⁵ For Shelley, such passionate characters challenge society and may contribute to a greater good even through their destruction by revealing what flawed society cannot accommodate.

Whereas the masculine Byronic hero perceives isolation from a disapproving society as an inconvenience—if indeed he does not actively seek it out—the female Byronic hero perceives it as punishment. For example, Mathilda's anguish is triggered by her father's passionate love and abandonment through suicide; Beatrice's madness is

¹⁵ In the case of Euthanasia, even her reasonable actions are interpreted as passionate and condemned. In the case of the Creature, his position as supplicant aligns him with Shelley's vulnerable women characters, and he is interpreted first as a dangerous creature of uncontrolled passions, and secondarily as a wily reasoner whose very power to reason is condemned as deceptive.

triggered by Castruccio's abandonment and by her discovery that her supposed holy powers are a sham. Even the Creature's rage is triggered by Victor's abandonment. These characters share the vulnerability to abandonment that differentiates them from most men in Shelley's milieu—even though their initial potential (for love, service, creativity or passion) is not differently gendered from men's in Shelley's eyes. Being abandoned causes the female to seek a reason for her exile, and her identification of her anger at and fear of society may cause her to perceive herself as internally corrupt and a vector of pestilence.¹⁶ In Catherine Decker's terms, "women treated . . . as mad or immoral may become mad or immoral."¹⁷

In *The Last Man* (as in *Frankenstein*), Shelley's goal seems to have been to make this perception of abandonment and sense of internalized pestilence universally understood.¹⁸ The contemporary critic who complained that Shelley's novel should have been about "*the last Woman*" who "would have known better how to paint her distress at having nobody left to talk to,"¹⁹ perceived abandonment as a feminine condition even as Shelley attempted to demonstrate that it is not necessarily so. Isolation and abandonment are two sides of the same coin: Raymond's self-exile results not only in his own death but

¹⁶ Michael Eberle-Sinatra states that "Woman (in the person of Evadne) identifies herself with destruction, and 'enacts the revenge of female power against control' [Anne McWhir, introd. *The Last Man*, xxv]" (99). Shelley argues against the *necessary* equation of Woman with destruction, but also demonstrates why it often turns out that way.

¹⁷ See my discussion of Beatrice in Chapter Four on *Valperga*.

¹⁸ Pamela Clemit agrees that in *The Last Man*, "the monster's experience of cosmic victimization has become that of all mankind" (185).

¹⁹ Review of *The Last Man*, *London Literary Gazette*, 474 (18 Feb. 1826), 103, qtd in Clemit 188. Bennett (149) gives a longish extract from this review and from others.

in Perdita's and Evadne's as well. Although isolation may be chosen, its detrimental effects are made more forcefully clear when it is portrayed as abandonment: abandonment has a more devastating appearance because it is not chosen, and the Plague emphasizes the horrors of isolation through its portrayal of large-scale abandonment.

In a move typical of Shelley's tendency to complicate her portrayal of gender, Verney also perceives Raymond's figure as transmitting the Plague:

Methought I had been invited to Timon's last feast; I came with keen appetite, the covers were removed, the hot water sent up its unsatisfying steams, while I fled before the anger of the host, who assumed the form of Raymond; while to my diseased fancy, the vessels hurled by him after me, were surcharged with fetid vapour, and my friend's shape, altered by a thousand distortions, expanded into a gigantic phantom, bearing on its brow the sign of pestilence. (160 [II. 79])

And to further implicate masculine characters as sources of pestilence or disease, both Victor Frankenstein and Castruccio suffer from fevers, Castruccio dying of his rather than from any military attack.

Shelley develops Perdita and Idris as overly sentimental characters, educated in a strongly gendered fashion.²⁰ Perdita suffers from her overly sentimental nature by contributing to the destruction of her own domestic happiness. Evadne plays her part in the destruction of Raymond's domestic happiness with Perdita, but Raymond resorts to omission and outright falsehood when confronted by Perdita about his doings with Evadne:

²⁰ As Lynn Wells rightly notes, "Perdita personifies womanly self-sacrifice and acquiescence to male domination, a cultural stereotype with which Shelley tries to come to terms through the creation of an exaggerated version of women's predicament" (221-222). However, Wells's description of Idris as a perfected version of Perdita (222-223) ignores the excruciating worry that debilitates Idris as the Plague threatens her family. Lionel views Idris as "the admired type of feminine perfection" (qtd in Wells 223) because Lionel loves Idris, not because Shelley does. Although Idris is a superior type to Perdita, Shelley portrays her as painfully restricted in her tight domestic circle.

He forgot each word he spoke was false. He personated his assumption of innocence even to self-deception. . . . He spoke with pride; he felt injured. . . . He had sinned against his own honour, by affirming, swearing to, a direct falsehood. . . . His passions, always his masters, acquired fresh strength, from the long sleep in which love had cradled them. (98-99 [I. 265-66], 100 [I. 270, 271])

The narrator condemns Raymond for deceiving Perdita, but Perdita is also condemned for her inability to forgive Raymond. Her devotion is understood by the narrator to be excessive: "I own that I did not see her misfortune with the same eyes as Perdita," says Verney; "At all events methought that the wound could be healed; and, if they remained together, it would be so" (112 [I. 309]).

Verney's perception of the excess of Perdita's emotions is Shelley's way of critiquing the weaknesses of such overly sentimental characters. The Plague is a mechanism of cruelty, showing the futility of a mother's worry over her children, who will always be subject to mortality. The fate of Perdita, however, is a direct result of her own total dependence on her husband, and on Raymond's corresponding inability to control his own self-centered passions. Perdita's excessive devotion to Raymond is first shown as destructive when she awaits the outcome of his bid to become Lord Protector. Her emotions vacillate wildly between despair at leaving England should Raymond be defeated, and joy at the thought of consoling him herself:

Perdita had arrived with her child at Dartford, weeping and inconsolable. . . . [She] passed several hours in acute suffering. Sometimes she hung over her child, tracing her resemblance to the father, and fearful lest in after life she should display the same passions and uncontrollable impulses, that rendered him unhappy. . . . She figured to herself their life in the Greek isle . . . her task of soothing him, her care for the beautiful Clara, her rides in his company, her

dedication of herself to his consolation. The picture then presented itself to her in such glowing colours, that she feared the reverse, and a life of magnificence and power in London; where Raymond would no longer be hers only, nor she the sole source of happiness to him. (83 [I. 216-17])

Perdita's devotion to Raymond takes a possessive turn, as she begins to prefer having him all to herself. She does not imagine herself as a political helpmeet but fears that Raymond's political life will divide them. Although this need not be the case--a marriage of equality would be up to the task, and Perdita could develop her own role in public affairs--she turns out to be right.

Raymond's arrival is accompanied by a sad example of the inability of the lovers to communicate effectively, a portent of their future estrangement:

That he should come to her alone, wetted by the storm, careless of every thing except speed, what else could it mean, that, vanquished and solitary, they were to take their way from native England? . . . The knowledge of his success had become so much a part of himself, that he forgot that it was necessary to impart it to his companion. She only felt in his embrace a dear assurance that while he possessed her, he would not despair. . . . He kissed her brow, but the wayward girl, half sorry at his triumph, agitated by swift change of thought, hid her face in his bosom and wept. He comforted her; he instilled into her his own hopes and desires; and soon her countenance beamed with sympathy. (83-84 [I. 218-19])

Raymond is cruel and careless with Perdita's emotions, making her wait alone for news of their fate. Shelley's dry tone in stating that Raymond "forgot that it was necessary to impart it to his companion" emphasizes his carelessness and his lack of sympathy with her hopes or fears. Raymond then "instilled into her his own hopes and desires" so that Perdita becomes less and less her own person and more a mere reflection of Raymond. Audrey Fisch also points out that while Raymond's inability to communicate effectively

with Perdita does not point to any immediate inability to lead the country, ultimately his inability to handle his domestic affairs does lead to his abandoning his post (274).²¹ In such scenes Shelley develops her criticism of patriarchal domesticity, showing how mere romantic love is unequal to the task of creating utopian domesticity when equality and respect are absent.

Wollstonecraft spends much of her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* deploring the way women are educated only to please men. Perdita describes her own character formation in language Wollstonecraft would have recognized:

“I was a poor, uneducated, unbefriended, mountain girl, raised from nothingness by him. . . . I devoted my self to him. . . / One only return did he owe me, even fidelity. I earned that; I deserved it.” (113 [I. 309-11])

He, she thought, can be great and happy without me. Would that I also had a career! Would that I could freight some bark with all my hopes, energies, and desires, and launch it forth into the ocean of life--bound for some attainable point, with ambition or pleasure at the helm! But adverse winds detain me on shore.

(126 [I. 351])

Mellor, in quoting these passages, points out that the women characters of *The Last Man* exist strictly in relation to male characters, “never self-centered or self-sufficient” (155-6).

Perdita’s character has been developed from childhood as intelligent but wary and sensitive; her impoverished upbringing, largely separated from her brother, was more difficult for her than for him because she was kept more confined due to her gender and her employment in domestic service. Thus a seemingly unhealthy bent toward

²¹ Fisch interestingly suggests that it is the insularity of England that Shelley brings down by the Plague--an island nation run by ambitious men, whose “splendid isolation . . . is a specious assertion of safety and a dangerously false and chauvinistic attempt to displace danger and responsibility onto an external and hence ‘different’ group” (277).

introspection was fostered in Perdita, and she did not develop the love of books adopted by Lionel after Adrian befriended him. Shelley clearly shows how Perdita's childhood and education are woefully mismanaged, resulting in her overwhelming identification with her role as wife.

As Samantha Webb compellingly argues, Perdita resists Lionel's attempts to interest her in scholarship. According to Webb, Perdita's refusal to be educated by Lionel "marks the limit of that educational process and denies him the authority he needs to succeed in his project. In this way, Mary Shelley calls into question any totalizing process or epistemology that offers a 'panacea' for individual or social ills, be it education, 'civilization,' domesticity, or love" (127). While not entirely taking into account Perdita's restrictive background as a domestic servant (while Lionel freely roamed the hills), which must in Godwinian fashion have formed her character at least in part, Webb's argument acknowledges Shelley's sophisticated understanding of the standard solutions usually proffered by progressive ideologies. Michael Eberle-Sinatra quotes Perdita's response to scholarship: "her own character, which formerly she fancied that she thoroughly understood, became the first in rank among the terrae incognitae, the pathless wilds of a country that had no chart" (123-4, qtd 104); he goes on to describe Perdita as "a Byronic heroine to whom love is 'woman's whole existence' and this is the cause of her death" (104). Neither Webb nor Eberle-Sinatra note that while Lionel finds (masculine) companionship among the great thinkers of the world, Perdita is unable to relate her own self-knowledge to what she finds in books. Perdita's gendered-ness repels her from study, and this repulsion creates a vicious circle that genders her further. Perdita wishes that she had "a career" but she does not see that her complaint is not a Wollstonecraftian desire for public utility, but is perilously close to that which led Evadne to destruction--the use of her powers for "ambition or pleasure." Finally, Shelley holds Perdita to a Godwinian standard, demanding that she offer Raymond forgiveness rather

than regarding her relationship to him as utterly destroyed. Eventually, Perdita does forgive Raymond, but not long before both are killed--Raymond, by an explosion during an ill-advised victory ride through Constantinople, and Perdita, through suicide after she is taken away from Raymond's burial place.²²

Both Perdita and Idris suffer greatly from the fear of being separated from their loved ones, by the Plague or by other circumstances. Idris's emotional intensity is, unfortunately, a direct result of Lionel's own directives, demonstrating that his desire to keep his wife safe (not just for her benefit, but for his own and his children's) supersedes her charitable outreach to others:

Maternal affection had not rendered Idris selfish; at the beginning of our calamity she had, with thoughtless enthusiasm, devoted herself to the care of the sick and helpless. I checked her; and she submitted to my rule. . . . she at length agreed not to go beyond the inclosure of the forest. Indeed, within the walls of the Castle we had a colony of the unhappy, deserted by their relatives, and in themselves helpless, sufficient to occupy her time and attention, while ceaseless anxiety for my welfare and the health of her children, however she strove to curb or conceal it, absorbed all her thoughts, and undermined the vital principle. (215 [II. 243-4])

Lionel plants the seeds of worry within Idris that ultimately lead to her wasting death, though he does not mention this until after he has begun describing Idris as sick with worry. Further, he "checks" her community-building impulses, so stifling the dimension of utopian domesticity, which depends on openness as opposed to exclusion, indicated

²² Perdita is the only one of *The Last Man*'s main characters to commit suicide, and must remind the reader of Mathilda's father, who also drowned himself as a result of overly passionate love. Drowning deaths had a biographical resonance with passion and irrationality for Shelley. Mary Wollstonecraft twice attempted to drown herself due to love affairs gone bad, and Percy Shelley's first wife, Harriet Westbrook Shelley, drowned herself, with rumors that she was pregnant at the time.

by the Castle's hospitality to victims of the Plague, though as stated earlier, it is left unclear how open the Castle really is.

Forgiveness is a central theme to utopian domesticity, for Evadne, Perdita, and Raymond, but another figure who earns forgiveness is the mother of Adrian and Idris, known as the ex-Queen. Angry with her husband for leaving the throne, angry with Lionel because he, instead of the ambitious Raymond, marries Idris, the ex-Queen treats Idris harshly, refuses to meet Lionel, and scorns Adrian for his lack of ambition to regain the throne for himself. When Idris dies without reconciling with her, the ex-Queen is spurred to acknowledge her mistakes to Lionel as they stand by Idris's corpse:

. . . She placed her wrinkled hand on my arm, exclaiming with tremulous accents, "Lionel Verney, my son!" This name, applied at such a moment by my angel's mother, instilled into me more respect than I had ever before felt for this disdainful lady. I bowed my head, and kissed her shrivelled hand. . . . She said, for excuse, "How did I treat her? Wounding her gentle heart with savage coldness; I had no compassion on her in past years, does she forgive me now? Little, little does it boot to talk of repentance and forgiveness to the dead . . ." . . . The overpowering knowledge, that love and life were the true emperors of our mortal state; all, as a tide, rose, and filled her soul with stormy and bewildering confusion. It fell to my lot, to come as the influential power, to allay the fierce tossing of these tumultuous waves. . . . She turned to me. The hard, inflexible, persecuting woman, turned with a mild expression of face, and said, "If our beloved angel sees us now, it will delight her to find that I do you even tardy justice." (280-282 [III.100-106])²³

²³ Jane Blumberg cites this scene, but interprets it as making the ex-Queen "suffer for her crime" (125). Blumberg does not see the end-of-life conversion of the ex-Queen as significant. This is, however, at least one instance in *The Last Man* which belies what Blumberg calls "Shelley's certainty of humanity's inevitable failure to achieve happiness

Several influences are at work in this scene. On the biographical level, this scene undoubtedly represents Mary Shelley's fantasy of seeing Sir Timothy Shelley, her dead husband's inflexible, condemnatory parent, chagrined and repentant. But the scene is more important to the understanding of the characters and Shelley's theory of justice in utopian domesticity. The ex-Queen comes to realize that her priorities should not have been focused on worldly ambition all these years, but on love for her children and fellowship with their families. The ex-Queen had been so harsh to Idris as to attempt to drug and ship her to Austria, there to be married against her will. Her acceptance of Lionel is a profound change of heart, and leads to a measure of happiness for her and for her surviving family, even though Idris is already dead. Even more important, the scene represents Lionel in a shining moment as an example of the Shelleyan Romantic hero. Seeing his mother-in-law's true repentance, he puts aside the years of mistreatment he faced at her hands and even focuses on her resemblance to his beloved wife (281 [III.104]) rather than holding a justified grudge over the pain she had caused Idris all these years. Lionel cheers the old woman by reminding her that her son Adrian and grandson Evelyn are still alive, and, as Euthanasia does for Beatrice, does his best to create a family circle for her. Although utopian domesticity barely exists in *The Last Man*, and is elusive even in Lionel's blissful marriage due to the lack of roundness in the character of Idris, the qualities of justice, forgiveness and re-education required for utopian domesticity do exist here.

As I indicated earlier, some critics interpret Shelley's tragic narrative and exploration of the weaknesses and strengths of various iterations of the Romantic hero as her abandonment of the radicalism and/or Romanticism of Percy Shelley. Mary Poovey

or live up to an ideal" (140); though it is a small-scale and qualified happiness, it is an important achievement in terms of justice.

couches *The Last Man* unequivocally as Shelley's "final abandonment of Percy's aesthetic ideals" (146), arguing that "the disappointment and grief that characterize *The Last Man* actually condemn his political and personal optimism" (149) because the fate of humanity is "a hideous equality before death" rather than "the political equality Percy dreamed of" (152). As Poovey acknowledges, "like all of her early novels, *The Last Man* dramatizes the way that egotism threatens domestic harmony" (149). Poovey is right to focus on the threat to domestic harmony in the book. Shelley is careful to show how Perdita, Raymond and Evadne are destroyed not by the Plague but by their inability to establish utopian domesticity. The "hideous equality before death" faced by Lionel and his friends is understood by him not in political but in personal terms. The deeply personal loss of loved ones, especially the hope of being survived by children or other family members, seems immeasurably more consequential than leaving behind great writings or public works (both of which are specifically found lacking in Verney's final pages). But this is not necessarily a refutation of Percy Shelley's "dreams of political equality"--political equality is shown to be a necessity even in the last days. In fact, the use of the Plague for political ends by the False Prophet in Paris is portrayed as the most monstrous sequence of events in the novel.²⁴ Here, political equality must be taken in Percy's terms as the destruction of tyranny, but not as the levelling of class differences, which Shelley seems to be at some pains to preserve.

The most glaring example of Shelley's preservation of class difference is her portrayal of servants still assisting their masters to cross the Alps after humanity has dwindled to a few dozen. At the most basic level of narrative, this portrayal serves her

²⁴ Morton Paley takes the episode of the false prophet as proof of the irrelevance of "the religious paradigm" (118) and as a further stab at Godwin, whose early religion had been a strict Calvinism. Paley's study of millennium in *The Last Man* focuses more on the literary resonances of millennium than on the political, and does not delve into on the local utopia of domesticity.

purpose of emphasizing the importance of fidelity and the preservation of human ties-- even when those ties are based on economic disparities and class differences which should have become meaningless.²⁵ Critics who have made connections between Shelley's philosophy and Burke's have identified her preservation of class differences and her focus on aristocracy as the most conservative elements of Shelley's utopian domesticity. On the one hand, her preservation of class derives from her Godwinian commitment to gradual change through education instead of sudden or violent revolution. On the other, her focus on aristocracy may derive from the fact of the aristocracy's control of material resources in the form of land (if not capital) which enables them to provide the necessities of life for their dependents. As Godwin argues in *Political Justice*, the fact that property is concentrated in the hands of a few is an evil that could be improved only by an intolerable violence.²⁶ But Godwin goes on to argue that property owners "hold their wealth only as a trust, that they are strictly accountable for every atom of their expenditure, that they are merely administrators, and by no means proprietors in chief;" he also asserts that it is not enough for them to dispense "clemency and charity" instead of adopting "a system of justice" (708 [Book VIII, Chap. I, "Preliminary Observations"]). Godwin believes that eventually, society will generally acknowledge

²⁵ Paul Cantor and others have noted Shelley's comfort with valorizing an aristocratic mode of life in *The Last Man*, but as Cantor realizes, it is only "to the extent that an aristocracy can be conceived on the model of a family, Shelley seems to endorse its leadership and way of life" ("Apocalypse of Empire" 203). Cantor states of Shelley's utopian domesticity that "For Shelley, the ultimate human good is to be found in the family, or at least in a small circle of human beings who genuinely care for each other" (199).

²⁶ Godwin concedes that "property, with all its inequalities, such as it is sanctioned by the general sense of the members of any state . . . should be defended" (717 [Book VIII, "Of Property," Chap. II, "Principles of Property"]).

superfluity to be a crime,²⁷ resulting in an equalized distribution of property and general societal improvement.²⁸ The utopian domesticity portrayed by Shelley in her novels comprises a Godwinian project of "general illumination"²⁹--an attempt to convince readers of the desirability of Godwinian simplicity as a component of utopian domesticity.

In her portrayal of the cottage way of life, Shelley demonstrates the value of simple agrarianism as opposed to the luxury attached to aristocracy--even though her characters (like her audience) are generally members of the middle and upper classes.³⁰

²⁷ Godwin's utopian ideal, resulting from an equal distribution of property, resembles Shelley's in its agrarian simplicity: "If superfluity were banished, the necessity for the greater part of the manual industry of mankind would be superseded; and the rest, being amicably shared among the active and vigorous members of the community, would be burthensome to none. Every man would have a frugal, yet wholesome diet; every man would go forth to that moderate exercise of his corporal functions that would give hilarity to the spirits; none would be made torpid with fatigue, but all would have leisure to cultivate the kindly and philanthropical affections, and let loose his faculties in the search of intellectual improvement" (730 [Book VIII, Chap. III, "Benefits Attendant on a System of Equality"]). Godwin does not go into the bases for community reformation focused on by Shelley.

²⁸ Godwin claims that equalized distribution of property would result in more leisure for the laboring classes: "Half an hour a day employed in manual labour by every member of the community would sufficiently supply the whole with necessities" (746 [Book VIII, Chap. VI, "Objections . . . from Allurements of Sloth"]). Godwin repeats this claim a few pages later (753 [Book VIII, Chap. VII, "Objections . . . from Benefits of Luxury"]), and Percy B. Shelley refers to it in a note to Canto V of *Queen Mab* (1813).

²⁹ Godwin writes that "The motives for a rich man to live as if he were a poor one are very inferior now to what they would be when a general sympathy upon this subject had taken place, and a general illumination had diffused itself" (738 [Book VIII, Chap. IV, "Objections . . . from the Frailty of the Human Mind"]).

³⁰ Some characters of Shelley's who might be deemed working-class include Old Barnet, a fisherman, from *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot*; Guinigi, warrior turned farmer in *Valperga*. Hernan de Faro, orphan turned warrior and mariner in *Perkin Warbeck*; and Fanny Derham, impoverished but scholarly daughter of a deceased clergyman in *Lodore*.

Such a tension was for Shelley carried out somewhat in her own life: she had married Percy Bysshe Shelley, himself a member of the landed aristocracy, who had something of a blind spot concerning his own biases in favor of his segment of society, as what Donald H. Reiman terms an “agrarian reactionary.”³¹ Still, Reiman argues, P. B. Shelley advocated for reform which would ensure the necessities of life for members of a currently “wretched populace;” his utopian scheme of reform is sketched, for example, in *The Mask of Anarchy* (Reiman 12-13). The ideal of the English freeholder, with a cottage and a small plot of agricultural land, is at the root of Shelley’s vision of perfected society throughout her works and is common to the early nineteenth century middle classes, as Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall have shown. James P. Carson theorizes as “radical agrarianism” the idea that valorizes “independent peasants, who labor on small farms that they either own outright or hold on long and secure leases” (170). This ideal, as Reiman perceptively notes, is a complicated mixture of nostalgia and utopia (14)--reactionary and radical at the same time. A similar tension is reflected in the contrast between Shelley’s aristocratic characters and the laboring peasants referred to by Godwin. Authors like Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and the Shelleys tended to resolve this tension, for good or ill, by aiming their critique at middle and upper class readers, in the hopes of effecting reform through a beneficial “trickle-down” type of effect. Shelley is less likely to portray “levelling” as a result of revolution and more likely to show characters voluntarily adopting a simpler lifestyle, usually in conjunction with other elements of utopian domesticity.

The plot of *The Last Man*, especially the figuration of the Plague as a destructive force of Nature and Necessity, resonates strongly with Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Laon and*

³¹ After Percy Shelley’s death in July 1822, Shelley’s portrayal of the necessity of landowners to deal justly with their dependents may also have been prompted by her severe treatment at the hands of Sir Timothy Shelley, who tried to control her actions by threatening to withdraw the maintenance necessary to her and her son, Percy Florence.

Cythna, or, the Revolt of the Golden City (1817). In it, the attainment of utopia is contrasted with the horrors of tyranny, and the direct result of tyranny is the spread of Plague. The first canto of *Laon and Cythna* depicts a battle between the forces of good and evil for supremacy on earth, and the reader learns that supremacy is held by evil, in the form of an impressive eagle, which has forced good to be taken for a serpent. In the remaining cantos, the visionary of the first canto is told the story of the two heroes, brother and sister, who try to overthrow the power of the tyrant of the Golden City. They achieve a momentary success, but the people's fear of the tyrant destroys them. Laon and Cythna are executed on a pyre by the order of the tyrant and a hideous priest, who accuses them of spreading the Plague which was clearly a result of the tyrant's bloodthirstiness. Laon and Cythna do not experience the agonies of the pyre but instead are transmuted to paradise, where Laon relates their story to the visionary.

Mary Shelley's novel invokes *Laon and Cythna* in several key themes. The contrast of childhood innocence with the depredations of tyranny and Plague are present in *Laon and Cythna*, and the culpability of superstition, masking as religion, in perverting human nature in times of stress is also common to both works. The scene of the death feast encountered by Lionel, a terrible parody of domesticity, calls up the horrific scene in *Laon and Cythna* in which a mad woman has arranged a pile of moldy loaves as a feast for a roomful of dead babies:

I returned to the first chamber, wondering what sightless host had spread the material for my repast, and my repose. I drew a chair to the table, and examined what the viands were of which I was to partake. In truth it was a death feast! The bread was blue and mouldy; the cheese lay a heap of dust. I did not dare examine the other dishes; a troop of ants passed in a double line across the table cloth; every utensil was covered with dust, with cobwebs, and myriads of dead flies. . . Tears rushed into my eyes; surely this was a wanton display of the power of the destroyer. . . . I

had hoped in the very heart of despair. . . . (351 [III. 315-316])

In *Laon and Cythna*, the comparable scene (canto 6, stanzas 46-53) is included to illustrate the horrors of tyranny in deranging the peasantry from their wholesome nature. But in Shelley's scene, the emphasis is on the horror Lionel derives from his imagination, which tries to convince him that he is not alone. The death feast is a horrible substitute for the companionship (*companion* literally meaning someone with whom to break bread) for which he longs. Blumberg reads the scene as a reminder of "the false security the comfortable family offers" (133). To the contrary, the scene yields such torture precisely because the domestic scene would successfully have rendered the comfort the Last Man so desperately seeks.

The key difference between Mary's story and Percy's poem is that nothing directly causes the Plague, *per se*, in *The Last Man*. English society has become a Republic, far from tyranny, governed by predominantly well-meaning and capable men. After the fall of Constantinople, the world knows universal peace for the first time. But the Plague appears anyway, carrying with it the grim and inescapable fate of death. Mellor has concluded that Shelley uses the Plague to emphasize the ultimate inutility of all ideological belief systems. Similarly, Jane Blumberg, in an interesting exploration of Burkean philosophy, concludes that neither Percy Shelley's style of radicalism nor Burkean conservatism could hope to withstand the calamity of the Plague (134-5; 140-147). I would argue, along a slightly different line, that the Plague collapses all belief systems, bringing them to the same level so that comparisons can be made as to what is really most important.³² Clearly, it is the centrality of human relationships that is crucial to human

³² Barbara Johnson points out that *The Last Man* "does indeed contain a series of critiques . . . of the projects of reform dear to her father William Godwin and her husband Percy Shelley . . . , but there is no relation between these critiques and the train of events" (264). In other words, the devastation of the Plague cancels out the trials of reform philosophy offered by the political actions of the characters.

existence. For Shelley, it is important to topple tyranny, but it is more important to create and preserve utopia on the local and immediate level. Volume One of *The Last Man* presents a story of stereotypical romance. Perhaps it offers little that is really new. But even if Verney's delineation of the errors of his friends and relations approaches tedium, these relationships are more important to Verney than the whole history of the human race. Not only the highborn Windsors, but every character Shelley introduces is presumed to have a similar story to Lionel's, and as the novel progresses through Volumes Two and Three, Shelley spends several digressions relating their stories as well: a daughter who will not leave her decrepit mother; another daughter who is found playing the organ for her blind father even as she expires from the Plague; a mother held hostage to a mad prophet by the love of her child; even the madness of Merrival who ignores his family until it is too late.³³ The centrality of human relationships is the one tenet of *The Last Man* that cannot be questioned. Ironically, Lionel's humanistic education, which required him to rethink himself as contributing to the well-being of others, has become pointless, and it is this that makes his narrative arc from wild, self-sufficient shepherd to solitary Crusoe figure so poignant.

³³ Albright notes how the narrative returns several times to the stories of Juliet and Lucy Martin.

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Chivalry and Utopian Domesticity in *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*

In *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830), Mary Shelley revisits ideas from her political novels of the 1820s, *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, but expands her exploration of utopian domesticity as the ideal social structure by situating it alongside the code of chivalry. Utopian domesticity contrasts vividly with the horrors of war and reveals the hollowness of the chivalric virtues of honor, ambition and glory. It is not that the code of chivalry celebrates only bankrupt virtues, but it valorizes hollow ideals (such as military glory for men, or a stainless reputation for women) that inspire men and women to try to protect their fame rather than to further human advancement; Shelley follows Godwin in her condemnation of this kind of love of fame.¹ In this novel Shelley portrays Richard, Duke of York (historically known as Perkin Warbeck, a Dutch pretender to the throne, but according to Shelley, the uncrowned Richard IV), as the ideal chivalric hero. Richard is a good man and is acknowledged to be the rightful heir to the English throne, but his quest is shown as unendurably destructive at both the national and personal levels. Shelley contrasts political ambition not just with personal happiness, but with the national well-being of England, Ireland, Scotland, and parts of Spain and France. The destructive

¹ Godwin showed how the love of his reputation, in a similar framework of chivalry, destroys Falkland in *Caleb Williams*, and explains how the love of fame is a mistake in *Political Justice*: "The love of fame is no doubt a delusion. . . . Whether the benefit which is added to the common flock proceed from you or me is a pitiful distinction. . . . It is impossible we should want motives, so long as we see clearly how multitudes and ages may be benefited by our exertions, how causes and effects are connected in an endless chain, so that no honest effort can be lost, but will operate to good, centuries after its author is consigned to the grave" (748, 749 [Book VIII, "Of Property," Chap. VI, "Objections . . . from the Allurements of Sloth"]).

William D. Brewer gives an excellent close reading delineating Shelley's exploration of chivalry and the influence of Godwin and Wollstonecraft on her thoughts about chivalry, but presents Shelley as more ambivalent about chivalry than she really is: though showing Richard as a virtuous man within the chivalric system, she nevertheless demonstrates how chivalry functions to pervert men from benevolence to a search for glory, ambition and personal honor.

personal ambitions of the virtuous Richard are pitted against the beneficial peace that has begun to heal war-torn England, even though the source of that peace is a king portrayed as personally cruel and politically merciless, even tyrannical.

Like *The Last Man*, *Perkin Warbeck* is a tragedy of attrition, and as such, it portrays utopian domesticity as fragile and evasive. Richard's marriage to Katherine Gordon is less a portrait of utopian domesticity than an idealized pairing of romantic lovers. In a kind of second chance, Katherine forms a relationship with Richard's sister that has more of the hallmarks of utopian domesticity: it is a bond of true, disinterested friendship; it is formed by affinity, not by ties of blood or politics; and it reaches out into the community to do good--Katherine hopes her influence will benefit Prince Arthur, the son of her friend Elizabeth of York and her husband, Henry VII.

Another possible site of utopian domesticity centers around Hernan de Faro and his daughter Monina, who take Richard in and become his devoted supporters. Monina de Faro, reminiscent of Beatrice especially in her inspirational speech, is passionate but virginal, remaining chastely devoted to Richard until death. Hernan de Faro, her father, is an intriguing cross-cultural figure. Born a Moor, he is raised by Christian monks in Andalusia, and marries Madeline Warbeck, a Flemish woman who shelters the fugitive prince by offering him the identity of her deceased nephew. Though a mariner, De Faro bears important resemblances to Guinigi, the utopian farmer of *Valperga*, and his ship, the *Adalid*, represents rescue, freedom, friendship and even hope itself, a kind of mobile utopian domesticity. The loving father/daughter relationship of De Faro and Monina is a close partnership that provides a revealing contrast with De Faro's chivalric allegiance to Richard.

In *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, Shelley explores the contrasts between the Shelleyan and Byronic Romantic heroes and pursues how such characterizations enact gender. In *Perkin Warbeck*, Shelley's exploration of how the Romantic hero is gendered

is overshadowed by the gendering effects of the code of chivalry. Shelley continues to use comparison to drive her characterizations, developing and contrasting Richard's character with those of his allies and enemies,² but while Richard incorporates many positive features of the Shelleyan hero, including mercy, fellow-feeling, and a capacity for selfless love, his warlike nature and insistence on his right to be king detract from his Shelleyan potential.³ The loyal Edmund Plantagenet, who tutors Richard in war, and the imprisoned Warwick, Richard's cousin, are virtuous adherents of chivalry, not exemplars of Shelleyan philosophy; Frion, Richard's secretary, and Robin Clifford, his childhood friend, are studies in treachery and degradation, yet lack the noble ambitions of the Byronic hero. Shelley creates an impressive range of women characters in *Perkin Warbeck*, though they do not reach the Shelleyan ideal of *Valperga's* Euthanasia or the Byronic passion of Beatrice or *The Last Man's* Evadne. In Richard's wife, Katherine Gordon, Shelley creates a woman who embodies domestic perfection—even to the extent that she threatens to become a model for the restrictive, traditional domesticity Shelley generally criticizes.⁴ Shelley balances her portrait of Katherine, the ideal wife, with

² Lisa Hopkins, in her discussion of characters and their opposites, calls Shelley's contrast of virtuous and degraded figures in *Perkin Warbeck* a "characterological chiaroscuro" (263). Jane Blumberg notes how Richard's "saint-like character shines in comparison to Henry's corruption, cruelty and greed" (217). Lidia Garbin recognizes many characters as "Shakespearean prototypes" (153). Robin Clifford seems especially Shakespearean in his combination of light-heartedness and sickness at heart; he also resembles the duplicitous Orsino from Percy Shelley's markedly Shakespearean drama, *The Cenci*.

³ Shelley uses a typical trait of the Byronic hero to indicate Richard's flaw: his lips were "a little curled, can we say in pride, or by what more gentle word can we name a feeling of self-elevation and noble purpose, joined to benevolence and sweetness?" (76 [I. 180]).

⁴ The descriptions of how Katherine consoles Richard after his many losses (274 [III. 15-16]) and considers her destiny as irrevocably tied with his (276 [III. 20-21]) invoke ideas of the Victorian "angel in the house," a woman whose primary duty in life is to create for her husband a haven from the hectic public world.

Monina, the ideal sister, with whom Richard spends his youth and who becomes his most avid partisan, even though she suffers personally for his political goals. Shelley demonstrates the high costs of traditional domestic arrangements and how these arrangements are politically freighted, in the persons of Princess Elizabeth of York, who becomes wife of Tudor Henry VII, the novel's arch-villain, and the ruined and repentant Jane Shore, forgotten mistress of Edward IV, Richard's father. In Monina, the Yorkist partisan Lady Brampton, and Richard's aunt Margaret, Duchess of Burgundy, Shelley continues to portray women's involvement with political ambition.

The relationship between Katherine and Richard is idealized, but in chivalric rather than utopian terms--that is, it represents a system which may be idealized but which readers already understand to be flawed and outmoded rather than a new system which offers the potential to reform society.⁵ Richard and Katherine experience great happiness in their union, but they do not form an open family which welcomes others or which serves a greater community for good.⁶ Initially theirs is a marriage of political expedience, consolidating Richard's power by allying him by blood to the Scottish king, James IV. Richard immediately acknowledges Katherine's great beauty and her many virtues, in true chivalric fashion, and treats her with the respect due a lady, as a true knight should. Though Richard's love for Katherine is portrayed as ideal in chivalric

⁵ Lidia Garbin, in her comparison of *Perkin Warbeck* with Scott's *Ivanhoe*, notes that both novels, as romances, "are set in a remote past and relate the adventures of a young man who is dispossessed of what is his own by right" (154). Garbin also notes that Richard of York has "a chivalrous and naive nature" and is "the representative of an obsolete chivalry" (155). In its idealization of the past and its close connection with the genre of the romance, chivalry is always already obsolete. Its standards of perfection are impossible to attain, making adherence to its code appear either naive or ironic.

⁶ As Betty Bennett states, "Katherine simply suggests total abandonment of Richard's public role, thereby offering him a love ideal which is personal and restricted rather than general; an ideal which is as insufficient for him as it would have been for Shelley" (367).

terms, their marriage is based on political maneuvering, and never seems more passionate than his earlier attachment to his foster sister Monina.

As in *Valperga*, Shelley concentrates the reader's interest not on the title character, Richard, but on the women of her story. Katherine, then, becomes a central witness as to the nature of utopian domesticity in *Perkin Warbeck*. Katherine's fidelity is her greatest virtue, both according to the expectations of chivalry and in Shelley's own estimation. Katherine is loyal to Richard to the end, comforting him when he is in the stocks and visiting him in prison (365-7 [III. 257-63], 392-4 [III. 331-38]). Unfortunately, this virtue stifles her pacifist (and domestic) response to Richard's ambition:

It was strange that a girl of royal birth, bred in a palace, accustomed to a queen-like sovereignty over her father's numerous vassals in the Highlands, should aim at restricting the ambitious York to mere privacy The Lady Katherine saw a vain mask in all the commonplace pomp of palaces; she perceived that power failed most, when its end was good; she saw that in accomplishing its purpose in the cottage, or in halls of state, felicity resulted from the affections only. It was being an actor in different scenes, to be a potentate or a peasant; the outward garb is not the livery of the mind: the refinement of taste, which enables us to gather pleasure from / simple objects; the warmth of heart which necessitates the exercise of our affections, but which is content when they are satisfied; these to her mind, were the only, but they were the complete ingredients of happiness; and it was rarer to find, and more difficult to retain them, among false-hearted, ambitious courtiers, and the luxury of palaces, than among simple-minded peasantry, and a plain natural style of living. There was some romance in this idea; Katherine felt that there was, and subdued herself . . . (290-1 [III. 59-61])

Accustomed to power, Katherine judges that "felicity resulting from the affections" is superior, whether "in the cottage, or in halls of state." She further argues that a peasant

may be as much an "actor," or wielder of power, as a potentate, only "in different scenes." She delineates two central aspects of utopian domesticity, that is, the preference of simplicity to luxury, and preference for "simple-minded" honesty rather than the duplicity of "false-hearted, ambitious courtiers," echoing standard critiques of the aristocracy made by working-class and middle-class radicals. But Katherine "subdues herself" from trying to convince Richard of the validity of her idea. The system of chivalry, which focuses on both allegiances to regal power and reflections of the use of power in terms of glory, prevents Katherine from contemplating the useful action she understands is possible at the "cottage" level. She does not have a clear idea here as to how she and Richard would achieve any other goal but personal happiness, and it is for this reason that Shelley signals Katherine's idea as the desire for "mere privacy." Katherine's dream of private domesticity with Richard is mere wishful thinking and does not provide a real alternative which would make use of Richard's many virtues and talents.

Just before his final defeat in Cornwall, Katherine tries to persuade Richard to give up his quest:

"What is there in the name or state of king, that should so take captive our thoughts, that we can imagine no life but on a throne? . . . Could I put fire into / my weak words - my heart's zeal into my supplicatory voice - persuasion would attend upon me, and you would feel that to the young, to two united as we are, our best kingdom is each other's hearts; our dearest power that which each, without let or envy, exercises over the other[, t]hough our palace roof be the rafters of a lowly cot . . . I almost think that, with words like these, I might draw you from the uneasy throne to the downy paradise of love." (302 [III. 88-89])

Katherine here attempts to move beyond her somewhat restricted domestic role as comforter and haven from the rough world, to convince Richard that to retire from his

pursuit would be a greater good than to continue. But Richard will not be persuaded, arguing that he must recover his good name, though he will relinquish his claims upon the throne. He promises that once this is accomplished, they will retire peacefully to his adopted home in Andalusia. But this, of course, never comes to pass.

The most stinging rebuke to Richard's ambition comes when he seeks an ally in Lord Surrey, an old Yorkist. Surrey acknowledges Richard's claims,⁷ but rejects chivalric systems of allegiance by refusing to take part in his cause. Both Jane Blumberg (217-18) and William D. Brewer (198-199) recognize Shelley's own pacifism in Surrey's speech. Clearly evident in Surrey's defense of his pacifist position are the tropes of utopian domesticity, which he privileges over chivalric power hierarchies and the love of "honour":

“ . . . My lord, the Roses contended in a long and sanguinary war, and many thousand of our countrymen fell in the sad conflict. The executioner's axe accomplished what the murderous sword spared, and poor England became a wide, wide grave. The green-wood glade, the cultivated fields, noble castles, and smiling villages were changed / to churchyard and tomb: want, famine and hate ravaged the fated land. My lord, I love not Tudor, but I love my country: and now that I see plenty and peace reign over this fair isle, even though Lancaster be their unworthy viceregent, shall I cast forth these friends of man, to bring back the deadly horrors of unholy civil war? By the God that made me, I cannot! I have a dear wife and lovely children, sisters, friends, and all the sacred ties of humanity, that cling round my heart, and feed it with delight; these I might sacrifice at the call of honour, but the misery I must then endure I will not inflict on others; I will not people my country with widows and orphans; nor spread the

⁷ The Duchess of Norfolk, Surrey's kinswoman, attests to the fact that Richard is who he claims to be, as he had married her daughter in a childhood wedding.

plague of death from the eastern to the western sea.” (195 [II. 146-7])

Shelley calls up tropes and images from her previous political novels, *Valperga* and *The Last Man*, to illustrate Surrey’s condemnation of war: “want, famine and hate,” “deadly horrors,” and “the plague of death” are all the fruits of war, in comparison with the pastoral image Surrey presents of England. Surrey’s bucolic images of “the green-wood glade, the cultivated fields, noble castles, and smiling villages” are a standard happy description of England;⁸ his devotion to “a dear wife and lovely children, sisters, friends” is a similarly standard chivalric attitude. But when Surrey focuses on the “cultivated fields” and peoples the pastoral landscape with “friends, and all the sacred ties of humanity, that cling round my heart, and feed it with delight” he begins to suggest the foundations of utopian domesticity that the benevolent Richard, despite the legitimacy of his chivalric claims, cannot refute.

In *The Last Man*, Shelley creates a similar picture of the survivors’ last winter in England, in which she connects chivalry and “patriarchal”⁹ simplicity (*Last Man* 240 [II. 318-19]). In both cases, the simple life she pictures is contrasted with horrors—in *The Last Man*, with the Plague, and here, with civil war. In *The Last Man*, Shelley was willing to suggest that chivalry, even with its restrictively gendered and hierarchical aspects, might play a part in such simplicity. But in *Perkin Warbeck*, she argues that chivalry can be only destructive to peace. Marguerite, the wife of Godwin’s *St. Leon*, often regarded as a tribute to Mary Wollstonecraft, argues that the simplicity of peasant life, if combined with refinement of taste and intellectual study, is superior to luxury and

⁸ See for example similar language in Felicia Hemans’s poem, “The Homes of England,” published in *Records of Woman* (1828), and discussed in Chapter Eight.

⁹ Shelley seems to use the term “patriarchal” not so much to describe a hierarchical social structure, but to indicate its resemblance to the social structures of early human history. Godwin uses the term “patriarchal simplicity” with similar connotations in the speech of Marguerite quoted below.

chivalry:

“Let us at length dismiss artificial tastes . . . Here we are surrounded with sources of happiness. Here we may live in true patriarchal simplicity. What is chivalry, what are military prowess and glory? Believe me, they are the passions of a mind depraved, that with ambitious refinement seeks to be wise beyond the dictates of sentiment or reason! . . . The splendour in which we lately lived has its basis in oppression; and . . . the superfluities of the rich are a boon extorted from the hunger and misery of the poor! . . . How cumbrous is magnificence! The moderate man is the only free. . . . I put in my claim for refinements and luxuries, but they are the refinements and purifying of intellect, and the luxuries of uncostly, simple taste. . . . There is no character more admirable than the patriot-yeoman, who unites with the utmost simplicity of garb and manners an understanding fraught with information and sentiment and a heart burning with the love of mankind.” (85-87)¹⁰

Marguerite argues against military prowess, glory and ambition, and for the cultivation of knowledge in an environment conducive to a simple existence. In this passage, Godwin seeks to encapsulate the positive aspects of domesticity he felt were revealed to him by Mary Wollstonecraft; and this lesson is well-learned by Mary Shelley, as exemplified in Surrey’s speech.

Even the dowager queen, Elizabeth Woodville, Richard’s mother, who tutors him with her final instructions to seek the throne of England, yearns for the kind of simplicity advocated by Marguerite: “Ah! were I a cottager . . . I should collect my young ones around me, and forget sorrow. I should toil for them, and they would learn to toil for

¹⁰ Brewer calls attention to this speech in his discussion of Shelley’s attitude toward chivalry, but he argues that Marguerite, though condemning chivalry, benefits from the respectful attitude toward women that it engenders in St. Leon (199-200).

me. How sweet the food my industry procured for them, how hallowed that which their maturer strength would bestow on me. I am the mother of princes. Vain boast!" (46 [I. 102]). Woodville's speech reveals the most basic structure of utopian domesticity--the bonds of love that unite individuals in selfless, shared labor--but in this instance, perhaps due to her deeply entangled political past, her labor is less selfless than Shelley's ideal, and she describes more of a reciprocal, almost contractual, agreement. It is this sort of tutelage that ensnares Richard, through the chivalric bonds of honor and respect, to making his claims for the throne, even though the majority of the "friends" whose wishes for a Yorkist king he attempts to fulfill, are killed as a result. After his disastrous alliance with the Scots, Richard realizes the mistakes of his upbringing: "Oh, my mother, my too kind friends, why did ye not conceal me from myself? Teaching me lessons of humbleness, rearing me as a peasant, consigning me to a cloister, my injuries would have died with me; and the good, the brave, the innocent, who have perished for me, or through me, had been spared" (258 [II. 316]).

Richard's answer to Surrey, perhaps his most damning moment, exhibits the worst principles of chivalry:

"By my fay!" he cried, "thou wouldst teach me to turn spinster, my lord: but oh, cousin Howard! did you know what it is to be an exiled man, dependant / on the bounty of others; though your patrimony were but a shepherd's hut on a wild nameless common, you would think it well done to waste life to dispossess the usurper of your right." (195-6 [II. 147-8])

In this answer, Richard insists that his "right" would even justify "wast[ing] life"--he does not specify whether he means others' or his own. His "right" would justify such a waste not only in the case of the ruling of a kingdom, but even if his inheritance were merely "a shepherd's hut on a wild nameless common"--an echo of the savage state of Lionel Verney who lived as a shepherd and rogue before his restoration to civilization by

Adrian. Richard also unconsciously refutes the benefits of the common--he must control his property solely, not share it with others in community. Even his oath, a degradation of "by my faith," is inferior to Lord Surrey's heartfelt "by the God that made me." Finally, he implies that to be a spinster or a dependant--that is, to slip from the masculine position demanded of him by the rigidly gendered chivalric system--would be unbearably degrading. Throughout the novel, Richard blindly refuses to accept his lack of real power, and wastes life in repeated futile attempts to seize the throne. His horror of his own "feminized" position prevents him from acknowledging the truth to himself, thus perpetuating his ambitious schemes. Shelley usually portrays cross-gender characteristics as real strengths in her characters (for example, the mothering tendencies of Adrian or Gerard Neville); such a refusal to contemplate his slip from a traditionally masculine gender position may be Richard's greatest weakness.

After his Scottish allies lay waste to several English villages near the border, Richard begins to repent of his designs on the throne.

It ranks among the most painful of our young feelings, to find that we are justly accused of acting wrong. Our motives - we believed them disinterested or justifiable. . . . Richard would have stood erect and challenged the world to accuse him - God and his right, was his defence. His right! Oh, narrow and selfish was that sentiment that could see, in any right appertaining to one man the excuse for the misery of thousands. . . . His track was marked by ruin: the words of Lord Surrey / were fulfilled. (252 [II. 299-300])

Richard's idea of right here is painfully destroyed, as Shelley vividly bears out her husband's interpretation of the ramifications of the English Revolution in *A Philosophical View of Reform*: "A man has no right to be a King or a Lord or a Bishop but so long as it is for the benefit of the People" (968). Richard's progress across the border is conflated with the progress of War itself--it even becomes unclear whether the pronoun "his" refers

to War or to Richard.

In a scene immediately following, the Monk who reared Richard's cousin, Edmund Plantagenet, is found in a church in one of the ruined villages, and in an echo of Evadne's curse upon Raymond in *The Last Man*, curses Perkin Warbeck as a destroyer of England: "the ill-nurtured Perkin, to whom God in his wrath has given such a show of right . . . God of my country, oh curse, curse him and his cause" (253 [II. 303]). This curse "uttered by the murdered man was even then breathed before God, and accepted" (253 [II. 303]). In these passages Shelley radically destabilizes the idea of God by deploying it with multiple meanings. Richard's concept of God is deeply embedded in the code of chivalry, which ensures him that his right to the throne is God-given; Richard sees God in terms of his own justification. Lord Surrey, on the other hand, sees God as a creator, to whom he owes responsible stewardship of his subjects; this God supports a peaceful, utopian England, but also allows tyranny to remain unchecked upon the throne. The monk, ironically, has the most negative vision of a wrathful God of curses; a Yorkist, he had killed his own twin brother in civil war and become a monk to expiate this crime. His religion, then, is one of penance but also of partisan scheming. Later, though repentant, Richard still perceives God as part of the chivalric code that demands his right: "a Prince may not palter with the holy seal God affixes to him" (258 [II. 317]). This multiple deployment of the idea of God shows how Shelley refuses to align herself with the conservative notion of an ultimate, supposedly divine arbiter of right and wrong, and is a subtle sign of her prevailing alliance with radicalism.

Katherine's friendship with Richard's sister, Elizabeth of York, is a second chance for her to develop utopian domesticity.¹¹ Indeed, it is her practice at providing

¹¹ Ann M. Frank Wake recognizes that "female community sustains these women in an alien, impersonal environment in which their only role is political." Wake also perceives Katherine's love for Elizabeth, but submerges this motive beneath other goals ("save face, remain in Henry's court without shame, and, importantly, protect her dead

comfort to her husband (but also at providing advice to her cousin, King James) that makes her such a good companion for the care-worn Elizabeth:

The life of the Scottish Princess had been spent in administering balm to wounded minds: the same soft eloquence, the same persuasive counsels, that took the sting of remorse from her royal cousin's conscience, was spent upon the long-hidden sorrows of the neglected wife, the humbled woman. From her own sensitive mind she culled the knowledge which taught her where and how peace and resignation were to be found. The piety that mingled with her talk was the religion of love; her philosophy was mere love; and it was the spirit of love, now kindling the balmy atmosphere of charity to many, now centred in one point, but ever ready to soothe human suffering with its soft influence, that dwelt upon her lips. (345-6 [III. 204-5]).

Katherine still focuses on resignation instead of action. "To soothe human suffering" is her only goal, but it is the same as Adrian's highest aim in *The Last Man*. Shelley insists that Katherine's ministry of love comes from "her own sensitive mind"—that is, she does not depend upon external, possibly biased, systems of religion or philosophy to tell her how to act. This is important because of Shelley's destabilization of religious ideals, exemplified by different characters' apprehensions of God in *Perkin Warbeck*, and by Beatrice's conversion from superstitious mysticism to Paterin heresy in *Valperga*. By allowing Katherine to develop her code of conduct from within, Shelley attempts to shelter it from the stigma of political bias—even though an internal code of conduct can probably never be completely free of ideological blinders.

husband's reputation"), arguing that Katherine "fulfills a duty to others while sacrificing her own desire" (249). But to the contrary, Katherine states, "I must love and be loved. I must feel that my dear and chosen friends are happier through me. When I have wandered out of myself in my endeavour / to shed pleasure around, I must again return laden with the gathered sweets on which I feed and live" (400 [III. 353-4]). Katherine has found friends in the hostile court, and happiness amidst her grief.

Another point of similarity between the friendship of Euthanasia and Beatrice in *Valperga*, and that of Katherine and Elizabeth, is Elizabeth's bitterness at having lost her true love, the Earl of Warwick, and having spent years married to the cold and cruel King Henry. Elizabeth echoes Beatrice's Paterin heresy when she says,

"God has delivered the innocent into the hands of the cruel; the cruel to whom mercy is as unknown, as, methinks, it is even to the awful Power who rules our miserable lives. . . . It is a bad world . . . I am not pure, not innocent; much you mistake me . . . Wicked, impious thoughts harbour in my heart, and pollute my soul . . . Sometimes I hate my beautiful children because they are [Henry's]; sometimes in the dark hour of night, I renounce my nuptial vow, and lend ready, willing ear to fiendish whisperings which borrow [Warwick's] voice. . ." (387 [III. 316])

Elizabeth has the advantage over Beatrice that her mind has not been destabilized by superstition, but the disadvantage that she is linked for life to a cruel husband who has power over her and her children. But Katherine has the power to console her. By conversing and finding fellowship with Katherine, Elizabeth's bitterness is poured out: "It was as if she emptied a silver chalice of its gall, to be refilled by Katherine with heavenly dew" (346 [205]). Although Elizabeth's bitterness recurs, and her predictions of Henry's refusal to be merciful are accurate--Warwick and Richard are indeed put to death--Katherine refuses to desert her, and still hopes that some good may come of her presence in the Tudor court.

Before Richard's execution, Katherine and Elizabeth visit Richard in jail, and Elizabeth asks Richard to grant her Katherine's company as his last boon:

"Years of peace, almost of happiness, in exchange for a life of bitter loneliness and suffering. You, my dearest Lord, know the celestial goodness of that fair White Rose; in adversity and peril *you* have known it; - *I* amidst the cold deceits

of a court. She has vowed never to return to her native land, to bear a questioned name among her peers; or perhaps to be forced by her father to change it for one abhorred. Though she must hate me as the wife of her injurer, yet where can she better be than with your sister? . . . On my knees do I implore you to bid her not to leave me, a dead-alive, a miserable, bereft creature, such as I was ere I knew her love." (393-4 [III. 335])

With this speech, Elizabeth rewrites the tragedy of Beatrice. Instead of repining over the wreck of romantic love, Elizabeth relies upon female friendship. Katherine does not respond in words to Elizabeth's request, but gives her hand, as in token of marriage; Elizabeth responds, "you are mine forever" (394 [III. 336]). Despite Euthanasia's loving friendship, Beatrice suffers insanity and death, unable to recover from the many betrayals and abuses she has suffered. Elizabeth, however, survives. Shelley notes that "The King underrated the talents of Elizabeth. This hapless woman had perceived that contention was useless; she therefore conceded every thing without a struggle. Her energies, spent upon endurance, made her real strength of mind seem tameness; but Katherine read with clearer eyes" (346 [III.207]). Elizabeth gains a friend in Katherine of far greater worth than husband or lover: Elizabeth notes that even her true love, Warwick, would expect to find someone she no longer resembles, while Katherine recognizes her strengths and consoles her for her weaknesses. Furthermore, Elizabeth grants Katherine a boon of her own. In begging Katherine from Richard, Elizabeth provides her with a home and removes her from the masculine exchange economy--she will not be given by her father to a new man.¹²

The relationship of Katherine and Elizabeth within the code of chivalry embodies a contradiction that Elizabeth has to negotiate: as sisters-in-law the customs of chivalry

¹² Katherine has already vowed never to return to Scotland, where she would put herself into her "ambitious father's hands, to be bartered away to another" (303 [III. 91]).

establish them as kin, giving them the right to associate, but they should be regarded as enemies according to those same customs because Elizabeth's husband is the mortal enemy of Katherine's. The code of chivalry breaks down, and Elizabeth formulates a new bond, the terms of which chivalry does not dictate, based on the older (patriarchal) model of marriage. But this a new, re-envisioned marriage predicated on the bond of woman-to-woman friendship, a freely chosen bond of affinity which overturns chivalry to establish utopian domesticity.

Once Elizabeth and Katherine are joined, Shelley significantly revises history to imply utopian possibilities, some that in reality never occurred.¹³ The friendship enjoyed by the two women crucially expands to effect good for the larger community in which they live--the nations of England and Scotland as well (through the union in 1503 of Elizabeth's daughter Margaret with Katherine's cousin James IV as noted below). The historical Katherine Gordon remarried three times after her first marriage to Perkin Warbeck, but this Katherine will not--she belongs to Elizabeth "forever." Katherine explains in the final chapter that she feels her nature to be divided between grieving for her lost husband, and continuing to do good while she lives. She states that, though it might be perceived as a weakness, or as merely due to her "woman's education," sympathy with others is the most sacred human duty: "Call it love, charity or sympathy, it is the best, the angelic portion of us. . . . The more entirely we mingle our emotions with those of others, making our well or ill being depend on theirs, the more completely do we cast away selfishness, and approach the perfection of our nature" (398 [III. 348]). Katherine remains with Elizabeth and sympathizing with her, becomes a kind of co-parent:

¹³ Utopian feminist writers often use the realm of science fiction to explore their ideas, and in SF this type of divergence from historical reality is commonplace and known as "alternate universe" fiction.

“together we turned to fulfil our duties. She had children; they became as dear to me as to her. Margaret I cherish as the betrothed bride of my ever-dear cousin, the King of Scotland; and, when I endeavour to foster the many virtues nature has implanted in the noble mind of Prince Arthur, I am . . . doing my part to bestow on the England [Richard] loved, a sovereign who will repair the usurper’s crimes and bestow happiness on the realm.” (399-400 [III. 351])

The historical prince Arthur dies in 1502, only three years after Richard’s death in 1499, but Katherine states that “years have past since then” (399 [III. 350]); as editor Doucet Devin Fischer states, “The retrospective character and reflective tone of [Katherine’s] confession suggest that it was made many years after Warbeck’s death in 1499” (399 note).¹⁴ Unlike Euthanasia and Beatrice, Katherine and Elizabeth together survive the death of the man whose story brings them together. And Shelley imagines England in an age of justice ruled by a king appropriately named Arthur, who has been reared according to the precepts of utopian domesticity by his mother and her friend, instead of by a father depicted by Shelley as cruel and tyrannical.¹⁵

Other women characters in the novel are far less passive than the resigned and saddened Katherine and Elizabeth, yet they do less to promote the goals of utopian domesticity. Lady Brampton is a fascinating figure of political machinations. She is able to befriend Elizabeth Woodville despite her euphemistic “friendship” with Edward IV, and is a tireless Yorkist partisan, even figuring in the introduction of Richard to Katherine. Despite her loyalty to Richard, she is one of the figures who furthers his destructive ambition. The repentant Jane Shore is another recurring figure who

¹⁴ Lisa Hopkins notes the discrepancy between tone and historical fact, calling Katherine’s hopes in contributing to Arthur’s rearing “the bitterest of ironies” (270).

¹⁵ Interestingly, by writing in Arthur as Henry VII’s successor, Shelley writes out Henry VIII, famous for disposing of the wives who fail to produce male heirs.

repeatedly offers refuge to Richard, in order to “atone” for her affair with Richard’s father. Jane’s hovel on the Shore of the Thames seems to appear almost magically when Richard twice seeks refuge after escaping from the Tower (190-192, 352-59). Although Jane has deeply internalized her sense of wrong-doing, these intervals are most significant because Monina and Lady Brampton offer no accusation to her for her offense against Richard’s mother, a form of forgiveness Jane craves.

Jane’s hovel is also significant as an ironic comment on the ideal of the English cottage--hers is the only English hospitality Richard can rely upon. It acts both as a site of utopian domesticity--a place where Richard’s adoptive “family” of supporters, mostly women, can meet in order to plan and carry out the ideas which they believe are best for England--and a mockery of the very concept: because Richard has no real support in England, the schemes of his supporters to place him on the throne threaten to upset the stability and peace of England to no good effect. Utopian domesticity is represented here as an achievable ideal--it *would* be possible for Richard to devote his talents to social good, were he to renounce his ambitions and rely on his friends for support outside the country. But the bonds uniting his friends are politically motivated and tenuous--they rely on the very misplaced hopes that fashion Richard as an ineffectual figure--corrupting the utopian scene in its very heart.

Monina de Faro is by far Richard’s most active supporter. Devoted to Richard’s cause, she is willing to sacrifice her own deeper feelings for him in order that he may wed Katherine to advance his political hopes. Monina travels, arranges meetings, and constantly hazards her own safety for Richard, throwing into question the gendered assumptions of chivalry regarding women’s need for protection. Like Lady Brampton, she takes political agency into her own hands, but this serves only to encourage Richard’s ambition.

The character of Monina exists not just to act as Richard’s partisan, but to reveal

the differences between Richard and Clifford. Clifford resembles Castruccio in his false attempts to win the innocent maiden.¹⁶ "What such men as Clifford feel is not love: he had no real friendship for the innocent girl . . . she spoke . . . of his duties to God and man, violated but not irretrievably, and with soft persuasion entreated him to spare those whose lives hung upon his word" (169 [II. 76]). Monina resembles Beatrice in her enthusiastic speech: "let me be a voice only," she says to Clifford as he attempts to woo her with the semblance of courtly love.¹⁷ Monina's resemblance to a prophetic oracle makes Clifford painfully aware of her spiritual truthfulness, causing him to feel the oracular effects himself: "The melodious voice of Monina, attuned by the divine impulses of her spirit, as the harp of the winds by celestial breezes, raised a commotion in his mind, such as a prophetess of Delphi felt, when the oracular vapour rose up to fill her with sacred fury" (151 [II. 26]). Although Monina is gentle, the corrupted Clifford feels battered by her virtue, which is at least part of the goad that continues to drive him in his downward spiral. The sacred fury of the oracle should remind Shelley's readers not only of Beatrice, but also of the Sybilline frame of *The Last Man*, as well as Evadne's associations with the oracular when she prophesies the Plague.

It is key to Shelley's political system that Monina offers Clifford forgiveness and a chance to repent, but instead he attempts to carry her away by force. After this, she

¹⁶ Clifford also resembles the corrupt priest Orsino of Percy Shelley's play, *The Cenci*, especially in his attempt to leave his identity behind: "Like all evil-disposed persons, he had no idea of purging himself from the foul stain by frank confession and reformation: his project was to begin a new career in a new country: to go where his own tarnished reputation was unknown" (198 [II. 155]).

¹⁷ Monina responds generously to Clifford's unwelcome advances: "Monina drew back, replying, gently, 'I am the partizan, the vowed conspirator for a cause, whose adherents walk as over / the thread-broad bridge spanning an unfathomable gulph . . . I beseech you, as you are a gentleman, reserve your fair speeches for the fortunate ladies of your native land. I will be a beacon-light to guide you, a clue for your use through a maze, a landmark to point your way; meanwhile forget me as I am; let me be a voice only.'" (142 [II. 4-5])

refers to him as “unworthy man” (169 [II. 77]) and “that bad man”: when Clifford attempts to blackmail the conspirators into giving him both gold and Monina, she answers,

“My father will make my ransom good. . . . Answer that bad man . . . thus: Monina will wed death, rather than crime and treason. . . . It were enough to drive a poor girl to eternal vows and a convent, to dream that such words are spoken of her, and if I do not take that refuge, it is because I will not desert my dear, fond, bereaved father.” (199 [II. 157-8])

Under the code of chivalry, Monina must be protected by some man or another and relies upon her father; Clifford mocks this system of protection by using it falsely. Although Richard hates Clifford for his insults to Monina, he is not her protector. Because of politics, she can be no more to Richard than his partisan. Monina attempts to equalize the benefit she receives from her father’s protection, creating a partnership with him and reaffirming their bond of love by providing him with her companionship; of course, the only other choice chivalry offers her is the decidedly less attractive “refuge” of “eternal vows and a convent” or even death.

In the love between Richard and Monina, Shelley recapitulates the Romantic fascination with sibling love, but this love is quelled because of politics: “They had lived like near relations from their childhood; that were sufficient to raise the flame that shed so bright a light over her soul: that he was a prince, and she the daughter of a Spanish mariner, forbade their union” (145 [II. 13]). Under the code of chivalry, Richard is praiseworthy for overcoming his love for Monina and subduing it to his political goals. Though she assents to this, Monina is nevertheless shown to suffer; “living like near relations” is a stronger argument for love, in Shelley’s eyes, than politics are against it. Because of her unrequitable love for Richard within the chivalric code, Monina is a perpetual maiden, and her self-image denies physicality, even to the point of prophesying

her own death if Richard should die. In her oracular speech and her passionate love for Richard, Monina resembles the Byronic heroes Beatrice and Evadne, and in her suffering and prophecies of her own death she resembles Mathilda in the role of *improvisatrice*. But unlike these characters, Monina submits her love to the controls of reason and is not given over to madness. Monina's death is indirectly reported and left in a degree of doubt; this chance for her survival is perhaps because she has never suffered outright abandonment or betrayal by her beloved. To this extent, Shelley allows, chivalry structures society sufficiently to allow a passionate attachment that does not end in the woman's victimization and complete destruction.

The love between Monina and Richard, though based on a sibling-like bond, is glaringly one-sided and susceptible to defeat by mere ceremony, while the love of her father offers a measure of partnership. Although Monina travels alone all over Europe, weaving herself into and out of perilous clandestine plots, De Faro recognizes that his daughter is "unprotected" and fears to leave her behind in Scotland when he attempts to voyage west (207 [II. 178]). Monina would prefer to remain with Richard, but convinces herself that she might find happiness journeying with her father. Focusing on her service to her father in giving him "delight," Monina promises herself the rewards of his joy:

"I shall give delight to my dear father by accompanying him over the untrod watery deserts The name of De Faro will be added to the list of those who bestow a new creation of supernal beauty on our out-worn world. He will call me the partner of his glory: and, though that be a vain word, his dark eyes will flash with joy. My dear, dear father! Should the Prince succeed and ascend his rightful throne, more impassable than that wide sea would be the gulph which ceremony would place between us." (207 [II. 180])

In contrast to the conditional and unreliable nature of Monina's relationship with Richard, the language linking De Faro and his daughter repeatedly denies the possibility of

desertion.¹⁸ While chivalry generally accords power to the man, who protects the woman, and De Faro certainly makes his love for Monina concrete by daring rescues in addition to caring attention, Monina also figures herself in a position of power in their relationship by asserting her own volition in accompanying her father for his benefit.

Hernan de Faro resembles the warrior farmer Guinigi in his enlightened love of peace and his devotion to a simple, hard-working way of life. De Faro, a Moor reared by Christian monks, has a horror of civil war and refuses to fight: "more humanity than belonged to that age, warmed his heart. He remembered that he was a Moor: whenever he saw a Moslem prisoner in chains, or a cavalgada of hapless women driven from their native towns to slavery, the blood in his veins moved with instinctive horror" (88 [I. 209]). The De Faros' home, Alcala-la-Real, is a mountain stronghold in Andalusia depicted by Shelley as a natural paradise and something of a haven from the fighting between Christians and Moors in Spain. Alcala-la-Real remains a possible site of utopian retreat in Richard's eyes, but its utopian potential is undercut by the training in war Richard receives in Andalusia, under the tutelage of his cousin Edmund Plantagenet, and by the death of Madeline de Faro who is killed when fighting suddenly intrudes there.

Unfortunately, De Faro is convinced to swear a chivalric oath of allegiance to Richard, taking up his sword in Richard's defence (82 [I. 195]). In his bloodiest moment De Faro appears at Richard's side in the attack on the Irish city of Waterford:

A blow was struck at Richard which felled him; he lay stetched at De Faro's feet.
Ere it could be repeated, the head of the assailant was cleft by a Moorish scymitar.
With furious strength, De Faro then hurled his weapon among the soldiers; the
unexpected act made them recoil; he lifted up the / insensible form of Richard with

¹⁸ After his wife is killed, De Faro states, "Thou wilt not desert me; we will leave this fated spot: and thou, Monina, will sail for ever with thy father on the less barbarous sea" (95 [I. 229]).

the power of an elephant; he cast him into the near waves, and leapt in after. . . .
He reached the Adalid . . . his own men raised Richard revived, now, but feeble,
to her worn deck; and he [De Faro] on board her well-known planks, felt superior
to every sovereign in the world. (286 [III. 47-8])

Despite the bloody nature of the passage, De Faro's primary function here is to rescue Richard, and De Faro comes to represent retreat from war even as he is understood to be an awesome, irresistible warrior. Using his large size, power, and uncanny swiftness, De Faro makes three important rescues striking in their similarity. First, De Faro saves Monina from Clifford as he attempts to kidnap her, and second, he rescues Richard from the defending forces at Waterford. The third time, attempting to save both Monina and Richard from Clifford's treachery, De Faro successfully rescues Monina but not Richard. These repeated rescues emphasize that Monina and Richard occupy a similar, protected position within the codes of chivalry--the very position of dependancy Richard expostulates against so vehemently in his response to Surrey. In the end, De Faro's real love for his daughter outweighs his chivalric oath to Richard. The oath itself has ironically overshadowed the fact that De Faro is actually Richard's foster-father--a chivalric bond undercutting and weakening the utopian potential of a bond created in sympathy.¹⁹

De Faro's ship, the Adalid, represents a nearly ever-present option of retreat, highlighting Richard's stubborn insistence upon striving for his goal and his strange optimism that success is somehow near. De Faro and the Adalid appear time after time to save Richard, to bear him or his supporters away. The Adalid appears as a beacon of safety--"I have ever found best safety on the wide ocean sea" states De Faro (289 [III.

¹⁹ The De Faros' harboring of Richard was of course made necessary by his identity as the sought-for Prince, but was made possible by Madeline Warbeck de Faro's sympathy for the homeless and hunted boy, who reminded her of her deceased nephew whose identity he assumed.

56])--though it is sometimes fleeting and evasive.²⁰ The sea has always before in Shelley's novels been linked, if not with outright death, then with troubled uncertainty.²¹ But the very dangers Shelley associates with the sea emphasize the peace and companionship offered by the Adalid in contrast to Richard's constant warmaking. De Faro creates a utopian respite in the Adalid that is always threatened by the hostile element, yet always survives. The Adalid offers safety and comradeship, but is most often simply an escape route. This is not to suggest that the utopian domesticity represented by the Adalid is "escapist"--to the contrary, the ship represents an "out" for Richard, offering him an alternative to war that he persistently misuses.

The fate of De Faro and Monina is uncertain. Though Monina decides to travel with De Faro, they return to England because she falls ill. Their final departure takes

²⁰ When Katherine awaits news of Richard's Cornish campaign on Saint Michael's Mount, Monina arrives on "the safety-laden Adalid to bear her to the shores of Burgundy" (333 [III. 172]), or to Beaulieu, where Richard lies in sanctuary, but unfortunately a sudden wind drives the caravel out to sea and Katherine is taken prisoner by Henry's men. Katherine openly states the safety and utopian potential of the Adalid when compared to the doomed Cornish campaign upon which Richard is about to embark:

"The narrow decks of yonder caravel were, methinks, a kindlier home [than England]: may we go on and prosper; but, if we fail, my Lord will pardon / me, if I welcome the day when I embark again on the Adalid; to find, when the wide earth proves false, safety and happiness on the free waves of ocean." (295 [III. 70-71])

Even Richard finally gets the picture: "The Adalid and safety are images most firmly united in my mind;" he begs Monina to find Katherine if he fails and allow the Adalid to "be her home and refuge" (304 [III. 94-5]).

²¹ Victor Frankenstein perishes aboard ship, and the Creature vanishes in darkness and distance in the Arctic Ocean, promising to immolate himself on a pyre on his ice floe, while Walton is met with mutiny and disappointment in his search for a Northern sea passage. Mathilda's father commits suicide by drowning himself in the sea. Euthanasia is exiled to an island but drowned in a storm en route. Lionel Verney loses his last two companions to a sudden storm, and then disappears into oblivion as he prepares for a sea voyage. Lord Lodore, though not threatened by the sea, is an unreformed Byronic figure whose passionate nature is reflected by his namesake, a spectacular waterfall in the Lake District; Niagara Falls figures as a virtual backdrop to his fatal duel. Falkner loses his beloved Alitheia to the tides.

place after they fail to make good Richard's final escape attempt, and the only further information we learn about their fate afterwards is based on hearsay. Indeed, Shelley reports the fate of the De Faros twice, once before Richard's death and once some time later. Shelley shrouds the circumstances of Monina's death in mystery and casts some doubt upon its occurrence. Katherine is told by Edmund Plantagenet that a sailor told him that he was "shown an humble tomb, half-defaced; her dear sacred name is carved upon it, and half the date, the 14-- . . . She could not have / survived our Prince many months; probably she died before him, nor ever knew the worst pang of all, the ignominy linked with his beloved memory" (397 [III. 344-5]). The fact that the year has not been filled in casts a great deal of doubt on the reality of Monina's death. Monina has certainly suffered because of her enforced separation from Richard and avowedly longs for death (374 [III. 282]), but Edmund is perhaps too quick to believe the report of Monina's death, because of his complete subscription to the code of chivalry. For him, Monina's existence must surely come to a close along with that of her Prince, her foster brother, whom she loved. But as Lisa Hopkins reports (271), the tomb of the historical Katherine Gordon was built in Swansea even though she was never buried there; and Shelley herself had experienced the mystery of graves when she had attempted to have her husband's ashes interred with the remains of her son William in Rome, and those remains could not be found.

De Faro is "almost forgotten" but is reported to have "sailed for the Western Indies, and was never heard of more" (397 [III. 344]). His search for the West Indies parallels the desire of the Creature to create a utopia in South America, and the description of the islands is distinctly paradisaical, in contrast with the strife in England: "What more had the Moorish mariner and his daughter to do with this miserable, guilty island? [De Faro] resolve[s] finally to quit the eastern world for the golden islands of the west" (374 [III. 271]). De Faro's desire to explore is in accord with his original claim to fame, as an explorer with Diaz: "De Faro's whole soul was set upon becoming one of those immortal

pioneers who opened new paths across the unexplored West” (207 [II. 178]). De Faro’s association with colonialism casts a shadow of suspicion over his character, as does his daughter’s interpretation of his voyages with the desire for glory. Monina attempts to recuperate De Faro’s mission by linking it with missionary zeal, to spread her religion and to “soften, as best I may, the cruel Spaniard, and save the devoted people from their barbarity” (374 [III. 272]).²² By referring to the colonizers as “the cruel Spaniard” Monina unwittingly associates them in the reader’s mind with her father. Metaphorically, Shelley connects De Faro with the elephant, as though she wanted to link him with this powerful natural inhabitant of the India he sought. As both Moor and Spaniard, fierce warrior and tender parent, colonizer and mute (animal) native laborer, De Faro is a bundle of contradictions, and one of Shelley’s most fascinating characters—certainly the most colorful of her characters to embrace many (though not all) of the tenets of utopian domesticity.

In *Perkin Warbeck*, Shelley presents her most nuanced response to the challenge posed by tyranny to those advocating gradual reform. Shelley agrees that Richard’s struggle for the throne is technically legitimate, but she uses her narrative to convey the message that even legitimate claims to power may corrupt. She complicates her novel by portraying Henry VII, Richard’s rival, as cold and cruel—more so than historical records support. In pitting Richard against Henry VII, Shelley pits an apparently virtuous hero against an apparently vicious tyrant. But Henry’s policies, though vicious, do not create the havoc and turmoil around the country that Richard’s do. Shelley might seem to argue that peace is worth any cost, even the endurance of tyranny. But as Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, “war, waged from whatever motive, extinguishes the sentiment of reason and justice in the mind” (1063). In her novel,

²² Shelley confuses Monina’s syntax to cast some doubt on whether “barbarity” is a trait of the “devoted [doomed] people” or of “the cruel Spaniard.”

Shelley suggests alternatives to war that can prevail against tyranny. The response of Katherine and Elizabeth, mediated by the restrictions placed on them by the gender roles of the time, is to attempt to create utopian domesticity within the very household of the tyrant--a response familiar to us from the laudable example of Euthanasia, who attempted the same with her friendship with Beatrice after the fall of Valperga. The response of Hernan de Faro, mediated by his training within the code of chivalry that urges its adherents toward war, is a position of defense and ready flight. He is pledged to serve Richard and does so loyally, but in general he retrieves Richard from warlike aggression rather than encouraging him in it. Richard's own actions, based on his belief in his personal *right* to rule as king, rather than in response to the will of the English people, are portrayed as both futile and ultimately wrong. Katherine's attempts to restrict Richard even to a merely private domesticity are seen as preferable to his continued dedication to warfare--both for his intimates and for the public at large. Surrey, who recognizes the legitimacy of Richard's claim, refuses to join him, basing his public policy on local, intimate concerns recognizable as the foundations of utopian domesticity.

Utopian domesticity has its basis at the local and intimate level. As such, it is often on a different scale from the problem of national tyranny and may seem like a retreat from public involvement, or like an unduly passive, rather than pacifist, response to untenable social conditions. And clearly, the home, no matter how idealized, is susceptible to violent destruction, as Richard learns to his dismay when his Scottish allies ravage the English villages near the border. But utopian domesticity is not painted in *Perkin Warbeck* as merely a conservative reaction to revolutionary change. Rather it is a rejection of both Richard's and Henry's petty schemes to power, and a system that overturns the ideas upon which chivalry is based. At the intimate level, Elizabeth's quiet endurance of Henry's cruelty and coldness exemplifies the sufferings of women in restrictive domesticity. Her passivity is markedly relieved by the introduction of

Katherine into her world, and the utopian domesticity they form allows her to find new strength and new hope that she may be able to effect change. Henry remains a tyrant, but his power does not quell the possibility of improvement fostered by the two women in their hopes to rear in Arthur a more just successor. At a more public level, Surrey retreats from war not because he supports Henry, but because he wishes to act for the good of his people. He does not believe Richard would be a better king than Henry simply because his claim is technically superior. He has witnessed the ravages of civil war and sees no good reason for such destruction to begin again.

Shelley is also willing to explore in *Perkin Warbeck* the possibility of a utopian domesticity based not on a traditionally fixed idea of the home, but on the itinerate ramblings of the mariner De Faro and his daughter. De Faro, a Christianized Moor, is “unmoored” from his national origins and refuses to take part in the Spanish wars. Even as the chivalric values of his age shape him into a warrior, he refashions himself as a figure of defense, and his interventions pull Monina and Richard back from the brink of destruction several times. The Adalid, though threatened by the dangers and hardships of the sea, survives, and Monina and Hernan de Faro, in another alternate universe, become figures of potential hope, possible intercessors between the Western people and the Spaniard, whose familiar cruelty they might be able to soften, or prevent.

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Utopian Domesticity as Social Reform in Shelley's Domestic Novels:

Lodore and Falkner

Mary Shelley's last two novels, *Lodore* (1835) and *Falkner* (1837), are the clearest examples in her canon of utopian domesticity. Over the course of her career, Shelley developed a complex understanding of the utopian potential of domesticity, critically adapting and expanding upon the theories of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, and revising the Romantic ideals, including the ideal of universal or Promethean love, exemplified in the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley.¹ Through utopian domesticity, Shelley models a society in which both women and men focus their energy not toward ambition and public power, but toward responsibilities within communities based on personal relationships. Shelley rejects the idea that men and women should move in "separate spheres" of power and influence, with men's influence and ambition directed to the public sphere and women's influence being contained with the home. Using this reform ideal, Shelley countered the restrictive patriarchal ideas of traditional domesticity, and the personal ambition, alienation and narcissism of masculinist Romanticism, while showing how these ideological complexes may be revised to create utopia.²

Shelley demonstrated her understanding of the problems of traditional domesticity in tragic works such as *Frankenstein* (1818) and *Mathilda* (c. 1819). She

¹ My understanding of the importance of Mary Shelley's engagement with Percy Shelley's ideal of Promethean love is heavily influenced by the work of Betty T. Bennett, especially her article, "The Political Philosophy of Mary Shelley's Historical Novels" and book, *Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley: An Introduction*.

² Ernst Bloch, in his monumental study, *The Principle of Hope* (1959), revises the traditional Marxist critique of utopia to theorize that ideologies may contain the seed of utopia. Utopian thought surpasses mere "wishful thinking" by providing a goal for society to work toward. Such utopian thought may exist within an ideology (such as Romanticism or domesticity), even though the ideology contains other problematic and unexamined elements.

expanded her critique to investigate the conflicts between domestic responsibilities and public ambition for both men and women in her historical novels, *Valperga* (1823), *The Last Man* (1826), and *Perkin Warbeck* (1830). In the 1830s, as the Victorian ideal of the “angel in the house” was gaining cultural hegemony, Shelley used the radical theories of Wollstonecraft and Godwin in her last two novels to revise domesticity in order to create a utopian model for society. Close readings of *Lodore* and *Falkner* will show how Shelley transforms the ideologies we now identify as domesticity and Romanticism in order to bring about a perfected society with utopian domesticity at its core.

Although Mary Shelley studies have enjoyed tremendous growth in recent years, *Lodore* and *Falkner* have only begun to receive critical attention.³ Many critics have disregarded *Lodore* and *Falkner* as conventional domestic novels, perhaps due to a prevalent perception that Shelley abandoned the radical challenges to contemporary beliefs that characterize her earlier work. For example, in his 1990 *Approaches to Teaching Frankenstein*, Stephen C. Behrendt gives the following synopses for *Lodore* and *Falkner*:

Lodore. . . . A sentimental and loosely autobiographical novel written, apparently, to illustrate, within the workings of a social circle that includes recognizable members of Mary Shelley’s own set, the author’s stated view that the primary value of human life is to be found in “the genuine affections of the heart.”

Falkner. . . . Another illustration of the primacy of the affections of the heart, the novel traces the history of a would-be suicide and the six-year-old orphan girl who prevents his self-destruction through a series of adventures in which natural benevolence triumphs over personal guilt to lead to separate, but related, lives for

³ The excellent editions of *Lodore* by Fiona Stafford (Pickering, 1996) and Lisa Vargo (Broadview, 1997) have already begun to encourage more critical attention.

both principal figures. (12-13)⁴

Behrendt's synopses portray Shelley's final two novels as less than exciting, even sub-literary. Mary Poovey initiated modern critical discussion of *Falkner*, seeing it as a confirmation of Shelley's eventual conformity to the propriety of the Proper Lady, while acknowledging the resistance and subversion Shelley is able to encode within the novel; she does not discuss *Lodore*. Pamela Clemit, in her study of the Godwinian novel, does not discuss Shelley's later novels, asserting that they "show an increased conformity to social and financial pressures" (139 note). The four most recent collections of essays on Mary Shelley contain nine articles between them discussing *Lodore* or *Falkner*, five of these reaching publication in 2000.⁵

Unfortunately, *Lodore* and *Falkner* have often figured as endpoints in a critical narrative of Shelley's devolution away from radical intellectual engagement and toward conventionality and conservatism. In this narrative, Percy Shelley's influence was vital to the radical content in *Frankenstein*, as well as to some extent in *Mathilda* and *Valperga*, and later novels became more and more conservative as time passed after Percy Shelley's

⁴ In his frank praise of Vargo's Broadview edition, appearing on the back cover, Behrendt revises his earlier statement: "Not the one book author that *Frankenstein* sometimes makes her seem, Mary Shelley was a complex and committed social thinker whose novels reveal her deep concern with the impact of the emerging Victorian social dynamic upon the lives of women . . . This exceptional edition will alert readers anew to the complexity and sophistication of Shelley's mind and art."

⁵ The 1993 collection entitled *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein* contains fourteen articles, only two of which (by Barbara Jane O'Sullivan and Kate Ferguson Ellis) discuss *Lodore* or *Falkner*. Charlene E. Bunnell, who has also published elsewhere on *Lodore* (see Herrera et al, eds., 1997), contributed an article on *Lodore* and *Falkner* to the 1997 collection, *Iconoclastic Departures*. *Lodore* is conspicuously absent from the 2000 collection of essays drawn from the 1997 conference of the Keats-Shelley Association of America, *Mary Shelley in Her Times*, while Betty Bennett there contributes an article that attends to *Falkner*. Michael Eberle-Sinatra's 2000 collection, *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Falkner*, indicates new attention to Shelley's late novels, with two articles about *Falkner* by Julia Saunders and Graham Allen, and three about *Lodore*, by Richard Cronin, David Vallins, and Fiona Stafford.

death. Scholars including Poovey and Anne Mellor have read the domesticity valorized in the later novels as a move toward a more conservative "separate spheres" domestic ideology. Reading over Shelley's *oeuvre* could suggest an increasing acceptance of contemporary domestic ideology, as Poovey and Mellor argue, or a continued strong negative critique of domesticity, as Kate Ferguson Ellis argues. However, neither of these narratives is entirely accurate. Richard Cronin has pointed out that Shelley conceived of marriage as "a hybrid, both a sentimental state, and an institution embedded in social and economic practices" (48). A committed idealist, Shelley remained politically engaged, and her espousal of domesticity differed appreciably from the dominant, separate spheres ideology identified by these critics. Shelley did not regard domesticity as a separate sphere appropriate only for women or gendered specifically to them. As Ellis suggests, "The radical reading of Shelley . . . depends on the now-widespread feminist perception of the family as a 'mode of government' whose operations affect us all" (233).

Joseph W. Lew asserts that as Shelley began her writing career, many women who had previously been active in literary and religious spheres were silenced (165). It makes sense, then, that Shelley would eventually seek a foundation for women's lives within the private sphere; if women's contributions were portrayed within the private sphere, where women were expected to excel, they might be more easily accepted and valorized in the wider culture. As Barbara Jane O'Sullivan states, "By domesticating female power, Shelley finally finds an acceptable way to write about it" (154). Even the reformist attitudes of her philosophical forebears might more easily be accepted if inserted within these culturally approved narratives. Katherine C. Hill-Miller has noted that "the sentimentality of *Falkner* can be read as a deliberate artistic strategy" encoding sexual desire (186). And indeed, the conventional sentimentality of both *Lodore* and *Falkner* may deflect the reader's eye from their radical political content: the modelling of utopian domesticity, a simpler society for both men and women based on responsibilities and

genuine ties of affection, freed from the constraints of divisive and artificial gender roles and the prescribed societal norms of luxury, appearances and self-serving ambition.⁶

As Betty T. Bennett has stated, "Mary Shelley cannot be properly read or understood without recognizing the pivotal role that politics play in all her novels" (qtd in Vargo 12). Shelley read and reread the writings of her parents, and they influenced her developing concept of utopian domesticity.⁷ Shelley follows Wollstonecraft in believing in woman's right to become an enfranchised citizen by becoming well educated. Wollstonecraft, however, only hints at what the *citoyenne* would do: she mentions several potential careers, but demonstrates to her primarily male audience the benefits they will receive from women's becoming better wives and mothers, promising that educating women would result in a happier, more efficiently managed domestic sphere. Shelley fleshes out Wollstonecraft's profile of the citizen's duties by responding to the ideas of Godwin, whose plan of societal simplicity implies a domestic mode of life based not on individual rights but on personal relationships and responsibilities within community. Acquisition of wealth, one of the primary factors which spurred the Victorian man to leave his angel safe in the house, is condemned in the Godwinian system. The

⁶ *Lodore* may have suffered from its categorization among silver-fork novels, which described the manners and pastime of the aristocracy and were considered escapist. As Fiona Stafford shows, however, Edward Bulwer, who was a leading author of the silver-fork novel, argued that the genre "was by no means frivolous escapism, but rather an inherently political genre" ("Present" 185). Shelley, indeed, uses the genre to demonstrate her utopian system, in that the life of Lord Lodore, unredeemed from his aristocratic and chivalric belief system, is forfeited, while Cornelia, who rejects the values of high society, is rewarded by the establishment of a new community with her daughter and new husband.

⁷ I refer primarily to Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793). Shelley was also strongly influenced by her parents' other works, especially the novels: Wollstonecraft's unfinished, posthumously published *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (1798), and Godwin's *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799).

Godwinian attitude toward wealth and the just distribution of resources is key to understanding the significance of Cornelia's actions in *Lodore*.

Lodore

In Shelley's late domestic novels, the values of domesticity within community bring about personal happiness and demonstrate society's improvement toward utopia. Nevertheless, Shelley retains her awareness that utopian domesticity is precarious. Marriage is easily ruined, and mere domesticity is not utopian.⁸ For domesticity to achieve its utopian potential, women must benefit from Wollstonecraft's paradigm of practical, thorough education. If women continue to be educated according to a different standard from men (what Shelley calls a "sexual education"⁹), a marriage--or a society--based on mutual understanding and respect could never occur. *Lodore* follows several characters, both men and women, as they progress toward a more complete understanding of the utopian potential of domesticity, based on shared community

⁸ Shelley doubtless drew on Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, for her understanding of the dangers of domesticity. In Wollstonecraft's novel, marriage leads to the madhouse, and even the sympathetic lover Darnford seems finally to betray Maria. As I discuss in Chapter One, Amelia Opie's *Adeline Mowbray* (1805), responding directly to the theories of Wollstonecraft and Godwin, was another cautionary tale in which the heroine is destroyed because she loves one man outside the bonds of marriage and is betrayed within marriage by another.

⁹ Shelley refers to the "sexual education" of Ethel in *Lodore* (218 [III. 21]). Wollstonecraft's idea of a sexual education, described throughout her work, is illustrated by the following quotation from her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*:
With respect to women, when they receive a careful education, they are either made fine ladies, brimful of sensibility, and teeming with capricious fancies; or mere notable women. The latter are often friendly, honest creatures, and have a shrewd kind of good sense joined with worldly prudence, that often render them more useful members of society / than the fine sentimental lady, though they possess neither greatness of mind nor taste. The intellectual world is shut against them. (Chap. IV, "Observations on the State of Degradation to Which Woman is Reduced by Various Causes," 66).
According to Wollstonecraft, even a "careful education" falls short when it is bound by gender expectations.

responsibility as opposed to worldliness and dedication to the primacy of self.

In Shelley's novels, men experience the effects of their bad choices in marriage, they are seen as culpable in their relationships with women, and they are held responsible for the well-being of their children.¹⁰ The primacy of the familial bond is not inscribed for the female alone: in *Lodore*, the duties of a father toward his child are heavily reinforced. The father's attentive education of the daughter prepares her for her future life (although domesticity is not the only option, as I discuss below) and gives her a chance to become the equal of her husband, who has usually had all of society's advantages. In addition to the novel's primary focus on *Lodore*'s education of his daughter Ethel, we also see how a bad father can nearly ruin the life of his son: Edward Villiers, Ethel's husband, is plagued by debt and has no way to raise money because his father squanders the income of their entailed estate, neglecting to send him even the bare minimum of necessary funds. Villiers himself must relearn his priorities, accepting that a shared life with Ethel is superior to the fashionable life to which he was previously accustomed, and he must abandon his chivalrous urge to protect her from his lessened circumstances.

In her novel, Shelley works to revise the ideologies of domesticity and Romanticism in order to create utopia. Her formulation of the character of Lord *Lodore* may be read as a commentary on the Byronic hero but should not be taken as an attack on Romanticism in general. *Lodore* represents the wild, passionate, and sublime side of Romanticism, which is both attractive and dangerous. *Lodore* takes its title from a waterfall in the Lake District that was a popular tourist destination in Shelley's day. The epigraph of *Lodore* clearly sets out the opposition between the tempests of Romantic passion and the calm rewards of utopian domesticity:

¹⁰ As Mellor observes, Wollstonecraft's "ethic of care . . . required one to take full responsibility for the predictable consequences of one's thoughts and actions, for all the children of one's mind and body" ("Women Didn't Like" 285).

In the turmoil of our lives,
Men are like politic states, or troubled seas,
Tossed up and down with several storms and tempests,
Change and variety of wrecks and fortunes;
Till, labouring to the havens of our homes,
We struggle for the calm that crowns our ends. (2 [title page])¹¹

The title character, Henry Fitzhenry, Lord Lodore, tempestuous and passionate like the waterfall after which he is named, has reminded several readers (including Claire Clairmont) of Byron. In her letter to Mary Shelley of 15 March 1836, Claire refers to that <bestly> modification of the beastly character of Lord Byron <which you> of which you have composed *Lodore*. I stick to *Frankenstein* merely because the vile spirit does not haunt its pages as it does in all your other novels, now as *Castruccio*, now as *Raymond*, now as *Lodore*. Good God to think a person of your genius, whose moral tact ought to be proportionably exalted, should think it a task befitting its powers to gild and embellish and pass off as beautiful what was the merest compound of Vanity, folly, and every miserable weakness that ever met together in one human Being. . . . I shall be curious to see if <your new> the hero of your new novel [*Falkner*] will be another Beautified Byron. Thank Heaven you have not taken to drawing your women upon the same model: Cornelia I like the least of them--she is the most like him because she is so heartlessly proud and selfish, but all the others are angels of light. (*Clairmont Correspondence II*, 341)

This resemblance is perhaps less important biographically and more important as it establishes Lodore as a type of the Romantic poet: "Like a Corinthian column, left single

¹¹ From John Ford, *The Lover's Melancholy* (1629), V. I. 4-9. All quotations from *Lodore* refer to Fiona Stafford's 1996 edition, volume six of *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*. Volume and page numbers from the original edition (3 vols., London: Richard Bentley, 1835) are given in brackets.

amidst the ruder forms of the forest oaks, standing in alien beauty, a type of civilization and the arts . . . Refined to fastidiousness, sensitive to morbidity, the stranger was respected without being understood, and loved though the intimate of none" (14 [I, 27-8]). Lodore is attractive, and a loving father, but as a "Beautified Byron," his overly passionate nature is his downfall.¹² As a young man, he dissipates his energy on the Continent in an affair with a Polish countess, Theodora Lyzinski. His attempt to re-enter British society fails. A combination of jealousy, rage and impatience results in his leaving England and spending the rest of his life in North America, where he is finally killed in a duel, appropriately near Niagara Falls. Lodore remains, as Cronin points out, morally untransformed (49); he is never able to achieve "the calm" for which he struggles, and the novel is primarily taken up with describing the effects of his actions on his wife, Cornelia Santerre, Lady Lodore, and his daughter, Ethel Fitzhenry Villiers.

Shelley sets up the plot of her novel in a way that clearly pits the values of the Byronic hero against an idealized (but as yet unreformed) domesticity. Having returned from the Continent, tired of "society women," Lodore is pleased to find the unspoiled Cornelia Santerre living with her mother in retirement in Wales. Lodore seeks in Cornelia a perfect haven, not an equal. Unfortunately Cornelia's mother, Lady Santerre, sees her daughter's marriage to Lodore primarily as the key to her own financial well-being. Accordingly, she drives a wedge between husband and wife, always asserting herself as Cornelia's closest confidante. Lodore is estranged from his wife, and because of pride, never attempts to become closer to her. Lady Santerre educates Cornelia to value social

¹² Marion Kingston Stocking responds that "*Falkner* was indeed a 'Beautified Byron'" (II, 345). See also Ernest J. Lovell, Jr., "Byron and the Byronic Hero in the Novels of Mary Shelley," and William D. Brewer, "Unnationalized Englishmen in Mary Shelley's Fiction." Lodore as a Byronic figure has a complicated lineage, as Richard Cronin argues: Shelley seems to have been influenced in her formulation of Lodore's character by Edward Bulwer's *Pelham*, which was itself probably influenced by "the Byron of the country house cantos of *Don Juan*" (44).

appearances above all else, and Cornelia leads an active social life. The resulting lack of understanding between the married couple, leading from misery to tragedy, illustrates the importance of a woman's education to the happiness of a marriage.¹³ They marry on Cornelia's sixteenth birthday, when Lodore is thirty-four; the great gap in their age and experience also contributes to divide them from one another, and although Lodore sees Cornelia as "white paper to be written upon at will, . . . a favourite metaphor among those men who have described the ideal of a wife" (41 [I, 108]), he never succeeds in replacing her mother with himself as Cornelia's primary instructor. However, it is Lodore's own passionate nature, not Cornelia's superficial social behaviors, that results in Lodore's disgrace and self-imposed exile. His old lover, Countess Lyzinski, appears in England with their son, Count Casimir. Just a little younger than Cornelia, Casimir becomes friends with Cornelia, and she, unknowingly, engages in innocent flirtation with Lodore's son. Lodore is enraged by jealousy, strikes the Count, and is forced to flee to avoid a duel that would pit father against son. Cornelia is urged by her mother not to yield to Lodore's request to join him in exile, and Lodore takes his three-year-old daughter Ethel with him to live in the wilds of the Illinois.¹⁴ Cornelia is left alone to resume her

¹³ For more on the effects of education on women in Romantic era fiction, see Charlene E. Bunnell, "Breaking the Tie that Binds: Parents and Children in Romantic Fiction."

¹⁴ This situation may possibly reflect on that of Queen Caroline, who was separated from her child, Princess Charlotte, and accused of adultery by George IV, her husband, who did not wish her to be acknowledged as his Queen when he ascended to the throne in 1820. *Cornelia* is an anagram of *Caroline*. According to Joan Perkin, radicalism was often reflected by sympathetic treatment of the Queen (37). Cornelia differs markedly from Queen Caroline in that she suffers greatly over her separation from Ethel (the Queen was sometimes rumored to be indifferent to the situation), and her social activity is above reproach (the Queen was not found guilty of adultery but was not irreproachable in her conduct).

Strangely enough (given Shelley's fear that she had an unwanted gift for prophesying tragic outcomes in her fiction), the situation seems even more applicable to that of Caroline Norton, a friend of Shelley's: in 1836 (a year after the publication of *Lodore*) Caroline Norton's husband accused Lord Melbourne of seduction, and even

untarnished social position, while Lodore flees romantically into the wilderness to raise his child as a more perfect companion for himself.

As a Byronic Romantic hero, Lodore is considerably less flawed than his earlier counterparts, Victor Frankenstein or Castruccio Castracani. Lodore's attachment to his little daughter, though not selfless, is loving. Still, he is unable to content his passionate nature with this calm loving relationship:

. . . Governed by a fevered fancy and untamed passions, Fitzhenry forgot the tranquil lot which he had learnt to value and enjoy; and quitting the haven he had sought, as if it had never been a place of shelter to him, unthankful for the many happy hours which had blessed him there, he hastened to reach the stormier seas of life, whose breakers and whose winds were ready to visit him with shipwreck and destruction. (27 [I, 66-67])

His willingness to reject utopian domesticity results in his re-entry into society, where, foregoing his responsibilities to his daughter in favor of worldly opinion, he soon involves himself in a duel to regain his lost honor, and is killed.

In *Lodore*, Shelley explores the strong Romantic emphasis on passion. Although sex is prominent in Shelley's tragic earlier novels (*Frankenstein*, *Mathilda*, *Valperga*, and *The Last Man*), her later novels (*Perkin Warbeck*, *Lodore* and *Falkner*) engage the sexual in a less open, less confrontational manner. As utopian domesticity grows stronger, the visibility of sex diminishes. In cases where sex is overt and central, signifying the dominant presence of Romantic passion, it usually leads to tragic consequences: in *Mathilda*, a father's admission of passionate love for his daughter leads to both their deaths; in *Valperga*, the downfall of Beatrice is doubly sexual, first when she is seduced

though the jury found insufficient evidence, Norton was denied access to her children by her husband. Her lobbying for mother's rights was instrumental in the 1839 passage of the Infant Custody Act.

by Castruccio and then when she is driven mad while held captive by a ring of sadists; in *The Last Man*, as Ellis notes (26), Raymond's sexual and emotional transgressions against domestic affections are directly linked to the Plague. *Lodore* follows these examples. Lodore's affair with Countess Lyzinski is ruinous for him. Not only does his bad experience with the Countess lead to his selecting a bride who is too young and unformed to judge between the conflicting advice of her mother and husband, it eventually leads to his death in a duel. Because he cannot seem to control his passion, he is sacrificed to it. Similarly, Clorinda, Horatio Saville's Italian bride, falls prey to her insane jealousy of Cornelia. Although Horatio has made an effort in good faith to forget Cornelia and to devote himself to his marriage with Clorinda, Clorinda is unable even to contemplate the possibility of his returning to England. Her passionate desires, pitted against his social duty (he has become the heir to an important political seat), destroy their marriage rather than reinforcing it. Mellor concludes that "Denouncing sexual passion, women writers urge their readers to embrace reason, virtue, and caution. . . . [they] call not for sensibility but for sense, not for erotic passion but for rational love, a love based on understanding, compatibility, equality and mutual respect" (Mellor, *Gender* 60). Inasmuch as sex is a force which drives characters (either male or female) to make selfish choices, it is harmful to the concept of a cooperative domesticity. When sexuality is made part of love rather than instigating untamed Romantic passion, it reinforces the bonds between loving couples or is made visible as the resulting babies who act as metonyms for happy domesticity. Interestingly enough, Countess Lyzinski herself remains immune to any ill effects from her affair with Lodore. Though we are given only a brief sketch of her character, her ability to remain calm in the midst of passionate circumstances makes her a figure of surprising power--retaining not only considerable emotional sway over Lodore, but also her hold on political and monetary power. In the Countess, Shelley paints a radical portrait of a woman who is able to experience Romantic passion without

being sacrificed to it. Lyzinski is a somewhat startling mirror, writ miniature, of Cornelia's ability to survive her own unfortunate attachment to Lodore.

In contrast to the passionate Lodore, Horatio Saville represents a significant revision of the Romantic ideal. Horatio represents the Shelleyan hero, still very much a Romantic hero, but a utopian one: "Horatio Saville was a being fashioned for every virtue and distinguished by every excellence . . . He was one of those who seem not to belong to this world, yet who adorn it most; conscientious, upright, and often cold in seeming, because he could always master his passions . . . His desire was knowledge; his passion truth" (113 [II, 20, 21]). Horatio has not been purged of a passionate nature, but has mastered it; his passion is truth. In his virtue and excellence he represents a utopian example for the rest of society to follow. In the figure of Horatio, the grosser elements of the Romantic figure are purged away, to leave a moral ideal: "he added the living spirit of poetry to their sensations, and associated the treasures of human genius with the sublime beauty of nature. He had a tact, a delicacy, a kind of electric sympathy in his disposition, that endeared him to every one that approached him" (169 [II, 189]). His upright moral qualities are combined with a physical appearance somewhat resembling Percy Shelley and associated with sensibility.¹⁵ Horatio's penchant for self-sacrifice is high, and indeed, despite his good intentions, leads to complications within the novel. Horatio is willing to sacrifice his own happiness for Cornelia's welfare by sending Villiers as an emissary to Lodore to attempt their reconciliation, so that Cornelia may be reunited with

¹⁵ See Stafford, 113 note a, for the association of Horatio's hectic flush with sensibility. As Mrs. Julian (Florence) Marshall noted in 1889, "Most of Mary's novels present the contrast of the Shelleyan and Byronic types" (qtd in Vargo 19), that is, types of the Romantic poet who have either devoted themselves to higher philosophical goals, and present as frail, ethereal, and otherworldly, as Shelley was often described, or who, though devastatingly handsome, are self-destructive, careless of the well-being of their loved ones, and overwhelmed by passions, like the mythic Byronic persona. David Vallins's exploration of Coleridge's and Wordsworth's influence on *Lodore* is valuable in its detail, but nevertheless misidentifies Saville as a figure of Coleridge rather than as a Shelleyan figure.

her child. Even Horatio's marriage to the tempestuous Italian, Clorinda, represents his willingness to attempt to find happiness in compromise.¹⁶

Mary Shelley portrays three important female characters in *Lodore*: Cornelia, Lodore's wife, Ethel Fitzhenry, their daughter, and Fanny Derham, Ethel's philosophical friend. Etziel represents both an idealized portrait of a loving father's gift of thorough education to his daughter, and the dangers of the gendered nature of that education. Under Lodore's tutelage, Ethel receives a "sexual education," as Shelley overtly states (218 [III. 21]).¹⁷ Reared in the isolation of the American wilderness, Ethel focuses all her devotion upon her father and is molded to satisfy his every whim: "Fitzhenry drew his chief ideas from Milton's Eve, and adding to this the romance of chivalry, he satisfied himself that his daughter would be the embodied ideal of all that is adorable and estimable in her sex" (18 [I, 38]). As noted by editor Fiona Stafford, Shelley's reference to Eve is designed to call to mind Wollstonecraft's "attack on male tyranny" in the second chapter of her *Vindication* (18 note b). Shelley also criticizes Lodore's education of Ethel overtly:

¹⁶ Believing that Cornelia cannot be his, Horatio tries to find happiness with Clorinda, whom he rescues from a convent:

. . . Clorinda was shut up in this convent through the heartless vanity of her mother . . . to wait there till her parents should find some suitable match, which she much instantly accept, or be doomed to seclusion for ever. . . . He declared that his love for her was not an absorbing passion like his first, but a mingling of pity, admiration, and that tenderness which his warm heart was ever ready to bestow. He described her as full of genius and sensibility, a creature of fire / and power, but dimmed by sorrow, and struggling with her chains. He visited her again; he tried to comfort, he offered to serve her. . . . he could rescue her from an unworthy fate, and make her happy. (164-5 [II, 174-5])

Many readers have noted the similarity between Clorinda and Emilia Viviani, whom the Shelleys met while she was living in a convent. Shelley's portrayal of Clorinda's good qualities and Horatio's kind (but ultimately ill-advised) intentions reflect interestingly on Percy Shelley's attachment to Viviani, for whom he wrote the passionate *Epipsychidion* (1821). Shelley is sympathetic to both parties, but favors the refined and revised Romantic figure (the Shelleyan Horatio) over the passionate, ungoverned Clorinda.

¹⁷ Lisa Vargo succinctly glosses Shelley's statement: "Ethel's education is a product of a culture that would separate men and women; Shelley would have it otherwise" (35).

A lofty sense of independence is, in man, the best privilege of his nature. It cannot be doubted, but that it were for the happiness of the other sex that she were taught more to rely on and act for herself. But in the cultivation of this feeling, the education of Fitzhenry was lamentably deficient. . . . In mind she was too often indolent, and apt to think that while she was docile to the injunctions of her parent, all her duties were fulfilled. She seldom thought, and never acted, for herself. (19 [I, 40, 41])

In the character of Ethel, Shelley shows how Lodore creates a perfect woman, not a perfected human being. Because Ethel's feelings are pure, the effects of her actions are always good, as far as she is capable of taking independent action.¹⁸ Her purpose in the novel is to demonstrate to the more worldly characters, Villiers and Cornelia, how superior the affections are to standards of worldly success. By learning to love Ethel, and by becoming more like her, both Villiers and Cornelia mature into a proper appreciation of the potential for utopian domesticity.

Lodore's concern to make Ethel "all that is adorable and estimable" is a worthy but unenlightened goal, limited as it is to "the embodied ideal of . . . her sex." Lodore's education of his daughter is well-intentioned but dangerous, because it does not endow her with the capacity to support herself. Throughout the novel, she is carefully transferred from one caretaker to the next: from Lodore, to the English family of Mrs. Greville, to her aunt Elizabeth Fitzhenry, and finally into the arms of Edward Villiers. Even once she is supposedly secure in the arms of her husband, she receives valuable assistance from the two independent women of the novel, her mother Cornelia, and Fanny Derham, the

¹⁸ Vargo notes the idealization of Ethel's character and identifies Shelley's project of portraying the effects of a sexual education: "Some reviewers suggest that Ethel is too good to be a credible character, yet this is consistent with Shelley's purpose. If she is creating a character who embodies the ideals of the domestic . . . , Shelley is critical of how such figures embody male fantasies of female passivity" (31-2).

philosophical daughter of Lodore's childhood friend. Cornelia, over time, revises her early education, and in effect, educates herself as Lodore was unable to do. Fanny receives a philosophical education that Shelley explicitly compares to Ethel's:

Lord Lodore had formed his ideal of what a woman ought to be, of what he had wished to find his wife, and sought to mould his daughter accordingly. Mr. Derham contemplated the duties and objects befitting an immortal soul, and had educated his child for the performance of them. The one fashioned his offspring to be the wife of a frail human being, and instructed her to be yielding, and to make it her duty to devote herself to his happiness, and to obey his will. The other sought to guard his from all weakness, to make her complete in herself, and to render her independent and self-sufficing. . . . Religion, reason, and justice--these were the landmarks of her life. She was kind-hearted, generous, and true--so also was Ethel; but the one was guided by the tenderness of her heart, while the other consulted her understanding . . . (218 [III, 21, 22])

Both Fanny and Cornelia are shown acting on their own initiative to assist Ethel, and in fact work together to effect her removal from debtor's prison, a feat which Villiers's seemingly more powerful male relatives are unable to accomplish. Fanny and Cornelia cooperate according to the dictates of utopian domesticity--acting on the bonds of love, friendship, and responsibility rather than according to social expectations--and their actions show how this utopian model spreads outward from the model of family upon which it is based to encompass and re-order all community relationships.

When Lodore is killed, Ethel transfers her affections to his second, Edward Villiers. Ethel marries Villiers, and they become a model devoted couple, but the potential for domesticity to fall from its utopian potential into tragedy does not go unnoticed. Ethel and Villiers are actually reduced to debtor's prison before Cornelia's self-sacrificing transfer of her wealth to them effects their release. Recalling an earlier

radical woman writer's commentary on wealth, marriage, law, and true love, Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House*, Lodore calls the sufficiency of love into question, before immediately brightening the circumstances. Lodore's gendered education of his daughter leads to her marrying a man with no means to support her, and having no means to support herself: if the novel had been planned by Shelley as a tragedy, it is easy to see how the circumstances could have turned out very badly. Villiers quotes from *The Cenci*, Percy Bysshe Shelley's study of parental tyranny, and Shelley credits the play in her footnote. Villiers states,

"My father is unworthy of his name--the animal who destroys his offspring at its birth is merciful in comparison with him: had he cast me off at once, I should have hardened my hands with labour and earned my daily bread; but I was trained to "high-born necessities," and have all the "wide wants and narrow powers" of the heir of wealth" (230 [III, 56]).

These are the words of Giacomo (*The Cenci*, II. ii. 8-12), whose father brings about his penury and turns his wife and children against him; as a result, Giacomo cooperates in his father's murder and is executed. Villiers, however, has been taught by Ethel to recognize as a "hoard of luxury and wealth" the simple room they inhabit together, and, though he still mistakenly equates "luxury" with happiness, he does not fall to despair as Giacomo did.

It is Cornelia's redemptive recognition of Ethel's devotion to her husband which convinces her of the supremacy of loving attachments,¹⁹ and it is mother love (which was turned against Lodore and Cornelia in their own marriage) which enables a happy ending. Not only does Cornelia survive her first marriage to Lodore, she is able to leave the bad

¹⁹ As Charlene Bunnell notes, "For [Ethel], domestic happiness is more important than self-interest and public masks, a lesson that Cornelia fortunately learns in time to enjoy the remainder of her life with her daughter" ("Illusion" 283).

example of her own mother behind her, sacrificing her own financial security for the higher good of the welfare of her daughter (and her daughter's newborn). Cornelia re-evaluates her social and familial priorities and places herself in a community context based on real (loving) rather than artificial (polite) bonds. Her re-education as a woman citizen and as a mother is according to Wollstonecraftian goals, added to which, the Godwinian program demonstrates that her happiness cannot be achieved without taking responsibility to others into account. The Godwinian agenda also includes the ideal of an informed and chosen simplicity which Cornelia adopts, sacrificing her wealth and social position to benefit her daughter.

Before she rejoins society, Cornelia meditates on the benefits of her withdrawal from the world:

“ . . . nature is the refuge and home for women: they have no public career-- no aim nor end beyond their domestic circle; but they can extend that, and make all the creations of nature their own, to foster and do good to. We complain, when shut up in cities of the niggard rules of society, which gives us / only the drawing-room or ball-room in which to display our talents, and which, for ever²⁰ turning the sympathy of those around us into envy on the part of women, or what is called love on that of men, besets our path with dangers or sorrows. But throw aside all vanity, no longer seek to surpass your own sex, not to inspire the other with feelings which are pregnant with disquiet or misery, and which seldom end in mutual benevolence, turn your steps to the habitation which God has given as befitting his creatures, contemplate the lovely ornaments with which he has blessed the earth;--here is not heart-burning nor calumny; it is better to love, to be of use to one of these flowers, than to be the admired of the many--the puppet of one's own

²⁰ I amend “every” to “ever,” following Lisa Vargo's edition of *Lodore* (443).

vanity." (309 [III, 297-8])

At the literal level, Cornelia muses that being able to appreciate and to take care of the flowers in nature is superior to engaging in the meaningless activities of society. Shelley follows the majority of feminist utopian writers both past and present by modelling her utopia on nature and natural beauty.²¹ But she also makes canny judgments about the division of society into separate spheres. She notes that women "have no public career:" there is no outlet for public ambition in a country where women do not even have the right to vote. She then contrasts the idea that women have "no aim nor end beyond their domestic circle" with "the niggard rules of society, which gives us / only the drawing-room or ball-room in which to display our talents," exposing the polite world of society, in which women's concerns move beyond their domestic sphere, but to no useful effect. She clarifies that to "seek to surpass your own sex" is for women to regard themselves primarily as sexual beings, which turns human "sympathy" into "envy on the part of women" and leads to "what is called love . . . feelings which are pregnant with disquiet or misery, and which seldom end in mutual benevolence," perhaps remembering her innocent actions as the basis of Lodore's jealous violence toward Casimir. She concludes that "it is better to love . . . than to be the admired of the many--the puppet of one's own

²¹ Such writers would include, as I discuss in Chapter One, Sarah Scott, author of *Millenium Hall* (1762), in which women retreat together into a country estate to form a society based on charity and community responsibility rather than sexual definitions of womanhood. Their bounteous and well-planned estate reflects the utopian quality of their community. Male utopianists tend to formulate an ideal commonwealth and to focus on forms of government rather than on the bounty and beauty of nature. (Percy Bysshe Shelley, with the utopian gardens in his *Queen Mab*, *Laon and Cythna*, and *Prometheus Unbound*, is a notable exception.) Another similarity with Scott and other utopian separatists is Cornelia's wish that she could retire to a convent: "In giving up fortune and station, she would have placed herself under the guardianship of a community; and have found protection and security, to compensate for poverty and slavery" (264 [III, 163]). Just a few important modern examples of the centrality of nature to feminist utopias include Charlotte Perkins Gilman's *Herland* (1915), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1978), and Ursula K. LeGuin's *Always Coming Home* (1985).

vanity" even if the only object of love is "to be of use to one of these flowers." Cornelia thus espouses, near the close of the novel, a preference for shunning worldly society and rejects the gendered/sexual roles imposed by society for more benevolent ties based on love and service. These attitudes form the basis of Shelley's model for utopian domesticity.

At the end of *Lodore*, Cornelia is rewarded with utopian domesticity in her marriage to the revised figure of Romantic excellence, Horatio Saville. Horatio has also survived a bad marriage, and recognizes the true worth of Cornelia even before she sheds her social station. As Mellor points out, because Horatio "acknowledges that the claims of a child can take precedence over the claims of a husband. . . . Mary Shelley subtly follows her mother's revolutionary political vision by implying that the primary claim upon both a woman's and a man's heart and mind is not the authority of the father or husband but the welfare of the child" (*Gender* 69-70). More specifically, Shelley emphasizes the priority of relationships based not on authority, but on love. Furthermore, Horatio is willing to let Cornelia, as a mature and responsible adult, acknowledge her affections honestly, according to Godwinian principles of forthrightness. At the close of the novel, by marrying Horatio, Cornelia becomes "Mrs. Saville," whom we remember as Walton's sister, an important signifier of interpersonal connection--and possible utopian domesticity--in *Frankenstein*.

The story of Fanny Derham in *Lodore* shows that Shelley does not consider marriage to be the well-educated daughter's only option. Many utopian paradigms fall short of convincing because of their lack of diversity. By including within the community an independent, self-supporting woman such as Fanny Derham, Shelley strengthens her utopian system. Devoting her considerable talents to the study of classics, Fanny is a scholar, but also a practical and devoted friend, who "possesses the most discriminating understanding of human motivation and the strongest capacity to act in support of others"

(Hill-Miller 143). Fanny is not imagined by Shelley within the heterosexual framework commonly associated with domesticity, but expands Shelley's vision of loving based on the domestic model even though she does not share ties of blood or marriage with her friends:

Such a woman as Fanny was more made to be loved by her own sex than by the opposite one. Superiority of intellect, joined to acquisitions beyond those usual even to men; and both announced with frankness, though without pretension, forms a kind of anomaly little in accord with masculine taste. Fanny could not be the rival of women, and, therefore, all her merits / were appreciated by them. They love to look up to a superior being, to rest on a firmer support than their own minds can afford; and they are glad to find such in one of their own sex, and thus destitute of those dangers which usually attend any services conferred by men. (214 [10-11])

Because of her numerous gifts, Fanny is not fitted for the "masculine taste," but this situation is not related as a handicap. Instead, she will have numerous women friends, who "are glad to find such in one of their own sex." Shelley points out that Fanny, because of her talents and her existence outside the heterosexual framework, defies the scope of the nineteenth-century novel:

. . . it is not in a few lines that we can revert to the varied fate of Fanny Derham. . . in her lofty idea of the dignity of her nature, in her love of truth and in her integrity, she will find support and reward in her various fortunes. What the events are, that have already diversified her existence, cannot now be recounted; and it would require the gift of prophecy to foretell the conclusion. In after times these may be told, and the life of Fanny Derham be presented as a useful lesson, at once to teach what goodness and genius can achieve in palliating the woes of life, and to encourage those, who would in any way imitate her, by an example or calumny

refuted by patience, errors rectified by charity, and the passions of our nature purified and ennobled / by an undeviating observance of those moral laws on which all human excellence is founded--a love of truth in ourselves, and a sincere sympathy with our fellow-creatures. (313 [III, 309, 10-11])

Fanny Derham represents freedom for talented women, not only intellectually but also materially. More significantly, she joins Horatio Saville as another important revision of the Romantic ideal: "Her beauty was all intellectual" (205 [III, 293]). Hers is a character of high virtue, striving after philosophical excellence, but remaining in close contact--"sympathy"--with the human community. Fanny becomes a new model for the Romantic intellectual, not having purged, but having "purified and ennobled" the passions. She is the Shelleyan hero, and though Shelley never went on to tell her story, her sister character is Elizabeth Raby, the hero of *Falkner*.

In Shelley's own experience as daughter of intellectuals and mother of an eventual baronet (her son Percy Florence), both knowledge and material circumstances were inherited. By earning her living as a writer, however, Shelley realizes Godwin's utopian scheme of gradual improvement of society by education. In her portraits of utopian domesticity, this element of economic self-support is absent; characters overwhelmingly rely upon inherited wealth and not upon their own labor to survive. Godwin's scheme of educational improvement is open to the criticism that study requires leisure and material resources which only the wealthy possess, and Shelley's own utopian ideals do not entirely overcome class boundaries. Fanny Derham is an important exception: by pursuing her intellectual endeavors, she carries out the Godwinian scheme (although, by the end of the novel, Fanny's paternal relatives, seeing that she has become a part of society, establish her and her family in economic independence).

Falkner

In *Falkner*, her last novel, Shelley continues her project of imagining a utopian social structure shared by men and women in both their personal and public lives. Shelley has three related goals in *Falkner*: first, to present utopian domesticity as a reformed model of the personal and public social order in response to Godwin's most well-known novel, *Things as they Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794); second, to present a reformed masculine Romantic hero, based on the education and reform of the characters of Rupert Falkner (a Byronic hero)²² and Gerard Neville (a Shelleyan hero); and third, to present a fully formed image of her domestic heroine in the education and life of Elizabeth (Raby) Falkner, a "womanly" yet independent-minded and idealistic heroine.

In this novel, Shelley uses language, characterization, and plot to destabilize gender associations so that utopian domesticity can be developed. At the level of language, Shelley noticeably turns toward what we would now call an "essentialist" treatment of gendered characteristics: many desirable characteristics, such as gentleness, devotion, and empathy, are identified as "womanly" or properly belonging to woman. At the level of character, however, Shelley complicates the gender association, destabilizing the easy association of gender with certain characteristics by assigning laudable "womanly" characteristics to male characters. Fidelity, the quality the novel claims as its central concern, is never assigned to one gender or the other and is exemplified equally by Falkner, his adopted daughter Elizabeth, and Gerard Neville. At the level of plot, Shelley goes farther to undermine the expectations of gendered behavior by having both male and female characters disregard their prescribed gendered behavior when acting or planning to act. This is especially true of the two young characters through whose attitudes Shelley

²² Falkner is termed Byronic by critics such as Hill-Miller (179). Falkner may be autobiographically connected with Edward Trelawny (as by Poovey [160], for example), but Trelawny was himself a Byronic figure.

expresses the utopian leanings of her imagined social order, Elizabeth (Raby) Falkner and Gerard Neville.

Mary Poovey's discussion of *Falkner* intends to reveal Shelley as an example of the way in which women writers were forced to conform the ideology of the proper lady, even when attempting (consciously or unconsciously) to subvert it: "Mary Shelley's last three novels reveal the way in which stereotypical feminine propriety could disguise--and even accommodate--the kind of unladylike aggression she had expressed in the productions of her youth" (159). Poovey attributes Shelley's conscious political manipulations of plot and character to an "unladylike aggression" Shelley is supposedly struggling to conceal--although, for Poovey, this makes Shelley more interestingly complex. Reading *Falkner* primarily as an illumination of Shelley's relationship with Godwin, Poovey concedes that "ostensibly [*Falkner*] is about fidelity" (160) and even elaborates on Shelley's execution of this theme (162-3) but goes on to argue that Shelley uses the narrative to punish Godwin by having the daughter, Elizabeth, "punish" Falkner for his crimes. Poovey does, however, feel that this punishment allows women to "retaliate against their legal superiors" as "legitimate agents for socializing men" (169). Thus "despite" her acquiescence to the ideology of the "proper lady," Poovey argues, Shelley succeeds in modelling a kind of social power for women. Poovey recognizes the face value moral of Shelley's novel--"Thus for--and through the example of--Elizabeth's love, two men master their strong passions and narrowly avert the crisis" (163)--but she submerges Shelley's utopian project in a morass of biographical facts arranged to support notions of revenge and muddled ideology.

Mellor follows Poovey in reading Elizabeth's "repressed anger" and "unacknowledged resentment," placing Elizabeth in "the same role in relation to Falkner that Godwin's Caleb Williams played in relation his employer and father-figure Falkland: innocent persecutor and revenging fury" (*Monsters* 203). In order to support her

argument that Elizabeth feels resentment toward Falkner (she does, but only when he separates himself from her in order to seek his own death), Mellor skews the events of the novel, as for example when she states that "Falkner has no right to deprive Elizabeth Raby of all contact with her natural family" (203). Actually, the Raby family, devout Catholics, have cut Elizabeth off because her father married outside the faith, so that when Falkner finds the orphan she is literally in rags; when Falkner tries to convey Elizabeth's worth to them, the old head of the family again rejects her as an "embarrassment" (142). Eventually, when the old man becomes senile, a kinder woman rises to the head of the family and opens her arms to Elizabeth, by this time a grown woman. Mellor also misreports Elizabeth's education: she argues that Falkner deprives Elizabeth of "an education appropriate to a girl of her breeding. The latter defect is partially remedied by . . . a cold and discreet woman who teaches Elizabeth self-discipline and needlework" (203). Actually, Elizabeth learned diversified habits of study similar to Shelley's own and is regarded with wonder and admiration by Falkner, who is himself less learned than Elizabeth. Nowhere does Elizabeth "feel the want of female society and friendship" (203), except when she is tending Falkner in Greece; later, she is cheered by the friendship of Lady Cecil, an attachment which Falkner encourages. It is hard to read Elizabeth's professions of love for Falkner, which are applauded by the narrator as examples of openness and sincerity, as examples of "resentment of Falkner's callous unconcern with her needs and sufferings, of his complete domination of her existence" (203). Mellor reads Falkner's reformation as character death: "The overt narrative conclusion . . . sentimentally redeems Falkner to live happily ever after in the household of Elizabeth Raby and Gerard Neville. But inherent in this conclusion is a transformation of Falkner's character that effectivly kills off the Byronic hero whose history of passionate love, crime, remorse, and misguided self-redemption we have been reading. In this sense, Falkner has been entirely destroyed by Elizabeth" (204). But in

Caleb Williams, the actions of Caleb actually do bring about Falkland's destruction--his physical wasting away and his conviction for murder--whereas in *Falkner*, Elizabeth's actions bring the inherent goodness of Falkner's character forward and allow for the forgiveness for Falkner that Caleb feels Falkland also could have deserved, had the two of them openly dealt with their grievances with one another, as Shelley's characters do. Elizabeth does not destroy, but allows Falkner at last to redeem himself, to live, instead of seeking an "honorable" suicide.

Countering the readings of Poovey and Mellor, Bennett states that in *Falkner* "the female as the model of courage, dedication, and intellectual accomplishment takes center stage" (*Introduction* 97) and that "Through Elizabeth Raby, the novel focuses on working out personal affections against the challenge of erroneous beliefs, appearances, and the meaning of justice" (100). Rather than viewing Elizabeth as an angry, repressed mirror of Shelley, Bennett asserts that Shelley created an admirable character in Elizabeth, and that her story reflects progressive political and personal values in line with those of Wollstonecraft, Godwin, and Percy Shelley, not opposed to them.²³ In order to give *Falkner* its due, the psychological/biographical reading favored by Poovey and Mellor must fall away, replaced by a political understanding such as Bennett espouses, and such as I argue in reading Shelley's work in terms of utopian domesticity.²⁴ Few scholars

²³ "Clearly," states Bennett, "Falkner's acquittal and acceptance works out Godwin's concept of personal reconstruction rather than the legal vengeance portrayed at the conclusion of *Caleb*. But this novel, like Mary Shelley's other novels, goes beyond Godwinian exploration to Romantic resolution in its demonstration of ways of taking responsibility and ways of loving" (*Introduction* 102); "both *Lodore* and *Falkner* represent fusions of the psychological social novel with the educational novel, resulting not in romances but instead in narratives of destabilization: the heroic protagonists are educated women who strive to create a world of justice and universal love" (104).

²⁴ In "Not this time, Victor!" Bennett contrasts Elizabeth Lavenza of *Frankenstein* with *Falkner*'s Elizabeth Raby, arguing that Shelley gives the latter Elizabeth a stronger grasp on worldly reality than the sheltered, controlled Lavenza had, and a stronger will as a result: "Her better education, familial and formal, eventually empowers her to become

have taken up the challenge to reconsider Shelley's domestic novels in a political light.²⁵

There are two reasons why critics might have trouble identifying Shelley's utopian feminist project in *Falkner*. First is simply its categorization as a domestic novel--a genre not usually explored by critics in terms of feminist potential. Second, and even more strongly, the feminist reader might feel uneasy when frequently encountering what looks like essentialist language in this particular novel. For example, Elizabeth's education must include "needlework [and] the careful inculcation of habits of neatness and order; [lest she lack] those feminine qualities without which every woman / must be unhappy - and, to a certain degree, unsexed" (40 [I. 116-17]). Shelley's adoption of essentialist-seeming language and the fulfillment of certain traditional expectations in the character of Elizabeth may be in part a defensive strategy. Perhaps thinking of attacks such as Richard Polwhele's upon her mother as an example of the "unsexed" feminist, Shelley creates in Elizabeth a heroine who could not be faulted by traditional critics for any lack of "womanly" skills--later in the novel she sets up her embroidery frame in Falkner's prison--but who also is taught the "more masculine studies" including history, biography and a general "love of knowledge" (39 [I. 113]). Shelley's outline of the thoroughness

the decision maker often times for both Falkner and herself" (11). I use the idea of utopian domesticity to situate the social behaviors and structures Shelley uses in formulating the philosophy of social and gender reform Bennett also describes.

²⁵ Katherine C. Hill-Miller in *My Hideous Progeny* gives a strong feminist reading of *Falkner*, but confines herself to a psychoanalytical/biographical argument. Her reading of *Falkner* is more focused upon the book's sexual/incestuous overtones than its political ramifications and continues in the vein outlined by Poovey and Mellor. Kate Ferguson Ellis, on the other hand, puts forth a valuable political reading of Shelley's work, although she finds a skeptical mistrust of the bourgeois family where I read a utopian reinvention of it. Charlene Bunnell gives a careful social reading of both *Lodore* and *Falkner* in terms of the conventions of the novels of manners and sentiment. More recently, Graham Allen looks at *Falkner* as it impinges upon Shelley's attempt to memorialize Godwin without re-awakening the scandal around the figure of her mother. Most useful for this study is Julia Saunders's cautious interpretation of Shelley's rehabilitation of the idea of the family as "a reconciliation of progressive ideas with the possible" (222).

of the education provided to Elizabeth by Miss Jervis gives pride of place to the “masculine studies” by mentioning them first. Shelley carefully details Miss Jervis’s “one hard, defined, unerratic line,” describing her personality as “precise, and formal, and silent, and quiet, and cold”—all characteristics more likely to be thought of as masculine. Shelley goes on to say that Falkner’s “mind was strong in its own elements, but these lay scattered, and somewhat chaotic. His observation was keen, and his imagination fervid; but it was inborn, uncultivated, and unenriched by any vast stores of reading” (39 [l. 113])—characteristics one might associate with the feminine. Through exposure to the combined influence of these two personalities, Elizabeth develops a well-balanced mind: “the two served to form Elizabeth to *something better than either*. She learned from Falkner the uses of learning: from Miss / Jervis she acquired the thought and experience of *other men*” (39 [l. 113-14], emphasis added).²⁶ Gender distinctions tend to blur in this description, serving to distance Elizabeth’s education from the idea of gender until the end. It is at this point that Shelley pulls back to divide the “more masculine studies” from “those feminine qualities.” The distance Shelley establishes between Elizabeth’s education and the expectations surrounding gender should function to mitigate our initial—and appropriate—critical alarm: Shelley’s language emphasizes the extent to which Elizabeth carries the strengths proper to *both* genders of her day, but does not

²⁶ Wollstonecraft herself, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, uses a similar non-gendered turn of phrase to describe her ability to converse “as man with man”:

I have conversed, as man with man, with medical men, on anatomical subjects, and compared the proportions of the human body with artists—yet such modesty did I meet with, that I was never reminded by word or look of my sex, of the absurd rules which make modesty a pharisaical cloak of weakness. And I am persuaded that in the pursuit of knowledge women would never be insulted by sensible men, and rarely by men of any description, if they did not by mock modesty remind them that they were women Men are not always men in the company of women, nor would women always remember that they are women, if they were allowed to acquire more understanding. (Chap. VII, “On Modesty,” 123 n7)

attempt to attribute certain qualities to Elizabeth as "natural," as most essentialist language tends to do.

Shelley uses similarly essentialist language to describe Elizabeth's situation when Falkner leaves her alone in Greece while he fights in the war:

There was no help or hope, and she must early learn the woman's first and hardest lesson, to bear in silence the advance of an evil, which might be avoided, but for the unconquerable will of another. Almost she could have called her father cruel, had not the remembrance of the misery that drove him to desperation, inspired pity, instead of selfish resentment. (59 [l. 178])

Here, what sounds like essentialist language--the age-old, oppressive patriarchal dictum that woman should suffer in silence--is shown to be the outcome of Elizabeth's personal and social circumstances. Actually, Elizabeth has not been silent or passive: she has strongly protested Falkner's intent (to die honorably in the war) and has insisted that she accompany him to Greece. She has, however, conceded to Falkner that she will not follow him into the very camp of war, and this separation has resulted in her present silence. The narrative condemns this situation, showing Elizabeth continuing virtuously to occupy herself and to study, even as her knowledge of Falkner's risk worries her. Falkner's "unconquerable will" is acknowledged to be "cruel," his involvement in the war "an evil" born of "the misery that drove him to desperation." Elizabeth struggles to feel "pity, instead of selfish resentment"--but the reader, sympathizing with her, does not identify her opposition to Falkner's will as selfish or as resentment. As a woman, Elizabeth is excluded from the scene of war, and powerless either physically or legally to restrain her guardian from his fool-hardy and suicidal wish. What looks at first like essentialist language becomes a poignant example of how restrictively gendered behavior forms obstacles to Elizabeth's right-minded and sympathetic goals.

Education is central to the foundational gendering of character in Shelley; indeed,

Shelley often introduces characters by describing their education. Elizabeth's is well-managed by Falkner. Contrary to the practices of Lord Lodore in Shelley's 1835 novel, Falkner does not insulate his adopted child from society, but travels with her (though they travel through foreign lands, they often meet with other English people) and hires a capable governess, Miss Jervis, who sees that Elizabeth's education is strict and complete. Whereas Ethel, the heroine of *Lodore*, is given a strongly gendered education, taught to adapt herself to her father's every mood and never learns to apply herself diligently to solitary study, Elizabeth is just the opposite. Taught by Miss Jervis always to strive for perfection, she is well able to manage her own studies independently and so can survive (though not contentedly) outside her father's presence (unlike Ethel, who always seems to require the presence of her father or a male surrogate). Throughout the novel, Elizabeth considers her father's welfare a paramount reason for not leaving his side. When Falkner wishes to restore Elizabeth to her Raby relatives in order that he might go to Greece and die in the war, Elizabeth will not allow it:

"My dear, dear father! - my more than father, and only friend - you break my heart by speaking thus. If you are miserable, the more need that your child - the creature you preserved, and taught to love you - should be at your side to comfort - I had almost said to help you. You must not cast me off! Were you happy, you might desert me; but if you are miserable, I cannot leave you - you must not ask me - it kills me to think of it!" (51 [I.152])

Elizabeth often refers to Falkner as her "more than father," emphasizing that bonds of choice rather than bonds of blood have joined them together.²⁷ The voluntary nature of

²⁷ Julia Saunders is correct to point out that Shelley has reimagined the bonds uniting members of a family: "Usually family ties depend on blood relationships . . . Shelley replaces blood with gratitude" (214). Saunders goes on to assert that "Falkner has 'bought' the freely given devotion of his adopted daughter through his care and support - doubly so because he extended his protection to an orphan with no claim on him. Gratitude forms ties thicker than blood" (216). Saunders's emphasis on *gratitude*

their association renders it stronger rather than weaker. Elizabeth "felt herself bound to him by stronger than filial ties. A father performs an imperious duty in cherishing his child; but all had been spontaneous benevolence in Falkner. His very faults and passions made his sacrifice the greater, and his generosity the more conspicuous" (55 [I. 166]). Utopian domesticity is enhanced as a model for society when, as here--and as in Shelley's utopian short story, *Maurice, or the Fisher's Cot*--characters join together in voluntary union out of this feeling of mutual benevolence. This utopian model is also demonstrated, not quite as conspicuously, in the companionate marriages featured in both *Lodore* (the marriage of Ethel and Edward Villiers, and the marriage of Cornelia and Horatio Saville) and *Falkner* (the marriage of Elizabeth and Gerard Neville).

Also unlike Ethel, rather than adapting her own reactions to the mood of Falkner, Elizabeth constantly challenges him to modify his own mood, preventing his attempted suicide when they are first brought together (19 [I.47]) and continually bringing him back both physically and mentally from the verge of death by her assiduous care. Elizabeth is much less of a bending reed than Ethel; although she embodies the "womanly virtues" admired by Shelley, she possesses an independent mind and the ability to formulate and adhere to her own plan of action. In the same scene, Elizabeth insists on accompanying Falkner to Greece:

"No dear father, you will not leave me behind. I am not unreasonable - I do not ask to follow you to the camp - but you must let me be near - in the same

runs the risk of transforming a cooperative community of benevolence into an economy of exchange. Elizabeth refers to Falkner's benevolence as proof of his reformation; but she looks upon her own devotion to him as a *duty* incurred by her familial bond of fidelity to him, not as repayment for his benevolence. According to the Godwinian idea of duty, one's actions should produce the greatest good for all, not necessarily redounding to oneself--gratitude is not involved, as any benefit to oneself is a mere side-effect. (Godwin discusses benevolence in book IV, chap. X of *Political Justice*, arguing that self-love, while sometimes a factor in benevolence, is not a necessary component of it). Utopian domesticity is created when individuals' personal benefit and gratitude are subsumed within a larger sense of duty and mutual benefit.

country as yourself.”

“You force me to yield against my better reason,” said Falkner. “This is not right - I feel that it is not so - one of your sex, and so young, ought not to be exposed to all I am / about to encounter” (53 [I. 157-8])

Elizabeth prevails, although Miss Jervis must be dismissed, and her proximity to Falkner results in her saving his life for the second time when he is wounded and catches a deadly fever. It is important to note here, that in obeying the dictates of “fidelity” (not necessarily a womanly virtue, but here closely tied to filial duty and love for the father) Elizabeth disregards any question that her sex should determine her actions, and the narrative supports the correctness of her decision.

Essentialist language occurs most often in *Falkner* when Shelley intends to praise the good qualities of a character. For example, in nursing Falkner, Elizabeth “brought that discernment and tact of which only a woman is capable” (63 [I. 192]). Again, when Gerard Neville witnesses Elizabeth’s care of Falkner, he “listened as if an angel spoke. . . none but woman could feel thus, but it was beyond woman to speak and to endure as she did” (71 [I. 281, 219]). This second example especially sets off warning bells, as it prefigures the Victorian “angel in the house” that became such a repressive model for women’s behavior.²⁸ Yet Gerard Neville himself is described in similar language in the surrounding passage. Though still a “stranger” to them, Neville has given aid to Falkner and Elizabeth when Falkner suffers a relapse while travelling:

. . . she found a couch had been prepared for her with almost a *woman’s care* by the stranger. . . . It was a new and pleasant sensation to the lone girl to feel that

²⁸ Julia Saunders, for instance, notes the resemblance of Elizabeth to the angel in the house; while arguing that this is a “superficial appearance,” Saunders takes the cautious position that Elizabeth’s characterization is “Wollstonecraftian” in its potential to reform the family, but less so than the “extreme liberated femininity of Fanny Derham or Euthanasia” (221).

there was one sharing her task, on whom she might rely. . . . / He greeted her with extreme kindness. / . . . acting, without question, as if he had been her *brother*, guessing, as if by instinct, the best thing to be done, and performing all with activity and zeal. Poor Elizabeth, cast on these difficult circumstances, without relation or friend, looked on him as a *guardian angel*, consulted him freely, and witnessed his exertions in her behalf in a transport of gratitude. He did every thing for her they were in a manner already intimate, though / strangers It was impossible not to be won by her new friend's gentleness, and *almost feminine delicacy* of attention, joined to all a man's activity and readiness to do the thing that was necessary to be done. "I have an adopted father," thought Elizabeth, "and this seems a *brother* dropped from the clouds." (70, 71 [I. 214, 215, 216, 217], emphasis added)

Elizabeth not only admires Neville's help in masculine terms--"all a man's activity and readiness to do the thing that was necessary"--but finds his manly qualities especially admirable for the very reason that they are "joined" to his "gentleness, and almost feminine delicacy of attention" and "almost a woman's care." Most importantly, even as Neville sees Elizabeth as something of an angel, Elizabeth also sees Neville as a guardian angel--helping to disassociate the metaphor from the disturbingly gendered and restrictive ties in which it later comes to be entangled. Again, the voluntary nature of Neville's benevolence is insisted upon as a quality of the utopian domesticity he is helping to create: rather than interpreting Neville's actions as those of a potential mate, and therefore an interested party, she perceives him as a *brother* and places him with Falkner as a member of her elective family.

Neville's good qualities are the product of a careful education--the early loving treatment of his mother, his own "better nature," and the care taken by his step-sister Lady Cecil to retrieve him from the bad treatment he suffered at the hands of his father.

After the loss of his mother, Neville is wild, full of grief, and angry at the blow to his mother's reputation when Sir Boyvill Neville divorces her by act of Parliament. Neville's early despair is described in terms reminiscent of the Creature in *Frankenstein*: "You do not know the usual unhappy tenor of my thoughts, nor the cause I have to look on life an an unwelcome burthen. . . . as a boy [this unhappiness] drove me to solitude - to abhorrence / of the sight of man - to anger against God for creating me" (74 [I. 228-9]). His mother torn from him, his father unjust, he, like the Creature, is spiritually orphaned. When Elizabeth and Falkner first encounter him, he is sullen and a savage: "She remembered him as she first saw him, a boy driven to wildness by a sense of injury; she remembered him when reason, and his better nature, had subdued the selfish portion of his feeling - grown kind as a woman - active, friendly, and sympathizing, as few men are" (86 [I. 268]). Lady Cecil's intervention, and his own insight that he might be able to clear his mother's name, allow Neville to recover his humanity, and indeed, to incorporate admirable characteristics (kindness, friendliness, sympathy) the narrative associates with "woman."

Falkner too has been a savage due to mistreatment at the hands of men and is driven to find kindness in the care of women. After his mother's death, Falkner was mistreated by his father, his uncle, and his school-masters in succession. Like Neville, Falkner had been a "heedless, half savage boy, who listened with wonder, yet conviction to lessons of virtue" at the feet of Alithea's mother, a distant relation of his own dead mother. He grows to love Alithea, but she regards him as a brother. Falkner, however, is unable to frame a familial (platonic) domestic model for relationship with Alithea, resulting in tragedy. In contrast to the voluntary benevolence of Neville's brotherly assistance to Elizabeth, Falkner's feelings toward Alithea change from brotherliness into romantic possessiveness:

"At first I had felt dissappointed and angry; but soon imagination shed radiance

over what had seemed chilly and dim. . . . I heard her sweet voice repeat again and again her vow never to forget her brother, her more than brother, her only friend; the only being left her to love. . . . The memory of this affection grew into a conviction that I was loved, and a belief that she was mine for ever." (171 [II. 213])

When Falkner finally returns after ten years in India to find Alitheia married to the jealous, vain, and insensitive Sir Boyvill Neville, he resolves to "rescue" her. Falkner is unable to provide Alitheia with kindness, friendliness, or sympathy--the "womanly" qualities Gerard Neville has cultivated in order to become qualified as a suitable "brother" and partner in utopian domesticity. A type of the hyper-masculine, commonly identified with Shelley's "Byronic" Romantic heroes and biographically associated with Edward Trelawny, Falkner brings Alitheia sadness instead of comfort in her unfortunate marriage. After he carries her away by force, she drowns in an attempt to return to her son.

Sir Boyvill, Alitheia's husband and Neville's father, is the villain of the novel. In the following passage, Sir Boyvill's disrespect for women forms the centerpiece of Falkner's accusations against him:

He was cold, proud, and sarcastic, withal a decayed / dandy, turned cynic - who, half despising himself, tried wholly to disdain his fellow creatures. A man whose bosom never glowed with a generous emotion, and who took pride in the sagacity which enabled him to detect worms and corruption in the loveliness of virtue. A poor, mean-spirited fellow, despite his haughty outside; and then when he spoke of women, how base a thing he seemed! his disbelief in their excellence, his contemptuous pity, his insulting love, made my blood boil. To me there was something sacred in a woman's very shadow. Was she evil, I regarded her with the pious regret with which I might view a shrine desecrated by sacrilegious hands - the odour of sanctity still floated around the rifled altar; I never could regard them as

mere fellow-creatures - they were beings of a better species, sometimes gone astray in the world's wilderness, but always elevated above the best among us. For Alitheas sake I respected every woman. How much good I knew of them! / Generous, devoted, delicate - their very faults were but misdirected virtues; and this animal dared revile beings of whose very nature he could form no conception. (175 [II. 226-8])

Sir Boyvill serves as a counterpoint to Falkner's chivalric tendency to place women on a pedestal. Ironically, Falkner's own worship of Alitheas, and not Sir Boyvill's insulting love, brings about Alitheas destruction. Shelley commonly uses the term "fellow creatures" when referring to issues of sympathy and justice, and again, ironically, it is Sir Boyvill in whose eyes women are "fellow creatures," whereas Falkner "never could regard them as mere fellow-creatures." Falkner "elevates" women to a "shrine" and "altar" and thinks them "a better species" because of empirical evidence--the generous treatment he had received at the hands of Alitheas mother leads him to exclaim, "How much good I knew of them!"--but his image of "a shrine desecrated by sacrilegious hands" allows women no agency of their own. He does not allow Alitheas the choice of staying in her bad marriage, even though he recognizes "the delicate forbearance that filled her noble mind. She thought of her virgin faith plighted - long years spent at [Sir Boyvill's] side . . . her fidelity, which if it had ceased to cling to him, had never wandered" (179 [II. 241]).

Shelley uses Falkner's chivalric attitudes to deepen and complicate her portrayal of utopian domesticity. The attitude of Falkner towards Alitheas is a good example of what Ernst Bloch has termed "abstract utopia"--the mere imagining of perfection. What Bloch terms "concrete utopia" is an imagined ideal that people struggle actually to create in society--a process that parallels the Godwinian notion of the "perfectibility" of humankind. Despite his lofty attitude towards Alitheas, Falkner disregards her right to

determine her own future: "I was shocked to see so much of the slave had entered her soul. I told her this; I told her she was being degraded . . . I told her that she must be free: . . . ' . . . Would you not with transport escape from your jailor to a home of love and freedom?'" (180 [II. 245]) Falkner imagines himself somehow able to escape the bonds established by society--whereas Alithea herself would have joyfully renewed the bonds of friendship that had previously linked Falkner to herself:

"If I have in my intercourse with [Sir Boyvill] regretted that lively, cheering interchange of sentiment which I enjoyed with you - you are now here to bestow it, and my life, hitherto defective, your return may render complete. / . . . Let us be friends, Rupert, such as we once were, brother and sister; I will not believe you are returned only to pain and injure me - I am happy in my children - stay but a little, and you will see how foolish I have been to complain at all. You also will love my boy." (180 [II. 244, 246]).

Alithea speaks to Falkner in the now familiar terms of utopian domesticity: despite her marriage to another man, the father of her child, ties which she cannot imagine breaking, she intends to expand the boundaries of her domestic situation to include Falkner--"such as we once were, brother and sister."²⁹ She imagines that Falkner will be capable of reassuming his voluntary, brotherly ties to her, and that these ties of voluntary love will extend to her son as well--"You also will love my boy." Falkner has no practicable scheme to effect Alithea's freedom; his is the talk of a wild revolutionary--an abstract utopian--contrasting "slavery" with "freedom." By stealing her from her husband, he dreams that he will set her free. Falkner's inchoate plans seem to evoke the plans of the

²⁹ Alithea's plans to treat Falkner as family, under the very nose of her husband, are reminiscent of the establishment of utopian domesticity in the house of the tyrannical Henry VII by Queen Elizabeth and Catherine Gordon in *Perkin Warbeck*. In both instances, the expectations of the world are disregarded, and bonds of love are seen as paramount.

Creature to take his mate to the wilds of South America, or Lord Lodore's attempt to similarly evade civilization in the wilds of the Illinois: ". . . away from *him*, I would claim no share in her myself. I would place her in some romantic spot, build a home worthy of her, surrounded with all the glory of nature, and only see her as a servant and a slave" (185 [II.259]). Although Shelley's portraits of utopian domesticity often do feature a similar location within "the glory of nature," this vision is regarded even by Falkner himself as improbable: "the very acme of my hallucination; it might be - I cannot tell" (185 [II.259]). Falkner overlooks what Shelley must have intended: the grammatical structure that allows Falkner to believe that he would only have encroached upon Alitheia "as a servant and a slave" actually seems to admit that he would "only *see her as a servant and a slave*"—and in fact, he has already admitted as much to her face. Alitheia, though seemingly naive as to the extent of Sir Boyvill's jealousy, prefers to attempt to restore her friendship with Falkner within the bounds of civilization because the theory of utopian domesticity always includes the possibility of its realization in concrete, not abstract, terms.

After Elizabeth's care brings Falkner back from the brink of death in Greece, Falkner agrees no longer to seek death in accordance with Elizabeth's wishes. Their honest conversation, in which Falkner alludes to his feelings of guilt and Elizabeth insists that his repentance and his benevolence to her should assuage this guilt, is a portrait of the benefits accruing from the openness of communication that is essential to utopian domesticity:

This interchange of heart-felt emotion did good to both. . . . There is a magic in sympathy, and the heart's overflowing, that we feel as bliss, though we cannot explain it. . . . Their hearts had united; they had mingled thought and sensation, and the intimacy of affection that resulted was an ample reward to her for every suffering. She loved her benefactor with inexpressible truth and devotedness, and

their entire and full interchange of confidence gave a vivacity to this sentiment which of itself was happiness. (65 [I. 199, 200])

Besides focusing on the emotional benefits of openness, this passage also emphasizes the characteristic sense of mutual benefit that parties derive from utopian domesticity. Although Elizabeth has just brought Falkner back from the brink of death by a combination of vigilant nursing and persuasive argument, she continues to see him as her "benefactor;" her "suffering" the worry and care of his illness results in an "intimacy of affection" she considers an "ample reward."

Elizabeth's education is key to her ability to remain by Falkner's side despite worldly advice to the contrary. Shelley explicitly discounts the gendered arguments that would bar Elizabeth from the public sphere of Falkner's trial and imprisonment, or from the acquisition of evidence on her behalf. Though Elizabeth is carefully presented throughout the novel as respectably feminine, the following passage wonderfully rebuts any restrictively gendered notions of proper behavior that might keep Elizabeth from the fulfillment of her goals. After citing her extensive travels with Falkner, and previous care of him, she asks,

was she to adopt a new system of conduct, become a timid, home-bred young lady, tied by the most frivolous rules, impeded by fictitious notions of propriety and false delicacy? Whether they were right, and she were wrong - whether indeed such submission to society - such useless, degrading dereliction of nobler duties, was adapted for feminine conduct, and whether she, despising such bonds, sought a bold and dangerous freedom, she could not tell; she only knew and felt, that for her, educated as she had been, beyond the narrow paling of boarding-school ideas, or the refinements of a lady's boudoir, that, where her benefactor was, there she ought to be; and that to prove her gratitude, to preserve her faithful attachment to him amidst dire adversity, was her sacred duty - a virtue, before which every minor

moral faded and disappeared. (234 [III. 99])

"Propriety," the watchword of the developing idea of prescriptive gendered behavior, is singled out here as the bearer of "fictitious notions" and associated with "frivolous rules . . . and false delicacy." Despite Mary Poovey's arguments to the contrary, Shelley explicitly disregards "propriety" as the correct basis for a woman's action in her novel.

Even Neville argues that Elizabeth's "age and sex wholly prevent" her travelling to America in search of Falkner's witness, but Elizabeth shrugs off his argument by asserting her own familiarity with travel: "I have not the common fears of a person whose life has been spent in one spot; I have been a traveller, and know that, but for the fatigue, it is as easy to go a thousand miles as a hundred" (259 [III. 181]). She refuses even to answer or acknowledge any impropriety pertaining to her gender. Startlingly, as though again to refashion the anti-feminist metaphor before it has even come into play, Shelley at this moment again refers to Elizabeth as an angel: "She looked as beautiful as an angel, as she / spoke; her independent spirit had nothing rough in its texture" (259 [III. 181-2]). This angel is markedly not of the house, nor is it confined to actions of gendered propriety, and it is impelled not by the restrictions of traditional domesticity, but by the freedom and voluntary ties of love characteristic of utopian domesticity.

Finally, Elizabeth refutes even the advice of Falkner when he invokes gendered propriety and worldly opinion as a guide for her actions: "Daughters, when they marry," observed Falkner, "leave father, mother, all, and follow the fortunes of their husbands. You must submit to the common law of human society" (278 [III. 244]). Elizabeth counters with the invocation of fidelity, the centerpoint of the novel: "We are not parent and child . . . but we have a strong resemblance on one point - fidelity is our characteristic" (278 [III. 247]). Elizabeth also rests assured that Neville will adapt to the unusual domestic circumstances--both because of his superior sense of interpersonal justice and perhaps also because of his demonstrated ability to cross the expectations of

gendered behavior in his actions of gentleness and sympathy.

At the levels of language and characterization, Shelley establishes that both sexes, given an appropriate education, are able to embody the same desirable virtues. At the level of plot, Shelley continues to enlarge upon utopian domesticity by responding to her father's first and most well-received novel, *Things as They Are, or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*. In *Caleb Williams*, Godwin shows how Falkland's love for his own reputation causes him to hide the guilt of a murder he committed in rage, suffering two innocent people to die. He then hounds Caleb Williams, who has discovered his secret, until Caleb, in despair, brings him to trial. There, upon seeing the wasted body of Falkland, Caleb pours forth his heartfelt regret for bringing the charge against Falkland, but because of his sincerity, all are convinced of Falkland's guilt and his reputation is finally destroyed. Caleb, too, considers himself destroyed, since his despairing attack upon his former master has destroyed a man he believes to have been noble and good at heart. So, despite the fact that Falkland is at last convicted of the murder he committed, both men are destroyed and justice, as Godwin would define it, is badly miscarried.

Shelley clearly signals her intent to revise *Caleb Williams*, first by using the name Falkner for her hero, and second, by focussing on the attempts of Gerard Neville to discover the secret of his mother's disappearance and to clear her reputation, resulting in the trial of Falkner for the murder of Alithea, Neville's mother. Falkner, however, when confronted with Neville's intention to go to America in search of Osborne, his accomplice in the abduction, confesses his guilt and puts himself at Neville's mercy. Neville at first intends to meet Falkner in a duel, and both men expect that Falkner will not defend himself. But Neville's vengeful and low-minded father, Sir Boyvill, instead brings charges against Falkner, paralleling the actions of Caleb Williams against his master Falkland.

Shelley's key revision of Godwin's plot is the interposition of Elizabeth, who

because of her long association with Falkner, knows of his heartfelt remorse and repentance, and also trusts in the fact that Falkner is innocent of murder, though not of abduction. Elizabeth stays with her adopted father in prison, much as Ethel does when Villiers is detained in debtor's prison in *Lodore*. Elizabeth refuses to listen to worldly wisdom, which attempts to convince her that she should abandon Falkner, disassociating herself from him by returning to the Raby family that had abandoned her as a child. The opinions of the world are expressed by the sympathetic and well-meaning Lady Cecil, Neville's step-sister and Elizabeth's friend:

"Yet," said Lady Cecil, "he cannot be wholly innocent; the flight, the catastrophe, the concealment of his victim's death; - is there not guilt in these events?" [The importance of the appearance of guilt to worldly judges continues to echo *Caleb Williams*.]

"Much, much; I will not excuse or extenuate. . . . It is not for me to speak, nor to hear even of his past errors; never was remorse more bitter, contrition more sincere. But for me, he had not survived the unhappy lady a week; but for me, he had died in Greece, to expiate his fault. Will not this satisfy his accusers?"

"I must act from higher motives. Gratitude, duty, every human obligation bind me to him. He took me, a deserted orphan, from / a state of miserable dependence . . . he brought me up as his child; he was more to me than father ever was. He has nursed me as my own mother would in sickness . . . when I knew not that one of my father's family would acknowledge me. Shall I desert him now? Never!" [Elizabeth's fidelity to Falkner, in response to his kind treatment of her, revises Caleb's inability to trust in Falkland, who had treated him well before Caleb began to suspect him.]

"But you cannot help him," said Lady Cecil; "he must be tried by the laws of his country. I hope he has not in truth offended against them; but you cannot

serve him." (232 [III. 91-2])

Lady Cecil points out that Falkner appears to be guilty, that the trial must go forward, and that Elizabeth can do nothing. But Elizabeth disagrees. Her own fidelity to Falkner is paramount in her mind; she wishes to remain beside him, to comfort him in his distress, and voluntarily to return the benevolence he has long extended to her: in short, to continue to sustain utopian domesticity around him even as he languishes in prison under the shadow of a horrible accusation.

Lady Cecil represents the far less utopian but completely reasonable viewpoint. She had never been convinced that Alithea had not been in fact guilty of the adulterous conduct with which her husband had accused her in the Parliamentary divorce. Lady Cecil's primary concern is to ameliorate the long-term suffering of Gerard Neville, and to convince him to abandon his attempts to clear his mother's name. Now, she tries to convince Elizabeth to cut her own losses in much the same way. But the very future that Lady Cecil is trying to protect--the intended future marriage of Gerard and Elizabeth--is based on the sympathy of heart between Elizabeth and Neville that grew out of Elizabeth's admiration for Gerard's fidelity to his mother. Elizabeth states,

"I sympathise with Mr. Neville; and I cannot help saying, though you [Lady Cecil] scoff at me, that I think that, in all he is doing, he is obeying the most sacred law of our nature, exculpating the innocent, and rendering duty to her who has a right, living or dead, to demand all his love." (135 [II. 93])

Shelley at this point sets up the concern with justice that is primary in the novel. Elizabeth sides against the worldly viewpoint to support Neville's seemingly hopeless project, though Lady Cecil peevishly asserts that her notion is "romantic." This complaint is similar to the sometimes disparaging use of "utopian" to describe a wishful scheme. But Elizabeth's opinions are grounded not in "wishful thinking" but in the concrete actions she reaffirms every day. So then, when Neville seems to have reconciled himself

to Falkner's trial, Elizabeth points out in very Godwinian language the contradiction between his professed belief in the defense of innocence and the prosecution of Falkner:

"I have heard you lament that crime is so hardly visited by the laws of society. I have heard you say, that even where guilt is joined to the hardness of habitual vice, that it ought to be treated with the indulgence of a correcting / father, not by the cruel vengeance of the law" Neville could not hear this without the deepest pain. (237 [III. 108-9])

It is Neville's pain that signals to us that Elizabeth has awakened the sympathy which will eventually bring him into the circle of utopian domesticity. In *Caleb Williams*, the "sincerity" of Caleb's avowals that he would not disclose Falkland's secret is what causes Falkland to break down and confess his crime. Had this sincerity been exercised privately—as Shelley asserts, within the domestic circle—the destruction of Caleb and Falkland might have been avoided. Neville admits that he believes Falkner to be innocent, but his fear of worldly condemnation for associating with his mother's destroyer continues for a while to rule his actions: "Can I take my mother's destroyer by the hand, and live with him on terms of intimacy and friendship? . . . can I - may I - so far forget the world's censure, and I may say the instigations of nature, as unreservedly as to forgive?" (295 [III. 301]) Still at the questioning stage, Neville knows he *can* but is not sure he *may* forgive Falkner. He must overcome the base influences of both his lower nature (the desire for revenge) and the world (the expectation that he seek revenge) to accomplish the Godwinian moment of justice: forgiveness.

Eventually, Neville does achieve Godwinian forgiveness and is rewarded by his own sense of interior approbation: "I do right in my own heart. It is a godlike task to reward the penitent. In religion and morality I know that I am justified: whether I am in the code of worldly / honour, I leave others to decide; and yet I believe that I am" (298 [III. 313-4]). His additional reward is that he becomes part of the domestic circle of

Falkner and Elizabeth. Importantly, Neville here revises Lord Lodore, the Romantic hero of Shelley's earlier domestic novel. Lodore is never able to overcome the sense that he should conduct himself according to the opinions of the world--dying in a duel to protect his honor rather than remaining alive to protect his young daughter. Neville, in forgiving Falkner, breaks the code of chivalry at the heart of so many tragedies: Lodore's death on the duelling field; Falkland's crimes on behalf of his reputation; and Falkner's worship of Alitheia which created an unrealizable, phantom paradise that led him unwittingly to destroy her. Neville's admissability to utopian domesticity is explicitly signalled in Elizabeth's statement, "I go with my father because he is suffering; Neville may join us because he is innocent" (286 [III. 271]).

Shelley's ideal, the Shelleyan Romantic hero, reaches its apex in the portrait of Gerard Neville. The witness of Elizabeth's relative, Mrs. Raby, provides, as it were, an impartial corroboration of Elizabeth's recognition of Neville's virtuous, even angelic qualities:

No one could see Gerard Neville without feeling that something angelic - something nobly disinterested - unearthly in its purity, yet, beyond the usual nature of man, sympathetic, animated a countenance that was all sensibility, genius, and love. (284 [III. 266])

"Sensibility, genius, and love" are strong code words identifying Gerard as a Shelleyan hero--still passionate, but without the dangerously self-centered turn of the Byronic hero. Previous incarnations of the Shelleyan hero were not without their flaws. Adrian, in *The Last Man*, though benevolent, is largely a character of negative actions; he refuses the crown, he avoids death. Horatio Saville, of *Lodore*, incorporates aspects of the Shelleyan hero in his love of learning and his ability to see the virtue in Cornelia's heart, but he is too dispassionate when he overestimates his ability to create a good marriage with his first wife, the Italian Clorinda. But Gerard Neville, like Falkner, undergoes a trial by fire,

purging away his savage aspects, turning his energies from self-destruction to active goodness. We see most closely into his psychological workings, learning of the struggles he goes through as he attempts to re-adjust his belief systems away from the worldly code, and toward justice, even when this shift affects him in the most personal way. Neville triumphs as a Shelleyan Romantic hero because he is able to allow his qualities of "sensibility, genius, and love" to come to the forefront and rule his character, resulting in his utopian union with Elizabeth, the real hero of *Falkner*. In achieving the capacity for forgiveness, Neville understands true justice and is enabled to help create utopian domesticity.

Falkner, who begins like Lodore, Victor Frankenstein, Castruccio, or Raymond, as hyper-masculine, aloof, pained, defensive, and self-destructive--a Byronic Romantic hero--undergoes not only a mental but a physical transformation from the Byronic to the Shelleyan type:

He grew, indeed, paler and thinner - till his handsome features stood out in their own expressive beauty; he might have served / for a model of Prometheus - the will unconquered - his mind refusing to acknowledge the bondage to which his body was the prey. (242 [III. 128-9])

This physical transformation of Falkner at first seems parallel to the physical wasting of Falkland in *Caleb Williams*--but with the invocation of Prometheus, Shelley explicitly praises the laudably reformed Falkner by paying tribute to her husband's poem. By the end of the novel, Falkner's wild and tempestuous youth, even savage at some points and leading to tragedy, has been atoned for and forgiven. His sufferings, like the sufferings of Prometheus, have pared away his harsher emotions, leaving him a creature of benevolence and goodness.

The reformation of Falkner must not be understood as a punishment of the father. Instead, it must be seen alongside the reformation of Neville (and even the deathbed

repentance of Sir Boyvill) as exemplifying the potential for forgiveness, justice, and Godwinian perfectibility. The ability of masculine heroes like Falkner to purge their impetuous, chivalric, and essentially selfish belief-structures, and instead to embody the gentler virtues traditionally associated with women, is key to the possibility of social reform modelled in utopian domesticity.

Shelley teases out the possibilities for social improvement hidden by the ideological formations of Romanticism and traditional restrictive domesticity. By revising domesticity, Shelley is able to couch her ideas for reform in an existing, real-world social structure. Every individual, she argues, benefits from creating bonds of love to form family and community. She emphasizes the possibilities of education as a way of gradually reforming the world, especially by casting aside the restrictions of gendered behavior for men and women, and denies the validity of worldly opinion (especially traditionally masculine notions of honor, glory, and chivalry) placing the priority of individual judgment within the boundaries of responsibility and duty. Unchecked selfish passions lead to disaster, whereas reformed passion, harnessed by reason, leads in Wollstonecraftian fashion to improvement and benevolence. These ideas are made manifest in the contrasts between the unreformed Byronic Romantic hero and the reformed and perfected Shelleyan hero as they are portrayed in the men and women characters of *Lodore* and *Falkner*.

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Austen, Hemans, and Edgeworth:
Contemporary Views of Domesticity and Feminism

Some of the works of the most well-regarded women writers of Shelley's day may reveal how Shelley's contemporaries understood feminism, domesticity, and the possibility of utopia. Jane Austen, Felicia Hemans, and Maria Edgeworth all published during the span of time in which Shelley's own novels appeared. The works chosen for this discussion reveal at least some degree of feminist engagement with the fate of women, serving as a useful point of comparison with Shelley's own feminism. *Frankenstein* was published in 1818, the same year in which Austen's last completed novel, *Persuasion*, posthumously reached publication. *Persuasion* offers a tantalizing hint of utopian domesticity in a novel that can be read as feminist because of its respectful portrayal of one woman's socially-sanctioned sufferings within a polite, upper-class social milieu. *Persuasion* does not, however, offer a program for social change that would allow women to escape such sufferings. Felicia Hemans published her extremely well-received volume of poetry, *Records of Woman*, in 1828. *Records of Woman* explores the private and public lives of women from around the world and across class, showing how women suffer from men's control of culture. Hemans valorizes domesticity in her work, but in a way that largely reinforces domesticity as an escape from a harsh world, rather than as a alternate, feminist model for social life. Maria Edgeworth's last novel, *Helen*, appeared in 1834, before the publication of *Lodore* in 1835 and *Falkner* in 1837. *Helen* shows the education of two young women who learn just how strictly they will be judged by society for the smallest failures. Although Edgeworth favorably portrays a woman who takes her place beside her husband in the public scene, the novel as a whole provides a rhetoric of punishment for deviation from strict rules women need obey. Unlike Edgeworth, Hemans, or even Austen, Shelley is unwilling to forgive

society or to allow women to be browbeaten, punished, or broken, without condemning such a society and contrasting it to a feminist utopian alternative.

Persuasion: Feminist, but not Utopian

As the history of utopian projects has shown, a utopia is not necessarily feminist. Likewise, a feminist project is not necessarily utopian. Feminism takes the critique of injustice towards women as its subject matter, while utopianism would suggest the blueprint of a reformed society which would solve the problems women face. Shelley's complex of reform ideas, which I describe as utopian domesticity, is one such blueprint. Her treatment of marriage (only one possible form of utopian domesticity)¹ demands that women's education prepare them to be independent and respected equals of men. Women must be allowed to rely upon their own judgment, not cater to the dictates of others. In turn, men must be open, not isolating themselves in pursuit of ambition or glory. Finally, men and women must work together to the benefit of their community, which is considered an extension of the home. Like-minded individuals who choose to link themselves in bonds of friendship and responsibility form utopian domesticity.

Utopia--the imagination of a perfected human society--is usually systematic in nature. By following the program of the utopia we should be able to get there from here. Utopianism, however, does not necessarily have to produce a roadmap, as long as it

¹ Although romantic heterosexual matches do figure prominently in Shelley's utopian narratives--the match of Cornelia with Horatio in *Lodore*, the match of Elizabeth with Neville in *Falkner*--familial love and the love of friendship, as well as the disinterested benevolence of philanthropic characters, figure equally as importantly, and some characters, such as Euthanasia, must reject romantic love completely in order to remain true to their utopian ideals.

produces a feeling of possible betterment, as Ernst Bloch has theorized.² The utopian impulse can be loosely defined in terms of four principles which Sarah Webster Goodwin has extracted from Bloch's work:

1. The imagined utopia, the hoped-for betterment, need not be real or realistic in any narrow sense, but it must be possible.
2. Utopian discourse does not necessarily present a paradigm or a program; it may also be a stance, a mode, or even something as diffuse as a feeling dispersed through a given context.
3. Although the utopian is a hopeful mode, it may also be a skeptical one. Indeed, it is most likely to be effective in realizing the possible if skepticism and hope form complementary aspects of it.
4. Although utopia typically is apocalyptic, an imagined end, it may also be visionary, a continual process. (4-5)

Generalizing from her study of Victorian feminist utopias, Nan Bowman Albinski comes to the conclusion that "British women utopians are reformist rather than revolutionary and, despite their outspoken socialism, are less likely than men to suggest the overthrow of the existing order" (51). The reformist nature of these utopias makes them less programmatic, and more in line with the more diffuse utopian impulses described by Bloch.

It is according to such broad principles that *Persuasion* seems most utopian. In *Persuasion*, Austen's last completed and most nearly utopian work, the happy ending achieved by Anne and Wentworth is both realistic and possible, fulfilling the first principle. In terms of the second principle, however, the predominant feeling of the novel, is tense and depressive. The extent of Austen's realistic detail, carefully executed

² See my discussion of Bloch in the Introduction.

narrative inexorability, and subtle, often ironic tone, threatens the feeling of utopia; a hopeful, utopian feeling is achieved only after the sought-for reconciliation.³ As to the third principle, *Persuasion* is both skeptical and hopeful: it argues against hope, even as it eventually rewards it. The structure of marriage in *Persuasion* is likewise described in terms skeptical yet hopeful. It is not that Wentworth and Anne Elliot end up in a marriage that belies a utopian ending; it is that the promising future readers look forward to for Anne and her husband, though based on the Crofts' idealized union, is not systematically secured. The ending of *Persuasion* is notoriously ambivalent: although it does not close down Anne's future with an "apocalyptic" finality, neither is the path life lying before her clearly mapped out in a "visionary" way. Austen's grasp of contingency and timing, her mastery of narrative tension and suspense, makes the reader aware of so many near misses in Anne's recovery of Wentworth that we feel that in this particular instance all has gone well--but it is a felicity to which we are not, in general, assured.⁴ Austen's mastery of realism is quite different from Shelley's use of less-rounded character types. Over the course of her career, Shelley developed a cast of characters which bear strong resemblances to one another and which often fall into the categories of Byronic (passionate, doomed) and Shelleyan (enlightened, benevolent) heroes. Her project of re-envisioning the Romantic hero, emphasizing the need for the Byronic hero's transformation into the Shelleyan, is a key part of her critique of Romantic-era culture in general. Austen's well-rounded characters, falling less into type categories, align themselves less distinctly with aspects of cultural ideology in need of revision. In this

³ As Mary Poovey has stated, "The conclusion of *Persuasion*, as many critics have noted, does not promise general social reform, an authoritative system of values, or even 'happiness ever after' for one loving couple" (234).

⁴ Laura Mooneyham White terms their marriage an "act of faith" but one which has internalized "in a sense, the 'threat of divorce'" (80).

way, realism as a technique of storytelling may be more likely to produce a narrative that is more specific to individual characters and circumstances and less applicable to the critique of general societal patterns--that is, less utopian.

The extent to which *Persuasion* may be thought of as utopian, then, hinges on the degree of perfection that is felt to be waiting for Anne and Wentworth in their marriage. Marriage has been a central issue for many utopian women writers. For example, Charlotte Perkins Gilman focuses on marriage and domesticity in her writing, and as Dorothy Berkson points out, although Gilman had identified "the traditional marriage . . . and single family domesticity [as] the foundations of women's oppression," she held up a largely domestic society as an ideal for women and uses marriage to unite the women of *Herland* to the backward young men from the United States--uniting revolutionary ideas with the society she hopes to change (108-109). Using a word coined in *Women and Economics* (1898), Gilman attempts to "maternalize" men through marriage, helping them to "reach a new and higher humanity by learning to serve and love" (Berkson 113, note 2). Carol Farley Kessler has shown that "of some ninety-five utopias written by U. S. Women before 1970, all included the marriage relationship, while 74 percent made it a central issue" (80). Since 1970, Kessler has observed that the emphasis on marriage has changed, such that the compulsory heterosexuality identified by Adrienne Rich and "compulsory behaviors" such as heterosexual marriage have been ameliorated by "a variety of individually selected alternatives" including both heterosexual and same-sex bonding, as well as societies envisioned without exclusive pairing. This expansion of women's options beyond the "marriage plot" of the nineteenth-century novel (including all of Austen's novels) makes it harder for modern feminists in search of utopia to identify it within the marriage plot.

Berkson points out some feminists' fear that "an emphasis on or idealization of women's cultures could backfire and create an ideological climate that could trap women

once again in the private, domestic sphere" (112), and elaborates on the need for understanding "women's culture":

I think our best chance of a truly feminist future arises precisely from an understanding of women's past and present experiences. Women's culture is a complex phenomenon. Some parts of it--those which repress or deny power to women or limit our sense of our own possibility--we all wish to reject. It is absolutely necessary, however, that we bring forward other aspects of women's experience and demand not only that they be acknowledged as valid, but also that they be seen as [better] models for human behavior and the organization of society . . . (113)

Feminists who take Berkson's exhortation to heart should also be aware of the dangers of generalizing a universal "women's culture" from a tiny sample (for example, the white middle-class United States women's culture--which even within it has many variables, such as sexual orientation, age, specific cultural background, etc.), nor should universal generalizations be drawn from Austen's limited milieu. Mary Poovey has argued that the romantic nature of the marriage plot helped to perpetuate a structure of powerlessness for women, compensating them with the reward of love: "in the absence of institutions that actually link the private and the public spheres, romantic relationships, by their very nature, cannot materially affect society" (237). However, Julia Prewitt Brown has recently argued from Lawrence Stone's work that "personal choices in marriage did have social meaning" (Review 306). Poovey discounts the idea that women's validation within these relationships might provide them a power basis for other feminist activity, but the romantic relationship can act, not as a tool, but as a resource. Austen's novels did focus on the lives and mental activities of certain women, revealing such women's lives and

problems to the male-dominated culture of the time⁵--a legitimate feminist activity which authorized the subjectivity of middle-class British women. The recognition of Austen's great literary merit celebrated the realistic portrayal of women's lives as a worthy subject for artistic endeavor.

Sally Miller Gearhart presents a more demanding definition of "feminist utopian fiction" as that which

- a. contrasts the present with an envisioned idealized society (separated from the present by time or space);
- b. offers a comprehensive critique of present values/conditions;
- c. sees men or male institutions as a major cause of present social ills; and
- d. presents women not only as at least the equals of men but also as the sole arbiters of their reproductive functions.

(qtd in Libby Falk Jones 116, from *Women in Search of Utopia* 296)

Diverging from Gearhart's first principle, Austen does not present a portrait of an idealized society in *Persuasion*. The world of the landed estate is slowly changing; this world is lampooned in Sir Walter's continual fawning over the Baronetage. As Gary Kelly points out, one of Austen's most strongly feminist positions is her stand "against the social, legal, and economic injustice of male primogeniture, restriction of women's property rights, and female economic dependence" (1995, 24). The reader is made to feel this injustice many times in *Persuasion*: at the sacrifice of Anne's yearly gift (15), the refusal to carry her to London, the spendthrift ways over which Anne's wise suggestions have no effect, the almost certain inheritance of Kellynch-hall by a cad and perhaps a woman who has schemed to become his wife. But even Anne's mother, beloved of memory, does not present a facet of an idealized society, as her entrusting her family to the care of her best friend Lady Russell has not produced exemplary results: Elizabeth is

⁵ For example, Susan Lanser shows that Austen's strong narrative authority supports Anne's argument against "men's literary advantages" (77).

vain and spoiled, Mary is hysterical and pathetic, and Anne's life has gone awry. The world of Bath is despised by Anne, and the world of Uppercross is satisfactory, but not idyllic.

Able to distinguish between aristocracy and meritocracy, Anne comes to view the renting of Kellynch-hall by the Crofts as a good thing: "they were gone who deserved not to stay, and that Kellynch-hall had passed into better hands than its owners" (119), but the world of the naval officers, which seems to be taking precedence over the world of the landed gentry, is not presented as idealized either. On the one hand, Monica Cohen makes a good case that the Naval officers in *Persuasion* have adopted the values of domesticity, which is portrayed as a change and an advance over the old gentry way of life.⁶ Harville's neat home in the boarding house, Wentworth's well-run ship, and the Crofts' good management at Kellynch-hall all demonstrate the positive effects of what Cohen calls "professionalized domesticity." Further, Cohen makes a link between Wentworth's domesticity and his attempts to act on behalf of Mrs. Smith's rights to her late husband's property. Still, although navy life seems cheerful, practical and honorable, its pitfalls are made clear: risky economic status, separation of loved ones, danger to life and limb, over and above the adoption of military hierarchy and war as a way of life. In order to enjoy the benefits of such a life, Anne must sacrifice security and "pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than in its national importance" (237). The domesticity of the naval officers aligns them with women in their appreciation of a well-kept home, but it does not reform the society in which they move. They remain men who must act at the behest of a nation run by men. The men's adoption of domestic behavior--

⁶ See Cohen's chapter 2, "Persuading the Navy Home: Austen and Professional Domesticism," in her *Professional Domesticity in the Victorian Novel* (12-43), a version of her Spring 1996 article appearing in *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*.

primarily indicated by their ability to keep a neat house--even runs the risk of edging women out of their last bastion of professional expertise, as the nineteenth century progresses and middle-class women are seen more and more as unfit for work and in need of protection.⁷

Gearhart's remaining principles are not quite met either. Anne's world is thoroughly critiqued (as in b), but it is held up to existing ideals, not necessarily visionary ones. Society is shown to be less than it imagines itself to be, but it is not compared to a revolutionary standard of improvement. Men and male institutions (c) are not particularly the focus of a stunning critique in *Persuasion*. Although the Baronetage and the patriarchal values it represents are shown to be less than perfectly wise, the Navy, another male institution, is held up as a good example for society to follow. Finally, women are presented as equal in powers to men, but their reproductive freedom is limited.⁸

Butler, in *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, seeks to define Jane Austen as a conservative writer, which by definition would put Austen at odds with the utopian project as outlined by Bloch or Gearhart. Butler explores Austen's conservatism through the generic conventions of the novelistic forms of her day: the sentimental novel, the gothic, the "Jacobin" novel, and the "Anti-jacobin." Butler finds that the sentimental and gothic techniques of interiority and the pitting of a superior heroine against a corrupt world were adopted by the Jacobins for the ideological/political expression of

⁷ The idea that middle-class women should not work, including the idea that they should employ servants for housework and childcare, grows stronger throughout the nineteenth century--a central point of Davidoff and Hall.

⁸ This particular criterion of Gearhart's may not be fully applicable to pre-twentieth-century utopian schema. Mrs. Croft has enjoyed her years at sea with her husband due to childlessness, but it cannot be determined if this was by choice (with birth control in those days being unreliable, outside sterility or complete abstinence).

revolutionary sentiments; she opposes this to the Anti-Jacobins' suspicion of high-minded philosophical strangers and their chastisement of characters who buck their place in society, coupled with their reward of characters who fit properly within their societal stations. According to these definitions, Butler places Austen within the conservative bastions in this war of ideas: "The heroine who is fallible and learns, and the heroine who is Christian and exemplary, are the standard heroine-types of reactionary novels of the 1790s. In Jane Austen's novels they confront, equally typically, the villains of the anti-jacobin period--plausible, attractive strangers, penetrating a community from abroad" (294). Butler's assessments support the conclusion that in *Persuasion*, Anne Elliot never really changes, nor would it be right for her to change. As a Christian, infallible heroine, her original decision not to marry Wentworth was an act of "common prudence" (275), and it is his eventual understanding of his own mistaken ideas that lead to their reconciliation.

Poovey argues that Austen presents a great deal more dissatisfaction with Anne's society than Butler allows, avowing that "the social and ethical hierarchy superintended by the landed gentry is in a state of total collapse" (224). This is taking it a bit far; although there would be no Uppercross for Anne, the state of society there is largely unchanged--perhaps somewhat foolish, but not in ruins. The conservatism identified by Butler may resolve into a graceful acceptance--even an embrace--of benevolent social changes, but in *Persuasion*, there is no instigation to active reform.⁹ Mrs. Croft, with her

⁹ Claudia Johnson writes with a great deal of sense that "Most of the novels written in the 'war of ideas' are more complicated and less doctrinaire than modern commentators have represented. It does not suffice to denominate writers as 'conservative' or 'radical' according to whether they were 'for' or 'against' the French Revolution" (xxi). Julia Prewitt Brown's argument that society in *Persuasion* has become fragmented into a "series of disparate parts" (137)--that Anne is "alienated" from her own home and family and must find some new place to belong (138)--supports the idea of different elements in society rising to replace others. Gary Kelly interprets the slippage of the gentry's privileged position and their replacement by "the novel's model professional people--the naval officers and their wives and fiancées" as "a reconstruction

insistence on women's independence and rationality, receives a lightly satirical coloring.¹⁰ In Gary Kelly's terms, Austen participates in a post-Revolutionary form of feminism, in which the Revolutionary emphasis on the rights of women had become an emphasis on women's power within domesticity (22-23). Thus Mrs. Croft's insistence that women are rational creatures, and that they belong on shipboard with men (68-9), is positioned within the idea that she has created the best possible domesticity with her husband according to these ideas.¹¹ The subtle discourse of Revolutionary feminism that remains within Mrs. Croft's speech is left behind by the primary plot of the novel, in which Anne's claims on Wentworth are based not on her rationality, but on her sentimental claim for women of "loving longest, when existence or when hope is gone" (222). Anne's claim situates women even more distantly from Revolutionary feminist discourse, positing a feminism based on respect for the powers believed to be specific to women.

Wentworth is forced by the novel to recognize Anne's good qualities, but more importantly, he must come to respect her judgment. *Persuasion* insists on the heroine's right to make up her own mind--despite the fact that it stages that right within a context of family loyalties and duties which are explicitly patriarchal--the duty she owes to her family and her name in terms of Wentworth's lack of property. While demonstrating that

of civil society for the Revolutionary aftermath, centered critically on the role of women" (1995, 30). Other critics have focused on the emphasis of individual merit as opposed to inherited privilege, as Claudia Johnson notes (146).

¹⁰ If Admiral Croft can readily be identified as a stock character, his wife is a revision of both Rousseau's Sophie and Edgeworth's Harriet Freke (Margaret Kirkham 152-3); her somewhat mannish qualities are admirable, but at the same time a bit broadly drawn, for comic effect.

¹¹ See Monica Cohen and Charles J. Rzepka on the Navy and professionalized domesticity.

the patriarchal control of property lies at the root of Anne's problems, Austen treats this problem as a fact of life and supports Anne's deference to practical considerations in terms of Wentworth's inability to support her. Yet Wentworth realizes that he would have been accepted by Anne if he had returned with his small fortune in the year six (233), and that it has been his own grudge against her that has protracted their pain for so long. Even if Anne was wrongly persuaded by Lady Russell, whose own judgment was in fact faulty, Wentworth nevertheless must respect Anne's decision.

Although Austen's sympathetic understanding of Anne's interior conflict indicates a feminist understanding of women's plight in that society, nevertheless it is a plight through which Austen decrees Anne must struggle. Wentworth's conversion does not signal a utopian moment because the societal rules Anne and he obey have not changed. Their marriage remains within an established social scheme. Utopia, about the envisioning of a perfected society, is implicitly at odds with Austen's conservative vision of a society which, though flawed, is already progressing satisfactorily.

Can there be a conservative utopianism? No, for the idea of utopianism posits the reorganization of a corrupted society into a perfected one--even if the basis of the utopia is drawn from the society's long-held beliefs. Can there be a conservative feminism, then, that although not utopian, valorizes women's experiences, ideas, and beliefs without positing them as revolutionary? Yes, even if that feminism is largely satisfied with the unperfected world, rather than prescriptive of a perfected society to come.

Austen's non-utopian, conservative feminism, as seen in *Persuasion*, contrasts with Shelley's work in that Shelley attempts to create a utopian blueprint for change. Shelley's blueprint for utopian domesticity is based on values of home, family and women's traditional sphere, of which Austen would approve. Austen would probably also approve of certain of Shelley's feminist critiques: for example, one imagines that she would have been sensitive to the plight of Elizabeth Lavenza, who is fatally shut out of

Victor's life. Shelley's fiction communicates a desire for radical societal change, whereas Austen relates the personal difficulties and growth of her characters without suggesting that society should be reformed. Shelley includes portrayals of characters who forward her reformist program, even in her most tragic narratives. A reader may glimpse the potential for utopian domesticity exemplified by the selfless, loving family life of the De Laceys, yet, at the same time, condemn their injustice of their exclusion of the Creature. Readers who mourn the socialization processes that lead to the Creature's exclusion, or who empathize with his hope for a utopian domesticity with a mate in the wilds of South America, have grasped the heart of Shelley's utopian project.

Records of Woman: almost Feminist, not quite Utopian

Felicia Hemans strove to create and publish poetry about male-dominated public affairs and about women who moved primarily within domesticity, while pointedly demonstrating the interconnectedness of home and empire.¹² Her poems express the lack of power held by women and show how women's lives are sacrificed to men's rules--with, however, a marked lack of anger, so that her poems appear with acceptably feminine resignation before the eyes of her masculine reviewers (see Virginia Blain 256-259). In *Records of Woman*, her 1828 volume, Hemans seems to argue that women are capable of effecting public change, but that this should always be as a last resort; further, she naturalizes domesticity as women's proper realm, and shows death as a result of women's straying from the home. Her portrayal of domesticity as an idealized realm that empowers women falls short of utopian because it is static and unchanging, and does not move towards betterment of society. Likewise, her feminist belief in women's power is

¹² See Tricia Lootens. Although Nanora Sweet argues that Hemans destabilizes imperialism by her insistence of the aesthetics of the beautiful, transient, evanescent and fragmentary, British imperialism is so naturalized in Hemans's work that if it is not wholly supported, neither can it be seen as strongly undermined.

heavily qualified. Domesticity for Hemans is closely linked to nationalism: the welfare of the home is linked directly to the health of the nation, and if the nation demands, the home (along with woman's well-being) must be sacrificed. The utopian potential of domesticity is stripped away, leaving only the valorization of the home as a beloved ideal which, instead of improving society, is always on the verge of being sacrificed to the national benefit. Hemans's emphasis on domesticity as a haven from public life is at odds with Shelley's idea that public life, as an extension of home life, should be modeled on the ideals of utopian domesticity, and for Shelley, the destruction of the home cannot be justified in terms of national welfare.

An old platitude states that a woman's name should only appear before the public eye upon her marriage and upon her death. Hemans seems to have subscribed to this view when determining her poetic subjects for *Records of Woman*; ¹³ indeed the last three poems of the group, "The Queen of Prussia's Tomb," "The Memorial Pillar," and "The Grave of a Poetess" rely on the physical monument of each woman's death for their inspiration. In "Pauline," in which a fire claims the lives of both mother and daughter, Hemans asks, "And bore the ruins no recording trace / Of all that woman's heart had dared and done?" Women in *Records of Woman* become public when they act on the centrality of interpersonal affections. The monument itself is public notice of the woman's existence which had hitherto been primarily domestic.

In *Records of Woman*, the collision between domesticity and the public world results in catastrophe, and the stories told overwhelmingly end in death. A woman's story

¹³ Of course, Hemans's own name had been before the public since her first volume of poems was published when she was 14. Hemans had no fear of the public nature of her profession. *Records of Woman* represents the work of a mature, professional author who, after nearly twenty years of publication, has attained both popular support and economic security; for more about her financial success, see Paula Feldman's valuable article in *KSJ* 1997.

becomes material for poetry when she reaches a dramatic emotional crisis, which usually involves the disruption of the domestic scene.¹⁴ In "Joan of Arc, in Rheims," for example, Hemans portrays the female warrior with admiration ("woman, mantled with victorious power . . . And beautiful with joy and renown") but states that in exchange for her power Joan has to sacrifice "The trusting heart's repose, the paradise / Of home with all its loves." The loss of the home catapults the woman into the public and her actions become the stuff of poetry. The transformation of a woman from domestic to patriotic occurs especially clearly in "The Switzer's Wife" when the threatened loss of her home impels Frau Stauffacher to prod her husband to (successful) rebellion:

And she, that ever through her home had moved
With the meek thoughtfulness and quiet smile
Of woman, calmly loving and beloved,
And timid in her happiness the while,
Stood brightly forth, and steadfastly, that hour,
Her clear glance kindling into sudden power.

For a woman, Hemans seems to indicate, participation in the public world is indeed possible, but extremely dangerous. Yet the promise of death is no deterrent to the women Hemans portrays. Rather, death is a necessary withdrawal from the catastrophic public world into which the women were called, and against which they found it necessary to make the ultimate struggle.

Feminists, striving to effect social change, have shown that it is vital to identify a

¹⁴ As Lootens notes, "Throughout her career, [Hemans] ransacked extensive readings in literature, folklore, and world history for exemplary narratives in which the threatened or actual dissolution of family ties intersected with the exercise of feminine national heroism" (241); and, as Jerome McGann suggests, "her work is a vision of the doom of an order of values which it simultaneously, and paradoxically, celebrates as a solid and ascendant order of things" (220).

source of personal power. In the imaginary world of her poetry, Hemans tries to avoid the portrayal of bleak despair through reliance on religious faith. Faith is a source of courage for some characters: religious faith enables "The Switzer's Wife" to encourage her husband to rebel: "man must arm, and woman call on God!" For many of her characters, however, faith is less a source of courage than of resignation. Death seems like a blessed escape, as in "The Grave of a Poetess" which Hemans wrote to the memory of Mary Tighe, the author of "Ode to Psyche." Hemans writes,

What seest thou then where no dim fear,

No haunting dream, hath birth?

Here a vain love to passing flowers

Thou gav'st--but where thou art,

The sway is not with changeeful hours,

There love and death must part.

The world is portrayed as a beautiful but deceitful place, where "love and death" are irrevocably intertwined.¹⁵ "Now peace the woman's heart hath found, / And joy the poet's eye," Hemans concludes ambiguously--for the reader cannot be certain whether Hemans refers in faith to Tighe's peace in the afterlife, or to the consolation derived from Hemans's reverie. In "The Indian Woman's Death-Song," the woman commits suicide by going over a cataract because she is no longer wanted by her warrior, and she also takes her infant daughter with her because she refuses to let the child grow up to a fate like her own; as the epigram states, "Let not my child be a girl, for very sad is the life of a woman." The injustices of life are explicitly contrasted to the joys of the afterlife.

In some of Hemans's poems death is at least partially averted. In "The American

¹⁵ Hemans makes a similar claim in "Edith": "O Love and Death! / Ye have sad meetings on this changeful earth, / Many and sad!"

Forest Girl,” a young girl saves the life of a captive English soldier and pities him because she had lost her brother, and in “Costanza,” an anchorite nearly saves the life of her long lost love, and gives him her forgiveness—but a peaceful domesticity is not established, and Costanza and the Forest Girl are left alone with their sense of satisfaction. As Anne Mellor notes, Hemans is divided between belief in a domestic ideal and a recognition that that ideal is extremely fragile (*Romanticism and Gender* 124–43); it is this division that tips the balance between life and death in the fate of her poetic subjects.

The blessedness of a faithful death is a problem for modern skeptical readers, who are not convinced by the assurance of eventual rewards for moral rectitude. Materialist critics who believe that “religion is the opiate of the masses” find Hemans’ emphasis on death to be unhelpful, because it does not suggest a means for women’s material improvement.¹⁶ The lack of hope for social improvement resulting from this prevalence of death also lessens the utopian potential of Hemans’s portrayal of idealized domesticity. The reliance on death in *Records of Woman* does, however, express a deep dissatisfaction with material reality as it is reflected in the poems. The deaths of the women in *Records of Woman* do not serve as exemplars for other women to go and do likewise; instead, they provide tragic examples in which women have had to sacrifice themselves because the world has left them no other choice. This aspect of feminist critique in Hemans’s work is tempered because although Hemans could envision women’s effective action in the public world, and was certain of their reward in the afterlife, she found it difficult (but not impossible) to imagine a woman who could effect public change and survive. Hemans’s attitude differs from Shelley’s, whose exemplary

¹⁶ For example, Anthony John Harding fears that Hemans “historically epitomizes the way in which the temptations of self-sacrifice were exploited to persuade women that motherhood and self-denial guaranteed them significant lives—but only in the transcendent hereafter” (144).

public woman, Euthanasia, is killed not because she leaves domestic seclusion (indeed, she never inhabited such a situation), but because her republican ideals are in conflict with the violent powers of tyranny.

In *Records of Woman* (the first half of the 1828 volume) only the violent disruption of the peaceful home is shown, and domesticity as such is hardly represented. The possibility of a utopian domesticity is demarcated by its absence: the women long for the domestic bliss they claim they had, or could have had. In "Madeline: A Domestic Tale" for instance--a rare case that does not end in death, but instead, the reunion of mother and daughter--the mother and daughter tell only the tragic parts of their tale and strictly avoid the happy parts. In "The Homes of England," however, the first of the "Miscellaneous Poems" in the 1828 volume, Hemans creates a serene, idealized landscape; this poem, situated as it is in the center of the volume, provides a utopian contrast to the bleak tales of destruction surrounding it.

Several quasi-religious references to English homes in *Records of Woman* prepare the reader for "The Homes of England." In "Edith: A Tale of the Woods," the slaughter which had bereft Edith of her English companions was described as "A fearful scene / For her whose home of other days had been / 'Midst the fair halls of England;" likewise, in "The American Forest Girl" the English soldier ponders his death at the stake: "What a tale to shadow with its gloom / That happy hall in England." The homes of England, explicitly contrasted with the war-torn wilds of colonial North America, act almost as a totem of safety to Edith and the soldier. Edith is taken in by a charitable chief and his wife, and she converts the tribe to Christianity before dying. The soldier, as he recalls his beloved home, excites the pity of the Forest Girl and is freed by her intervention. Almost as if by magic, the homes of England exert a civilizing force on the colonial realm merely by their invocation: in collusion, the domestic ideal seizes control

and enforces its standards upon the course of events.¹⁷ Lootens points out how domestic and imperial ideologies are closely linked in Hemans's patriotic/nationalistic agenda, based on a love of home, and an imperialist agenda, based on expansion and conquest. But just as domesticity can be used to shore up an imperialist agenda, imperialism also emphasizes the desirability of domesticity. Taken as a whole, *Records of Woman* with its long list of tragedies does not promote imperialist expansion, but mourns the fragility of domesticity. Hemans is deeply conflicted about the confinement of women within domesticity and the risks they run when emerging into the public arena.

"The Homes of England" represents the urge in Hemans that Sweet describes as a "feminization of national consciousness [that] can produce both [a] nurturing national identity and . . . sustaining domestic institutions" (179). The first stanza presents a fairly generic picture of aristocratic estates: stately homes, tall ancestral trees, deer bounding across the greensward, and swans in the rivers. In the second stanza, the commonplace diction of the word "merry" in line nine revises the aristocratic imagery, and we are told that England consists in "gladsome looks of household love," a more domestic picture than the exterior image of the generic estate in stanza one. Hemans describes the cultural activities of the inhabitants: "There woman's voice flows forth in song, / Or childhood's tale is told, / Or lips move tunefully along / Some glorious page of old." None of the cultural activities are privileged above the others. "Woman's voice," "childhood's tale" and the "glorious page of old" are semantically equal within domestic bounds. Cultural authority is decentered as the "glorious page of old" is brought to life by non-gendered "lips mov[ing] tunefully" in harmony with "woman's voice." Cultural authority is decentered even further in stanza three, when the nature of sanctity is deeply internalized:

¹⁷ As Marlon Ross puts it, "There is no doubt that Hemans sees her goal as the feminization of culture at large. . . . her project is intertwined with a Tory ideology of state nationalism, British imperialism, religious conservatism, and feminine conventionalism" (292).

“the holy quietness / that breathes from Sabbath hours” refers to no scriptural or church authority, but instead to the absolutely subjective experience of time. The fourth stanza refers to the fate of the “lowly,” asserting that they sleep fearless in their Cottage Homes, while the final stanza invokes a patriotic fervor of protectiveness for the “free, fair Homes of England.”

By structuring “The Homes of England” as a catalog, Hemans leaves the poem open to the criticism that it is not a complete catalog. The following homes have been described: the stately homes, the merry homes, the blessed homes, the cottage homes, and the free, fair homes. In Hemans’ poem, the homes are idealized, cultural authority is not given unfairly to one group at the expense of others, blessedness floats into the soul as naturally as the sounds of leaves in the breeze. Homes that are not stately, merry, blessed, or free and fair, are not explicitly called into the mind of reader, and Hemans makes no demands that other sorts of homes be defended. Once the catalog has been identified, however, the insistent utopianism of the poetic voice sounds a bit desperate, and one begins to wonder about the fates of those persons excluded from such homes as Hemans describes. One is left to worry that such persons might experience fates more similar to those described in *Records of Woman*.

Hemans’s portrayal of utopian domesticity in “The Homes of England” is limited by boundaries of denial. Elsewhere, her emphasis on domesticity is restrictive and tragic. While her urge to concentrate on the plight of women is feminist, her insistence on the surcease of suffering in death conveys dissatisfaction with the current state of things but does not constitute a feminist call to arms. Like Austen, Hemans’s critique of an unsatisfactory society does not suggest how that society can be changed; but unlike Austen, Hemans charges that the unchanged society is deadly to women. In the end, Hemans’s poetry in *Records of Womans* condemns the many ways women have been wronged but does not suggest any possible improvements to change women’s fate.

Shelley is unlike Hemans in that she avoids Hemans's strong split between an idealized domesticity and public life, nor does Shelley portray her heroines' emergence from domesticity as fatal. While Hemans's portrait of home is glowing but somewhat vague, Shelley presents a utopian domesticity that, Bloch's terms, is concrete: she outlines particular conditions which, if met, should lead to a more perfect society. Shelley acknowledges that her ideals may not always prevail against worldly wrongs, but these ideals are always portrayed as enduring in their superior virtue, even in instances when they have been overcome by evil. For example, Euthanasia, Shelley's most politically involved character, bears a surface resemblance to Hemans's women heroes in that she dies as a result of her involvement with politics. Her determination to save the life of her former love and political enemy Castruccio requires that she join an intrigue against him; because she joined the plot, Castruccio exiles her and she drowns. Shelley does not posit this, however, as an effect of her leaving the protective haven of domesticity. To the contrary, it is an effect of the corruption of Euthanasia's political environment. Her own politics are seen as superior, even when she is forced to choose from among several unappealing options. Euthanasia stands by her values, which are represented in the novel as virtuous and right, even though she fails to protect her fortress, Valperga, and fails to save herself or Castruccio. Euthanasia's attempts to befriend the tormented and disillusioned Beatrice also fail--Beatrice succumbs to her madness--but Shelley's principles of utopian domesticity ring true nevertheless. In such a way, Shelley's fictions carry out her reform project of introducing a superior social model to her readers, leading to the gradual but real improvement of society.

Helen: Neither Utopian Nor Feminist

Maria Edgeworth's last novel, *Helen* (1834), is a didactic novel focusing on

domesticity, marriage and the marriage plot.¹⁸ Its moral thrust is twofold: the necessity of complete truthfulness, and the confidence which must exist between husband and wife in order to ensure a happy marriage. Shelley's two domestic novels closely follow the publication of *Helen: Lodore* in 1835 and *Falkner* in 1837. Unlike Shelley's reformist and sometimes utopian portraits of domesticity, Edgeworth's domesticity is a product of the ideology of the gendered separation of public and intimate spheres, an ideology of which Edgeworth approves.¹⁹ While Edgeworth's women retain a sense of moral independence--they are expected always to act correctly--they do not have a great deal of power, opting instead for the more feminine "influence." Edgeworth supports conservative, traditional values, rather than innovation; her narrator's description of General Clarendon also applies to Edgeworth herself: "The march of intellect was not a favourite march with him, unless the step were perfectly kept, and all in good time" (106). Although the novel ends with all things set to right, the sense that the characters have all been soundly punished for their actions is too strong to feel a sense of the utopian: the code of truthfulness upheld by the novel is nearly impossibly strict, with the result that the emotional and psychological welfare of the characters is too precarious.

Colin B. Atkinson and Jo Atkinson argue that Edgeworth's politics can best be described as paternalistic, involving an emphasis on duties rather than on rights, within

¹⁸ The marriage plot need not always be restrictive, though in this case it is; see for example, Julie Shaffer's investigation of empowered women prior to the Victorian ideal of the Angel in the House. More generally, Eve Tavor Bannet argues that women she describes as Matriarchal feminists created the idea of women's separate sphere in order to strengthen women's cultural authority and used this authority successfully to achieve feminist goals.

¹⁹ As Andrew McCann argues, at least in her much earlier *Belinda* (1802), Edgeworth demonstrates "the segregation of private and public spheres, on the one hand, and the positive unreality of utopian conjugal fantasies, on the other" (74).

an “authoritarian, hierarchical, organic, and pluralistic society.”²⁰ They show that both radicals and conservatives had a similar interest in women’s education: “both radicals and conservatives proposed but one suggestion to remedy women’s inferior status: a better education, one more concerned with developing a girl’s mind than with ‘accomplishments’” (112). They further argue that both liberals (including Mary Wollstonecraft) and conservatives (such as Edgeworth and her father) “took it for granted, as did . . . all but a minute number of ‘feminists’, that woman’s destiny was domestic” (114). While Wollstonecraft did argue that women had domestic duties, she denied that domesticity was women’s only possible destiny, whereas, in *Helen*, Edgeworth’s political agenda is clear: women should be implicitly trustworthy and educated to be useful to their husbands. The extent to which Edgeworth can be shown not to participate in liberal or progressive politics is clear from her other novels, especially from her portrayal of a ludicrous Wollstonecraftian woman, Harriet Freke, in her novel *Belinda*. It is not so much in her attention to duty that Edgeworth varies from her more liberal contemporaries, but in her insistence on the subordination and limitation of women to prescribed domestic roles.

The novel focuses on five central characters: Helen Stanley, her friend Lady Cecilia Clarendon, Cecilia’s mother Lady Davenant, Cecilia’s husband General Clarendon, and Helen’s beau, Granville Beauclerc. The two men of the novel are opposing types: Clarendon an older man with an unbending, strict moral code, and Beauclerc, his ward, generous, impetuous, and romantic. The three women represent three different stages of virtue: Helen is naturally good but untested, Cecilia is good but her character is flawed, and Lady Davenant, over time, has overcome mistakes in order to strengthen her virtue. Each woman must learn to adapt herself to societal codes of

²⁰ The Atkinsons cite David Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England*, 115fn.

conduct in order to ensure her happiness in life. Helen's orphan status, and the recent decease of her guardian, leave her as a kind of *tabula rasa* for the absorption of the novel's lessons. Helen strongly loves her friends and is too willing to sacrifice herself for their happiness, which is seen as a flaw, but an amiable one. After her guardian's death, Helen goes to live with her childhood friend, Lady Cecilia, who has recently married General Clarendon. Cecilia's flaw is a lack of strict truthfulness, and she is afraid of the censures of her mother and husband. Cecilia does not reveal the entire truth about a romantic involvement she once had with a Captain D'Aubigny before her marriage to Clarendon, entangling herself and Helen in a web of deceit. The punishment and repentance of Cecilia for her lack of truthfulness is the main didactic thrust of the novel.

Three marriages are described in the novel: the Davenants, the Clarendons, and the courtship between Helen and Beauclerc that ends in marriage. In all three marriages, certain moral principles are at stake: confidence between husband and wife is essential; meriting her husband's esteem is vital to a wife's peace of mind;²¹ a woman may demand to be trusted but only if she fully merits that trust; mistakes can be redeemed if only admitted truthfully; and, the man has the last word. In Edgeworth's novel, women are understood to be independent moral agents, but a woman's relationship to her husband is not one of equality. A wife must "look up" to her husband; he must be felt to have a superior understanding.²² In addition to conforming to the best interests of her husband, a woman's wider social reputation also depends on her strict conformity with a severe code of conduct. Women's fulfillment in life is tied up in the extent to which they can

²¹ Iain Topliss points out that Wollstonecraft and Edgeworth share the tenet "that esteem is as essential to marriage as love" (24).

²² As Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace says of Lady Davenant, "she finds inner peace only when she submits to her husband's supervision" (*Fathers' Daughters* 189).

conform to a model predicated on men's happiness, while unmarried women are to face their lot with uncomplaining stoicism.

Helen and Beauclerc have a relationship based on friendship. The trial of their relationship comes when Cecilia forces Helen to conceal the authorship of letters Cecilia wrote to D'Aubigny: Cecilia will not admit she wrote them and makes it seem that Helen did. Helen is willing to sacrifice herself to save her friend, but she does tell Beauclerc that she is innocent of any wrongdoing and convinces him to trust her. Clarendon, although he protects Helen's reputation, is disgusted by dissimulation and sends her away with his sister--but Beauclerc continues to trust her, forming the basis for a solid relationship between them. Marilyn Butler regards Beauclerc's character as "out of focus" and more "immature" than brilliant (*Edgeworth* 470) but Beauclerc's impulsive behavior stems from generous impulses. These same generous impulses are what allow him to rely on Helen's trustworthiness: the unfinished nature of Beauclerc's character gives him leeway to respond to Helen's needs in a way that Clarendon, as a mature and fully formed masculine character, can do only with great difficulty--Clarendon yields to reconciling with Cecilia only after the dying Lady Davenant on her knees implores him to do so.

The marriage of Clarendon and Cecilia is based on strong romantic love, a love which is shown *not* to be proof against Cecilia's penchant for fudging the truth. Clarendon, in response to two friends whose wives had betrayed them (26), had sworn that he would never marry a woman who had previously loved another: "love and honour being with him inseparable, the idol he adores must keep herself at the height to which he has raised her, or cease to receive his adorations. She must be no common vulgar idol for every passing worshipper" (29). Butler notes that Clarendon "in his awe-inspiring reserve strongly resembles Lady Davenant" (*Edgeworth* 476), but whereas Lady Davenant is more tender toward Cecilia than she thinks, General Clarendon really is quite

exacting in his expectations. In order to satisfy Clarendon's marital requirements, Cecilia convinced him that she had never thought of another. In reality, she had written love letters to D'Aubigny. Thus, their marriage is tainted by the element of deceit, which brings them to the point of absolute separation, Cecilia's denials being compounded and her truthfulness progressively eroded until her final confession is prompted by her mother's expected death. Lady Davenant is finally able to convince Clarendon that Cecilia's confession ensures her new allegiance with the complete truth and the couple are reunited. Although Cecilia has repented and is rewarded with the return of her husband, Helen is shocked by the severe mental strain Cecilia has undergone, and she is never shown to recover from the "change" effected on her by her sorrow. The novel insists that this suffering is deserved, by providing a justification of Clarendon's requirements (See Kowaleski-Wallace, *Fathers' Daughters* 190-1), and by Lady Davenant's emphasis on Cecilia's newly attained virtue. Cecilia's good intentions, for sparing small pains to the people around her, are portrayed as destroying her marriage: compare Cecilia with Austen's *Emma*, whose meddling is much less harshly rewarded. Butler praises the psychological tension of the novel as the situation becomes progressively worse for both Cecilia and Helen; but as Kowaleski-Wallace states, the suffering of the two women is "excruciating" (191), a portrayal of "impossibly high standards imposed on innocent women" despite Edgeworth's intention to support the trial as beneficial to the women's characters (190). Edgeworth's novel supports women's conformity with societal standards, no matter how exacting or torturous they become.

Mary Jean Corbett, in her fine discussion of Edgeworth's *The Absentee* (1812), delineates how Edgeworth's familial politics reflect those developed by Edmund Burke in response to revolutionary ideas. Corbett explains how Burke's central theory of cultural inheritance depends on masculine control of females: "Burke's confidence in the security of hereditary transmission depends . . . on the tacit assumption of marital chastity among

women, who act as the unacknowledged ground for familial, economic, and political legitimacy. . . . no principle of transmission can be fully secure if feminine fidelity is not maintained" (880).²³ Although twenty years passed between the writing of *The Absentee* and *Helen*, Corbett's argument applies just as readily to this latter work, especially when the extremely harsh behavior of General Clarendon toward the fearful Cecilia is wholly condoned by the novel. Corbett shows how in his *Reflections* Burke regards French revolutionary women as monstrous, and makes explicit the connection between Burke's theory and Edgeworth's fiction: "Like the *Reflections*, *The Absentee* promotes the family as the mainstay of the orderly society. . . . like Burke, Edgeworth understands the regulation of sexuality--especially female sexuality--to be the linchpin of social order. . . . any and all irregularities in women's sexual and social identities present serious impediments both to the practice of domestic life and to male virtue" (882, 883). Cecilia's commitment to truthfulness is tested on the basis of an old love affair, which, though innocent, could have prevented her marriage to the General had she revealed it. It is the hint of a connection between Cecilia's "honesty" and her "chastity" (two words closely connected) which causes Lady Davenant to fall into a fit:

'Suspect!--wrong!' cried Lady Davenant, starting up, with a look in her eyes which made Helen recoil. 'Helen, what can you conceive that I suspect wrong?--Cecilia?--Captain D'Aubigny? What did you mean? Wrong did you say?--of Cecilia? Could you mean--could you conceive, Helen that I having such a suspicion, could be here--living with her--or--living anywhere----' And she sank down on the sofa again, seized with sudden spasm--in a convulsion of agonising pain. (292)

²³ This concept is also central to Lawrence's *Empire of the Nairs*, discussed in Chapter One.

Lady Davenant's pain centers around her heart--a pain emblematic of her motherhood.²⁴ Cecilia's failure at complete verbal disclosure implies that her chastity might also be suspect. Though Lady Davenant denies that this could really be the case, her near hysterical response reveals that this is indeed her worst fear. This sort of reliance on the family as an organizational tactic for controlling women is far from Shelley's project in the revision of domesticity to expand its utopian potential.

The marriage of Lord and Lady Davenant, the novel's exemplary marriage, is a working partnership, and Lady Davenant is shown throughout the novel assisting with her husband's affairs. Butler describes Lady Davenant as "a powerful political and intellectual woman who is as much at home in foreign capitals as in London. . . . her tone is that of a highly intelligent, reasoning and feeling woman, . . . a forceful personality. . . . Her manner is that of a woman who has become accustomed to authority" (*Edgeworth* 469). While Lady Davenant does maintain an important role in her husband's political career, her activities are narrowly and conservatively defined. Lady Davenant takes care to explain to Helen that while she is thought by some to control Lord Davenant, this is not the case, and she relates how early in her married life she attempted to use her influence inappropriately (to secure money for a project of her mother's) but Lord Davenant's disapproval taught her the error of her ways (72-87). A well-respected woman of real genius, Lady Davenant is shown by Edgeworth to demonstrate true wisdom because she assists her husband but does not interfere. In that Lady Davenant always participates in her husband's political activities, Edgeworth does not exactly restrict her women characters to a private domestic sphere, but the interpenetration of the domestic and political realms is demonstrated in a way consistent with conservative, traditional beliefs about women and their talents: women's roles are not significantly

²⁴ This emblematic pain is much like the pain of Lady Delacour's "bad breast" discussed by Kowaleski-Wallace in her work on *Belinda* ("Home Economics" 251-253).

expanded, nor is the treatment of women in the novel progressive or reformist. Lady Davenant learns not to feed her own ambition, but to support her husband's political goals: "I learned, if not to be less ambitious, at least to show it less. . . . D— had once said that 'every public man who has a cultivated and high-minded wife has in fact two selves, each holding watch and ward for the other'" (87); to paraphrase the legal theory of coverture, in politics, the two are one and the one is the man.

Lady Davenant's early interest in politics, when she desired to have power, caused her to neglect Cecilia, and Cecilia's faults are supposed to be the results of this neglect.²⁵ Lady Davenant says, "I did not attend sufficiently to Cecilia's early education: engrossed with politics, I left her too much to governesses, at one period to a very bad one. I have done what I can to remedy this, and you have done more perhaps; but I much fear that the early neglect can never be completely repaired" (87). Mitzi Myers praises as "feminocentric" the concentration on the relationship between mother and daughter in Edgeworth's Rosamond series.²⁶ In *Helen*, the mother-daughter relationship is still central, doubled by the mirror daughters (Kowaleski-Wallace, *Fathers' Daughters* 189) of Cecilia and "surrogate daughter" Helen to the mother, Lady Davenant, and mirrored again in the relationship between Cecilia and General Clarendon, whose forbidding personality is very similar to her mother's and which sparks in Cecilia a similar fear of their harsh judgement of her.²⁷ Edgeworth intended that the moral for *Helen* should be "that

²⁵ As Kowaleski-Wallace points out, Lady Davenant identifies her relationship with her own mother as also beset by problems (*Fathers' Daughters* 188-9).

²⁶ In her discussion of the *Bildungsroman* aspects of Edgeworth's Rosamond series, Myers writes that "Edgeworth replaces the usual heterosexual romance script fusing female self-definition with relations between the sexes by a mother-daughter educational narrative thematizing domestic realism and enlightened choice" (71).

²⁷ Butler notes Cecilia's "two stern mentors, her mother and her husband" (*RES* 284).

mothers talented mothers [*sic*] should take care not to make their children afraid of them so as to prevent them from telling the truth & trusting them with their faults and secrets . . . In short the moral of Lady Davenant's characters is that talents should make themselves objects of Love not fear" (Maria Edgeworth to Lucy Edgeworth, 6 Jan 1836; qtd in Butler, *Edgeworth* 476). Although the novel is "feminocentric" in that it fully explores the developing personality of the main character, and provides engaging studies of the supporting characters Lady Davenant and Cecilia, *Helen* demonstrates that a focus on women does not by itself guarantee that a novel will be feminist. Instead of empowering the women, the novel's lessons constantly hem them in. Edgeworth's attention to the formative effects of education on Cecilia's character is similar to what Shelley's would be, but Edgeworth uses society's condemnation as a tool of punishment to correct Cecilia, rather than attempting to improve her own internal judgment. This is not a utopian portrait of domesticity or a feminist one: while respecting Lady Davenant as a strong character, Edgeworth does not try to expand the boundaries of her realm but instead has adopted a position which supports women's activities only as far as society condones.

Edgeworth devotes several passages to the difference between women's power, influence, and interference. In the first passage, Clarendon makes clear that women's power must be constrained to *influence*:

"Female *influence* is and ought to be *potent*," said the General, with an emphasis on *influence*, contradistinguishing it from power, and reducing the exaggeration of omnipotent by the short process of lopping off two syllables.

"So long as ladies keep in their own proper character," said Lady Davenant, "all is well; but, if once they cease to act as women, that instant they lose their privilege--their charm: they forfeit their exercising power; they can no longer command the demon of party nor themselves. . ." (272)

The narrator gives Clarendon the ability of "lopping off" women's power, like an

amputation or, more politically, a beheading. Lady Davenant's speech is riddled with negatives--"cease--lose--forfeit--no longer." Her somewhat mysterious remark about "acting as women" is illuminated by Wollstonecraft's injunction in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*: "This desire of being always women, is the very consciousness that degrades the sex. Excepting with a lover, I must repeat with emphasis, a former observation,--it would be well if they were only agreeable or rational companions" (99). In Wollstonecraft's argument, "acting as women" is to act constantly in a socially predetermined sexual or gendered manner--which masquerades as natural--without consciousness of being as rational as men. Edgeworth argues that women should influence through their charm and from their existing, socially determined positions.

Edgeworth, while not advocating a reformist stance, does allow that some change in the place of women in the political sphere has taken place since Wollstonecraft wrote. Lady Davenant advises Helen that life has become too complicated for her to consider that politics is no concern of women's:

"Let me observe to you that the position of women in society is somewhat different from what it was a hundred years ago, or as it was sixty, or I will say thirty years since. Women are now so highly cultivated, and political subjects are at present of so much importance, of such high interest, to all human creatures who live together in society, you can hardly expect, Helen, that you, as a rational being, can go through the world as it now is, without forming any opinion on points of public importance. . . . Depend on it, Helen . . . that when you are married, your love for a man of superior abilities, and of superior character, must elevate your mind to sympathy with all his pursuits, with all the subjects which claim his attention." (276)

Lady Davenant's advice devolves from the position that women should understand society because they are rational creatures, to the idea that they should be able to remain in

sympathy with their worldly active husbands. It is a shift from women's political action in its own right, to fulfill their duty as citizens as Wollstonecraft argues, to the idea that women's duties as a wife demand this new ability from them--an idea that Wollstonecraft supports in order to bolster her larger argument for women's intellectual and political freedom.

In the end, Lady Davenant draws a line between public and private involvement in political affairs that neither Wollstonecraft nor Shelley ever draws:

Of the public dangers and private personal inconveniences that may result from women becoming politicians, or, as you better express our meaning, interfering with public affairs, no one can be more aware than I am. *Interfering*, observe I say, for I would mark and keep the line between influence and interference. Female influence must, will, and ought to exist on political subjects as on all others; but this influence should always be domestic, not public--the customs of society have so ruled it. (277)

Edgeworth explicitly makes the distinction which genders the division between public and domestic spheres, and ordains that the domestic sphere be subordinate to the public. Rather than advocate the full involvement of women in politics, Edgeworth strictly warns women against interfering, and leaves the final decision in politics, as in personal relations, with the men.

In contradiction to Wollstonecraft's claim that education and intellectual activity will make women better wives and mothers, Lady Davenant's involvement in politics has partially estranged her from her daughter--she spends more time with papers than with her daughter, causing Cecilia to fear her as aloof and instigating her downfall. Although Helen is always ready to go to Lady Davenant for advice, Cecilia is too afraid. In one instance, Cecilia attempts to assist in the affairs of her parents (an ambassadorial mission to Russia has been delayed) by throwing a party for political friends and enemies alike,

sure that amity will reign (245-275). In describing Cecilia's party, the narrator focuses on the disturbances that occur between Lady Davenant and the other women guests. As to the men's business, the narrator pleads ignorance:

The political conferences were held in Lord Davenant's apartment: to what these conferences tended we never knew and never shall; we consider them as matters of history, and leave them with due deference to the historian; we have to do only with biography. Far be it from us to meddle with politics--we have quite enough to do with manners and morality. (269)

Although the political and the domestic clearly mix, at least in the case of the husband-wife team of the Davenants, Edgeworth does not wish to expand the province of the domestic novel in order to investigate the political side.

Cecilia's plan to restore her parents' political fortune does not pan out. Lord Davenant's setback has in reality been due to an information leak, and Lady Davenant is suspected. This information leak has an important parallel in the slanderous publication of Cecilia's letters to D'Aubigny--in fact both sets of papers are copied by the same duplicitous page, Carlos. The Portuguese page boy is doubled by another spying immigrant, the French maid Felicie. The two foreign spies represent an invasion of the domestic space, an erosion of trust within the very home. Lady Davenant had taken the young Carlos in off the street, and his betrayal is explained only inasmuch as he was offered money to copy the information. Felicie's betrayal receives even less of an explanation--only that she has never seemed sincere, with her flattering French maid's ways. Again any potential for a utopian domesticity in Edgeworth is undercut: her domesticity is a precarious space, susceptible to misunderstanding or to outright betrayal for reasons that seem arbitrary and insignificant.

Although Edgeworth shows Lady Davenant to have certain flaws of ambition and perhaps too strict a method with her daughter, her portrayal of Lady Davenant is flattering

on the whole. Lady Davenant's opposite is Lady Katrine Hawksby, an annoyance throughout the novel and finally publicly denounced as a villain (she had attempted to slander Cecilia and Helen with a locket from the D'Aubigny affair). In a scene involved with the slanderous publication of the letters--which have been fluffed out with even more shocking material which Cecilia never wrote--Katrine is described by her sister as "blue" (that is, overly intellectual):

"Deep blue! Shocking: and this is a blue breakfast, and all the people at it are blue bores, and a blue bore is, as Horace Churchill says, one of the most mischievous creatures breathing; and he tells me the only way of hindering them from doing mischief is by *ringing* them; but first you must get rings. Now, in this case, for Katrine not a ring is to be had for love or money." (379)

Inspired by Madame de Stael, and with "the notion . . . of being the English Corinne," Lady Davenant had once indulged in salon behavior, but had quickly retreated when a friend "repeated those two provoking lines-- 'New wit, like wine, intoxicates the brain, / Too strong for feeble women to sustain'" (75).²⁸ Katrine, however, is never described as carrying out any useful intellectual activity, but instead is at the heart of the publication of the slanderous letters, and her description as "blue" indicates that she only pretends to intellect, unlike the now-wise Lady Davenant. Katrine is also unmarried, and hates Helen for her engagement to Beauclerc. Edgeworth does not argue that that the only fate for unmarried women is to become as bitter as Lady Katrine; she argues instead that it is a matter of strength of mind how an unmarried woman regards her own fate. Lady

²⁸ The lines are from George Lyttleton's poem, "Advice To A Lady," (1731) from *Poems* (1777):

Nor make to dangerous wit a vain pretence,
But wisely rest content with modest sense;
For wit, like wine, intoxicates the brain,
Too strong for feeble woman to sustain;
Of those who claim it, more than half have none,
And half of those who have it, are undone. (31-36)

Davenant deplores the universal belief that all women should marry:

dancing-masters, music-masters, and all the tribe, what is it all for, but to prepare young ladies for the grand event; and to raise in them, besides the natural, a factitious, an abstract idea of good in being married? Every girl in these days is early impressed with the idea that she must be married, that she cannot be happy unmarried . . . it requires some strength of mind to be superior to such a foolish, vain, and vulgar belief . . . Look at Lady Katrine; strength of mind on this one subject would have saved her from being a prey to envy, and jealousy, and all the vulture passions of the mind. (194)

Edgeworth balances her portrayal of this savage old maid with the somewhat more favorable spinster sister Esther Clarendon--but Esther is also portrayed as brusque throughout most of the novel, only coming into a favorable light when she offers Helen a home while she is under suspicion. Esther and her Aunt Pennant have a home of their own in Wales, where Esther's punctilious behavior can offend no one. Her spinsterhood is regarded as her own choice, for at one point she admits that she abruptly left the Clarendons because she was beginning to feel an unrequited attachment to Beauclerc (453), in direct opposition to Katrine's behavior.

In *Helen*, Edgeworth provides skillful interpretations of the characters of women and explains how they must adapt to survive in society. Helen's financial situation, given as the reason she must dwell with her friends in the first place, is a fitting metaphor for the lesson of the book: a woman's restraint is proof of her good moral nature. Emphatically not utopian, Edgeworth's final book does not support the feminist reform of society, nor even does it point out society's flaws: just the opposite, it points out women's own flaws and demands their punishment and remediation before rewarding them with marriage.

In her own domestic novels, Shelley carries out a very different project from that

of Edgeworth. Her characters are situated within the environments and educational circumstances that shaped them. In Godwinian fashion, the characters are responsible for their own successes and failures, but the social realities that shaped them bear a heavy weight as well. Additionally, rather than dwelling on punishment, Shelley almost always emphasizes the opportunities for improvement that lay before the character. In *Lodore*, for example, she shows how Cornelia is able to re-educate herself after the failure of her marriage to Lord Lodore. Shelley shows Cornelia's suffering from her separation from her daughter, but not in order to punish her; rather, Shelley tends to emphasize Cornelia's faulty education. Her mother manipulates her, and Lord Lodore marries her when she was too young then fails to get to know her or to adapt his own behavior and expectations to his young wife's needs. Eventually, Cornelia reforms her own values, and instead of acting according to the precepts of the worldly society through which she moves so easily, she gives up her wealth in order to come to the aid of her daughter. In her final lesson, she learns that she need not isolate herself because of her noble act; she is taken back into society, reunited with her daughter, and marries Horatio Saville, a virtuous man who has also learned from the mistakes of his own impulsive marriage. In the re-education of such figures as Cornelia, Shelley shows how society may be redeemed by the principles of utopian domesticity.

Throughout her work, Shelley demonstrates her commitment to social reform by developing an ideal I've called utopian domesticity. Shelley's program for domesticity is feminist because it condemns the restrictions of traditional domesticity that confine women in the home and exclude men from it, and utopian because it lays out a set of conditions that could create a perfected society. Shelley revises the traditional idea of domesticity to emphasize women's capacity to effect public good, as well as men's responsibilities within the home. Above all, Shelley uses the idea of domesticity to

emphasize the importance of interpersonal human bonds: individuals, whether male or female, must turn away from isolation and ambition for personal glory and toward responsibility, justice, and friendship.

Other women writers, contemporary to Shelley, confronted the idea of domesticity without seizing on its potential as a model for utopian feminist reform. Austen explores the troublesome situations of her well-rounded characters with complexity and depth, but without attempting to critique or change the societal structures that place her characters in such situations. Hemans demonstrates through numerous examples that women can leave the domestic haven in order to affect the larger political world, but she tends to portray this move as fatal. Neither Austen nor Hemans, although they understand and sympathetically portray women's subordination by the power structures of the world at large, attempts to influence those structures through their fiction. Edgeworth, on the other hand, argues that women should in fact be held to strict standards of conduct and brought back into line when they deviate. Edgeworth denies that women should do any more than influence the decisions of men who move in the public world and chastens their "interference."

Over the course of her career, Shelley explores many different configurations of domesticity with a critical eye, revealing not only the negative effects of traditional gender structures, patriarchy and chivalry, but also domesticity's utopian potential. In *Frankenstein*, Shelley demonstrates her feminist critique of the negative effects of restrictive domesticity by exposing the marginalization of female characters and critiquing even the De Lacey's potential utopia by condemning its patriarchal exclusivity. In *Valperga*, the rational, benevolent leadership of Euthanasia is a good example, contrasted with Castrucchio's cruelty, treachery, and violence; Shelley carefully explains the educational systems that produced these two leaders, as well as their deluded religious counterpart, Beatrice. In *The Last Man*, while focusing on the central importance of

human connections, Shelley critiques the gendered roles which restrict the lives of women in the book and undermine their potential for fulfillment even before the advent of the Plague. In *Perkin Warbeck*, chivalry, patriarchal legitimacy, and the concept of the “just war” are condemned, and women’s role in the public sphere is again explored. In *Lodore*, Shelley critiques the passionate, unreformed Romantic character of the eponymous hero, whose estranged wife takes center stage by re-educating herself: she abandons worldly priorities in favor of the values of utopian domesticity--responsibility instead of personal rights, simplicity instead of luxury, unself-interested benevolence--and by devoting herself to the benefit of her daughter, reunites her family and gains a new, like-minded husband. In *Falkner*, Shelley provides utopian domesticity as a frame that makes possible the feminist reform of justice demanded by Godwin in *Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*.

Shelley explores women’s own Romantic desire both for personal fame and glory and for public benevolence, showing how either men or women may become ambitious Byronic heroes or benevolent Shelleyan heroes. She investigates women’s engagements with power in the public sphere and in the sphere of interpersonal and community relationships, while she also valorizes men who become more involved with family and community instead of selfishly seeking political or military power. As a disciple of Wollstonecraft, Shelley consciously demonstrates the effects of education on women and men characters, insisting on women’s full education and their rights to become full citizens alongside men. As a follower of Godwin, she sees domesticity as the site where human interactions, at their most basic, have the greatest potential to effect revolutionary change. As a Romantic woman writer, whose fictions appeared between 1818 and 1837, Shelley investigates the powerful ideologies of her day, exposing the weaknesses of Romanticism and domesticity even as she reveals the possibilities they bear for perfecting human interactions.

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