

SOCIABILITY AS POLITICAL ACTIVISM: WRITING FOR CHANGE IN THE 1790s

by

LAURA ELIZABETH MCDONALD

(Under the Direction of Roxanne Eberle)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Charlotte Smith's *Desmond*, and William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* as works of political activism. I approach these texts within the context of a newly developed sociability that combines the coffeehouse of the mid-eighteenth century with the new developments in publishing and the circulation of texts. In a time of constant political change, these texts engage with a new audience of men and women who are becoming more actively involved in agitating for political reforms. Because of these new audiences, Burke, Smith, and Godwin modify their methods of persuasion and didacticism to educate and convince their readership of their own political stance. The works discussed combine the political with the literary to convince new audiences of political arguments.

INDEX WORDS: Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Charlotte Smith, *Desmond*, William Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, Romantic sociability, French Revolution, Jüergen Habermas

SOCIABILITY AS POLITICAL ACTIVISM: WRITING FOR CHANGE IN THE 1790s

by

LAURA ELIZABETH MCDONALD

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Athens, Georgia

2010

© 2010

Laura Elizabeth McDonald

All Rights Reserved

SOCIABILITY AS POLITICAL ACTIVISM: WRITING FOR CHANGE IN THE 1790s

by

LAURA ELIZABETH MCDONALD

Major Professor: Roxanne Eberle

Committee: Elizabeth Kraft  
Chloe Wigston Smith

Electronic Version Approved:

Maureen Grasso  
Dean of the Graduate School  
The University of Georgia  
May 2010

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not have been possible without the careful direction of Dr. Roxanne Eberle. Her assistance and kind understanding has been an invaluable asset. Over the past few years, Dr. Eberle's guidance has been truly formative. I would also like to thank Dr. Elizabeth Kraft for enlightening me on the intricacies of the eighteenth century literary world, and in particular Johnsonian sociable circles. I am also indebted to Dr. Chloe Wigston Smith's suggestions for reading in eighteenth century literary criticism.

I would also like to express my appreciation for Dr. Kirk Willis's invaluable guidance and encouragement. Over the past few years, his tutelage has instilled in me a passion for history. Dr. Scott Gavorsky's intellectual guidance has proved incredibly valuable for this work, especially as he first instilled in me the idea of sociability as political activism.

I would like to express my gratitude to the staff at Cups Coffee for their generous refills and witty banter. Last but not least, I wish to thank my friends, family, and David for helping me over the past year and for putting up with my stress. Thank you!

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
2 CONVERSATIONAL SOCIABILITY: EXPANDING AUDIENCES IN BURKE'S <i>REFLECTIONS</i> .....	9
3 DIDACTICISM AND DISCOURSE: QUESTIONS OF REFORM IN SMITH'S <i>DESMOND</i> .....	33
4 EDUCATION AS CONTEMPLATION: GODWIN'S <i>CALEB WILLIAMS</i> .....	54
5 CONCLUSION.....	75
WORKS CITED .....	79
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	82

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The literary scene of the 1790s merits and receives critical attention for the authors' engagement in contemporary politics through their work. Whether through novel-writing or incorporating novelistic elements into speeches and political writings, these authors engage directly with the rapidly changing political scene and attempt, through their novels, to affect that scene by influencing their readers' political beliefs. The overt didacticism of these texts often complicates their artistic merit, or in the case of political writings, the inclusion of narrative techniques threatens the text's political currency. The fusion of literary forms, the miscegenation of the novel and politics, often calls into question the merit of the produced text. Though this condemnation is not true for all texts published in the 1790s, it is true that the novels, and the political tracts with novelistic tendencies, of the 1790s benefit from contextual readings, readings which acknowledge their position in a developing political and social discourse. It is only within these discourses that the texts can be appreciated as a whole, incorporating both novelistic and political elements, and thus advancing our understanding of contemporary political and literary discussions. The following chapters will examine the ways in which Edmund Burke's political tract *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Charlotte Smith's novel *Desmond*, and William Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* operate as didactic political texts and, perhaps more importantly, engage with each other in a new realm of sociability. This new realm of sociability occurs at the intersection of the sociable remnants from the early eighteenth century, which centered on the coffeehouse culture of an elite few, and the new modes of discourse and publication reliant on

newspapers and the emergence of the popular press. The new sociability centers at the intersection of these multiple and varied texts, as novels respond to political tracts and parliamentary language meets gothic imagery. *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, *Desmond*, and *Caleb Williams* each work to redefine this sociability by incorporating new literary perspectives to the political discussion and to expand this discussion to new audiences.

The elements of didacticism and sociability in these texts are inextricable. The introduction of new audiences to the sociable scene, through expanded literacy and mass print production, means that these new audiences require education in the basic elements of political discourse. These authors must first educate their readership before persuading them to a particular political stance. In exploring these textual elements, I pursue a two-part definition of sociability. The first component follows a more conventional form of sociability descendant from mid-eighteenth-century coffeehouses. It involves a moderately exclusive group of people well versed in the politics of the day who respond to each other, pose questions, suggest answers, and, more often than not, stand in position to enact these suggestions into political policy. Burke, as a statesman involved in parliamentary politics since the 1760s, fits neatly into this conventional sociability. Charlotte Smith, as a woman though of elite status, and William Godwin, in part by his own choice but also because of his radicalism, stand outside of this political elite. Both Smith and Godwin, however, participate in a discourse that poses questions, suggests answers, and above all, relies on the response and engagement of their peers, to develop and deliver their own political opinions. Smith and Godwin, along with their peers, incorporate these elements of conventional sociability into their discourse and thus expand sociability to include a wider selection of writers. By responding directly to Burke, and emphasizing a tone of familiarity with him in these responses, participants like Mary Wollstonecraft, Joseph Priestley,

and Thomas Paine legitimize their right to engage in a previously exclusive discussion. Smith, especially, must first defend her right to participate in this sociable discourse before she can presume to position *Desmond* as a political novel. Burke and Godwin, both men but also well-educated and respected, enjoy a relatively easy entrance into the discussion, but still rely on the trappings of an older sociability to substantiate their opinions. Conventional sociability justifies the author's involvement in the discourse.

The new element of sociability relates to the slowly developing popular voice in English politics at the time, and thus involves the justification of a new audience in the political discourse. In the 1790s, increased education meant expanded literacy for much of the English population. These new readers inevitably pushed for expanded political rights, though they will not be granted the vote until the 1830s. By the 1780s, and especially with the threat of military agitation represented by the French Revolution, the disenfranchised masses became a potentially powerful political voice. Godwin's *Caleb Williams* represents the most obvious connection to this second component of sociability. *Caleb Williams* takes the political philosophy of his 1793 *Political Justice*, which addressed a highly educated audience more closely related to Burke's exclusive circle, and translates this philosophy into a format more accessible for the popular audience. In choosing the novel, both Godwin and Smith chose a popular audience, a fact that is reinforced by the tendency towards didacticism in both works, but particularly in *Desmond*. In a somewhat surprising move, Burke's inclusion of characteristics of the popular gothic novel in his conservative manifesto *Reflections on the Revolution in France* addresses a popular audience just as strongly as does Smith's didactic radicalism. Most importantly, however, the inclusion of new audiences and readers require that the authors incorporate educational components into their works. The common man required basic education on their political rights and history before

they could participate in the discourse. Burke attempts to reeducate an English population who he sees as far too easily swayed by the romanticism of revolution in France while Smith shows her readers a moderate France enacting political reforms that would benefit England. Godwin, who rejects didacticism as an ineffective form of education, also writes at the start of England's own version of the Terror and must moderate overt references to English radical thought by writing a psychological thriller that would inspire his reader's contemplation and potential conversion to his suggested rational anarchism.

Each of the authors discussed rely on both components of sociability to participate in the political discourse. Burke, who assumes a rightful position in conventional discourse, relies on its expansion to address and convince new audiences. On the opposite end of the spectrum, Smith and Godwin position their novels in political discourse by assuming elements of conventional sociability, particularly by addressing Burke, with the ultimate aim to convince these new audiences of a more radical position.

In the development of this two-pronged approach to sociability, I am indebted to Jürgen Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and the work done by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite in *Romantic Sociability*. In *Structural Transformation*, Habermas identifies a transition in the eighteenth century from a feudal-based society where political powers centered in the king and his court to a new kind of public sphere based on the currency of rational-critical debate. The diversification of the economy, which separated wealth from land, created a group of educated gentlemen who would claim political and critical authority over issues that concerned them as a whole, or the newly developed public sphere. Whereas a hundred years earlier, politics was a matter of court business and more often a matter of court manners, at the end of the eighteenth century, a new political culture developed as an independent public

voice. The press played an integral role in this transition. As Habermas notes, the earliest newspapers reported on the journeys and returns of the princes, the arrival of foreign dignitaries, and special events at court, “which can be thought of as a kind of transposition of the publicity of representation [i.e. the prince and his court as public entities] into the new form of public sphere” (Habermas 21). These early newspapers identified these monotonous aristocratic activities as the location of public interest. Many of these early newspapers were co-opted by the government as a medium to address “the public,” or in principle all subjects, in the cases of war or acts by Parliament. This development led to a body of people who knew and were affected by the “news” now released by the government in papers, and eventually to a body of people who wished to rationally respond. Habermas defines this new bourgeois public sphere as “the sphere of private people come together as a public” to use their reason to debate with established authorities (27).

Implicit in this development is the emergence of sociability, instigated in part by publications like the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*, which issued opinions to the new public for sociable discourse, most often in coffeehouses. Exploring Habermasian principles, Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite identify “two aspects [of sociability], an early eighteenth-century phase in which cultural production is primarily conceived in sociable terms and a post-1750 phase in which the ‘imagined community’ of print takes precedence” (Russell and Tuite 13). This imagined community of print gained increasing power as the eighteenth century progressed, in conjunction with the growing power attained by the new bourgeois public sphere. As men across England began to push for widened political rights and more equal political representation, as first the American Revolution and then the French Revolution gave a universality to these claims for rights, and as publishing mediums began to reach out to an increasingly literate public, the

imagined community of print and the political stances they wished to take became increasingly important. The emergence of this popular voice would contribute to the prevalent and unusually perceptive feeling that the world was on a cusp of change.

Corresponding societies, such as the London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information, developed to educate and galvanize this literate public on their rights and the need for parliamentary reform. To achieve this goal, the societies used the prevalence of new media like the newspapers and pamphlets. Publications like the *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* had already created a culture in coffeeshops where men would gather to read and discuss the news and pamphlets, thus amplifying the impact of the publications. The London Corresponding Society would transfer this sociability to the lower classes through cheap membership fees and low cost editions of the most influential pamphlets. The LCS would prove integral in spreading Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* across Great Britain.

The inclusion of the lower classes into the sociability of reform relied on the Enlightenment understanding that all men are endowed with equal faculties, disrupting previous notions that the upper classes were necessarily more intelligent and therefore responsible for governing the masses. The French Revolution represented a direct challenge to this social hierarchy. Reformers found encouragement in a revolution that seemed, at least at the beginning, to aim for a mixed government with popular representation equal to or better than the English model. Conservatives did not immediately disapprove of the revolution, either valuing it for distracting the French nemesis or hoping to see similar values for mixed government. As soon as it became apparent, however, in June 1791 that the king and his nobles were not in support of the revolution, their social equals in England withdrew their support and began to fear that such social usurpation would cross the channel. Suddenly, the newly born popular opinion became

important and potentially powerful. The reformers sought to educate and mold this popular opinion to agitate for political reforms. The conservatives feared that such popular opinion, especially if agitated, would become a mob and overthrow the government. In either case, however, the people, an entity whose murky history had only recently begun, became an incredibly important audience, worthy of educating and courting.

Burke, Smith, and Godwin write to that newly important audience and each, in his and her own way, attempts to guide readers in their political education. As authors and politically engaged individuals, Burke, Smith, and Godwin are influenced by the contemporary political scene. Burke addresses a reading public in which the French Revolution was viewed favorably, for the most part, which not only amplified his fears for the English fate, but also impacted how widely he conceived of his audience. Were it not for the fact that the common man was gaining more political power and therefore had an opinion worth educating, Burke would have felt no need to address them. In 1792, when Smith published *Desmond*, the fate of the French Revolution was beginning to darken and popular support for the revolution in England was waning. A key question in Smith's text as well as in England at the time was how to take the positive virtues of the French Revolution and implement them at home, while leaving the negative dangers behind. Smith's epistolary form takes both perspectives across the channel and attempts to unite them, though perhaps uneasily. In 1794, Godwin witnessed the state's prosecution against his friend Holcroft and several other political reformers for treasonous words in favor of France and against the English government. Because he was mixing radical political ideals with his novel, Godwin had to couch his politics in metaphor. Even within metaphor, France's dark fate and the deterioration of freedoms in England led to the dismal alternate ending of *Caleb Williams*.

All three authors address a new public through the medium of a new sociability. Each author relies on the conventions of mid-eighteenth century sociability, treating their publications like continued conversations that raise questions and suggest answers about critical political issues of the time. However, their engagement with the public audience is, for the most part, much more subtle. Burke avoids any elements of common debate by couching his address to the public within a letter to a French nobleman. Smith relies on the conversational aspects of an epistolary novel to provide opportunities for her male characters to espouse political radicalism in the midst of a domestic novel. Godwin writes to introduce his philosophy to a new popular audience in the hopes that the resultant psychological impact will encourage independent contemplation and eventually transform his reader into new entrants in the political debates. These authors write to impact their rapidly-changing world by engaging and educating their newly sociable audiences.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONVERSATIONAL SOCIABILITY: EXPANDING AUDIENCES IN BURKE'S *REFLECTIONS*

On May 6<sup>th</sup>, 1791, a Parliamentary debate over Quebec's constitution erupted into a shouting match amongst Whig MPs, particularly between Charles James Fox and Edmund Burke. Though the argument ostensibly centered on Quebec, any debate over constitutional construction necessarily brought up the comparison between English and French constitutions, and by extension the merits and demerits of the French Revolution. Tory Prime Minister William Pitt watched with amusement as the opposing party fractured: Fox remained a staunch supporter of the French Revolution, which he saw as a liberating force granting constitutional and representational power to the people, while Burke held to his position that the turmoil in France would only lead to a greater authoritarian threat. The Whig party had been breaking for over a year along these lines, but it is at this moment that Burke makes the final, absolute, and dramatic break. Fox, who had been Burke's political mentee and close friend for several years, watched in tears as Burke symbolically walked across the floor to sit with Pitt and the ministerial side of the House.<sup>1</sup> In response to Fox's plea that this argument not affect the friendship of the two men, Burke responded that there could no longer be a friendship: "I have done my duty though I have lost my friend. There is something in the detested French constitution that envenoms every thing it touches" (qtd. in Prior 338).

---

<sup>1</sup> For more information on this crucial break, see James Prior, *Memoir of the Life and Character of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*, 335-346.

The theatricality of this gesture exposes several characteristics both of late eighteenth-century parliamentary debate and of Edmund Burke. Parliamentary debate was passionate and increasingly defined by party politics. One of the reasons behind Burke's overwrought gesture was the fact that he was quite publicly breaking from Fox and the Whig line. These debates were also necessarily conversational. Speeches engaged with opponents and the more theatrical or controversial speeches provoked the most response. This debate over the French Revolution and its implications for British constitutionalism overwhelmed conversations in Parliament at this time. Most importantly, however, this encounter demonstrates the inextricability of politics and sociability at this time. Political allegiances were cemented in friendships and politics took place at the conversational level across the floor of Parliament. As a rather conservative Whig, Edmund Burke participates in this conversation but prefers to keep the discussion, at least for appearance's sake, on an elite parliamentary level. However, both through parliamentary speeches and the publication of the 1791 *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke would instigate and inflame this debate beyond parliamentary boundaries into a public discourse. *Reflections* relies on Burke's position within this political and sociable discourse, but also opens that discussion, through the inclusion of gothic imagery and by encouraging published responses with his inflammatory language, to new audiences.

Responses to *Reflections* were strong in part due to Burke's fervent, emotive language, but also because his fierce opposition to the French Revolution ran counter to the Whig party line and even, to a lesser degree, to Pitt and his government's response. Initial responses to the French Revolution in England were mixed, but not hostile. The government line, originally, was a detachment from the internal affairs of their old adversary combined with a hope that France would be too preoccupied to play a large role in European affairs. Many in Britain welcomed the

Revolution as a transition from French despotism to something resembling the settlement of 1688, creating a mixed system based on checks and balances between the Crown, the Commons, and the Lords. By 1791, some conservatives, including Pitt, had become much more wary about the unstable events in France, but most of the country still celebrated the revolution. Burke's persuasive techniques, therefore, had to convince a reluctant readership which did not share his peculiarly strong motivations, as well as to anticipate and answer the conversational responses his instigatory rhetoric would inspire.

The popular support for the French Revolution expressed itself in a variety of ways. Charles James Fox declared on 15 April 1791 that "he for one, admired the new constitution of France, considered altogether, as the most stupendous and glorious edifice of liberty, which had been erected on the foundation of human integrity in any time or country" (qtd. in Graham 193). Pitt and his ministry either appreciated the efforts the French movement seemed to make towards a constitution or celebrated the temporary distraction and inner turmoil of their arch rival. Perhaps most dangerous in Burke's mind, political reformers took up the French Revolution as a rallying cry for reform in England. The Dissenters, already predisposed to reform for religious reasons, responded especially enthusiastically. Richard Price, a famous Dissenting minister, delivered a speech to the London Revolution Society on the 101<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the 1688 revolution, celebrated in 1789. Though comparatively moderate in his politics – he preferred mixed government over democracy and called for the restoration of the constitution – Price's rhetoric, and often its effect, was politically charged. As Marilyn Butler describes, "Price displays that reckless expansive spirit which was typical of the radicalism [of the time]" (Butler 23).

Price's radical politics and language had already led to something of a confrontation between himself and Burke over the American colonies and their war for independence. These conversations in print demonstrate a conventional sociability: Price and Burke acknowledge each other's experience and established involvement in political discourse; they debate through purely political mediums that do not include literary elements; their opinions generally follow party lines; and their arguments are rationally espoused based on a high level of political and historical education. Price's *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty* (1776) argues for government acquiescence to colonial demands because "man as a citizen had to have the same freedom of will that he required as a moral agent" (Dreyer 467). Burke responds to Price in *Letter to the Sherrifs of Bristol*, in which he refers to Price not by name but as a "metaphysician who rejects the evidence of experience," and argues that civil liberty, far from being a total lack of restraint on the will of the citizen, can be defined as "the absence of compulsion" (467). This exchange provides not only the foundation for later encounters between the two orators but also serves as a perfect example of the kind of conversation characteristic of politics at the time. Neither man acknowledges the other by name, and, for the most part, these pamphlets followed their respective party lines. Despite the pretense that each pamphlet stands on its own, however, Price and Burke wrote with the intention of instigating and responding to previously stated or predicted opposition. The pamphlets moved conventional sociability to a print discussion, carrying over elements of the coffeehouse discussion between educated and privileged political participants, arguing for party lines, and encouraging rebuttal and conversation. Thus, when Price published *Discourse on the Love of Our Country* in 1789, he knew he was taking a stance for the Whig support of the French Revolution and likely to spark a conservative rebuttal, perhaps even from his old opponent, Burke.

In *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*, a published version of the speech he delivered to the Revolution Society, Price criticizes the British constitution, denies the hereditary descent of the monarchy, and calls for a union of the friends of liberty to press for parliamentary reform using French success against despotism as an example. In communicating these points Price betrays a moral philosophy based on a Cartesian preference for reason devoid of the senses, which Burke would find perhaps the most offensive aspect of the entire pamphlet (471). Price views man as an independent rational moral agent, capable of making his own decisions without outside influences. Burke, on the contrary, argues that the traditional social hierarchy is necessary to bring out the best of mankind. Price states in *Discourse* that he views his purpose to “disseminate among his fellow creatures just notions of themselves, of their rights, of religion, and the nature and end of civil government,” emphasizing his reliance on the rationality of man and his ability to make his own judgments (Price 26). He celebrates the 1688 Glorious Revolution as a “bloodless victory, the fetters which despotism had been long preparing for us were broken, the rights of the people were asserted, a tyrant expelled, and a Sovereign of our own choice appointed in his room” (28). The revolution brings society closer to one of rational independence, but, he continues, this revolution, though a “great work, it was by no means a perfect work,” and it still remains for the country to achieve equal representation and the blessings of liberty that will follow from this final achievement.

To this end, Price views the revolution in France as a cause for great celebration and hope that the ardour for liberty will catch and spread across Europe. His effusions on this point are evocative:

What an eventful period is this! I am thankful to have lived to it...I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error...I have lived to see

THIRTY MILLIONS of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice; their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects (31)

Price paints a scene where revolution is the natural and rational process by which the people assert their rights and expel despotism. He makes revolution an exciting, joyous prospect, one in which he is grateful to take part. Price intentionally depicts the revolution in positive terms, emphasizing the rationality of the revolutionaries' motivations and the happy outcome which follows. Price's effusions would be the primary instigation for Burke. Price emphasizes those elements the revolution, especially the large numbers of rebels and the monarch's willful subjugation, which Burke finds the most offensive. This excerpt comes at the end of the speech, throughout which Price's tone grows increasingly adamant and excitable. Though speaking to a welcoming Dissenting audience, Price's evocative language, his excitement at the very things which frighten Burke the most, suggest a secondary intention to instigate debate. Price would have known that the marching thirty millions with smiles on their face, leading their king "in triumph," as he surrenders himself willingly, would trigger a response from the conservatives.

Burke rises to answer the call almost immediately. He began writing *Reflections* in 1789 and advertised it for a spring 1790 publication under the title *Reflections on Certain Proceedings of the Revolution Society...concerning the Affairs of France*. The title suggests that Burke's first aim of the piece was an address to Price and the Revolution Society rather than a treatment of the events in France as a whole. At some point in 1790 he decides to address the revolution itself as well, perhaps encouraged by the popular response to Price and other radical agitators and certainly motivated by a desire to publish a satisfactory rejoinder into this public discourse. Whereas Burke had always seen the French Revolution as "a future, hypothetical foreign

problem,” the enthusiasm with which his countrymen embraced events in France convinces him it was actually “an immediate, actual and domestic danger”(Clark 63). More than likely, the realization of this danger broadened the scope of *Reflections* beyond the initial sociable response directed at Price. *Reflections* aims first to refute Price’s politics and then to counteract the popular support and excitement towards the French Revolution, especially the positive images Price and other radicals painted, all in a form that addresses and reaches a wide popular audience.

Politically speaking, Burke views the French Revolution and Price’s endorsement in particular, as imposing an inappropriate definition on the term, “revolution.” Burke describes the Glorious Revolution of 1688 as “a conservative act which sustained the traditions of the English people by creating a balanced structure of king, lords, and commons and thus giving a political expression to natural order” (Woodcock 21). In other words, the Glorious Revolution was an upheaval that devolved England back to a natural order from an unnatural state. In contrast, the French Revolution aims to overturn society and begin anew, redefining revolution to mean a vicious break from the old regime, or what Burke calls, “the most astonishing thing that has hitherto happened in the world” (Burke 2001 154). In Price’s interpretation, this means a return to natural rights of the individual man, as opposed to Burke’s natural order of society. In Burke’s mind, such an attack on natural order would inevitably lead to anarchy and ruin.

Burke’s *Reflections* attempts to dissuade the English people from such anarchy and ruin. He opens the letter with a meditation, which he refers to as a clarification, on those two enemies of English peace: the Society for Constitutional Information and the Revolutionary Society. These popular societies in England were committed to the spread of knowledge, mostly through the production and distribution of books and pamphlets and engaging in the emerging sociable

public discourse on the revolution and politics in general. Their ultimate goals were the expansion of political rights to the people and the creation of a constitutional structure where these rights were protected against the encroaching liberties of the nobility and monarchy. Both societies exuberantly expressed their support of the Revolution in France, even communicating with the National Assembly itself, and serving as a kind of representative body for radicalism across the Channel. Burke's intensity of focus on these two societies, and the amount of ink he spills clarifying and denigrating their role in English society to his French correspondent, betrays his true intentions in *Reflections*. As he explains within the framework of a letter to a young French nobleman, he must "call back their attention to the true principles of [England's] domestic laws; that you, my French friend, should begin to know, and that we [Englishmen] should continue to cherish them" (175). Burke's constructed dialogue, with a "French friend" really functioning as a guise to persuade his fellow Englishmen of the dangers of revolution and the benefits of conservative traditions.

The choices Burke makes in his presentation of this argument reflect on both the unpopularity of conservative opposition to the revolution as well as his fervor. As his greatest fear is the gullibility of his fellow Englishmen, and not, say, the fate of French peasants, or even necessarily the future of English radicals, Burke's ultimate goal is to convince regular Englishmen of his argument's soundness. A common approach to composing such an argumentative essay would be to argue directly to Englishmen to show both the folly of their beliefs and the veracity of the author's claim. However, this is not how Burke chooses to proceed. *Reflections* takes the form of a letter to a young nobleman in France who has asked for Burke's own, presumed enlightened, opinion on the "late proceedings in France" (145). This constructed dialogue mimics the sociable discourse Burke himself takes part in with Price.

Though Burke does not acknowledge that he writes as a response to Price, proudly keeping his discourse above the level of common debate, Burke references Price and the November 4<sup>th</sup> in *Reflections*. Within the context of explaining to Depont what occurred at the Revolution Society in November, Burke takes the opportunity to diminish the speech as mere *philippizing* to his supportive audience, “chaunt[ing] his prophetic song in exact unison with their designs” (156).<sup>2</sup> Burke then goes on to declare, “no sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity...those who quit their proper character, to assume what does not belong to them, are, for the greater part, ignorant both of the character they leave, and of the character they assume” (157). With this condemnation of political speeches from the pulpit, Burke attempts to exclude Price from legitimate participation in the discussion. Though Burke makes great efforts to establish his French nobleman as his audience, his digressions on Price reinforce the notion that *Reflections* takes part in a continued conversation between the two men.

The constructed dialogue serves other purposes as well. As David McCracken expertly argues, this nobleman is a mock audience, “who is not the real target of Burke’s arguments or persuasive technique” (McCracken 120). Rather, McCracken identifies four distinct groups within the text: his character as a speaker, the young French nobleman, philosophical fanatics, both English and French, and true Englishmen. In answering a young French nobleman’s request for his own opinion, Burke establishes his respectable status as a British MP, his own extensive knowledge of France and her revolution, and the expertise to comment on internal British affairs. According to McCracken, Burke aims to separate the philosophical fanatics from the true Englishmen by “maneuver[ing] his real audience, who ostensibly agree with him...*behind* Burke the speaker” (120). Burke’s manipulation of audience betrays the very real fears for Britain’s

---

<sup>2</sup> To philippize: “to favour, or take the side of, Philip of Macedon ... to speak or write as one is corruptly ‘inspired or influenced’: *OED*”

future that motivate the text. Price's positive imagery, along with the positive reports of the revolution published in radical newspapers, presents a significant challenge to Burke. He does not feel he can directly attack the faulty logic of the English population, out of a fear that this persuasion will fail or, worse, backfire; instead, he chooses to constitute the Englishman as an audience to his theatrical engagement with a fictional actor, the young French nobleman.

Burke sees the revolution and reform societies as populated by "persons who, under the pretext of zeal towards the [Glorious] Revolution and constitution, too frequently wander from their true principles, and are ready on every occasion to depart from the firm but cautious and deliberate spirit which produced the one, and which presides in the other" (Burke 2001 146). Once the people are persuaded to view the revolution and constitution in this manner, it is a short step to lauding the French Revolution and attempting to mimic it on English soil. To counteract Price's triumphant account of the people leading a willing King Louis into a new and bright age, Burke must reanimate the scene and relocate the appealing triumph in the stability of the English constitution.

The danger in Price's account lies in the sublime appeal of the French Revolution. In contrast to this exotic appeal, the staid tradition of the British constitution is beautiful, comforting, and therefore far less appealing. Burke's 1757 *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas Of the Sublime and Beautiful* attempts to "range and methodize some of our leading passions" before further examining the sublime as the most powerful passion (Burke 1997 227). Under this systematized view of the world, Burke divides the passions into those of self-preservation, containing the sublime, and the passions of society, containing the beautiful. The latter category contains the society of sex, which includes the passion of love, and the general society, which includes sympathy, imitation and ambition. Though this latter category of

passions defines interpersonal relations and the wider structure of society, the passions of self-preservation are much more potent, and in some ways cement the weaker bonds of passion. Burke strikes a careful balance between the pleasure of beauty and the unique pleasure found in pain. For example, in describing social passions, Burke contrasts stagnant society that lacks positive pleasure with the pain resulting from absolute and entire solitude before concluding that the ideal lies in a balance: “Good company, lively conversations, and the endearments of friendship, fill the mind with great pleasure; a temporary solitude on the other hand, is itself agreeable” (220). The beauty of society, a sociable ideal, is necessary in Burke’s mind, but ideally augmented by the occasional brush with the pain of sublimity.

In response to the appeal Price gives the French Revolution, Burke attempts to redefine the English government in terms of the work he has already done on sublimity. Sublimity, for Burke, is the moment when the mind is astonished and completely filled with the sublime object, so “that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it” (230). This, for Burke, is the great power of the sublime because “it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force” (230). When encountering the sublime, man surpasses his limited rational thought and accesses a deeper, innate sense of power and truth. In *Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke focuses on the literary uses of sublimity, for example Milton’s use of terror and obscurity in *Paradise Lost*. In these examples, however, the reaction to the sublime reaffirms a traditional social and religious design. Milton’s descriptions of the darkness circling the heavenly throne, for example, affirm the greatness of God, requiring responses of sublime astonishment and humility. Burke acknowledges that he “know[s] of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power” (236). As sublimity is first and foremost reliant on the greater potency of pain than of pleasure, power is sublime

because it places us “in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either [pain or death]” so that we are incapable of being free from terror. Burke associates this terror with the terror felt in the presence of powerful kings or commanders. “Indeed so natural is this timidity with regard to power,” Burke remarks, “and so strongly does it inhere in our constitution, that very few are able to conquer it” (238). Thus the natural hierarchy, socially or religiously speaking, is maintained from our instinctive, human responses to the sublimity of power.

Burke’s views on natural hierarchy and human nature color his response to Price. He violently recoils at the celebratory tone with which Price treated Louis XVI as an “arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects” (Price 32). As Burke writes, “before I read that sermon, I really thought I had lived in a free country; and it was an error I cherished, because it gave me a greater liking to the country I lived in” (Burke 2001 211). Price’s angry and destructive response to monarchy represented, in Burke’s mind, an unnatural response to the sublime power of the king. Price emphasizes the rationality of the ardour for liberty catching and spreading across Europe, but this total reliance on rationality is a limited response in Burke’s mind because it forbids access to the innate truths which result from an encounter with the sublime. It is the lack of proper appreciation for natural order combined with a total lack of astonishment in the face of natural power that Burke fears will lead England into anarchy and ruin. As he sees it, the French “have forgot, that when they framed democratic governments, they had virtually dismembered their country. The person whom they persevere in calling king, has not power left to him by the hundredth part sufficient to hold together this collection of republics” (210). Burke writes to reinvigorate a sense of the sublime in the traditional hierarchy, which is necessarily a process of emotion rather than one of reason. Burke interprets Price as

having a faulty sense of astonishment in what Burke calls the “unguarded transport” of those to whom “the sufferings of monarchs make a delicious repast”(234). More than just abhorring “such treatment of any human creatures,” Burke writes, “I confess to you, Sir, that the exalted rank of the persons suffering, and particularly the sex, the beauty, and the amiable qualities of the descendant of so many kings and emperors... adds not a little to my sensibility on that most melancholy occasion” (236). Price fails to encounter the sublime of monarchy and is therefore misguided by arguments based on reason that contradict the foundations of society. Burke aims to reeducate his audience and to do this must necessarily address them at the lowest common denominator, expanding the political discussion to new audiences.

Many of Burke’s most stringent contemporary critics raged against the apparent lack of rational argument and the overt reliance on emotional appeals in *Reflections*. This theatrical tone, however, serves two purposes. The first is educational. Burke relies heavily on the ideas of reason and sense perception he inherits from Locke’s empiricism. In *Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, Burke calls reason a “disagreeable yoke,” and claims that, “so far as the imagination and the passions are concerned, I believe it true, that the reason is little consulted” (Burke 1997 209). If reason is to be useful, it is in careful analysis of those feelings we discover in ourselves: “Men often act right from their feelings, who afterward reason but ill on them from principle; but as it is impossible to avoid an attempt at such reasoning, and equally impossible to prevent its having some influence on our practice, surely it is worth taking some pains to have it just, and founded on the basis of sure experience” (228). This reliance on experience, feeling, and sense perception to access an inner truth follows Locke’s break from the Cartesian rationalism Price propounds. In Burke’s mind, it is only through access to our feelings and senses that we can discover truth. No rational exploration of the constitution will return adequate

and true answers, but a sublime encounter with the power and majesty of monarchy accesses a deeper truth, beyond rational excuses, that must be maintained. Therefore, the theatrical tone in Burke's text aims to create in the reader an encounter with this sublimity. He intentionally rejects common debate or conversation, which would require addressing his true audience, both in Price and in a common public; rather, he seeks to educate his reader to fear and cherish traditional values by emphasizing their sublimity in an abstract way.

Burke's second goal is to spread this educational opportunity. Burke knew from his parliamentary experience, like the very public and dramatic break from Fox, that the more spectacular moves receive the most attention and discussion. Furthermore, he knew from previous pamphlet experience, as well as published speeches from Parliament, that the more instigatory passages were likely to be quoted in newspapers. It proved an effective technique. Burke's biographer F.P. Lock writes, "some of the most memorable passages were immediately reprinted in the newspapers, introducing some of its leading ideas to the widest of all readerships" (Lock 332). One of Burke's primary motivations for expanding his letter to Depont into a reponse to Price and an exploration of society and government was his fear that the common English people, as well as some of the educated political elite, would fall prey to the romanticism of revolution. His education in natural hierarchy must, therefore, reach the common English people on a level which they can access. Many in this wide audience did not have a political voice and even if they could vote, Parliamentary representation skewed these votes and placed higher emphasis on the historically empowered. Thus, Burke's indirect address to this wide audience, in some ways, counters his traditionalist argument. Burke wishes to address this audience to dissuade them from taking the power away from the king, as the revolutionaries in France had done. However, by even addressing this audience, Burke grants the common people a

degree of respect and acknowledges in them a kind of political power that runs counter to his natural hierarchy. As the letter primarily addresses DePont and obviously stands in response to Price, it is not immediately obvious that Burke intends to address a common audience. Nor would Burke, of course, wish this fact to be obvious. The moral lessons garnered from encounters with the sublimity of power and social hierarchy, according to Burke's understanding of the universal human condition, apply for both his peers in Parliament and the man who reads excerpts of *Reflections* in a coffeehouse. However, Burke augments the universal applicability of the sublime by incorporating elements of the novel, and specifically of the gothic, into his lessons on the sublime, both of which historically have a more general audience than any of the political discourse or pamphlet history surrounding the publication of *Reflections*.

In *Art of Darkness*, Anne Williams explores the tradition of the gothic novel, or, as she calls it, "the gothic complex" to include a wider array of examples (23). Many literary critics have identified the gothic with an "otherness." This otherness can be seen in the gothic's obsession with night, foreign locales, the supernatural, medieval superstition, and the female. The vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* stands as a perfect example of this. Williams argues, however, that what makes *Dracula* gothic is not only his otherness, but that his bloodsucking, his unnatural means of reproduction, and his ability to cross the boundary of death culminate in a "specifically sexual threat that could undermine Western culture itself" (Williams 21). According to Williams, the gothic complex is characterized by its focus on the patriarchal family, and more specifically the threats facing this family. Unconsciously perhaps, Burke takes the same definition of gothic as he incorporates these elements of a popular novel form into his political treatise.

The most obvious example of the gothic nature of Burke's moral sublimity is his description of the October Days, as well as any mention of his gothic heroine Marie Antoinette. In the October Days, King Louis XVI was punished for his lackluster support of the revolution when the National Guard stormed Versailles and removed the royal family to Paris where they would reside under house arrest. In this drama, Burke continually emphasizes the king as a father figure, the queen as the epitome of beauty, grace, and femininity, and their children as innocent infants who once "would have been the pride and hope of a great and generous people" (Burke 2001 232). The patriarchal family are the main characters in *Reflections* and Burke, to enforce the appealing sublimity of traditional values, must make the reader fall in love with this family, despite their previously bad reputation as poor rulers. Burke does this by threatening the family, so that the reader will learn to love Marie Antoinette as they love Ann Radcliffe's Emily St. Aubert and to hate the mob as they hate the villainous Montoni. Burke incorporates gothic elements like the sexually-threatened heroine and the attack on a castle in the middle of the night to emphasize the threat represented by otherness and the comparative pleasure of returning to a stable family dynamic and, by necessary extension, a stable and traditional political reality.

Burke employs all of his rhetorical powers in his description of the queen and her removal from Versailles. Gothic heroine Marie Antoinette is depicted as something of a goddess, "glittering like the morning-star, full of life, and splendor, and joy" (238). As this idealized figure, Marie Antoinette's role is that of the threatened, defenseless woman. Burke writes that she is sleeping when her sentinel calls to her from the door "to save herself by flight—that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give—that they were upon him, and he was dead" (238). The sentinel goes out in a blaze of glory, crying out to save the goddess queen as the "band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen..."

(238). Burke's repetitive phrases emphasize the cries of the sentinel, as if the reader too joins in crying to the queen to save herself, pleading their fidelity, and bemoaning their failure to rescue her. Burke vividly depicts the blood of the sentinel and so amplifies the threat of the "cruel ruffians and assassins." Yet all of this sets the groundwork for some of Burke's strongest imagery. Emphasizing the queen's interrupted slumber, Burke characterizes Marie Antoinette as a defenseless woman sexually threatened by these ruffians, just as Montoni represents a continual sexual threat to the pure and lovely Emily St. Aubert. The queen "had but just time to fly almost naked" from the bed as it was "*pierced* with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards" (238, emphasis added). Rather than appealing to reason, Burke appeals to his reader's sense of propriety and chivalry to defend against such a travesty. Significantly, Burke chooses to access this sense of propriety and chivalry through the explicitly literary rhetoric of the gothic.

The scene shifts as the queen successfully escapes with her life and her virtue, only to "seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure of his own life for a moment," a construction that emphasizes the king's own impotency and futility (238). The royal family was forced then to march to Versailles, a march that Burke vividly described as characterized by "horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women" (233). After such a vivid description, Burke takes a brief step back, ostensibly to address his young nobleman correspondent, but in actuality to convince his English readership. His rhetorical questions, "Is this a triumph to be consecrated at altars? to be commemorated with grateful thanksgiving? to be offered to the divine humanity with fervent prayer and enthusastick ejaculation?" are desperate pleas to his English readership to acquiesce to his expert emotional manipulation (233). These rhetorical questions call for specific responses from those who agree

with Burke, but they also encourage responses from his opponents who would be desirous of rephrasing the issues. Burke's conclusion is inevitable: after first comparing the marching women as "unutterable abominations of the furies of hell," he wants his reader to agree that such an act could not be consecrated; it would be blasphemous.

Such an appeal to Christian norms, which Burke views as inherent in the natural order, forms the crux of his argument. Burke positions the king as a father figure akin to God, in a similar way that the queen is exalted. The queen's flight plays on the king's inability to protect his own family, which would be a fear Burke's common Englishman could easily understand. By emphasizing the king's role as a father, Burke makes the king's role as a monarch a patriarchal one, once again creating an analogy to which his readership can easily connect. Burke scripts the king's feelings, "as a man, it became him to feel for his wife and children, and the faithful guards of his person, that were massacred in cold blood about him; as a prince, it became him to feel for the strange and frightful transformations of his civilized subjects, and to be more grieved for them, than solicitous for himself" (237). Thus, by first emphasizing the king's inability to protect his sexually threatened wife, Burke encourages his male readership to shudder at such an act against an unprotected queen. Then Burke transforms the king into a character whose fatherly beneficence has been rejected by an ungrateful population, thus raising the question of why such a benevolent order was ever abolished.

The metaphorical analogy of king as father represents the old, natural order Burke fears losing in England. In France, he concedes it has already been lost, and the inevitable result of such a loss is anarchy. Although in early 1790, there is still hope across the Channel for a constitutional monarchy and a peaceful resolution, Burke presciently foresees the next ghastly turn that the Revolution will take: the murder of a king. The loss of chivalry means more than the

absent “ten thousand swords [leaping] from their scabbards to avenge” the threatened queen (238). In Burke’s melodramatic turn of phrase, the loss of nobility is the loss of “that sensibility of principle, that chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness” (238). Burke’s nobility possess a divine sanction, and threatening that nobility is akin to attacking that divine sanction. It is the sublimity of power, the most concentrated way of encountering the pleasant pain of horror, that Burke wishes to inspire here. Burke’s greatest fear is that once the natural order of things is lost, then “a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order” (240). And extending from this logic, “the murder of a king, or a queen, or a bishop, or a father, are only common homicide; and if the people are by any chance, or in any way gainers by it, a sort of homicide much the most pardonable, and into which we ought not to make too severe a scrutiny” (240). For Burke, this eventuality, the direct link between the destruction of the natural order and the destruction of society, is so horrific that words cannot be too excessive, tone cannot be too histrionic. He acts to counteract this tradition by emphasizing the sublimity of the royal family and a hierarchical social structure. By writing part of his political treatise as a Gothic melodrama, Burke addresses his concerns for the fate of the traditional hierarchy to an audience who had previously been excluded from political discussion but now, as common men who have the potential to become the mob, possess political currency.

Ultimately, Burke’s success in this endeavor is questionable. Burke’s strident tone became a rallying point for conservative backlash against any and all political reform, which could not have been the moderate Burke’s intention. As a former reformer himself, Burke did not advocate the dismissal of all reform efforts, merely that the current atmosphere and tension

surrounding the French Revolution was not an appropriate time, nor was the revolution itself an appropriate rallying point. Regardless of these intentions, however, his gothic imagery and manipulative language struck a chord in his readership, both positive and negative. Pitt's ministry welcomed Burke enthusiastically and some of his doomsday language enters parliamentary discourse. More significantly for the discussion on sociability, Burke's *Reflections* inspired a flurry of responses, as he knew it would.

The earliest responses came in the newspapers. Some were positive. In early January 1791, the resident graduates at the University of Oxford published their letter and Burke's response in the *General Evening Post*. Speaking as representatives of the University, they "acknowledge the eminent service rendered both to our civil and religious constitution, by your able and disinterested vindication of their true principles" (Wyndham). Other newspaper responses were not so favorable. An unidentified Lucius published a series of letters entitled "Cursory Remarks on Mr. Burke's *Reflections*" in November 1790 issues of the *St. James Chronicle*. In the fourth letter, Lucius acidly remarks, "Some writers, by the *ignus fatuus* of brilliant metaphors, have a wonderful power of fascinating and misleading, at least for a time, men of more than ordinary understanding... By the magick of Metaphor and Simile [Burke] makes despotism inviting, by entwining its chains with wreathes of flowers, and converts the Queen of France to *an Angel of Light*" (Lucius). As expected, the political tenor of the newspaper determined the response published. The *London Chronicle* was one of the first newspapers to publish excerpts, significantly without much commentary. The *St James Chronicle* maintained a balanced perspective between Lucius' outspoken praise as well as more adverse commentaries. For the most part, however, the responses were categorically defined according to their partisan leanings. Conservative responses, in line with the Oxford letter,

praised Burke's defense of the constitution and his persuasive language, although some ministerial papers mimicked Pitt's cautious support mixed with a hesitancy to denounce the revolution with such vehemence. Opposing responses denigrated Burke's high language and his lack of rational argument. Some seemed especially affronted with Burke's desertion from his previous Whig politics. The widespread publication in newspapers, both of excerpts from *Reflections* and of commentaries, exponentially increased the numbers who read *Reflections*. The more lengthy responses in books and pamphlets emerged almost immediately, partaking in the language of sociability Burke used when speaking of Price, but also recognizing a wider public audience.

The flurry of publications responding to Burke's *Reflections* provide one of the best examples of the sociability of print Russell and Tuite identify in their introduction to *Romantic Sociability*. The respondents assumed that those reading their publications would be familiar with the key texts, especially *Reflections*, that had already been published. They also adopted a tone of familiarity, if antagonistic familiarity, with Burke. Joseph Priestly, for example, writes, "notwithstanding the great difference in our *conclusions*, we have, I perceive, some great and leading *common principles*; so that it may not be difficult which of us has departed the farthest from them. I shall endeavour to show our readers, that with these common principles, your conclusions are wholly discordant" (Priestley 85). As a result of this assumed familiarity, the authors implied a kind of literary/political social circle accessible solely through the printed word, but in most cases affordable for a wide audience.

The first on the scene was Mary Wollstonecraft, whose *Vindication of the Rights of Men* was published a mere twenty-eight days after *Reflections*. She addresses *Vindication* directly to Burke, emphasizing both the assumed familiarity and an enforced equality. Her condescending

tone mocks Burke's supposed lack of rational argument, "I shall not, therefore, condescend to shew where you affirm in one page what you deny in another; and how frequently you draw conclusions without any previous premises" (Wollstonecraft 72). She identifies his florid language as one of the greatest problem, primarily because it obscures the more problematic issues: "these are the gothic notions of beauty – the ivy is beautiful, but, when it insidiously destroys the trunk from which it receives support, who would not grub it up?" (73).

Wollstonecraft's essay takes the lead on castigating Burke's conservatism as tenable only for "the rich and short-sighted" (73). *Vindication* also begins the natural rights argument, declaring "there are rights which men inherit at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in receiving these, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights" (73). Though short, Wollstonecraft's *Vindication* passionately rebuts Burke's arguments and determines the tone of mixed condescension and familiarity which her ideological fellows would use.

Thomas Paine's 1792 *Rights of Man* represents one of the more radical early responses to Burke and adopts a tone and rhetoric very reminiscent of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication*. Paine reacts to Burke's high language and fear-mongering by emphasizing the strengths and rights of the individual man. By mocking government and the social hierarchy as a "bubble, a mere court artifice to procure money," Paine invalidates Burke's worship of the traditionalist cause (Paine 111). Furthermore, by using simplified language, Paine's work becomes much more accessible to a wide audience. He writes to the Abbé Sieyès, a correspondent who supports Paine's place in the sociable political circle while also diminishing Burke's influence; "I shall occasionally take Mr. Burke in my way," he writes (109). Paine's political argument is the most radical at that point. He argues against monarchy as a government which requires ignorance of its subjects, as

compared to the rationality induced from the representative system. Though he follows Wollstonecraft in both basic argument and tone, Paine stands somewhat apart from the sociable circle, in part because his politics are more radical, and in part because his audience was openly the common man, without the lens of a sociable elite audience to refract his intentions. Paine worked in conjunction with the London Corresponding Society to publish cheap editions *Rights of Man* for their men across the United Kingdom. His *Rights of Man, Part II* would lead to a conviction for sedition and self-imposed exile. Though not typical of Burke's respondents, Paine does represent the general movement. Most of the participants in the pamphlet war of the 1790s relied on the implied sociable circle, as when Wollstonecraft addresses Burke familiarly, in part to amplify their ability to respond intellectually, but also as a protection against the kind of consequences Paine faced for addressing a public audience.

It is of course difficult to argue that, while Burke could not have foreseen with certainty the kind of response his *Reflections* would garner, it was still somewhat intentional and carefully instigated. Because of his previous interactions with Price, and the familiar tone which he uses to address Price and his fellow Dissenters, however, we can assume that Burke understood he was engaging in a sociable discourse that would necessarily invite responses. Furthermore, the strident tone and instigatory language Burke used consciously inflames his opponents as it attempts to persuade his audience. The inclusion of gothic imagery in his political tract suggests that Burke consciously expands the sociable discourse he began with Price to include a much wider, and more common, audience. Though the question of Burke's audience is contentious, the fact that he did reach and convince a wide population through the newspaper excerpts also called for an increased response from those who opposed his politics. By keeping the discourse within the realm of the sociable, however, his respondents maintained a politeness, both a politeness in

tones that only barely verged on the rude and also a politeness that avoided addressing the vulgar masses. After the flurry of pamphlet and essay responses, however, the sociable discourse moved into the realm of the novel, and by so doing, opens the discourse up to a wider, less educated, and perhaps more malleable audience.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### DIDACTICISM AND DISCOURSE: QUESTIONS OF REFORM IN SMITH'S *DESMOND*

In her preface to the 1792 *Desmond*, Charlotte Smith acknowledges several worries and vulnerabilities about the publication of this “work so unlike those of my former writings” (Smith 45). She worries about the epistolary form and the morality of her hero’s love for a married woman. Primarily, however, she worries about embroiling herself as a woman writer in politics, because “women it is said have no business with politics” (45). As a woman novelist entering into political discourse through her novels, Smith represents a significant part of the shift to a new sociability, defined in part by conversations and discussions in print and by the entrance of new, previously excluded, participants. Smith defends this political interest strongly, emphasizing that it is because of her position as a woman and the domestic duties associated with that role that she became an author, “it was in the *observance*, not in the *breach* of duty, *I* became an Author” (46). Smith prioritizes observance as central to a woman’s duties and also as the primary source for a woman’s exposure to a world beyond her family. Her dissolute husband’s neglect and, consequentially, her financial need to support her family compelled Smith to write and also introduced her “to those scenes of life, and those varieties of character which I should otherwise never have seen” (46). In defending the epistolary form, Smith claims that the political passages throughout *Desmond* are “drawn from conversations to which I have been a witness, in England, and France, during the last twelve months” (45). Smith’s knowledge of English and French politics and her position as an established gentlewoman poet give her the experience and authority to engage in sociable discourse.

As a new entrant into this discourse, Smith grants that her own role is unique, in part because *Desmond* is a novel rather than a political treatise, pamphlet, or essay. She anticipates her critics; “those who object to the matter, will probably arraign the manner, and exclaim against the impropriety of making a book of entertainment the vehicle of political discussion” (47). Smith defends against these criticisms by claiming her representations do not sacrifice the truth for either party, thus making her entrance into the sociable discourse a factual and intellectually stimulating one. Her stated goal is clear: she is a “slight skirmishing novelist” embattled against the “phalanx of prejudice,” hoping to gather fellow Englishmen united “in that cause which *must* finally triumph – the cause of truth, reason, and humanity” (47). Smith situates herself as a warrior, an eager participant in the debate over the French Revolution and the values of republicanism. She wants the novel to educate her readership on what she has learned as a careful observer of the revolution, and she hopes to instigate a conversation over the issues facing both England and France in the summer of 1792. *Desmond*’s intermingling of narrative and politics, necessary to make it part of the sociable discussion, also complicates the novel’s artistic merit by incorporating a degree of didacticism, particularly in the first half. This didacticism, however, identifies Smith’s primary goal of educating her readership on the truths as she sees them about the French Revolution.

*Desmond* is Smith’s most radical work, published at a crucially important time, both in terms of the contemporary history and her history as an author. In June of 1792, when the novel appeared, the tenor in most British circles was in favor of the revolution in France, though the tide was starting to change. The flight of the royal family to Varennes in June of the previous year caused those in power in England to raise questions: what they had previously interpreted as a constitutional change to a system of mixed government, was clearly not supported by a

monarch who had attempted to flee his own country. Smith holds with those reformers who still hold faith in the inherent value of French republicanism. *Desmond* propagates this view, especially early in the novel. Smith's entrance into the print discourse surrounding the revolution mediates between supporting the revolution in France and concern about how such ideals for reform can or should be implemented in England. Smith locates these two aims, elucidating the realities of the French Revolution and asking how to implement the values of republicanism in England, by first creating clearly-defined public and private realms and then conflating the two. As Desmond travels to France, his letters to Bethel contain the public discourse and didactic passages on the French Revolution. His letters to Geraldine, however, remain firmly in the private realm, as do the letters between Geraldine and Fanny. At the beginning of the novel, Smith represents France as the male, public realm to counter the female, private realm of England.

As the plot progresses, however, this strict separation crumbles as Geraldine travels to France and Desmond brings his French indiscretions home to England. Geraldine speaks on the revolution, entering the public realm, and Desmond's indiscretions with Josephine in the private realm complicate his trustworthiness as a revolutionary hero. This intermingling presents Geraldine as the answer, the mother figure who can heal and reform England. However, the novel ends with the sense that France may not be the ideal revolutionary site and that Geraldine, though possessing the mother's healing touch, may not be able to reform a country so deeply entrenched in the limited patriarchy symptomatic of the *ancien regime*. Smith concludes her most radical novel, introducing, as it does, pro-French political dialogue and proto-feminist visions of reform, with a hesitant tone that both reflects the growing disillusionment with the revolution and a concern that a downturn in France further complicates the potential for reform

in England. As a part of the sociable discourse, *Desmond* begins by educating, often didactically, its audiences and ends by raising questions about the efficacy of transferring republican reforms to England.

As a woman author, Smith knew that her participation in the print discussion would be viewed skeptically, at best. To counteract this, *Desmond* must demonstrate an intimate knowledge with the events in France and must take an early, decisive stance on revolution and reform. Before she can raise questions about reform in England as a part of sociable discourse, she must prove her knowledge and, in a sense, create new participants in the discourse by educating her readership. Smith uses the epistolary form to both demonstrate knowledge and inspire discussion. The novel's dated letters place the novel's action in the years 1790 to 1792, which Smith emphasizes by references throughout the narrative. For example, Desmond's revolutionary fervor results from experiencing the exultant first anniversary of Bastille Day (87). Or more subtly, Verney cannot meet Geraldine when she arrives in Paris because the King's arrival sends his noble friends out of Paris (310). Smith's careful chronological placement emphasizes her familiarity with the revolution and the events in France, which she had visited the previous year. Her familiarity stands in stark contrast to Burke, who was famously criticized by Paine for preferring drama over factual information in *Reflections*. Furthermore, the epistolary structure of *Desmond* not only reinforces this careful chronology but also provides Smith with a discursive and dialectical platform from which she could use her familiarity with France to educate her readers.

Smith's fictional political correspondents, Desmond and Erasmus Bethel, participate in sociable discourse on the revolution in response to Burke's *Reflections*. Desmond, injured in France at the time, receives Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* just two months

after its November 1, 1790 publication. His letter dated 8 January 1791 declares he read it through in three days and disagrees vehemently with Burke (Smith 182). Desmond prophetically foresees, paraphrasing Burke's language, "*that a thousand pens will leap from their standishes....* [F]ar from finally injuring the cause of truth and reason, against which Mr. Burke is so inveterate, [*Reflections*] will awaken every advocate in their defense" (183). Smith's description of Desmond's response to Burke mimics the novel's response to *Reflections*. Desmond and Bethel's knowledgeable discourse on Burke and the revolution provide Smith with a framework to issue her own opinions. Smith's use of a male voice perhaps suggests her desire to make those opinions more respectable in the discourse because the male voice more closely relates to the public and political realm. Smith provides justification for issuing political opinions by framing *Desmond* as a response to *Reflections*, entering into the discussion almost by default as one of many of Burke's respondents.

*Desmond* responds to *Reflections* both thematically and structurally. In the epistolary form, Smith has her character correspond via letters, which mimics the form of Burke's *Reflections*. Erasmus Bethel, Desmond's friend and mentor, writes to Desmond in France from England, echoing Burke's letters to his French correspondent, Depon. Speaking as a staid mentor, Bethel initially criticizes Desmond's love for the married Geraldine and his revolutionary fervor. He suggests that Desmond should travel to France and forget Geraldine, warning that "this model of perfection, which you have imagined, and can never obtain, will be a source of unhappiness to you through life" (59). His practical advice does not temper Desmond's idealization of Geraldine nor does it acknowledge the merits of Desmond's political liberalism. In this way, Bethel closely resembles the more conservative Whigs of Smith's contemporaneous audience, and the most important audience for a liberal author to convince. Desmond, on the

other hand, represents the fervent revolutionary. His fervor, at the very least, reinforces his correspondence to Burke, as they both speak as passionate radicals from opposite ends of the political spectrum. Once Desmond witnesses the “animating spectacle of the 14<sup>th</sup>”, the one-year anniversary of Bastille Day, his radical politics are confirmed (87). Desmond declares to his mentor Bethel, “I shall now have no difficulty in making you as warmly anxious, as I am, for the success of a cause which, in its consequence, involves the freedom, and, of course, the happiness, not merely of this great people, but of the universe” (87). Desmond’s declared intention of instructing Bethel upsets the previous mentor-student relationship of the pair; when Bethel agrees to the value of both the revolution and Geraldine demonstrates its eventual success. Desmond corrects Bethel, and thus Burke.

Desmond, acting as a mouthpiece for revolutionary fervor, wholeheartedly supports the revolution in France. Desmond’s letters attempt to clarify the true events in France, refuting Burke’s dramatically negative characterization. Letter VIII of Book I reprints a discourse between Desmond and Montfleuri’s entitled uncle on the supremacy of the church. The abbé objects to the National Assembly’s claiming ecclesiastical property, which he argues “ought undoubtedly to be sacred” (93). The abbé betrays his own ignorance when he concludes, “If the nation were distressed in its revenues, by—by— by I know not what cause,” they should have accepted the monetary donation the clergy offered beforehand (93). Smith uses the abbé’s arrogant ignorance as an opportunity to educate her readers on the real situation in France through the rational logic of both Montfleuri and Desmond. The epistolary form allows Smith to “quote” other authorities and, while avoiding implicating herself in potentially subversive revolutionary rhetoric, to still provide an educational lesson in republicanism to her readers.

Smith uses the epistolary form to quote authorities and represent debates most effectively when she discusses the need for political reform in England. Again, by displacing radical statements in her character's voices, Smith avoids implicating herself. Some of Desmond's statements directly challenge the English government; he believes "it has been an object of our government...to stifle truths...to impede a little the progress of that light which they see rising in the world" (87). Desmond delights in the opportunity to tell "the real state of Paris" where the police force allows the natural gaiety of the people (88). He associates himself with the French revolutionaries, and he praises the "sudden change that has taken place in this country, from the most indolent submission to a despotic government, to the adoption of principles of more enlarged liberty than *your* nation has ever avowed" (101, emphasis added). According to Desmond, the English have forgotten their own struggle for liberty as they blame the French "for throwing off those yokes, which would be intolerable to themselves" (100). The novel's praise of the French always connects back to the English; for example, when discussing Montfleuri's excellence as a kind landlord even in the midst of revolution, Desmond compares the happiness French peasants to the destitution of the English common people (115). Desmond's praise for the newfound freedoms in revolutionary France inherently includes a criticism of England and pressure for reform.

Bethel's conversion letter makes the emphasis on English reform obvious. He acknowledges, "that a revolution in the government of France was absolutely necessary" (178). Aristocratic hierarchies, whose interests are "diametrically opposite to all reform, and, of course, to the reception of those truths which may promote it," will be resistant to the reforms that are necessary for England (179). The revolution in France represents a resurgence of liberty, but Bethel sees this revolution as most important in its reference to England. When Bethel accepts

the “incontrovertible truth” and benefit of the French Revolution, he immediately ties it to possible reform of those “yet called limited monarchies,” including, and most important, England (179). Desmond and Bethel’s emphasis on reforming England brings home the revolutionary fervor that previously remained firmly within the public realm and geographically within France.

The mixing of public and private realms in *Desmond* enacts a new kind of sociability at the same time that it creates narrative conflict and tension. Smith’s preface acknowledges that, as a female writer engaging in a political discourse through novel-writing, she conflates the division between public and private realms. “Women it is said have no business in politics,” Smith writes, before immediately questioning, “Why not? –Have they no interest in the scenes that are acting around them, in which they have fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or friends engaged! (45).” For Smith, the personal is political. In merging the two she enacts a new kind of sociability wherein the conventional political discourse takes place within a domestic novel, opening the discussion to new audiences. Smith mimics this conflation within the text by first creating a strict division between public and private realms, and then conflating the two to create narrative conflict and tension.

At the beginning of the novel, the division between public and private reflects the geographic separation between Desmond and Geraldine, as well as the subject matter of the letters. Desmond and Bethel’s letters appear almost schizophrenic in nature, as a public political assertion gives suddenly way to the private and domestic. Bethel writes, “so much, dear Desmond for private news from England. As for public news...” and “I will leave the discussion of politics, to tell you of what passes among your acquaintance” (123, 94). Awkward transition sentences like these mark the firm separation of public and private. Desmond’s initially split

desires, between revolution and Geraldine, echoes this firm division. Bethel's diagnosis recommends Desmond "search in England" for some new object of personal affection, or if this will not do, "go abroad, dissipate your ideas" (120). According to Bethel, Desmond can remain home, within the personal realm, and find love, or he can go abroad, into the public realm, to discuss and experience political revolution. The latter half of *Desmond*, however, complicates this neat divide as the realms collide and the personal becomes the political.

Geraldine, representing the personal realm, serves as the opposing force to Desmond's revolutionary and public discourse. Within this realm, she plays the idealized female and the mother figure. Geraldine embodies for Desmond, "the cultivated mind and polished manners of refined society, united with the simple and unpretending modesty of retired life" (67). Desmond also views Geraldine as the epitomized Englishwoman, a Britannia figure. Desmond fails when he tries to imagine Geraldine in place of Josephine with him in France. "Some trait [of Josephine's], in the character of her country, has suddenly dissolved the charm, and awakened me to the full sense of the folly I was guilty of" in attempting to conflate the pure, British Geraldine with the less pure, French Josephine (119). Smith emphasizes Geraldine's role as the immutable Britannia figure by prioritizing her motherhood. Bethel describes her children surrounding her in a picture of domestic bliss, "in her lap sleeping the little infant of a month old" (169). When Verney calls her to Paris, in spite of the danger and with unscrupulous motives, Geraldine returns to what she calls the "most dreadful of all fetters" because "it is my *duty*" (303). Even to her and unworthy husband, Geraldine plays the perfect, dutiful wife and, by extension, the ideal British woman. Geraldine represents all that is good and virtuous about women, England, and the personal realm.

Geraldine's perfection must remain feminine, English, and personal; the sacrifice of those ideals, through conflation with the public realm, leads to conflict. Initially, she rejects any engagement in public discourse. When Bethel mentions events in France, Geraldine brings the conversation back to the personal with the response, "how can I think of France without feeling the acutest pain, when it instantly brings to my mind what has so lately happened there to our excellent friend, Mr. Desmond?" (170). She connects her avoidance of the public discourse with her duty toward her husband. "Mr. Verney," Geraldine explains, "is no politician; or, if he were, he would hardly deign to converse on that topic with a woman" (171). For Geraldine, her role as an idealized female not only means intense concern for her children, but also an avoidance of the public sphere.

As the female writer engaged in a political discourse, Charlotte Smith intentionally conflates opposing forces for both Geraldine and Desmond. As Geraldine represents the idealized mother figure, or Britannia, her struggles with the private versus the public reflect on a national level. The embodiment of the private realm, Geraldine's engagement with questions of political reform suggest that the British nation should ask these questions themselves. Furthermore, Geraldine's marriage reflects the negative potential future facing an unreformed England. Smith's characterization of Geraldine's husband Verney stands in response to Burke's philosophic analogy of the king as the benevolent father figure. If Geraldine represents the national mother, her husband should therefore be a national father, akin to Burke's characterization of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Verney's class should place him amongst those who care for their land and holdings and assist their children, their tenants, and future generations. Verney, however, is a despicable and dangerous rake. According to Bethel, Verney has "naturally a wild, unsettled look... To an emaciated figure and unhealthy countenance, were

added the disgusting appearance of a debauch of liquor not slept off, and clothes not since changed” (171). Especially damaging in the light of Geraldine’s role as idealized mother figure, Verney refers to her and the children as “my wife and her brats” whom he relegates to the nursery, as “the proper place for women and children” (172). Verney’s debts, which also counter Burke’s gentlemanly ideal, send Geraldine all over the country and across the Channel and into revolutionary France. He even threatens her feminine virtue as he attempts to sell her to Romagnecourt to settle a debt. Verney does not protect his wife, children, or his estate; he therefore refutes Burke’s gentlemanly ideal and philosophic analogy; his personal life and behaviors make him a public symbol of the corruption inherent in hierarchical society and the subsequent need for reform.

As a representative English gentleman, Verney’s behavior condemns England to the same problems facing the *ancient regime* in France. By positioning Verney against Burke’s ideal, Smith criticizes Burke’s idealized depiction of English aristocracy. Without a positive relationship between the aristocracy and the common people, Burke’s argument in defense of traditional social structure falls apart. The sufferings of Geraldine and her innocent children make the need for reform in England very apparent, but Smith hesitates to suggest positive ways to achieve such reform. As the novel progresses, the conflation between public and private for both Geraldine and Desmond causes problems rather than generates solutions, and increased reservations about the revolution itself lends a more somber tenor to the novel.

Smith’s rising concerns about the revolution refocuses *Desmond* on the need for reform in both the public and personal realms. In *Mothers of the Nation*, Anne Mellor argues that Bethel’s conversion to Desmond’s brand of republicanism marks the end of the Jacobin portion of *Desmond*, as Smith “devotes the rest of her novel to an exploration of the gender politics that

sustain both conservative and republican political ideologies” (113). In other words, Bethel’s conversion ends the debate between Desmond and Bethel over the revolution; the political discussion transitions to the private narrative centered on Geraldine. In many ways, this is true. Bethel’s conversion does mark a transition in *Desmond*, away from the political rhetoric to a new incorporation of Geraldine and the personal realm. This new discussion of the personal realm revolves, however, around the introduction of the political into the personal, rather than the personal realm supplanting the public. Whereas the first half of *Desmond* situates the domestic/Geraldine home in England and the political/Desmond abroad in France, the latter half mixes the personal and political as Desmond returns to England and Geraldine goes abroad. Crossing these previously entrenched boundaries causes turmoil, especially with the dangers Geraldine faces in France. Revolutionary instability becomes increasingly dangerous to Geraldine as she travels; public troubles not only complicate the novel’s revolutionary fervor but also threaten the private ideal represented by Geraldine.

As the second half of *Desmond* revolves around the personal realm, conflict arises when political issues infiltrate this realm, as represented by Geraldine. An early instance of this occurs when Verney’s misdeeds inhibit Geraldine’s role as mother. Geraldine explains, “it was impossible my health should not be affected, and, of course, that of the child, whom, under such circumstances, I have, perhaps, done wrong to continue nourishing at my breast” (Smith 234). Verney’s failings do not introduce a new theme, however, they begin to affect Geraldine’s effectiveness as a mother. Verney’s failure represents the failure of British nobility and harms Geraldine’s most significant role as mother. Political corruption harms on a personal level, which then reflects on the public nation.

Desmond brings Josephine's baby, the result of his illicit affair with the French version of Geraldine, to England. His initially public interest in the French political cause has morphed into a mixture of political and personal that infuses his personal life at home. Geraldine protects the child, fulfilling her role as idealized mother, yet complicating that ideal with an intimate connection to an illicit affair. Her husband's dissolute behavior once again threatens Geraldine when he attempts to settle his debts with the Duc de Romagnecourt by selling Geraldine to him (267). Verney's injunction to meet Romagnecourt and her mother's refusal to provide shelter forces Geraldine, with her children, to cross the Channel alone and unprotected. Verney, already dismissive of Geraldine's role as mother, consistently threatens her feminine virtue towards the end of the novel. By sending her into France, he forces her, as the symbol of the personal realm, to interact with the political revolutionary fervor in France, a process which Desmond began by bringing her Josephine's baby. The men in Geraldine's life present a corrupting public influence on the personal realm on both sides of the political divide, an interaction which will eventually silence Geraldine's participation in the exchanged letters and conversation.

The political realm does not fare much better than the private in Smith's novel. In France, the revolution has taken on a new, more frenetic tone. Bethel's letter informing Desmond of Geraldine's intentions, dated June 28 1791, arrives at a critical juncture of the Revolution. Earlier that month, Louis XVI and his family had attempted to flee France and garner support in Europe. The revolutionaries caught the group and returned them to Paris, but the attempted escape stirred public sentiment against Louis and for the Republic. On July 17 1791, the people signed a petition calling on the "National Assembly to replace the king 'by all constitutional means'" (Merriman 492). The removal of the king means that the revolution, which began as an attempt to create a constitutional republic retaining the values of mixed government and

individual liberties, has now become a much more dangerous and chaotic process of overthrowing a government without a clear post-revolutionary plan. France's passionate revolutionaries contrast to the peaceful celebrants Desmond had written of just after arriving in France at the beginning of the novel; the revolution begins to darken, a change that Bethel and Desmond acknowledge. Bethel hints his concern with Verney's injunction, "is this a time to order you, unguarded and alone, to undertake such a journey; and to enter a capital, which must, from the present circumstances, be in consternation and confusion?" (300). Desmond still hopes for a peaceful resolution to the war, but acknowledges, "Some evils, however, must be felt before this great work can be completed – and perhaps, some blood still shed" (311). Geraldine's journey into revolutionary France represents the confrontation of personal and public realms, and the dangers she faces there suggest that all is not peaceful and happy for revolutionary France.

Geraldine arrives safely in France, retaining many of the idealized characteristics of England and the personal realm. She expresses confidence that "the French, of whatsoever party I may fall among, will not hurt a woman and children!" (303). Her life in France, though somewhat solitary, does not immediately differ from her life in England. However, once again Verney pulls Geraldine into political turmoil. He calls her to him from his deathbed and, "Listening to nothing but what she believed to be the voice of duty, she gave herself no time to reflect on danger which affected only herself" (387). Desmond has every reason to expect this danger to be great. Light-hearted revolutionary revelry, which characterizes his and Geraldine's accounts of northern France, does not apply to the southern provinces. These provinces, Desmond acknowledges, are infested by aristocrats, "who, encouraged by the hopes of being speedily restored to their former situation, by the armies which were assembling under the exiled princes, had, *en attendant mieux*, armed those who were content to remain in vassalage" (382).

The armament of southern France indicates the increased chaos of the French Revolution. It represents the evils Desmond predicted would be necessary for victory, but now Geraldine's presence makes the "blood still shed" a very personal threat. Suddenly, the political idealism with which Desmond approached the French Revolution early in the novel must face the feminine idealization of Geraldine – in effect embodying what would be required for true political reform to improve England. Geraldine's encounter with the French banditti symbolizes both the deteriorating state of the revolution in France and the challenges facing those who wish to bring part of this revolutionary ideology to England.

Smith's narrative arc in *Desmond* climaxes in France as the personal and public realms intermingle. Geraldine and Desmond are both in France, dealing with the slowly deteriorating state of the French Revolution and the complications brought upon the domestic sphere by Verney's illness and death. Verney's death makes a union between the two possible – supposedly a beneficial conclusion for the personal realm. However, the lack of positive emphasis on this potential domestic bliss lends a somber tone to the novel as a whole and suggests a lack of hope in the potential for effective political reform to benefit the personal realm in England.

Bethel notes that in the weeks preceding Geraldine's flight to Verney's deathbed, Desmond who, "with whatever subject he began his letters, generally spoke more of Mrs. Verney than any other, now seems to force himself upon political affairs" (357). Forcing himself to discuss political issues, Desmond sheds the tone of enthusiastic abandon with which he first described the revolution as a process that "involves the freedom, and, of course, the happiness, not merely of this great people, but of the universe" (87). His political opinions have completely shifted away from discussion of France, instead focusing on the need for political reform in

England. Even on this topic he does not speak with the same “mixture of contempt and indignation” towards Englishmen as he did originally, instead meditating, “I think that our form of government is certainly the best – not that can be imagined – but that has ever been experienced,” though still in need of reform (101, 343). At the start of this letter on reform, Desmond writes to Bethel, “In the present state of my spirits I cannot contend with you, were I disposed to do it” (341). Desmond’s unhappy restlessness stems from worries for Geraldine and her family, but is amplified by the increasing violence in France. The last glimpse into the French political reality is ominously the encounter with the banditti, suggesting that what once was admirable for its political ideals has devolved into lawlessness and chaos. The narrative resolutions in the personal realm overshadow the unresolved political issues at the end of the novel.

The end of *Desmond* can be read optimistically by viewing the revolution and political idealism of France as the source for a resolution to Desmond’s personal troubles. In this reading, the revolution in France destroys Verney, and thus representative of the corrupt aristocracy in England. Verney’s deathbed approval of the union between Desmond and Geraldine allows for the symbolic reform of England: an educated, moderately liberal father paired with the idealized mother figure. However, just as Smith complicates the positive path of the revolution in France, she does not grant perfect domestic bliss for the personal realm.

The conclusion possesses all of the identifying characteristics of a happy ending: Geraldine and Desmond return to marry and create a home for the Verney children and Desmond’s illegitimate child; Montfleuri falls in love with and marries Fanny; and the death of Josephine’s husband means she can marry her lover. Smith describes these happy endings, however, only through the possessive male voice as the women’s letters disappear. Josephine,

though she marries her lover, must leave her daughter with Desmond, since he is the legal custodian of all offspring, and she falls out of the story entirely. Geraldine and Fanny, whose voices and letters have been consistently present in the novel, appear only as objects in Desmond's, Bethel's, and Montfleuri's last letters. Montfleuri, expressing his love for Frances in a letter to Desmond, speaks of her possessively: his Fanni "is a little angel, and I must have her" (372). Montfleuri assumes Frances' acceptance of his marriage proposal, though Smith does not include a letter in Frances' own words. In addition to the ambiguity surrounding Frances' feelings, Montfleuri's possessive love does not appear trustworthy. He wonders, "I hope I shall not repent it – but I have doubts about the wisdom of it sometimes," before rationalizing that he has the ability to run away if he wishes, an eventuality Frances does not have and can only prevent by relying upon Bethel and Desmond's protection.

Desmond's love for Geraldine, perhaps a bit purer, is just as possessive. Geraldine's last letter narrates her adventures in France up until Verney's deathbed scene, but at its conclusion, she remains married and loyal to Verney. Desmond narrates Verney's death and his union with Geraldine, with little reference to her thoughts on the matter. Her only mention of a possible marriage to Desmond revolves around her lost bloom "in my heart or my person," urging Desmond to reconsider and find a woman elsewhere. Geraldine's selfless arguments leave her true feelings ambiguous; though it is true she cares for Desmond, her remarriage is one negotiated between Desmond and Verney. Verney proclaims on his deathbed, "it is to you [Desmond], rather than to any other man, that I wish to confide her and my children" which he then sets down permanently in his will (407). Geraldine's only claim to individual power, the control of her children, she now legally shares with Desmond. His exultant letter telling Bethel of his approaching marriage speaks of Geraldine in terms of a possession, "Geraldine will bear

*my name – will be the directress of my family – will be my friend – my mistress – my wife!*” (414). Not only does Smith deprive her readers of Geraldine’s and Fanny’s final thoughts, she emphasizes their subordinate role in the patriarchal family Desmond idealizes at Sedgewood, “My Geraldine – You, my dear Bethel – your sweet Louisa – my friend Montfleuri, and his Fanny” (414). Desmond, though not abusive towards Geraldine, does not appear much more enlightened than Verney, who attempted to sell Geraldine as property. If Smith foregoes the public realm in exchange for a reform of the personal realm, then the dark undercurrents generated by possessive male voices and absent female voices complicate the superficially idyllic rural picture Desmond describes at the end.

The ambiguous ending communicates Smith’s uncertainties about both the revolution and the potential for the success of true, necessary reform in England. The political didacticism of the first volume acts primarily as a response to Burkean conservatism. Smith uses the novel as a platform to educate her readers on the most ideal aspects of the French revolution and the need for reform in England. But when political idealism conflicts with the personal realm, she turns to an exploration of how reform can occur in the intersection between public and private realms. Smith ultimately concludes that the revolution in France was both necessary and inevitable and based on good theoretical principles. Ideally, the English could take the good examples from the French and reform their own government, while eschewing the less desirable slip into chaos. The novel’s tentative ending departs from early didacticism to raise questions about the potential for true reform. Smith demonstrates the failure of a reformed domestic sphere even in the hands of “enlightened” men. In doing so, she asks what lessons the English should take from the French and how those lessons should be realized. Most importantly, she asks how England can examine those social questions, for example the role of women, without losing grip on the good elements

of their constitution and government. She poses these questions to her reader so that a sociable discussion of the issues, reminiscent of the exchanges between Bethel and Desmond, may discover new answers.

Critics have identified *Desmond* as the first historical novel, preceding Sir Walter Scott's *Waverly*, and even perhaps inspiring the name for that novel's title character. Contemporary reviewers acknowledged *Desmond*'s unique inclusion of French politics. In 1792, *The Critical Review* noted that examination of the French state was "the principal novelty in the conduct of this tale," while the *Monthly Review* describes how Mrs. Smith "ventured beyond the beaten track, so far as to interweave her narrative with many political discussions" ( )(1792a)(1792a)(*Critical Review* 99; ( )(1792c)(1792c)*Monthly Review* 406). In general, the reviews accept these political inclusions. Smith's preface introduces her goals for *Desmond* as demonstrating her knowledge of the French Revolution, educating her readership on these truths she has observed, and then instigating discussion over the questions of reform in England. According to the contemporary reviews, Smith achieves most of these goals.

The *Critical Review*, though acknowledging, "her politics we cannot always approve of," remarks that Smith's "residence in France has furnished her with these [political] additions, which will be differently judged of according to taste, or more properly according to the political opinions of the readers" and goes on to say that history will determine which political stance is correct and that, though they disagree, Mrs. Smith's attempts to educate her fine lady readership is an acceptable cause (*CR* 99). "The opportunities of modern fine ladies for information are so few," the reviewer writes, "that every means of their obtaining it, incidentally, should be approved of" (*CR* 99). The *Monthly Review* echoes these sentiments, because "the female character is advancing in cultivation, and rising in dignity, [it] may be justly reckoned the

improvements that are making in the kind of writing which is more immediately adapted to the amusement of female readers” (*MR* 406). “Novels,” the reviewer continues, “are becoming the vehicles of useful instruction” (*MR* 406). As evidence of this instruction, both the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* quote political passages from the novel, prefaced in the case of the *Monthly Review* by the assurance that these are taken “from conversations to which she has been a witness in England and in France, during the last twelve months” (Smith 406). One review, in the *European Magazine*, though arguing for a lack of complete information in the novel, does acknowledge that Smith “certainly vindicated the excuse of French liberty with much acuteness” (*European Magazine* 22). Judging by these reviews, Smith capably convinces her readers of her own knowledge and takes great strides towards educating them on the truth of the French situation and the cause for French liberty.

Whether she successfully influences the sociable discourse surrounding the subject of French liberty and revolution, however, is another question. The *European Magazine* believes it successful in this point, “for its morality, blended so easily and delicately with the sentiments of liberty, it will, we doubt not, be recognized as a work not less useful than entertaining” (*EM* 23). The novel’s impact, however, was quickly curtailed by events in France. Later in 1792, the 10<sup>th</sup> of August saw the king captured, the September Massacres followed with waves of mob violence, and as the National Convention declared war on Austria and its European allies. French excesses on all fronts caused it to lose most, if not all, of its reform currency in England. Smith had aimed to demonstrate, as Geraldine writes, “that these blessings [of freedom] are not yet fully felt, seems to be the only complaint that the enemies to the freedom of France can alledge against it” (Smith 324). With the quick decline into chaos that becomes more evident at the end of the summer of 1792 and even more apparent by August of that year, however, Smith’s

moderately liberal tone was outdated almost as soon as *Desmond* was published. Her intent remains admirable, however, and perhaps for a short period successfully educates her readers and instigates discussion. Smith's entrance into sociable discourse is specifically situated in 1792. *Desmond* stands as one of the last responses to Burke that supports a pro-French argument before political events made even such moderate approvals dangerous. Shortly thereafter, as Godwin's *Caleb Williams* shows, public support of French republicanism became a treasonable offense, and sociable discourse had to transition away from inspiring public discussions to instilling private education and contemplation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EDUCATION AS CONTEMPLATION: GODWIN'S *CALEB WILLIAMS* S

On November 4, 1794, William Godwin sat listening to an ongoing trial at the Old Bailey in London. Godwin had picked this day to attend the long and protracted Treason Trials because his friend and fellow novelist, Thomas Holcroft, faced a charge of treason for his participation in the London Corresponding Society and other radical reform societies. Godwin's participation in these trials, through the publication of *Cursory Strictures*, would mark what historian Albert Goodwin called the "most signal service Godwin ever rendered to the cause of radicalism" (341). The trials, as Godwin's *Cursory Strictures* argues, represented some of the most threatening actions taken by a government verging on tyrannical. Godwin's influential 1793 *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* argues that the necessary outcome of human progress and improvement is anarchy. His presence at the Old Bailey demonstrates that his political and philosophical activism was as sociable as it was intellectual. He conceived of *Political Justice* as a response to Burke's *Reflections* and, thus, as a part of the revolutionary discourse. This is perhaps more true of the follow-up novel, *Caleb Williams*, which was written to communicate "to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach... a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism by which man becomes the destroyer of man" (Godwin 2000a 55). The novel explores how the decayed and distorted values of the upper classes represent a corrosive and inescapable force on society. Godwin's hero spends much of the novel attempting to escape from his employer Falkland, which ultimately proves an impossible task in the face of such an oppressive social structure. Through narrating the

unavoidably corrosive powers of such a hierarchy, *Caleb Williams* takes what had previously been a political philosophy reaching exclusively an inner circle of educated men and extrapolates this lesson beyond to a sociable literary circle, attempting to educate this new broad audience through a novel that requires careful interpretation, contemplation, and thought.

*Caleb Williams* follows the flight of the innocent Caleb from his former employer, the proud and powerful Mr. Falkland. Caleb, after stumbling across evidence of a crime Mr. Falkland committed in the past, runs away from Falkland's service. Falkland attempts to silence him with accusations of robbery, committing him to jail, and by publishing tales of Caleb's crimes. To the end, Caleb remains confused as to why the intelligent and revered Falkland behaves thus. It is not until the authorities finally capture Caleb and bring him to trial that the bonds of social and familial reverence of his social better finally dissolves. The long-delayed revelation deserves extensive quotation:

I had long cherished a reverence for him, which not even animosity and subornation on his part could utterly destroy. But now I ascribed a character so inhumanly sanguinary to his mind; I saw something so fiend-like in the thus hunting me round the world, and determining to be satisfied with nothing less than my blood, while at the same time he knew my innocence, my indisposition to mischief, nay, I might add, my virtues; that henceforth I trampled reverence and the recollection of former esteem under my feet. I lost all regard to his intellectual greatness, and all pity for the agonies of his soul. (375)

At this moment, Caleb, who has suffered countless indignities and pains, throws off the respect for the social hierarchy inscribed deeply in his psyche. For Godwin, this respect for a hierarchy imposed and undeserved represents one of the greatest social evils. As the founder of philosophical anarchism, Godwin believed "that government is a corrupting force in society,

perpetuating dependence and ignorance, but that it will be rendered increasingly unnecessary and powerless by the gradual spread of knowledge” (Philp 2009). Caleb’s overthrow of his ingrained reverence for Falkland represents his embrace of this new knowledge. Significantly, however, this process of Caleb’s education is a long and arduous one, demanding serious contemplation on his part.

Godwin’s private corresponded yields insights into how he envisioned his readers’ engagement with the novel. He hopes to inspire the same kind of contemplation in his reader so that his reader, just like Caleb, can come to the same knowledge and overthrow the bindings of hierarchical society and government. In his 1832 account of the novel’s composition, Godwin writes, “I said to myself a thousand times, ‘I will write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he has read it, shall ever be exactly the same man that he was before’” (447). Godwin wants the psychological impact of the novel to cause his reader to pause, interpret, and contemplate what the novel means for government and political reform. To create this psychological impact, Godwin writes a novel of pursuit and surveillance, echoing the practices of Pitt’s government. The reform movement faced several prosecutions where spies collected information from public places, like pubs, and twisted it into seditious and even treasonous statements. In 1792, John Frost had been convicted of sedition for carrying on conversation in a tavern, where he was rumored to say “Equality, and No King.” Pitt’s ministry employed many men to listen to these kinds of conversations and report back, so that the men, like Godwin, of contrarian opinions feared that any small utterance could be misconstrued by the many eyes and ears hovering unseen. Godwin wants to instill in his reader a fear of this high degree of government involvement and surveillance. Hopefully, the epoch in the mind of the reader will contribute to the reader’s education about government and the dangers of tyrannical

rule. The end goal of this contemplation is the reader's enlightened support for Godwin's political philosophy.

Godwin's political philosophy developed as the result of conscious intellectual stimulation within the context of a sociable circle of intelligent friends. Exemplary of the kind of Romantic sociability outlined by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite in *Romantic Sociability*, Godwin bridges the gap between the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century sociability characterized by a political activism located in serial publications and discussed in coffeehouses and the late-18<sup>th</sup> century involvement predicated on literary publication and sociable discourse (Russell and Tuite 13). After leaving the ministry, Godwin moved to London in 1783 to write and engage in the metropolis's social and intellectual scene. Godwin became an incredibly prolific writer, first publishing his sermons and short pamphlets before moving to some fiction and the "British and Foreign History" section of *The New Annual Register*. This last task, published from 1783 to 1791 required a thorough understanding of contemporary history and politics in Britain, Europe, India, and America, as well as first-hand acquaintance with the parliamentary debates. He also served as an editor of the journal, *The Political Herald, and Review* from July 1785 to 1790, which brought him within close proximity of key Whig politicians of the 1780s, including Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the Duke of Portland, and George Canning. His friendships with Sheridan and Thomas Brand Hollis introduced him to many leading intellectuals of the day.

Friendship was of primary importance to Godwin; as his biographer Kegan Paul writes, "friendship stood to him in the place of passion, as morality was to him in the room of devotion"(Paul 30). He was less interested in the political friendships that could possibly lead to political office than he was in the intellectually stimulating friendships he found in men like Thomas Holcroft, a writer and sometimes actor. Holcroft's vitality and irritability stimulated

Godwin's tranquil rationality; Holcroft converted Godwin to religious agnosticism and Godwin radicalized Holcroft's political views. Prior to the French Revolution, Godwin was as a moderately successful political commentator though he participated primarily from the periphery.

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 proved a pivotal turning point for Godwin's intellectual life. His political education relied heavily on French philosophers such as Rousseau, Helvétius, and Montesquieu, among others. Godwin writes, "I could not refrain from conceiving sanguine hopes of a revolution of which such writings had been the precursors" (qtd. in Marshall 77). Godwin responds to this political inspiration with serious contemplation and sociable discourse, "my mind became more and more impregnated with the principles afterward developed in my *Political Justice* – they were the almost constant topic of conversation between me and Holcroft" (Godwin 1992 48). In 1791, a year which he describes as "the main crisis of my life," Godwin ceased work on the *New Annual Register* and began composing a treatise on political principles (49). The interest surrounding his forthcoming political treatise, inspired by the flurry of pamphlets engaging with Burke and with each other, gave Godwin a degree of fame even before publication.

Godwin's public fame led to introductions to Sir James Mackintosh, David Williams, and Joel Barlow, all who had written pamphlets against Burke. These men would gather together, along with Holcroft, in social meetings "in which the principles of my work were discussed" (49). Godwin's emerging fame placed him in the center of the political activity of the early 1790s. While writing *Political Justice*, Godwin and Holcroft assisted Paine by publishing the second part of his *Rights of Man*, for which he would be convicted of sedition. Godwin was also present for the famous dispute between Fox and Burke which finally broke their long-standing

Whig political alliance. As tensions surrounding French politics mounted, Godwin continued methodically working on *Political Justice*. He relied heavily on interactions with fellow writers and philosophers, especially Holcroft. The two were members of a small debating club, the Philomathean Society, and dined almost daily together while discussing all manner of topics included in *Political Justice*. Godwin edited Holcroft's novel *Anna St. Ives*, which has been called an early novelized form of *Political Justice*, especially in its faith in "the omnipotence of truth, universal benevolence, and the perfectibility of man" (Marshall 1984 87). The intellectual debt most likely was reciprocal; the two instigated each other's thoughts, edited each other's works, and reflected the other's ideas in his own work, evidencing sociability through new forms of media.

When he writes the preface to *Political Justice*, dated 7 January 1793, Godwin knows very well that the tenor of English national politics at the moment meant that the publication of such a radical work could be potentially dangerous. The project had taken sixteen months as he had written and edited each page with great care, and the work charts his transition from a philosophical position similar to Paine and the English Jacobins, "only to finish a convinced and outspoken anarchist – the first great exponent of society without government" (Marshall 84). The basic argument of *Political Justice* is that society was originally organized to provide security for the unruly individual. Assuming the progressive nature of man, however, Godwin calls for a reevaluation of that social organization. Government, as a means of providing an organizing structure, is perniciously invasive and robs men of their independence and rationality, permutating the baser elements of mankind to a permanent form. In order to maintain control over society, government must persuade the majority of the community to support it, which, by refusing people the right to exercise their free will, keeps the populace ignorant and dependent.

Therefore, Godwin argues against an overarching governmental structure and instead supports small, self-selected federations to provide security while encouraging free will and independent thought. This transition can only occur when the people are educated, willfully turn away from their ignorance, and embrace their better natures.

Significantly, especially when contrasted with the pamphlet authors whose advice Godwin sought when composing *Political Justice*, the work avoids mention of contemporary politics or current affairs. It reads as an abstract political treatise, which is perhaps one reason why Godwin escaped the government reprisals of 1794. More importantly, however, *Political Justice* sold for £1 16s, more than half the average monthly wages of a labourer (Marshall 121). Despite its relatively high price, the work was immensely successful. William Hazlitt contextualizes the work within a published sociability, “No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as the celebrated *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Tom Paine was considered for the time as a Tom Fool to him; Paley as an old woman; Edmund Burke as a flashy sophist” (qtd. in Godwin 1971 xi). Despite this elite, educated audience, Godwin acknowledges potential danger in his preface: “It is not to be tried whether, in addition to these alarming encroachments upon our liberty [other trials for published pamphlets and unguarded words], a book is to fall under the arm of the civil power, which, beside the advantage of having for one of its express objects the dissuading from tumult and violence, is by its very nature an appeal to men of study and reflection” (Godwin 5). Whether it was the elevated language, extremely high price, or committed pacifism in *Political Justice*, Godwin was not brought to trial in the treason trials of 1794.

Although not accused, Godwin was a very interested spectator. He was of course impassioned by his friend Holcroft’s arrest, but also by the explicit threat to political sociability

represented in the rounding up of those radicals who expressly wished to communicate with like-minded reformers. Pitt's ministry aimed to stop the spread of political radicalism to the lower classes, which meant that the newly developed corresponding societies were his primary targets. These societies had been established with the primary purpose of communicating with each other across the country and publishing and spreading new ideas through these communications. In short, they were the embodiment of political sociability for the lower classes. Godwin's greatest contribution to this cause was the anonymous publication of *Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury*. Written as a response to Chief Justice Eyre's opening statement, Godwin attacks the "new and extraordinary doctrines upon the subject of Treason" (Godwin 1968 147). The prosecution in the treason trials was attempting to prove that the accused had contrived to create a legislature to supplant Parliament, which by extension amounted to treason because an overthrow of the government would necessarily threaten the life of the king. Godwin argues persuasively that as a society with fixed rules of law and precedence, the cases against the accused cannot proceed because they cannot, "show me the statute that describes it [the crime]; refer me to the precedent by which it is defined; quote me the adjudged case in which a matter of such unparalleled magnitude is settled" (152). In these trials, Godwin sees the culmination of two of his greatest fears: an over-reaching government that has finally tipped to despotism and which now threatens the sociability and public discourse that he has prized above all other endeavors.

In the year leading up to these trials, Godwin began to write his novel, *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*. As biographer Peter Marshall writes, *Caleb Williams* was a project intricately related to *Political Justice*: the novel's story was the "offspring of that temper of mind in which the completion of *Political Justice* had left him and was produced in a

state of great fervor of spirit” (Marshall 146). Godwin published the novel in May of 1794. In the original preface, which Godwin’s publishers withheld from publication as too radical, the author declares that the novel will be “a study and delineation of things passing in the moral world” (Godwin 2000a 55). *Political Justice* operates primarily as a political tract in the vein of other works of political philosophy; it relies on an abstraction of government from contemporary politics. *Caleb Williams*, however, in addition to expressing the political philosophy of *Political Justice* for a broader audience, also situates this philosophy more concretely into contemporary affairs. Thematically, the sense of constant surveillance Caleb suffers under mimics the reality faced by victims of government scrutiny like John Frost and the accused in the treason trials. The invasion by government into the private and personal lives of individuals, or what Godwin refers to as “an abridgement of individual independence,” represents the greatest danger government poses to “the most desirable state of mankind” (Godwin 1971 14). By narrating the psychological damage such invasion causes, Godwin hopes to give the reader “a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism by which man becomes the destroyer of man” (Godwin 2000a 55). The literary decisions Godwin makes in *Caleb Williams* relate back to his desire to create in the reader a deep sense of the psychological torture attached to such despotism and to connect this torture to contemporary politics.

Godwin first conceived of *Political Justice* within the context of a pamphlet war responding to and fervently countering Burke’s conservative support of the traditional hierarchy, which was characterized by a strong idealization of the nobility. Burke’s idealized nobility must have been in Godwin’s mind, therefore, when he set out to narrate despotism as revealed in the character of Mr. Falkland, a character who echoes Smith’s negative portrait of Verney. In the preface to the 1832 “Standard Novels” edition of *Caleb Williams*, Godwin writes that he

consciously invested his pursuer “with every advantage of fortune, with a resolution nothing could defeat or battle, and with extraordinary powers of intellect” (446). In addition to these advantages, Mr. Falkland behaves in accordance with the nobility of manner that Burke’s celebration of the hierarchy expects. Though “compassionate and considerate for others,” Falkland’s reserve, the “coldness of his address, and the /impenetrableness of his sentiments seemed to forbid those demonstrations of kindness to which one might otherwise have been prompted” (63). As Mr. Falkland’s librarian and personal secretary, Caleb is one of the only domestics in the house to approach him on a regular basis. Falkland’s variability of temper would sometimes lead to “hasty, peevish, and tyrannical” behavior, which he would counter by “the benevolence of his actions, and the principles of inflexible integrity by which he was ordinarily guided” (2000a 63). His domestics, including Caleb, “regarded him upon the whole with veneration, as a being of a superior order” (63). In this initial description, Godwin sets up a firm dichotomy between the upper and lower orders of society, and Mr. Falkland, faults and all, remains a representative figure of the ruling class. The hierarchical relationships in Falkland’s home echo the Gothic hierarchy within the family that Burke encourages. Through this characterization, Godwin references the Burkean worship of nobility, but also points out that those caught in the dichotomy fail to remain objective about the potentially serious flaws of those in the superior order.

Despite his veneration for Falkland, Caleb’s curiosity leads him to note Falkland’s obsessive privacy. When he stumbles across Falkland groaning over the opened trunk in his office, Falkland flies into a rage yelling, “Villain! ... You set yourself up as a spy upon my actions; but bitterly shall you repent your insolence” (64). Falkland’s indignation at Caleb’s spying represents a significant difference in the privileges of the upper class: Caleb cannot spy

on Falkland, but Falkland considers it his prerogative to stalk Caleb across England. Incessantly curious, Caleb eventually discovers, through asking fellow servant Mr. Collins for Falkland's history and through investigating in the forbidden trunk, that Falkland committed a murder for which another man was tried, convicted, and executed.

Caleb's discovery of his master's guilt does not diminish Falkland's superior status in his mind, "I had no inclination to turn informer. I felt what I had no previous conception of, that it was possible to love a murderer" (208). Falkland initially confides his guilt in Caleb, though warning that the confidence "is of your seeking, not of mine. It is odious to me, and is dangerous to you" (214). Falkland bemoans his guilt and the oppression he has suffered to keep his secret, "This it is to be a gentleman! A man of honour! I was the fool of fame...I cling to it to my last breath. Though I be the blackest of villains, I will leave behind me a spotless and illustrious name" (215). Even with this confession, Caleb continues to respect and admire Falkland, observing that he demonstrated a great deal of forbearance towards an insolent servant. When presented with a better position with Falkland's brother-in-law Mr. Forrester, Caleb attempts to leave Falkland's service, to which Falkland replies, "You never shall quit it with life. If you attempt it, you shall never cease to rue your folly as long as you exist. That is my will; and I will not have it resisted" (235). Falkland abhors the idea that his guilt, secreted in Caleb, has become something he can no longer control and which now has the potential to expose him. As a man who above all prioritizes his gentlemanly honour, Falkland cannot tolerate this threat to his pride. He frames Caleb for robbery and, using his reputation as an honorable gentleman of the highest merit, plays the part of a "martyr in the public cause," to ensure that Caleb is sent to prison (256).

From this point on, the novel becomes a story of pursuit. As with the pseudo-trial against Caleb, the rights and privileges of the superior order are manipulated and used to achieve their

own ends. Forrester, after hearing Falkland's testimony against Caleb, declares, "this is no time for us to settle the question between chivalry and law. I shall therefore simply insist as a magistrate, having taken the evidence in this felony, upon my right and duty of following the course of justice, and committing the accused to the county jail" (259). Godwin takes advantage of Caleb's time in jail to meditate on the contemporary prison system in England. The jailers lock Caleb's twisted ankle into a fetter until he fears it will never heal. He protests to the turnkey, "you are to take care we do not escape; but it is no part of your office to call us names and abuse us," especially against a prisoner who has yet to be tried for his crime, to which the jailers respond, "they knew what they did, and would answer it to any court in England" (284). When Caleb's fellow Thomas visits, he observes "Why I thought this was a Christian country, but this usage is too bad for a dog" (290). Ever faithful to the natural order, however, Caleb replies, "it is what the wisdom of government has thought fit to provide" (290). While emphasizing Caleb's continued dependence on the benevolence of government, Godwin exposes the inherent faults of a system that would accept and torture a prisoner who has only been convicted by the nobility's preference.

The third volume of the novel opens just as Caleb has successfully escaped from jail. He throws himself on the mercy of society as a penniless beggar, feeling that "never did man more strenuously prefer poverty with independence to the artificial allurements of a life of slavery" (298). In this moment, Caleb begins to realize the oppression he suffers as a victim of the most invasive aspects of government. He does not, however, completely disavow the ingrained social order. When he is discovered wandering in the woods by the compassionate leader of a band of criminals, Raymond, he shares his story "except so far as related to the detection of Mr. Falkland's eventful secret, to my protector" (311). In choosing to keep this secret, Caleb

demonstrates that he remains enmeshed in the social order. Caleb feels that his place among the criminals in the woods “answered completely the purposes of concealment” (310). His safety, however, is quickly compromised by Falkland’s long reach.

The squire publishes a bulletin, condemning Caleb’s escape from jail as a confession of guilt, detailing the purported crime and the ingratitude this criminal has shown to such a benevolent master, before offering one hundred guineas for Caleb’s discovery. Though Caleb remains safe within the band of criminals, the publication of the bulletin causes him to reconsider Falkland’s motivations. Even to this point, Caleb believes, “though he persecuted me with bitterness, I could not help believing that he did it unwillingly, and I was persuaded it would not be for ever” (318). With the publication of the slanderous bulletin, however, “indignation and resentment seemed now for the first time to penetrate my mind” (318). Caleb’s seemingly limitless forgiveness and understanding for his former master begins to crack when it becomes apparent that Falkland will be satisfied only by ruining Caleb’s life entirely. The narrative movement relies on incidents where Falkland’s ability to harm Caleb’s reputation or life cause Caleb to reevaluate the reverence he feels towards his former master. These incidences eventually lead to Caleb’s epiphany, but the slow progress towards this moment emphasizes the importance Godwin places on careful contemplation and thought.

Caleb’s ingrained social respect begins to crack when confronted with Falkland’s apparent ubiquity. Not only can Falkland publish a bulletin that within days of Caleb’s escape almost results in his recapture, but just as Caleb leaves the security of Raymond’s group, he stumbles upon a road bearing none other than Falkland’s carriage. When he reaches a public-house in a village, he is “surprised, and not a little startled, to find them fall almost immediately into conversation about my history, whom, with a slight variation of circumstances, they styled

the notorious housebreaker, Kit Williams” (330). One woman remarks, “I think he makes the talk for the whole country” (330). In a matter of days, Falkland has successfully raised what seems to be the entire country in his favor. He has co-opted the media with his wealth and power so that even the common people can be on the watch for Caleb. In effect, Falkland employs a small army of spies to rout out his intended victim. In this representation of constant surveillance, Godwin echoes progressive concerns over spies and the ubiquity of government eyes.

The novel’s pace picks up in the third volume as it follows Caleb’s flight across the United Kingdom. Part of this increase in narrative pace results from Godwin’s employment of retrospective narration. Several times throughout his tale, Caleb refers to moments when the narrative reaches a critical turning point. For example, just before he peeks into Falkland’s trunk, he describes the moment as an impending crisis of fortune, after which, “incident followed upon incident, in a kind of breathless succession” (210). The use of retrospective narration gives the tale a sense of hovering fate, pulling Caleb closer to an inevitable end that has yet to be disclosed but is certainly unhappy. Godwin’s 1832 preface suggests that this effect was intentional and carefully wrought. He wrote the volumes in reverse order, so that “an entire unity of plot would be the infallible result; and the unity of spirit and interest in a tale truly considered, gives it a powerful hold on the reader” (446). Godwin intends that the psychological elements of *Caleb Williams*, in addition to pulling the reader through the novel, to also leave an indelible mark on the reader and force him to contemplate the issues the novel raises. Contemplation would then lead to sociable conversation and knowledge.

For Godwin, the act of contemplation is necessary in order to gain true knowledge. Godwin publishes his 1797 collection of essays, entitled *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education*,

*Manners, and Literature*, for “the contemplative reader, not as *dicta*, but as the materials of thinking” (Godwin 1797 v). In it, he outlines the connection he sees between literature and knowledge. The requisite intermediary step, according to Godwin, is independent contemplation. “A judicious reader,” he writes, “will have a greater number of ideas that are his own passing through his mind, than of ideas presented to him by his author... What he adopts from him, he renders his own, by repassing in his thoughts the notions of which it consists, and the foundation upon which it rests, correcting its mistakes and supplying its defects” (331). Therefore, *Political Justice* only operates as a successful work of philosophy if its readers contemplate what they read. The same holds true for *Caleb Williams*. Godwin remarks in the essay “Of Choice in Reading,” that determining “the moral of a story, or the genuine tendency of a book, is a science peculiarly abstruse. As many controversies might be raised upon some questions on this sort, as about the number six hundred and sixty six in the book of Revelations” (133). Godwin’s concerns about the acquisition of knowledge influence his emphasis on the psychological aftereffects of a novel like *Caleb Williams*. In the 1832 preface, Godwin laments that he has only created “a story to be hastily gobbled up by [children], swallowed in a pusillanimous and unanimated mood, without chewing and digestion” (Godwin 2000a 450). Far from this, he hopes *Caleb Williams* will inspire its readers to continually return and contemplate that epoch in their minds.

Godwin’s desire to create a novel that inspires its readers to contemplate perhaps provides an alternate reading of the multiple endings. In both endings, Caleb’s multiple disguises ultimately fail and he finds himself yet again in court. Suffering from the “singularity of my fate, that it hurried me from one species of anxiety and distress to another, too rapidly to suffer any one of them to sink deeply into my mind,” he confesses to being the much maligned Caleb

Williams (346). While awaiting trial, Caleb contemplates his countless sufferings. It is at this late moment that he finally “lost all regard to [Falkland’s] intellectual greatness, and all pity for the agonies of his soul” (375). He determines to “show myself bitter and inflexible as he had done” and to expose Falkland’s murder (375). When he does confess this knowledge however, his information is disregarded as an attempt to avoid his own guilt. Caleb, growing ever more free of the imbedded social order, rants, “Six thousand a year shall protect a man from accusation; and the validity of an impeachment shall be superseded, because the author of it is a servant!” (377). Caleb grasps onto this righteous anger in place of the veneration he held for Falkland.

Both versions of the novel depict Falkland’s commitment to ruining Caleb’s life at all costs. Falkland declares to Caleb, “I had my eye upon you in all your wanderings...I meditated to do you good” (383). Falkland argues that he has been trying to preserve Caleb’s life, so long as he keeps his secret, but now that Caleb has betrayed Falkland’s guilt, he cries, “I will never forgive you” (383). Godwin emphasizes that Falkland’s hysteria emerges from his obsession with reputation, “I live the guardian of my reputation” (383). Because Caleb is unwilling to sign a paper stating Falkland’s innocence, the two men part, Falkland refusing to risk exposure by bringing Caleb to trial and Caleb full of righteous anger. Outside of the court, Falkland does what he can to ruin any potential for Caleb’s happiness. Falkland, “wise as he is, and pregnant in resources,” publishes *Wonderful and Surprising History of Caleb Williams*, detailing Caleb’s supposed crimes and maligning him as a servant of the worst kind, desirous to ruin his master and potentially dangerous. The effects of this publication reach far into Caleb’s life and demonstrate Godwin’s concerns about the exploitation of print and government censorship. A close family friend, Laura Denison, refuses to allow Caleb in to her home. Gines, representing Falkland, “follow[s] Caleb] from place to place, blasting my reputation, and preventing me from

the chance...of acquiring a character for integrity” (409). With these comforts gone, and without any home of sympathy or kindness, Caleb’s anger takes over and he determines, “I will tell a tale - ! The justice of the country shall hear me!” (421). He journeys back to Falkland’s home, raises the chief magistrate, and declares his intention to “accuse Mr. Falkland of repeated murders” despite Falkland’s failing health. Regardless of potential consequences, Caleb declares, “I desired to know the worst; to put an end to the hope, however faint, which had so long been my torment; and, above all, to exhaust and finish the catalogue of expedients that were at my disposition” (425). The magistrate relents and agrees to go with Caleb to the squire’s house to hear out the accusations.

From this point on, the two endings deviate. The published ending was the second ending Godwin wrote. In it, Caleb’s cold-hearted anger melts into pity when he sees the frail Falkland. Almost immediately, he regrets accusing Falkland of murder. He wishes, “it were possible for me to retire from this scene without uttering another word! ... I would submit to any imputation of cowardice, falsehood, and profligacy, rather than add to the weight of misfortune with which Mr. Falkland is overwhelmed” (428). Because he must go through with what he started, Caleb accuses Falkland of the murder before bemoaning the fact that Falkland did not keep his confidence in Caleb, choosing to persecute him rather than trust him with his secret. Caleb cries, “where is the man that has suffered more from the injustice of society than I have done?” and goes on to detail his flight and the motivations which brought him to this accusation (429). Out of the guilt he feels for condemning Falkland to a shameful death, Caleb finishes, “I came here to curse, but I remain to bless. I came to accuse, but am compelled to applaud. I proclaim to all the world, that Mr. Falkland is a man worthy of affection and kindness, and that I am myself the basest and most odious of mankind! Never will I forgive myself the iniquity of this day” (431).

Falkland, persuaded by Caleb's remorse and honesty, confesses, "I have spent a life of the basest cruelty, to cover one act of momentary vice, and to protect myself against the prejudices of my species. I stand now completely detected. My name will be consecrated to infamy, while your heroism, your patience, and your virtue will be for ever admired" (432). The novel ends with Falkland's arrest but also with Caleb's guilty self reflections: "I began these memoirs with the idea of vindicating my character. I have now no character that I wish to vindicate: but I will finish them... that the world may at least not hear and repeat a half-told and mangled tale" (434). In this ending, Caleb forsakes his anger in favor of the veneration for the superior orders. The guilty man, Falkland, withers in prison while Caleb walks free, though racked with guilt. Caleb, through publishing his narrative, becomes a strong defender of Falkland's reputation and, by extension, the general benevolence of the superior order. The novel continues to operate as a critique of the prison system and as a psychological tale about the lengths man will go to destroy another man, but its capacity as a social critique of the Burkean conservative hierarchy diminishes.

Godwin wrote the unpublished ending first. In this conclusion, the sight of a withering Falkland does not inspire Caleb's pity, but "harmonized with the madness of my soul, and gave double vehemence to the tide of my fury" (435). Caleb delivers his condemnation of Falkland "with energy, fervor, and conscious truth" (437). In response, Falkland defends himself by his reputation, "His life had been irreproachable; it had been more than this; he must say it, it had been uniformly benevolent and honourable" (437). Caleb's bad reputation, on the other hand, is notorious, "first a thief; then a breaker of prisons; and last a consummate adept in every species of disguise" (437). The magistrate decides in Falkland's favor, declaring, "Never was the dignity of administrative justice in any instance insulted with so bare faced an impudent a forgery!"

(438). Falkland, through Gines, keeps Caleb in an apartment where Caleb records his story through snatched moments of freedom and stolen paper. Falkland recovers, causing Caleb to lament, “Alas! Alas! It too plainly appears in my history that persecution and tyranny can never die!” (440). Caleb finishes his memoir while still able. Perhaps he merely goes mad, perhaps he is poisoned, but he leaves off with the words: “I feel now a benumbing heaviness, that I conceive to have something in it more than natural. I have tried again and again to shake it off. I can scarcely hold my pen” (440). In the letter accompanying his memoir, Caleb rants madly, asking for Collins’ understanding and compassion before concluding, “all day long I do nothing am a stone – a *gravestone!* – an obelisk to tell you, *here lies what was once a man!*” (442). The unpublished ending focuses on the psychological damage Caleb suffers. He dies, presumably, under a kind of house arrest, while Falkland recovers his health and lives out his untarnished reputation. In this ending, Godwin strongly emphasizes a condemnation of the social hierarchy and the corrosive reach of government. Caleb takes his innocence to a proper magistrate judge and cannot find a reprieve from Falkland’s persecution. Falkland, as a representative of the superior order, does not redeem himself and remains as an attack on the pride and corruption inherent in that class. This being said, the alternate ending leaves no room for hope. As Caleb bemoans, tyranny can never die.

If Godwin’s political beliefs radicalized as he composed *Political Justice*, the published ending of *Caleb Williams* may be viewed as a moderation on that radical belief. The unpublished ending represents a condemnation of all society and government and is more closely in line with Godwin’s philosophical arguments for the total abolition of government in favor of localized collective groups. Once the abstract philosophies of *Political Justice* are instilled into fictive characters, the dynamic of individuals and their relation to government moderates the

philosophical argument. Godwin writes in the essay “Of History and Romance,” that the “abstractions of philosophy, when we are grown familiar with them, often present to our minds a simplicity and precision, that may well supply the place of entire individuality” (Godwin 2000b 455). To counter that, “the study of individual man can never fail to be an object of the highest importance. It is only by comparison that we come to know any thing of mind or of ourselves” (2000b 455). Though Godwin here speaks of the individual focus of history, the same would hold true of the individual focus of the novel. In transferring the philosophical arguments of *Political Justice* into *Caleb Williams*, he complicates his own theory of rational anarchism. In the published ending, at least, the superior order survives almost entirely intact. Falkland admits his guilt, and Caleb publishes his memoir solely to exculpate Falkland and to reinstate his previous veneration. The unpublished ending does condemn the superior order; Caleb writes his memoir to make himself a martyr of the pervasive and corrosive tyranny. Though the novel does not provide an answer for how to combat this overreaching government and social hierarchy, it clearly takes a stance against such injustices.

Perhaps Godwin’s emphasis on the need for contemplation to achieve true knowledge provides the answer to this apparent hesitance in the novel’s ending. The unpublished ending more closely approximates the political arguments Godwin makes in *Political Justice*, however it also conveys a depressing hopelessness about the possibility of change. Caleb ultimately remains unable to accomplish anything against the system, which could leave a depressing aftertaste for the reader. In the July 1795 *British Critic*, Godwin writes that he wants *Caleb Williams*:

to expose the evils which arise out of the present system of civilized society; and, having exposed them, to lead the enquiring reader to examine whether they are, or are not, as has

commonly been supposed, irremediable; in a word, to disengage the minds of men from prepossession, and launch them upon the sea of moral and political enquiry (451).

As Godwin's primary question for the novel is the potential for a remediation of society, it makes sense that he would avoid concluding his novel with a complete damnation of the system. Godwin's published ending echoes the effect of Smith's ending in *Desmond*. Both must avoid condemnation, which leads to hopelessness and inertia and does not encourage reform. *Desmond* ends on a moderately happy note, but the lack of female voices raises questions about how the "enlightened" men of England can enact reforms based on French principles when they remain ingrained in an imbalanced hierarchical and patriarchal social structure. Smith's ending encourages hope for the future while criticizing social elements that require reform, much like Godwin's published ending. Godwin, who writes at a time when the French Revolution has deteriorated and no longer represents the bastion of reformer's hopes as it did for Smith, sees potential for a much more bleak future. But Godwin must avoid such a dismal picture if he hopes to, as *Desmond* does, leave room for enquiry, contemplation, and perhaps even action.

As a man to whom society and friendship was a primary goal in life, Godwin would have prioritized the ability for *Caleb Williams* to inspire contemplation and discussion. The novel seeks to narrate and characterize the philosophical arguments of *Political Justice* so that those arguments can reach a wider audience. By extension, he wants to inspire conversation, contemplation, and enquiry in a wider section of the public so that those men and women can ask the same questions about how their society operates.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

In 1795, a society of gentlemen, as they named themselves, published a short-lived journal from Norwich entitled *The Cabinet*. The aim of *The Cabinet*, as stated in the first issue, was “to work the complete reformation of mankind by argument, or to rouse them to an immediate sense of their civil obligations by occasional remonstrance” (vol 1, 7). The anonymous authors open the journal with the somewhat sarcastic acknowledgement that they cannot adopt a tone of equal confidence “under what is called a free and happy constitution,” for they fear that the jealous government will read their work not to improve their minds, but to mark for persecution and penalty a careless or unguarded stricture, a warm or intemperate remonstrance” (vol 1, 2). The authors recognize the tyrannical government Godwin depicts in *Caleb Williams*, but it only serves to amplify their passion and dedication to reform. In an introduction that resembles a manifesto, they declare:

Yet, amidst these evils, it is our duty, and amidst much greater ones, it would still be our duty, to redouble our efforts, to multiply and strengthen our exertions. It is the duty of all, who have leisure, opportunity, or talent fit for the talk, to contribute their mite to the moral and political reformation of human society; and, in spite of calumny or intolerance, to pursue the track of laudable enterprise, with a steady and composed pace.

(vol 1, 2).

In the face of persecution, the gentlemen behind *The Cabinet* determine to continue the sociable discourse as possible. Public conversation, in the style of conventional sociability, is not an option because of the government hovering in pubs and scanning for unguarded strictures.

Government surveillance inhibits debate and discussion as any radical remark would be readily misconstrued as a treasonous statement. The only available avenue to pursue sociable discourse, therefore, is in print. As the authors declare, “the press is an engine, from which all the lights of our modern world have proceeded, and while its freedom lasts, every thing that is of any value to us, will be defended and preserved” (vol 1, 7). The discourse must move into print, and furthermore, it must act through the education of its readers. Because debate is impossible, and the chance for conversation very limited, people who wish to participate in reform discourse must do so through educational statements rather than persuasive arguments.

The works examined in this essay cover a very short span of time, but within this timeframe sociability changes drastically. In 1790, with the publication of Burke’s *Reflections*, sociability still resembles the conventional coffeehouse debate between an educated elite. Burke opens this discussion up to a new audience, however, with his gothic imagery and instigatory language. Responses to Burke dominate the sociable discourse for the following four years, significantly taking place from a variety of media. Smith’s *Desmond* engages in this sociability through the epistolary novel, which she uses as a platform to educate and to inspire discussion. Her ambiguous ending raises questions about the possibility for effective reform in England, questions which she hopes her readers and her fellow sociable authors will address. However, in 1792 the entire scene shifts. Revolution in France begins to devolve and the government begins to resist reformers as potential threats. By 1794, when Godwin writes *Caleb Williams*, the government response to the reform rhetoric characteristic of sociable discourse impedes Godwin’s ability to address the issues directly. The sociable discourse transitions into the realm of education and contemplation. No longer characterized by quick, persuasive essays like Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication*, the sociable discourse in 1794 focuses on educating the readership

through print on their rights and on how government should be created. Godwin's *Caleb Williams* seeks to educate his readership through the contemplation of a psychological novel, perfectly blending the political with the literary to achieve the dual purpose of entertainment and enlightenment. For the most part, however, with government restrictions on sociable discourse and radical thought, the reform movement transitions to education in print, as characterized by the 1795 *Cabinet*.

These works benefit from readings that emphasize their intertextuality not just because the texts respond to each other, but also because the authors wrote in a time when politics and literature embraced and relied upon sociability. The works were written to respond to each other, and therefore a complete reading requires heavy emphasis on intertextuality and sociability. As printed works, *Reflections*, *Desmond*, and *Caleb Williams* opened the political discussion to new audiences and thus formed a new sociability. This new sociability relied heavily on the conventions of mid-eighteenth-century coffeehouse discussions, particularly between an elite group of men already involved in politics. The introduction of the popular press, however, as the works examined here show, opened this discourse into new speakers, or authors, and, most importantly, new audiences.

The logical next step in this exploration would be an analysis of reception history. Burke, Smith, and Godwin acknowledge, both through the narrative techniques they employ and also through personal writings and prefaces, an interest in reaching new audiences. These new audiences are the men and women who are slowly emerging as important political players towards the end of the century. Discovering how these men and women received, read, interpreted, and incorporated the political philosophies of the authors here discussed represents a difficult, if not daunting, task, mostly because of a lack of information. However, questions

remain about how well these works operated as educational texts and to what degree these new audiences learned about their political histories and rights through the literature. We can know that there was a very strong impulse amongst the intellectual reformers to educate the new public, which is obvious from *The Cabinet*. The obvious next question is how effective these efforts were.

Burke, Smith, and Godwin merge politics and literature in order to discuss contemporary events and political questions within a public medium. This mixture causes problems for the authors. Burke's inclusion of gothic imagery complicates his political message; readers who anticipated a political treatise recoiled at the ploy to simplify and convince a common audience. For Burke's most adamant detractors, like Wollstonecraft and Paine, this miscegenation of politics and novel results in a message that is easily criticized. For the novel-writers, mixing politics and literature complicates the novel's ending. *Desmond* and *Caleb Williams* can no longer end according to purely aesthetic concerns. Rather, the endings must address the issues of political reform each novel raises, and do so in a way that inspires conversation, contemplation, and most importantly, action. Mixing politics and the novel places these three works within a sociable discourse about political reform, but it also challenges the authors to manipulate form for new motivations. *Reflections*, *Desmond*, and *Caleb Williams* participate in a sociable discourse and respond to each other, and though their effectiveness in educating their audiences remains a difficult question to answer, they represent their author's fervor to positively alter or reform their world.

## WORKS CITED

- Burke, Edmund. "A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful." *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*. Eds. McLoughlin, T. O. and James T. Boulton. Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. 185-320. Print.
- Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Ed. Clark, J. C. D. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001. Print.
- Butler, Marilyn, ed. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.
- Cabinet by a Society of Gentlemen*. Norwich: J. March, 1795. Print.
- Clark, J. C. D. "Introduction." *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Ed. Clark, J. C. D. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001. Print.
- "A Review of *Desmond*." *Critical Review* Sep 1792a. Print.
- "A Review of *Desmond*." *European Magazine* July 1792b. Print.
- "A Review of *Desmond*." *Monthly Review* Sep 1792c. Print.
- Dreyer, Frederick. "The Genesis of Burke's *Reflections*." *Journal of Modern History* 50 3 (1977): 462-77. Print.
- Godwin, William. "Autobiographical Fragments." *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*. Ed. Philp, Mark. Vol. 1. London: William Pickering, 1992. Print.
- Caleb Williams*. Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2000a. Print.
- "Cursory Strictures." *Uncollected Writings*. Eds. Marken, Jack W. and Burton R. Pollin. Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1968. Print.
- The Enquirer: Reflection on Education, Manners, and Literature*. Dublin: J. Moore, 1797. Print.
- Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Ed. Carter, K. Codell. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. Print.
- "Of History and Romance." *Caleb Williams*. Eds. Handwerk, Gary and A.A. Markley. Ontario: Broadview Literary Texts, 2000b. Print.
- Goodwin, Albert. *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979. Print.
- Graham, Jenney. *The Nation, the Law, and the King: Reform Politics in England, 1789-1799*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Lanham: University Press of America, 2000. Print.

- Habermas, Jürgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Burger, Thomas and Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989. Print.
- Lock, F.P. *Edmund Burke*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006. Print.
- Lucius. "Cursory Remarks on Mr. Burke's *Reflections*, 7c.: Letter Iv." *St. James Chronicle* Nov 18 1790. Print.
- Marshall, Peter. *William Godwin*. London: Yale UP, 1984. Print.
- McCracken, David. "Rhetorical Strategy in Burke's *Reflections*." *The Yearbook of English Studies* 1 (1971): 120-24. Print.
- Mellor, Anne. "The Politics of Fiction." *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*. Ed. Mellor, Anne. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002. Print.
- Merriman, John. *A History of Modern Europe*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004. Print.
- Paine, Tom. "The Rights of Man, Part I." *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Ed. Butler, Marilyn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.
- Paul, C. Kegan. *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1876. Print.
- Philp, Mark. "William Godwin". Stanford, 2009. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed. Zalta, Edward N. (Summer 2009): The Metaphysics Research Lab 15 Mar 2010. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/godwin/>>.
- Price, Richard. "A Discourse on the Love of Our Country." *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Ed. Butler, Marilyn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.
- Priestley, Joseph. "Letters to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, Occasioned by His Reflections on the Revolution in France." *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Ed. Butler, Marilyn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.
- Prior, James. *A Life of Edmund Burke*. Philadelphia: A Small, 1825. Print.
- Russell, Gillian, and Clara Tuite. "Introducing Romantic Sociability." *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain 1770-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. Print.
- Smith, Charlotte. *Desmond*. Eds. Blank, Antje and Janet Todd. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001. Print.
- Williams, Anne. *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Print.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. "A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke." *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Ed. Butler, Marilyn. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.

Woodcock, George. "The Meaning of Revolution in Britain, 1770-1800." *The French Revolution and British Culture*. Eds. Crossley, Ceri and Ian Small. New York: Oxford UP, 1989. Print.

Wyndham. "To the Right Hon. Edmund Burke." *General Evening Post* Jan 3 1791. Print.

## SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. "Revolutionary Romanticism." *Wordsworth in Context*. Eds. Fletcher, Pauline and John Murphy. Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1992. Print.
- Blakemore, Steven. *Burke and the Fall of Language: The French Revolution as Linguistic Event*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988. Print.
- Boulton, J. T. *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963. Print.
- Bruyn, Frans de. *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke: The Political Uses of Literary Form*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. Print.
- Butler, Marilyn, ed. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984. Print.
- . "Romanticism in England." *Romanticism in National Context*. Eds. Porter, Roy and Mikuláš Teich. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988. Print.
- Butler, Marilyn, and Mark Philp. "General Introduction." *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*. Ed. Philp, Mark. Vol. 1. London: William Pickering, 1992. Print.
- Clair, William St. *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004. Print.
- Clark, J. C. D. "Introduction." *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Ed. Clark, J. C. D. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001. Print.
- Clemit, Pamela. "Introduction to *Caleb Williams*." *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*. Ed. Mark Philp, ed. Vol. 1. London: William Pickering, 1992. Print.
- Cobban, Alfred. *The Debate on the French Revolution*. London: N. Kaye, 1950. Print.
- Crafton, Lisa Plummer. *The French Revolution Debate in English Literature and Culture*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997. Print.
- Dreyer, Frederick. "The Genesis of Burke's *Reflections*." *Journal of Modern History* 50 3 (1977): 462-77. Print.
- Eagleton, Terry. "Aesthetics and Politics in Edmund Burke." *History Workshop* 28 (Autumn 1989): 53-62. Print.
- Friedland, Paul. *Political Actors: Representative Bodies & Theatricality in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003. Print.
- Furniss, Tom. *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender, and Political Economy in*

- Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993. Print.
- Garrett A. Sullivan, Jr. "'a Story to Be Hastily Gobbled up': *Caleb Williams* and Print Culture." *Studies in Romanticism* 32 (1993): 323-37. Print.
- Graham, Jenney. *The Nation, the Law, and the King: Reform Politics in England, 1789-1799*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Lanham: University Press of America, 2000. Print.
- Graham, Kenneth W. *The Politics of Narrative: Ideology and Social Change in William Godwin's Caleb Williams*. New York: AMS Press, 1990. Print.
- Gray, Tim, and Paul Hindson. "Rhetoric and Representation in Burke's *Reflections*: Edmund Burke and the French Revolution as Drama." *History of European Ideas* 14 2 (1992): 203-11. Print.
- Gregory, Allene. *The French Revolution and the English Novel*. New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1915. Print.
- Grenby, M.O. *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001. Print.
- Grylls, Rosalie Glynn. *William Godwin and His World*. London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1953. Print.
- Hampsher-Monk, Ian. "Rhetoric and Opinion in the Politics of Edmund Burke." *History of Political Thought* 9 3 (Winter 1988): 455-84. Print.
- Kaufman, Pamela. "Burke, Freud, and the Gothic." *Studies in Burke and his Time* 13 3 (1972): 2179-92. Print.
- Kelly, Gary. *The English Jacobin Novel: 1780-1805*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. Print.
- Lang-Peralta, Linda. *Women, Revolution, and the Novels of the 1790s*. Ed. Lang-Peralta, Linda. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1999, 1999. Print.
- Leaver, Kristen. "Pursuing Conversations: *Caleb Williams* and the Romantic Construction of the Reader." *Studies in Romanticism* 33 (1994): 589-610. Print.
- Mallory, Anne. "Burke, Boredom, and the Theater of Counterrevolution." *PMLA* 118 2 (Mar 2003): 224-38. Print.
- Marshall, Peter. *William Godwin*. London: Yale UP, 1984. Print.
- Mellor, Anne. "The Politics of Fiction." *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*. Ed. Mellor, Anne. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2002. Print.
- Ousby, Ian. "'My Servant Caleb': Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and the Political Trials of the 1790s." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 44 (1974): 47-55. Print.
- Philp, Mark. "The Fragmented Ideology of Reform." *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*. Ed. Philp, Mark. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. 56-77. Print.

- Prior, James. *A Life of Edmund Burke*. Philadelphia: A Small, 1825. Print.
- Rajan, Tilottama. "Wollstonecraft and Gowin: Reading the Secrets of the Political Novel." *Studies in Romanticism* 27 2 (Summer 1988): 221-51. Print.
- Spinner, Jeff. "Constructing Communities: Edmund Burke on Revolution." *Polity* 23 3 (Spr 1991): 395-421. Print.
- Sussman, Charlotte. "Women's Private Reading and Political Action, 1649-1838." *Radicalism in British Literary Culture*. Eds. Morton, Timothy and Nigel Smith. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 133-52. Print.
- Thompson, E. P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Vintage Books, 1966. Print.
- Wharam, Alan. *The Treason Trials, 1794*. London: Leicester UP, 1992. Print.
- Wood, Neal. "The Aesthetic Dimension of Burke's Political Thought." *Journal of British Studies* 4 1 (1964): 41-64. Print.
- Woodcock, George. "The Meaning of Revolution in Britain, 1770-1800." *The French Revolution and British Culture*. Eds. Crossley, Ceri and Ian Small. New York: Oxford UP, 1989. Print.