FAMILY MEN

Constructing the gentleman in the eighteenth-century British novel

APRIL 16, 2021

SARAH E. BERKOWITZ

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Economy of Character Behind Closed Doors. 2

Chapter One

The Gold Standard:
Fictive Kin and Moral Community in
The History of Sir Charles Grandison. 47

Chapter Two

The Three Greatest Characters and the "Little Republic":
Family, Fatherhood, and Civic Identity in *The Vicar of Wakefield*. 80

Chapter Three

"That Dirty Paultry Custom":
Emotional Labor and the Vails Debate, 1750-1780. 114

Afterward

Perfect Gentlemen. 145

Works Cited. 151

Introduction

The Economy of Character Behind Closed Doors

When they first appeared in 1773, *Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son* were an immediate *success de scandale.* Famously teaching "the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master," the letters spanned thirty years and consisted of the nobleman's advice to his illegitimate son, Philip Stanhope (Boswell 188). The public's curiosity was piqued by the potential window into the lives of the rich and titled, as Chesterfield advocated for the politest forms of lying, flattery, and adultery in the name of social and political advancement. But the letters were not marketed as a secret history or memoir. Instead, they were marketed as "a compleat system of education" for young gentlemen. English editions would be variously titled: *The Principles of Politeness* (1775); *The Fine Gentleman's Etiquette* (1776); and *Some Advices on Men and Manners* (1776) (Roberts x). These two genres, the conduct book for young gentlemen and the aristocratic tell-all memoir, should be opposites of one another. The conduct book is about general behavior—what anyone *should* do when faced with a particular set of circumstances. The tell-all memoir, on the other hand, is about learning the private habits of specific people—trying to discern the difference between what someone says they do and what they really do behind closed doors.

Jenny Davidson has argued that the publication of Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* marked a turning point in British attitudes towards the relationship between morality and politeness. Chesterfield's advocacy for manners at the expense of sincerity revealed the barely concealed opposition of the two. One of the charges that contemporaries frequently leveled

against Chesterfield was hypocrisy. He was prone to giving advice that encouraged telling other people what they wanted to hear at the price of sincerity: "A man of the world must, like the Cameleon, be able to take every different hue." Chesterfield himself did not consider such advice as hypocrisy, "for it relates only to manners, and not to morals" (106). There is much to say about Chesterfield's reputation for hypocrisy, but I want to turn away from the separation of manners and morals to draw attention to moments in the letters that reveal a kind of tortured sincerity.

In a letter dated 14 December 1747, Chesterfield communicates his affection for the fifteen-year-old Stanhope, but then spends the rest of the letter qualifying what he means by "affection." He warns Stanhope, "Do not mistake the nature of my affection, and think it of a kind that you may with impunity abuse. It is not natural affection, there being in reality no such thing" (62). He goes on:

> My object is to have you fit to live; which, if you are not, I do not desire that you should live at all. My affection for you then is, and only will be, proportioned to your merit, which is the only affection that one rational being ought to have for another. Hitherto I have discovered nothing wrong in your heart or your head: on the contrary, I think I see sense in the one, and sentiments in the other. This persuasion is the only motive of my present affection; which will either increase or diminish, according to your merit or demerit. (63)

Chesterfield goes out of his way to insist upon the conditional nature of his love. The affection he feels towards Stanhope is not *his* per se, but the rational effect that Stanhope's proper mixture of sense and sensibility would have on any observer. Chesterfield rejects the possibility of "natural affection" between father and son because to do otherwise would be its own form of

hypocrisy. Chesterfield's advice focuses on behavior. He firmly believes that certain actions produce certain reactions; thus, if he *were* to feel affection for Stanhope when he failed to act "correctly" it would undermine the years of education and mentorship Chesterfield has invested in his son.

More than merely undermining his own advice, Chesterfield would be risking his character. If he were to love Stanhope beyond reason, he might risk unmanly effeminacy. Chesterfield's affections are not "those of a mother, of which the only, or at least the chief objects, are health and life" (63). He claims to be so far from caring about health and life that he could watch a son not "fit to live" expire without regret.

This kind of rational parenthood takes a toll on Chesterfield. Despite proclaiming that his love for Stanhope is conditional, Chesterfield's unconditional affection keeps leaking through the correspondence. The primary emotion that Stanhope elicits from his father is not pride but "anxiety." For example:

> It seems extraordinary, but it is very true, that my anxiety for you increases in proportion to the good accounts which I receive of you from all hands. I promise myself so much from you, that I dread the least disappointment. (12 September 1749)

Or:

> Solicitous and anxious as I have ever been to form your heart, your mind, and your manners, and to bring you as near perfection as the imperfection of our natures will allow, I have exhausted, in the course of our correspondence, all that my own mind could suggest, and have borrowed from others whatever I thought could be useful to you. (6 June 1749)

Or:

> Your good or ill success at Hanover will have a very great influence upon your subsequent character, figure, and fortune in the world; therefore I confess that I am more anxious about it, than ever bride was on her wedding. (26 June 1752)

This kind of anxiety reflected well on Chesterfield as a parent, but it also reveals the corner he has painted himself into.[1] His feelings are at the mercy of Stanhope's success or failure, and hence outside of his own control. The somewhat uncomfortable metaphor of feeling like a bride on her wedding night reveals the extent to which Chesterfield has undermined his own authority. He uses the bride metaphor to describe a state of powerless anticipation, knowing that the consequences of somebody else's actions will have a permanent effect on his own life. His anxiety has reversed the power relations of the family—the paterfamilias reduced to new bride.

As it happened, Stanhope was not the protégé Chesterfield might have wished for. He had a "disastrous" career in politics consisting of "two brief periods as an MP, a maiden speech for connoisseurs of ineptitude to savor, and a failed attempt to buy a seat in the year of his death" (xxi). Stanhope quit politics and England for diplomatic postings in Germany where his career was cut short by his sudden death at age 36. After his death, Chesterfield learned that, in opposition to his explicit advice, Stanhope had been married in secret to a lower-class woman with no political connections. When Eugenia Stanhope learned that Chesterfield would only provide financially for her two sons, leaving her with nothing, she undertook to publish his letters to Stanhope without his consent, altering his reputation forever.

[1] Lord Eliot was said to have remarked: "It was strange that a man who shewed he had so much affection for his son as Lord Chesterfield did, by writing so many long and anxious letters to him, almost all of them when he was secretary of state, which certainly was proof of great goodness of disposition, should endeavour to make his son a rascal" (Roberts xi).

Despite being a historical figure, Lord Chesterfield is my starting point for a dissertation about fictional gentlemen. It's no accident that the two genres *Letters* hybridizes, the conduct book and the secret history, are also two genres often cited as precursors to the realist novel, and there are certainly times when both Stanhope and Chesterfield read like characters from an epistolary novel.[2] But I start with Chesterfield because his relationship with Stanhope crystalizes all of my dissertation's themes: character, masculinity, and patriarchy are all woven together in the relationship between ambitious father and disappointing son. I also begin here because he is the worst nightmare of the gentlemen who are the focus of my dissertation: a tragic and cautionary tale about the folly of ambition. Chesterfield's hypocrisy, his "cameleon" nature, is the effect of his public lifestyle. He *has* to change his appearance to suit different audiences because his audience is so vast that a single set of manners or morals could never satisfy it.

This dissertation is about how not to become Lord Chesterfield. The gentlemen in the novels I read have managed to find a balance between passionate attachment to individuals and trying to please "all the world." Instead, the conservative mid-century novels I read find gentlemen at the center of small, private communities that affirm their authority without exposing them to unsuitable publicity. Novels like *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* and *The Vicar of Wakefield* renegotiate the gentleman's authority as a question of character rather than status. This model of character encourages readers to equate gentlemen with entire communities, meaning we can understand the gentleman from his society or society from the gentleman. Figures like Squire Allworthy in *Tom Jones* or Sir William Thornhill in *The Vicar of Wakefield* put boundaries on worlds where identities threaten to spin out of control and characters and

[2] See for example Nancy Armstrong *Desire and Domestic Fiction;* Rosalind Ballaster *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction from 1684-1740*; Miranda Burgess *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830*; Michael McKeon *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740*; and J. Paul Hunter *Before Novels: The Cultural Context of Eighteenth-Century Fiction*.

readers do not know whom to trust. These equivalencies provide the gentlemen with social prestige and authority, but also cause a loss of access to the kinds of privacy we usually associate with subjectivity.[3]

In the rest of this introduction, I trace eighteenth-century ideologies of family, privacy, and patriarchy to show how novels taught readers to understand the gentleman's social authority as character. I argue that abandoning subjectivity in favor of the kinds of sociability evinced in these novels reveals a new kind of character, one better suited to describe the eighteenth century's understanding of what it meant to be a "gentleman." I use novels, conduct books, and political philosophy to show how the relationship between the neighborhood and the gentleman created a mutually reinforcing moral warrant; the gentleman's position gave him the prestige of authority, while the neighborhood's dependence upon the gentleman helped calibrate the potentially unstable world of the emerging market economy.

Masculinity and Character

I take my working definition of "gentleman" from the Oxford English Dictionary. A gentleman is:

1) A man
2) Who does not have to work for a living

The OED also provides a third part to this definition: "who is not a member of the aristocracy." I've chosen to omit this criterion, not only because characters like Charles Grandison and

[3] As I detail a little later, the concept of character in the novel as the precursor to the liberal subject is largely an inheritance from Ian Watt's *Rise of the Novel,* which associates the form of the novel with the emerging market economy. For a particularly lucid exploration of the correlation see Catherine Gallagher's article "The Rise of Fictionality." For explorations of character that shift the focus away from subjectivity see David Brewer's *The Afterlife of Character* (2005), and Blakey Vermeule's chapter "The Fantasy of Exposure and Narrative Development in Eighteenth-Century Britain" from her study *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?* (2010).

William Thornhill have titles, but because one of the questions up for debate in these novels is whether or not an aristocrat can be a gentleman. The gentleman becomes the focal point for intersecting reorganizations of class and gender between the early modern period and the eighteenth century.

Somewhere, on or about April 1679, human nature changed.[4] Michael McKeon describes the transition from the seventeenth to the eighteenth century as a process of "birth" decoupling from "worth," and a fulfillment of the "early modern disenchantment with aristocratic ideology" (297). But, McKeon cautions, the political and economic changes that would allow the middle class to "rise" cannot be separated from a concomitant reorganization of ideologies of gender:

> In the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, England acquired the modern wisdom that there are not one but two sexes; that they are biologically distinct and therefore incommensurable; and that they are defined not by behavior, which is variable, but by nature, which is not. (301)[5]

Gender and class were engaged in a kind of epistemological *do-si-do*:

> "Gender" and "sex" came into existence as a dialectically inseparable counterparts engaged in the crucial adjudication of the boundaries of the biological. But "class" came into existence to demystify and replace a former rule of biological essence, the rule of inherited social status. (306)

---

[4] An aside about periodization: I discuss a number of sweeping historical narratives that form the backdrop of my analysis of gender and character in the novel, most of which rely on a transition from a certain state of affairs in the "early modern period" (1500-1650) to a markedly different one in the "modern period" or "long eighteenth-century" (roughly 1651-1815). I give the dates for convenience, but as with all cultural and historical trends we can assume change was incremental and incomplete. I've picked the Glorious Revolution and the Hanoverian Settlement as my pivot point because it marked a moment when many of the discontents of the previous era came to fruition, and political power changed hands, but I always intend to serve my dating of cultural changes with a grain of salt.

[5] McKeon is mostly building on the work of Thomas Laqueur here, whose study of science, medicine, and history, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, pinpoints the early modern era as the moment when physicians began to change their understanding of female bodies from one of fundamental similarity to one of fundamental difference when compared with male bodies.

As in a *do-si-do*, the gentleman ended up in almost the same place. A wealthy man who did not have to work for a living still held supremacy, but the difference was that he now shared his access to power with other men (who may or may not be aristocrats) instead of with other aristocrats (who may or may not be men).

This sounds a bit like "the more things change, the more they stay the same," but the resemblance between the old and new versions of the male-person-with-authority creates extra challenges for the new regime. If class is mobile but gender is stable, then masculinity becomes a much more reliable metric of "worth" than class. But since roughly half the population is male there has to be more ways of differentiating the one from the many. Character becomes the mechanism that helps demystify new relationships between people, property, and authority. By asserting the existence of a stable identity, character stabilizes social relations in turn. "Character," Deidre Lynch argues

> arises to help the populace cope with the influx of new goods and ideas: new commodities, available in new kinds of spaces, put pressure on the norms and the categories that people had formerly invoked to explain the material world and to make its artifacts meaningful. In this context, people used characters to renegotiate social relations in their changed, commercialized world, to derive new kinds of pleasure from the changes, to render their property truly private, to cope with the embarrassment of riches. (4-5)

Like "gentleman" character can be a frustratingly capacious term. It can mean a fictional person, a mark on a surface, personality, reputation, moral fiber, the list goes on and on.[6] In this dissertation I use character to mean an epistemology of people. Whether it is a fictional human, a

[6] The OED offers 15 primary definitions, each with multiple sub-definitions, followed by two pages of usages.

personal tic, or a letter of recommendation, character offers us the comfort of believing that people can become legible to other people.

Reorganizing Character

We tend to think of even the pre-nineteenth-century novel as an inherently bourgeois genre, interested in the private lives of middle-class characters and championing the extraordinary individual. The preeminent version of this argument comes from Ian Watt's 1957 *Rise of the Novel*, which still casts a long shadow. Watt crafts a teleological progression through eighteenth-century fiction that corresponds to the emerging market economy and rise of the middle classes in England. He traces prose fiction from the supposedly unsophisticated genre of Romance that focused on knights and nobles to a full-fledged version of realism that makes stories about everyday people compelling. A crucial element of his argument is that realism emphasized stories about "particular individuals" whereas Romance told stories about archetypes (17). While the work on character in the eighteenth-century novel since Watt's book have steadily chipped away at his teleological approach, much of it revises rather than refutes his central thesis and still emphasizes an inherent connection between "character" and "the individual." [7]

My aim is not to contradict these readers, but to supplement them; the techniques they highlight coexist with modes of characterization that highlight connection and belonging. Part of the inheritance of the tradition that equates character with individuality is to devalue the kinds of

[7] For exploration of character in the eighteenth-century novel contemporaneous with Lynch see Catherine Gallagher *Nobody's Story*; post Lynch we get Lisa A. Freeman's *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity on the Eighteenth Century English Stage* (2002). Explorations of the role of "flat" characters in the novel acknowledge their importance but still consider them to be lesser than the round characters they support. See Alexander Woloch's *The One vs The Many*, Maria DiBattista's *Novel Characters: A Genealogy* (2010); John Frow *Character and Person* (2014); Marta Figlerowicz's *Flat Protagonists: A Theory of Novel Character* (2017). Aaron Kunin's 2019 *Character as Form* is an exception to this rule.

character that *do not* resemble the fully-formed, psychologically realized, individual. The language inherited from E. M. Forster asks us to think of character in spatial metaphors, as either "flat" or "round." Round characters exceed the flat page, we are able to imagine an inner life for them beyond the confines of the book, while flat characters—unsurprisingly—fit very nicely on the flat page. Forster is clear that, while flat characters have their charms, they "are not in themselves as big achievements as round ones, and also that they are best when they are comic. A serious or tragic flat character is apt to be a bore" (71). We encounter this distinction in different critical contexts in studies of the novel, each with its own vocabulary for the contrast between the kinds of characters who feel "real" (deep, individual, invested with subjectivity) and the characters who are upfront about their own fictionality (flat, stock types, narrative objects). Most replicate Forster's hierarchy, considering round characters a greater artistic achievement than flat ones. I posit that round and flat is not a useful binary to describe gentlemen whose "worth" is measured by sociability instead of subjectivity.

The gentleman is not really a "type." In *Character as Form*, Aaron Kunin makes the startling claim that all character is really Theophrastan character—i.e., all character can be taxonomized by type. He contends that "A character collects examples. In fact, a character collects every example. …Not personal identity but a grouping based on a shared characteristics" (7). For Kunin, a heading like "The miser" is all we need to collect misers throughout history; from Harpagon to Ebenezer Scrooge to Scrooge McDuck. But this kind of categorization doesn't work for "the gentleman," in the same way it works for a character like a miser or a braggart. Depending on your definition, gentleman as a type could include Tom Jones, Blifil and Allworthy—how would we begin to caricature such a figure? The gentleman is a difficult type to conjure because it's the one we are always conjuring with. The other Theophrastan types exist in

relation to the gentleman: a miser is stingier than your average gentleman, a trickster wilier, and a braggard more brash. Only by stripping away interesting characteristics can we see the gentleman underneath—and by then we might be looking at anyone at all.

Yet we also cannot psychoanalyze him; if he is not a type, neither is he an individual. In *Desire and Domestic Fiction,* Nancy Armstrong argues that character with interiority was something the novel generated for women around the middle of the eighteenth century. Men "generally retained their political identity in writing that developed the qualities of female subjectivity and made subjectivity a female domain" (4). Public roles are so important to gentlemen that they cannot transcend them to inhabit private identity. However, like Theophrastan type, the "female domain" of subjectivity that Armstrong describes both excludes the gentleman and is predicated on his existence. Her emphasis on domestic fiction means that her soulful heroines are seldom found outside of the marriage plot; subjectivity thus seems predicated on questions like "How good does a housemaid need to be to reform a Mr. B?" or "What would make a suitor look past Mrs. Bennet as a mother-in-law?" The soft power created by subjectivity is judged by its effect on an imagined male viewer.

Whether we are discussing character as individuals or types, the gentleman seems to be both integral to the system and outside of it. I argue that the best way to characterize the gentleman is not by looking at his outsides, like Kunin, or insides, like Armstrong, but rather by looking at his relationship to a larger character system. Rather than think of character in terms of depth, I want to switch to a language of connectivity. In *The Economy of Character*, Lynch observes that character "in its most abstract sense" designated "the qualities that separated an object from some things and bound it to others" (35). When we talk about character in the novel

vis-à-vis other people, we usually focus on those elements that separate; I want to refocus the conversation on the elements of character that bind.

Alex Woloch has described the tension at the center of the realist novel as a dialectic between psychological depth and social breadth, which he understands as a question of character. In his exploration of minor characters in the nineteenth-century novel, *The One vs the Many*, Woloch seizes on the limited "space" of the novel, what he calls "the circumscribed form of narrative," and the unlimited nature of an "implied human personality" (13). Real people (perhaps we can call them "explicit human personalities" to continue Woloch's analogy) do not cease to exist when we stop thinking about them, but characters in novels exist only insofar as they command our attention. All novels, even eighteenth-century novels, have to end eventually, and even if this were not the case readers could not attend to an infinite number of fictional people indefinitely. The space in which a character holds our attention is what Woloch calls "character space." In Woloch's theory realist novels are "character systems," or "the management of multiple different characters' spaces…into a unified narrative structure" (13).

Because character space is necessarily limited, the character system becomes a zero-sum game, creating the antagonistic "vs." relationship of Woloch's title. I want to take Woloch's insights about the relationships between space and character and ask what happens if that relationship isn't necessarily antagonistic. Eighteenth-century ideas of personhood and subjectivity allow for other kinds of character relationships within the bounded unit of the novel, including what I think of as "cumulative" relationships, where space given to one character adds to, rather than subtracts from, the space of another. Consider Elizabeth Bennet's tour of Pemberley in *Pride and Prejudice.* Elizabeth Bennet is able to reflect (with characteristic irony) that she first fell in love with Mr. Darcy after "first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley"

(397). Her first encounter with Pemberley does indeed change her feelings about Darcy, but not because it displays the magnitude of his wealth. Once she sees how well the estate is run, and how highly Darcy's household staff and tenants talk about him, her opinion begins to shift. The scenes where she tours the estate are very much *about* Mr. Darcy even though he is not present for the tour itself; space given to Mr. Darcy's housekeeper adds to, rather than detracting from, Darcy's own character space.

I posit that these kinds of cumulative relationships are the best way to understand the function of gentleman characters in eighteenth-century novels. Woloch's analysis pertains mainly to the nineteenth-century novel, and his theory is shaped by the relationship between realism and what he refers to as "nineteenth-century bourgeois imagination" (31). He reads the realist novel as:

> a dialectical literary form […] generated out of the relationship between inequality and democracy. The realist novel is infused with the sense that any character is a potential hero, but simultaneously enchanted with the freestanding individual, defined through his or her interior consciousness. […] In the paradigmatic character-structure of the realist novel, any character *can* be a protagonist, but only one character is: just as increasing political equality, and a maturing logic of human rights, develop amid acute economic and social stratification. (31)

In contrast, my dissertation explores novels from the middle of the eighteenth century and asks how writing before the full formation of the "nineteenth-century bourgeois imagination" conceptualized the relationship of character to space within the novel. Specifically, I look at the eighteenth century's evolving ideas about patriarchy and the portrayal of the gentleman in novels because, I believe, the ideal English gentleman is a particularly bad fit for the kind of character

we usually associate with subjectivity and depth, but still plays an important role in eighteenth-century character systems.

It's a familiar move but it bears repeating: examining masculinity helps to denaturalize gender-based power structures. And gender has always been a significant part of the critical tradition that equates the liberal subject with character; the divide between a feminine private sphere and masculine public sphere is duplicated in the way critics imagine interiority. Watt's argument stresses that female readers were a major factor in the development of the realist novel, making the novel a "feminized" genre. He equated the psychological interiority of "round" characters with the interiority of domestic space, which he read as a distinctly feminine domain. The genre that most often receives attention for constructing masculinity is the periodical.[8] Like the novel, the publications like *The Tatler, The Spectator*, and *The Rambler* eschewed overt political affiliations, but unlike the novel they circulated in public spaces and discussed public sociability. Shawn Lisa Maurer argues that these publications were responsible for initiating "efforts to publicize representations of […] 'sentimental masculinity,' in which the so-called space of the home supplanted the polis as a locus for masculine virtue" (7). Part of what I aim to show here is that the same modes of character production that arise in an "economy of character" can also exist within the relative privacy of the home and in the semi-privacy of the neighborhood.[9]

[8] See, for example, Shawn Lisa Maurer *Proposing Men: Dialectics of Gender and Class in the Eighteenth-Century English Periodical* (1998, and the first volume of Thomas A. King's *The Gendering of Men*, 1600-1750.
[9] This is similar to Jürgen Habermas's understanding of character as geared towards a "privateness oriented to an audience." Habermas describes the family as the site where "humanity" originated, "in the humanity of the intimate relationships between human beings who, under the aegis of family, were nothing more than human" (48).

The Novel of Sociability

Most of the works I read here are examples of what Betty Schellenberg calls "the novel of sociability."[10] These novels center around the creation and maintenance of a harmonious "community of consensus" that exists as distinct from a potentially cruel and unforgiving outside world, and highlights "the circumscription of socially threatening individualistic desire in a plot structure that models a community of consensus as the ideal unit from which a stable society is constructed" (4). If Woloch frames the paradigmatic struggle of the realist novel as the one vs the many, these novels put forth a fantasy of the many becoming one. Their happy endings imagine a stable, structured community with strict boundaries that is larger than an individual household but smaller than the polis or a potentially unbounded "public sphere." Although the structure of these communities usually replicates the non-consensual patriarchal power structure of land-based wealth, emphasizing their consensual nature changes their primary structuring force from inherited social and economic status to sociability, taste, and character. Schellenberg stresses that these fictions turn away from the liberal subject and rework "form on every level to embody a model of the self not as a uniquely expressive essence but as a relational and role-defined part of a larger whole" (5). The semi-private sphere these communities create are the perfect medium for characterizing the gentleman—public enough that they allow for the competent execution of community leadership, but private enough that their decisions seem to be

[10] Schellenberg identifies such disparate works as Sarah Fielding's *David Simple*; Richardson's *Pamela in her Exalted Station* and *Sir Charles Grandison*; Henry Fielding's *Amelia*; Sarah Scott's *Millennium Hall* and Tobias Smollett's *Expedition of Humphry Clinker* as examples of the genre. She acknowledges that her genre is retroactively imposed upon these novels—contemporary readers would not have thought of *Humphry Clinker* and *Pamela in her Exalted Station* as belonging to the same genre, much less have asked their lending library for "a novel of sociability" in the same way they would a Gothic novel or a Romance. But the very fact that they cut across so many existing genres highlights, I think, the potential for these kinds of communities within long prose fiction itself.

motivated by their own character rather than loyalty to any particular ideology or political circumstance.

The novel of sociability can place either a man or a woman as the center of their moral universe. *Pamela in her Exalted Station* and *Millennium Hall* both imagine moral universes built around a central virtuous woman or women. But novels of sociability that place a gentleman at the center of their moral world have an additional challenge. The central figure's status as a wealthy gentleman recreates traditional, non-consensual power structures so exactly that we have no reason to assume that the central gentleman's character is doing any of the work. Perhaps people follow Sir Charles's example because he's virtuous, but is it not just as likely that they follow his example out of self-interest? His wealth and gender give him the kind of economic and social power that someone like Pamela, working class and female, has to earn through exquisite displays of feeling. The challenge these novels face is how to communicate that character and not rank or wealth are responsible for the central gentleman's position.

One technique that I explain later in this introduction is to cast the community as a form of family and the gentleman as the proto-paterfamilias. By treating the members of his community "like family" the gentleman can enjoy personalized relationships that maintain hierarchy. Lynch has argued that the representative novels from this period are picaresque tales whose protagonist is "the gentleman who eventually becomes worthy of the station assigned to him" (81). These proto-gentlemen, characters like Tom Jones, Peregrine Pickle, or David Simple, gain the experience and wisdom on the road that they need in order to return home and assume authority. This is a Lockean model of personal worth: the gentleman accrues worth through circulation, like a commodity might; the more he sees, and the more knowledge he accumulates, the more "valuable" he becomes. Lynch describes mid-century picaresque novels

as dividing characters between "those qualified to observe and those who are objects of other's observation" (82). The picaresque main character who moves through different social scenes is the observer, and everyone else puts on a continuous play for him, allowing him to learn from their exaggerated examples. He, in turn, collects a "stock" of knowledge from his travels that creates cohesion from discombobulation.[11] But Lynch's argument doesn't take into account (so to speak) the fundamental stability of the worlds that the gentleman leaves and eventually returns to. Tom Jones requires Squire Allworthy's certification as his official heir to receive his happy ending. If *Tom Jones* does indeed invoke an economy of character, then Allworthy's approval becomes the "unit of account" for that economy: his combination of wealth and morality "underwrite" all of Tom's adventures, in much the way that gold used to "underwrite" notes from the Bank of England.

Novels of sociability eschew the idea of a gentleman becoming worthy of the station he has been born into. Instead, figures like Sir Charles and Sir William Thornhill are already fully formed moral agents when their story begins. The process of coming into character by amassing knowledge is displaced onto the communities, which have the potential to grow and change that the gentleman himself lacks. I see a tight correlation between the boundaries of these communities and the character of the gentleman at their center, as community cohesion only stretches as far as the gentleman's gaze. Novels of sociability switch the organizing gaze from a gentleman who travels to a gentleman who stays home, the narrative energy shifts from "collecting" new experiences and individuals to maintaining a community by keeping disruptive

[11] "The physiognomic digest the would-be gentleman assembles over the course of his journey makes the nation make sense. In an era requiring new evidence of social cohesion, these tours were reparative. The protagonists' reading of the nation, by translating it into text and rendering its various parts commensurable, provided a means of restoring balance to a social order turned topsy-turvy by the explosive growth of the marketplace. The knowledge stockpiled within the physiognomic digest was meant to serve as a kind of symbolic capital, which, introduced into the economy, would correct the disequilibrium" (Lynch 82).

elements out. It may be educational for Tom Jones to encounter Lady Bellaston on the road, but nobody wants her living next door. Schellenberg acknowledges that exclusion and dependence are necessary components of a community of consensus; my argument is that by making the gentleman responsible for the borders of the community he essentially "underwrites" the values of the entire community, which, in turn, means that the shape of the community can be viewed as a reflection of his personal character.

Stabilizing the Economy of Character: The Unit of Account

Stepping back for a second, I want to spend some time exploring how a gentleman can "underwrite" a community's character. Figures like Allworthy, Sir William Thornhill, and Sir Charles Grandison provide the "unit of account" for the economy of character within their respective novels. Their moral and social guidance becomes a kind of touchstone for the other characters in the novel, and moral success or failure is judged against their value-systems and approbation.

John Barrell posits that, in order to have the kind of economic and political authority necessary to stabilize meaning, one had to become a "disinterested gentleman." The market economy popularized the idea that it was possible to work towards one's own self-interest and still contribute to the good of the nation as a whole.[12] But, if a system contained factions working towards different personal goals, it was important that *somebody* retained a sense of the big picture and could put national interest above self-interest. The person who was best qualified to

[12] One of the ideas up for debate is whether pursuing personal gain could be counted as a moral good if the positive impact it had on society was accidental rather than an intended consequence. Works like Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714) argued that the morality of production and consumption didn't need to be taken into account if the effect on society as a whole was positive. In response, writers like the third Earl of Shaftesbury argued that if self-interest contributed to the common good it was a sign of the inherent morality of man. His philosophy is developed by Scottish enlightenment thinkers like Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith, who go on to develop the link between self-interest and the common good.

do so was “the gentleman of landed property” who “had a two-fold qualification to be regarded as disinterested: his permanent stake in the stability of the nation, and his freedom from engaging in any specific profession, trade, or occupation which might occlude his view of society as a whole” (33). To have gentility equated with disinterest has profound implications for the gentleman’s relationship to character. Professions, trades and occupations are all exercises in particularity; they mark a person with attendant associations and features like calloused hands or an ink-stained tongue. The gentleman, by contrast, could be imagined as appealingly featureless. As Lynch explains, “The thing that signifies main-characterness is bland male beauty as opposed to the grotesque and ‘vividly embodied’ people they meet” (82).

However, idleness has attendant snares. In his 1667 conduct book, *The Gentleman’s Calling,* Richard Allestree describes the potential danger of an idle, wealthy, class of men:

> A Gentleman is now supposed to be only a Thing of Pleasure; a Creature sent into the World, as the Leviathan into the Deep, to take his Pastime therein, (and the better to complete the Parallel, to devour his Underlings too) and then ’twill be no wonder if it be adjudged a ridiculous Solecism [sic], to attempt to define his Calling, whose very Essence is thought to consist in having none. (A3)

Allestree leviathan echoes Hobbes’s more famous invocation of that creature, but where Hobbes wants to suggest that no single person can possess dictatorial power without the willing support of others, Allestree sees the gentleman as a potential leviathan unto himself—able to devour underlings in the pursuit of his own pleasures, should he choose to do so.

His solution is to press upon gentlemen that they have a “calling,” a responsibility to God and the rest of society, that requires a pro-social use of his time, talent and money. He identifies five “advantages” that mark a gentleman for a higher calling: education, wealth, leisure,

reputation, and authority. The "authority" of the gentleman, though, is not the same as the authority of the state. Here again Allestree contrasts with Hobbes, who understands the authority of the state as consensual but "artificiall." Despite his calls for absolutist monarchy, Hobbes believed that the relationship between the sovereign and the commonwealth comes from social consensus rather than divine right. The gentleman's "authority" is the opposite, "natural" but limited. It is "not that which belongs to those who are in Public Office"; instead it consists of "that more private Influence which *Gentlemen* generally have on those that are their *Dependents*" (Allestree, 15). He has "sway and prevalency" proportional to his estate which determines those "Number of Servants, Tenants, and Pensioners, (yea perhaps [friends]) too" susceptible to his persuasion (15). His authority is not "despotic," and should not impinge upon anyone else's bodily autonomy, which, significantly *includes* his tenant's private households. The gentleman's authority ends at the cottage gate.

The people most susceptible to the gentleman's sway are his tenants, the people who work his land and pay rent:

> A *Tenant* who thinks his livelihood concerned in the good will of his Landlord, a Pensioner whose subsistence rests upon the bounty of his Patron, will strive to model themselves to such a form, as may best suit the inclinations of the person they desire to endear: they are usually Wax to him, that are Flint to others. (111)

Allestree's metaphor makes two things apparent. First, the hypothetical tenant is only concerned with "form," not with thoughts or feelings, which seems to be good enough for Allestree—it matters more how the tenant behaves than what he thinks. Second, the gentleman's power lies in transmutation rather than creation. Where the "poor man" has the ability to expand his authority through procreation, the gentleman can only "sway" the tenants who already fall under his

jurisdiction. The scope of the gentleman's authority is bounded by the gentleman's ability to see and be seen: only those people who are aware of the gentleman's preferences will modify their behavior, and they will only do so if they know he is watching.

In 1776, nearly a century later—and in the middle of my period—Allestree was still in print, and Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations*. While the economic treatise is very different from Allestree's conduct book, there are moments when the two seem to be in conversation with one another. Smith, too, worries about the potential harm an idle, wealthy man can cause, and he wants to encourage those with means to spend righteously. His underlying argument is that the more wealth a nation produces, the better for everyone in that nation, and, like Allestree, he's concerned that wealthy people have the potential to consume without generating more wealth for the economy:

> The expence of a great lord feeds generally more idle than industrious people. The rich merchant, though with his capital he maintains industrious people only, yet by his expence, that is, by the employment of his revenue, he feeds commonly the very same sort as the great lord. (363)

Smith imagines two ways a rich person can spend their money—on growing manufacture or on their own comfort. Just as Allestree's moral authority is underwritten by the gentleman's wealth, Smith's analysis of wealth is underwritten by a moral code. In this passage, the terms idle and industrious are Smith's way of describing unproductive vs productive labor. Productive labor "adds, generally, to the value of the materials which he works upon, that of his own maintenance, and of his master's profit," while unproductive labor "adds to the value of nothing" (360). Just as the landlord can turn his tenant from flint to wax, Smith's rich man has the option to turn his employees into either "idle" or "industrious" people. Even rich merchants will inevitably spend

some of their profits on their own "expences," but every shilling that goes to their personal comfort detracts from the capital that could be enriching the economy.

That said, Smith acknowledges the need for certain kinds of unproductive labor. He divides unproductive labor into "high" and "low" jobs. Some of the "gravest and most important professions" consist of unproductive labor, including "churchmen, lawyers, physicians, and men of letters of all kind" (including, one assumes, political economists); while "low" unproductive laborers include domestic servants as well as "players, buffoons, musicians, opera singers and opera dancers" (107). Unproductive labor can be as vital to the nation as manufacturing, but it is deeply dependent on the kinds of things that one is not producing:

> The labour of some of the most respectable orders in the society is, like that of menial servants, unproductive of any value, and does not fix or realize itself in any permanent subject, or vendible commodity, which endures after that labour is past…The sovereign, for example, with all the officers of both justice and war who serve under him, the whole army and navy, are unproductive labourers. They are the servants of the public, and are maintained by a part of the annual produce of the industry of other people. (361)

I would argue that the "sway" Allestree claims a gentleman possesses over his tenants is analogous to what Smith describes as "high" unproductive labor—both are imagined as a kind of administration—moral in Allestree's case (but underwritten by economics) and economic in Smith's (but with a moral undertone). Despite his claim that the government are the "servants of the people," the professions in this category all involve some kind of authority—whether intellectual (lawyers, physicians, and 'Men of Letters'), spiritual (churchmen), or political (the sovereign, arguably the soldier).

The novel was one of the cultural mechanisms that helped to elevate the reputation of high unproductive labor and distinguish it from other kinds of work. Through the creation of sympathetic and virtuous characters who used their gentility to elevate others, the novel imagined a reconciliation between the gentleman's suspect leisure and his moral authority. Gentility itself becomes a form of unproductive labor that generates an economy of character. Members of the community look to the gentleman to arbitrate questions of taste, behavior and sociability. Imagining that these things are generated by the gentleman in the same way that capital generates wealth invests the gentleman's leisure with a paradoxically intangible productivity. That product *is* character: a mixture of reputation, moral authority, and affect that proves the gentleman's legitimacy.

Good-Natured Authority

Affect is an important component of this kind of character, but like wealth it comes with its own potential pitfalls. Disinterest forces the gentleman to replace attachment with responsibility: specific attachment narrows the gentleman's focus and is perilously close to interest; while having a "bird's-eye view" of his community swells the number of individuals who have a claim on his attention. But refusing to indulge in specific attachments means the gentleman runs the risk of being considered anti-social, especially if he does not temper his responsibility with warmth. The solution here is to image the gentleman's responsibility as possessing its own kind of warmth, but warmth without specificity—what eighteenth-century writers would have called "good-nature." In "An Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Man," Henry Fielding describes good-nature as a "temper of mind" that regards moral action as both right and pleasurable:

> Good-nature is that benevolent and amiable temper of mind which disposes us to feel the misfortunes and enjoy the happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter and prevent the former; and that without any abstract contemplation on the beauty of virtue, and without the allurements or terrors of religion. (645)

The good-natured man is the intellectual offspring of the Latitudinarian thinkers who posited, in opposition to Hobbes and Locke, that man was, essentially, good.[13] As the Fielding quotation hints, "Good Nature" was a quality almost akin to sympathy, that allows actors to take pleasure in moral action. Crucially, though, while akin to sympathy, and part of the same intellectual tradition, they are not the same—while the man of feeling may occasionally be good-natured, the good-natured man is not always, or even chiefly a "man of feeling."

John K. Sheriff taxonomizes the different characters who embodied the good-natured man, and argued that while each of these different types represent an aspect of "Good Nature," they each serve different functions within the novel (*see table 1*). I start our inquiry in the 1750s which places us just before the sentimental turn that became a dominant trend in the novels of the sixties and seventies. The novels I focus on may have the occasional sentimental interlude, but I do not consider them to be sentimental novels—they have a fundamentally different concept of community that rejects the sentimental exchange in favor of the social exchange.

[13] The bibliography of critics who explore the sentimental turn in the eighteenth-century novel is wide and deep. For a sampling see G.J. Barker Benfield's *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (1992); Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the Culture of Politeness* (1994); Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility, Race, Gender and Commerce in The Sentimental Novel* (1996); Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (2006); and James Chandler, *An Archaeology of Sympathy* (2013).

Table 1; Adapted from John K. Sheriff		
Type	Characteristics	Examples
The Naïf	Unfailingly moral, Innocent, simple, warm-hearted, generous, unaffected. Lacking in social awareness, "can understand in others only which they contain in themselves" (27).	Reverend Primrose, Parson Adams, Tom Jones
The Humorist	Essentially moral, but with one ruling "humor" that sometimes trumps his good nature. Usually a "lovable eccentric," seldom meant to be exemplary.	Matthew Bramble, Uncle Toby
The Man of Sentiment	Emerges later in the century, is a "degeneration of the Good-Natured Man type" "A humor character whose obsession or hobby-horse is his conception of benevolent Good Nature." (73)	Yorick, Harley
The Paragon	An idealized character. Unfailingly moral, but with the social savvy to understand other people's characters, and the manners to know when displays of "good nature" are socially appropriate. Usually wealthy and well-born.	Sir Charles Grandison, Squire Allworthy, Sir William Thornhill

The novel of sociability is profoundly concerned with boundaries and structure, and character is as much about delineating where one person ends and another begins as it is about sympathy and an exchange of feelings. James Chandler points to this breakdown between cause and effect as one of the defining hallmarks of sentimental fiction. In the sentimental emotional economy "we attain an identity for ourselves through exercises in vicariousness," which in turn means that "questions of activity and passivity are never easy to decide. We move when we are moved, and we are moved when we move" (204-205). Sentiment is an active force that has the

potential to dismantle interpersonal boundaries. Adela Pinch describes the period's concept of "sentiment" as "characteriz[ing] feelings as transpersonal, as autonomous entities that do not always belong to individuals but rather wander extravagantly from one person to another" (3). Pinch bases the bulk of her observations on Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, in which he argues that passions are the strongest influence on our day-to-day life. He invests the passions with enormous power—arguing that they wander from person to person, and that "reason is, and ought only to be, slave to the passions" (283). For Hume, passions are contagious, and hence obscure the relationship of cause and effect: when two people find themselves weeping together it can be hard to tell "who started it."

But sympathy is also a lavish display of inner feelings, proof that, whatever a subject's exterior might signify, they do, in fact, "have a heart." Meeting a site of great suffering with a dry eye and steady hand might be signs of competence, rationality, or sociopathy, and tells us nothing about whether the subject has sympathy. The gentleman is taxed with having to maintain a balance between the rationality of disinterest and the warmth of good feeling, to find a way to make affective connections without dissolving boundaries. The critic who best understands the extent of the eighteenth-century novel's investment in boundaries as a force for characterization is Sandra Macpherson, despite the fact that she works in a very different mode and has different concerns. Macpherson writes about strict liability in the eighteenth-century novel. Strict liability laws "impose responsibility for accidental injury without requiring that it be shown the wrongdoer acted carelessly or with fault, laws indifferent to mental states and thus to the normative criteria of liberal subjectivity" (4). Like Lynch, she sees the novel's central project as mapping the unexpected interdependence of individuals in the modern world, but she is also adamant that causality and responsibility structure these encounters:

> [Strict Liability] conceives of the person as a material abstraction--as the bearer of a harm that is substantive but not particularized, as the perpetrator of a harm that is causal but not agentive. Relationship on this model is not an effect of recognition or affection: one is obliged to another whether or not she likes her, whether or not she knows her, whether or not she acknowledges her. (21)

Macpherson reads the novel as a tragic genre, and focusing on liability unearths moments of tragic collision: events that a character could not plan for, but nonetheless demonstrate responsibility. Character in tragic universes, she argues, is the "effect of the realization that one is responsible without being at fault" (9). I think we can expand Macpherson's observations beyond tragic moments of liability to other kinds of responsibilities. If character is produced by discovering *tragic* responsibility, I would argue, we can also find it in moments of comic responsibility. Indeed, comic responsibility is one of the novel's favorite devices, so prevalent that it's almost beneath critical notice. This is a favorite move of sentimental literature—discovering that the penniless stranger the protagonist helped in chapter three turns out to be their long-lost sibling in the final pages, or that the shabby gentleman you were polite to on the road is actually your landlord. Unlike the sentimental exchange, which is imagined as a one-on-one exchange between two individuals, responsibility allows for a relationship between one and many, but on suitably unequal terms.

Privatizing Patriarchy

So if, as I assert, the gentleman's character has to be filtered through social formations, and allows for cumulative character space relationships, how do we distinguish between moments that show the community running smoothly, and moments that are "about" the gentleman? Does

he get to claim some sort of "character tax" on all social interactions? Or are some moments more "about" him than others? If he is one of many, what makes him "*the* one" indicated by the many? The problem that Armstrong identifies as making character incompatible with masculinity returns here. The gentleman's role in his community requires public participation, while character involves a private sense of self, or, perhaps more accurately, the public perception of a private sense of self. How to make the gentleman's public-facing actions appear to be "personal"? Understanding the kind of responsibility I described in the last section as a sign of character involves a process of privatizing patriarchy—imagining patriarchal relationships as affective and consensual. By privatizing patriarchy, novels successfully re-cast the family as a site of character formation and, more interestingly, make public-facing acts of administrative power appear private and personal.

Privatizing patriarchy sounds like a contradiction in terms. If we think of patriarchy as a rationale for governance, as Sir Robert Filmer does in *Patriarcha,* then it is necessarily a public ideology that structures the affairs of state. Even when it crosses into the domestic sphere, patriarchy still sits uneasily alongside privacy. When historians like Randolph Trumbach and Lawrence Stone, and Naomi Tadmor write the history of the British family, they usually associate patriarchy with pre-modern kinship structures, while privacy belongs to the eighteenth-century world of the affective family. Trumbach describes patriarchy as a system that "presume[s] that there was property not only in things but in persons and that ownership lay with the heads of the households. It meant some men were owned by others, and all women and children by their husbands or fathers" (120). If, as Pocock asserts, property is both an extension of and pre-requisite for personality, then a loving, tight-knit family makes the perfect testament to a gentleman's character because they function *both* as family members with affective

associations *and* as property of the paterfamilias.[14] In some ways, this model of patriarchy is the ultimate Lockean wish fulfillment: property that can love you back.

The broad timeline that sees the emergence of the affective family (and the term 'affective family' itself) comes from Lawrence Stone's influential 1977 *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England from 1500-1800*. Stone argues that between the early modern era and the mid-eighteenth century, the British family evolves from "difference, deference and patriarchy to affective individualism" (22).[15] He identified the "modern family" as having four key features:

- Intensified affective bonding of the nuclear core at the expense of neighbors and kin;
- A strong sense of individual autonomy and the right to personal freedom;
- A weakening of the association of sexual pleasure with sin and guilt;
- A growing desire for physical privacy. (22)

If the affective family sounds a bit like a novel's protagonist (private, strong sense of self, valuing love over status), it's because the same broader social changes underwrite both. The novel became one of the places that the dialectic between duty to family and private desire could be dramatized.

---

[14] The idea of property as a prerequisite to personality goes back at least to Aristotle:

> The term 'article of property' is used in the same way in which the term 'part' is also used. A part is not only a part of something other than itself: it also belongs entirely to that other thing. It is the same with an article of property. Accordingly, while the master is merely the master of the slave, and does not belong to him, the slave is not only the slave of his master; he also belongs entirely to him. (*Politics* 1.4, 14)

While Aristotle distinguishes the family relationships between husband and wife, and parent and child, from that of master and slave, his sense of the family boundaries not exceeding the paterfamilias's person makes its way into eighteenth-century conceptions of the private sphere.

[15] Stone's master narrative has come under critical scrutiny since its publication, although the broadest outlines seem to remain fairly fixed. His work has been disputed by subsequent scholars who see his argument as oversimplifying (Naomi Tadmor, Michael McKeon) or ignoring the importance of the nuclear family in England pre-1500 (such as Amanda Vickery). However, there does seem to be scholarly consensus that in between the years 1500 and 1750, there were changes in the organization and cultural meaning of the family. Kelleher compares the resilience of Stone's argument in the face of steady critique as similar to the resilience of Watt's *Rise of the Novel*. The particulars of both have been picked at for decades, but the master narrative has yet to be dislodged (205).

One particularly important revision of Stone is Ruth Perry's *Novel Relations*. She argues that one of the novel's central projects was to "shift the basis of kinship." Perry describes Stone's shift as:

> A movement from an axis of kinship based on consanguineal ties or blood lineage to an axis based on conjugal and affinial ties of the married couple. That is, the biologically given family into which one was born was gradually becoming secondary to the chosen family constructed by marriage. (2)

Perry's intervention shifts the focus of Stone's argument without really disagreeing with his timeline or the ultimate result of "the transformation of England in the eighteenth century from a status-based society to a class-based society and from a land-based agrarian economy to a cash-based market economy" (29).

Stone's "affective individualism" rests upon a conflation of physical privacy with the emotional bonding between individual family members, and a corollary freedom from role-bound expectations that limited the early-modern family. This "freedom," I argue, is the primary feature of the so-called "private sphere." I'm proceeding here with caution; Amanda Vickery reminds us that "what writers designated as belonging to the private sphere tended to vary according to the particular public they were counterpoising. Consequently, privacy for eighteenth-century historians is a moveable feast" (27). Vickery is especially wary of a strictly gendered divide between a feminine household and a masculine public world of coffee houses and citizenship, which she suspects was never as complete or as universal as some historians claim.[16]

[16] The idea of a "private sphere" separate from the public world of commerce and ideas has a rich intellectual history that has found itself at the center of various debates about a myriad of subjects including gender, architecture, citizenship, and of course the novel. Jürgen Habermas coins the term public sphere in *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, which charts the development of a "bourgeois public sphere" which "may be conceived above all

The existence of domestic privacy was an important component of the construction of a public-facing masculinity. Maurer notes that in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, privacy and domesticity were becoming more central to eighteenth-century masculinity, but a privacy that depended on the existence of the household as a unit, on "men's ability to support and monitor a nuclear family" (7). This meant that not only family life, but a specifically patriarchal model of the household was "reinstated within a conception of the modern individual who was, necessarily, a family man and not merely—or even primarily—a free agent in a separate public sphere" (20). I see Stone's modern family as a kind of sentimentalized patriarchy; affective well-being is not the opposite of a patriarchal family structure. As both Maurer and Paul Kelleher remind us, patriarchy is easily subsumed into the affective family:

> This process of sentimentalization is typically understood as a shift from an overtly patriarchal and masculinist ideology (which privileges male domination and female subordination) to an ideology of heterosexual love and intimacy (which preserves patriarchy's vision of sexual asymmetry but refashions it into gender complementarity). (Kelleher 7)

What the addition of affect *actually* does is to create a kind of bespoke, individualized patriarchy that structures the household. The privacy of the family becomes associated with personal

---

as the sphere of private people come together as a public" (27). Habermas looks at the emergence of the bourgeoisie over the long durée and argues that the emergence of the public allowed for an "exchange of ideas" separate from political life. He was building on ideas from Hannah Arendt, who argued that "modern individualism" transformed privacy from the opposite of *political* life, in which it meant the deprivation of participation, to the opposite of *social* life, where it is a privileged space in which the individual recuperates from the demands of public life. Another strand of discourse looks at the rise of physical privacy. Mark Girouard analyzes architectural history to show the transformation of the private house from the early-modern to modern eras. He traces features like private bedrooms and servants' quarters to show the manner in which residents had come to value physically private space. Patricia Meyers Spacks focuses on differentiating the idea of psychological privacy from physical privacy in the eighteenth century, and traces the contribution of the novel to the distinction. For an overview that organizes these different narratives see David Brewer, "This, That and the Other: Public Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries" in *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*.

authenticity.[17] At a time when "personality" was becoming bound up in property, the privatized, affective family became a psychologically-necessary corollary to the free market. Pocock describes the kind of anxiety an eighteenth-century reader might feel: "The foundations of personality themselves appeared imaginary or at best consensual: the individual could exist, even in his own sight, only at the fluctuating value imposed upon him by his fellows" (*The Machavellian Moment* 461). If identity fluctuated outside the home, the home itself was where individuals could retreat to a stable sense of self.

For instance, in *Rambler 68* Samuel Johnson describes the family as a place where privacy authorizes authenticity:

> The great end of prudence is to give chearfulness to those hours, which splendour cannot gild, and acclamation cannot exhilarate; those soft intervals of unbended amusement, in which a man shrinks to his natural dimension, and throws aside the ornaments of disguises, which he feels in privacy to be useless incumbrances, and to lose all effect when they become familiar. To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition, the end to which every enterprise and labour tends, and of which every desire prompts the prosecution. (7)

Johnson's imagined private household presents the version of the speaker at home as genuine while the one who appears outside the home is a deliberate put-on. The public man is of "unnatural dimension" steeped in ornaments of disguise and other, implied, "encumbrances" rendered moot by the privacy of the family. While the public world is a means to an end, home is

[17] In this Locke departs from Aristotle's understanding of the family. For Aristotle, as for Locke, patriarchal authority was different than political authority, but not necessarily because the family and the state work to different ends. Instead, Aristotle understands women, children, and slaves as fundamentally different from citizens, each requiring their own kind of rule. While the Aristotelian household "is concerned more with human beings than it is with inanimate property" it does not fundamentally change who those human beings are when they leave the house.

an end unto itself—the "result of all ambition," and hence potentially the rationale for the more unsavory behaviors someone might have to do in the marketplace. Privacy of the household might mean the opposite of the public sphere, but it is also the opposite of solitude. Johnson's domestic idyll is actually about the relationship between a gentleman and his servants, the members of the household who serve as "The most authentick witnesses of any man's character" because they "know him in his own family, and see him without any restraint, or rule of conduct, but such as he voluntarily prescribes to himself" (10). In this context, the "privacy" of the home is actually stability—if Pocock's public sphere imagines character fluctuating based on who is watching, the household promises a (relatively) stable audience, leading to a (relatively) proscribed set of expectations that were easier to meet than the fluctuating demands of public life.

According to Stone, a large part of the transformation of the early-modern patriarchal family into the affective family was due to the rise of social contract theory and "the incompatibility of domestic patriarchy with the political theory of contractual obligation" (165). In fact, as I will show, the patriarchal family is not only compatible with social contract theory but predicated upon it. It is true, however, that social contract theory rests upon an understanding of the family as the site of character formation. It's not a coincidence that John Locke, the figure most associated with the repudiation of strict patriarchy in favor of the social contract, was an educator as well as a political theorist. His model for government pre-supposes a private household where people become themselves, a household that I would argue relies upon a patriarchal family to structure to initiate children into full citizenship.

Carol Pateman identifies three kinds of patriarchy: "traditional" patriarchy, or the belief that "the family, and the authority of the father at its head, provided the model or the metaphor

for power and authority relations of all kinds"; classical patriarchy (what McKeon calls "strict patriarchy"), which argues that "paternal and political power were not merely analogous, but identical"; and "modern patriarchy" which is "fraternal, contractual and structures capitalist civil society" (23-24). Pateman analyzes Locke's refutation of Filmer in *Two Treatises* and shows convincingly that Locke's social contract theory only banishes patriarchy from the state by reifying it within the home. She argues that civil society consists of two contracts: the civil contract and the sexual contract. "The social contract is a story of freedom; the sexual contract is a story of subjection… Civil freedom is not universal. Civil freedom is a masculine attribute and depends upon patriarchal right" (2). Kristin A. Kelley builds on her argument, and points out that, by contrasting two different forms of patriarchy to identify civic freedoms, Locke unintentionally develops two competing concepts of privacy within *Second Treatise:* "The first separates the family from politics; the second separates the individual and the state" (368). But neither, crucially, separate the family members from one another—privacy of the family is very different from privacy within the family.

Locke's thesis is that the "The power of a MAGISTRATE over a subject maybe distinguished from that of a FATHER over his children, a MASTER over his servant, a HUSBAND over his wife, and a LORD over his slave" (II, 2). For Locke, the state and the family have different ends, each of which requires different forms of authority and interventions. The "natural" condition of civil life is competition for resources and power, hence the state exists to keep peace and ensure personal liberty. When there is the danger of a breach of peace or destruction of property, the state needs to have the power of life and death over its citizens to keep them in line. The state needs an "umpire… indifferent, and the same to all parties;" preferably one who has been elected by the players he's officiating (II, 87). While public life is

inherently competitive, Locke understands the family as naturally cooperative.[18] Marriage "draws with it mutual support and assistance, and a communion of interests too, as necessary not only to unite their care and affection, but also necessary to their common off-spring, who have a right to be nourished, and maintained by them" (II,78). Crucially, no one in the family has power over life and death, "for this is the proper power of the magistrate, of which the father hath not so much as the shadow" (II, 65). A father's power is purely "but a help to the weakness and imperfection of their [children's] nonage, a discipline necessary to their education" (II, 65).

If a father's power is less than a magistrate's, though, the individual members of the family are less free than the public citizen. Partially this is from necessity—the family creates children, new people who *cannot* be full citizens because they have been born without the ability to reason:

> *Children* I confess, are not born into this full state of *equality*, though they are born to it. Their parents have a sort of rule and jurisdiction over them, when they come into the world, and for some time after; but it is but a temporary one. The bounds of this subjection are like the swaddling clothes they are wrapt up in, and supported by, in the weakness of their infancy: age and reason as they grow up loosen them, till at length they drop quite off, and leave a man at his own free disposal. (II, 55)

Locke's family is bounded by time—only so long as the children need parental guidance is the family a functioning unit. However, even after a child grows into the full state of equality and no longer owes his father *obedience*, he still owes him respect: "[God] has laid on the children a perpetual obligation of honouring their parents, which containing in it an inward esteem and

[18] This creates the blind spot that Kelley worries about: What happens when the interest of a single family member conflicts with the interest of the family as a whole? In cases of intimate partner violence or child abuse the privacy of the family from the state creates a barrier to individual liberty.

reverence to be shewn by all outward expressions" (II, 66). If the eighteenth century saw a separation between "birth" and "worth," Locke's theory reinscribes the family as the site that creates worth—not through birthright, but through education. Education, manners and breeding are the added value that parents imbue upon their children. A well-behaved and dutiful child is an example of the kind of cumulative character-space that characterizes the gentleman: their behavior reflects on their parents' values.

Family as Form

Patriarchy gives family a shape, a clear hierarchy and boundaries between members and non-members, which is where the novel and the family begin to cross pollinate. Woloch argues that character space exists because the length of a novel is necessarily limited, turning character into a zero-sum game. Stone's modern family sets up the family as its own character system, the privacy of the household replicating emotionally the limitation of space that we see in the novel. As the family shifts from kinship structures to an affective core the number of people who count as family becomes smaller.

Naomi Tadmor has shown convincingly that "family" in the eighteenth century most often meant household rather than kinship.[19] This means that individuals who lived under the same roof and "owed allegiance" to the same (usually male) head of house were considered members of the same family, even if they were not related to each other by blood or marriage. Conversely, siblings and other blood relations who did not live with the head of house were

[19] Although Tadmor also cautions that research into contemporary distinctions between kinship and household is made more confusing by the contemporary usages of vocabulary—"family," "kinship," and "friend" all had different resonances then than they do now. But this language does not necessarily mean kinship was devalued in the eighteenth century. The proliferation of terms like "friend," "kin," and "connexion" that both denote kinship and obscure the exact nature of the specific kinship tie, and could apply to members of the household as well as extended kinship networks.

sometimes excluded from the immediate family. The realist novel ushers in a proliferation of media that relies on the idea of family-as-kinship and family-as-household in competition with one another, even though, as McKeon helpfully reminds us, the two are not necessarily opposites. Ruth Perry pushes further, arguing that this opposition is part of the novel's central project. She pinpoints the major shift as moving from "consanguinity to conjugality… That is, the biologically given family into which one was born was gradually becoming secondary to the chosen family constructed by marriage" (2). When Stone describes this shift, he frames it as reprioritization of autonomy and choice over the economic function of the family, but Perry shows that plots which focused on the formation of the affective family still involve consolidating family wealth, just in a different form:

> On the one hand, the attitude that 'love is more important than money' reinforced the uni-directional flow of resources from the older to the younger generation and absolved the young of any responsibility for their elder's welfare. Thus, the material disinterestedness that was an essential ingredient of fictional heroism—that made triumphal gatherings in of love *and* money by the good characters in fictional climaxes all the sweeter—expressed an individualistic drive for economic independence as much as the paramount importance of love in marriage. This plot thus expresses anxiety about money as a source of value at the same time as it celebrates the capitalistic virtue of independence. (12)

The novel helps articulate the difference between marrying for personal enrichment, (where love just so happens to come with money), and family enrichment (where money may or may not happen to come with love). By articulating the boundaries of desire and affection, the novel helps draw the boundaries of an affective family unit.

I want to think of both family and the novel as specific, historically bounded forms that react to one another. I'm borrowing here from Caroline Levine's new formalism, which sees commonalities between social structures and literary forms. In her elegant monograph *Forms*, Levine lays out a series of tools for recognizing forms on and off the page. Her project is to use literary formalist tools to interrogate socio-political realities:

> Literary forms and social formations are equally real in their capacity to organize materials and equally *un*real in being artificial, contingent constraints. Instead of seeking to reveal the realities suppressed by literary forms, we can understand sociopolitical life as itself composed of a plurality of different forms, from narrative to marriage and from bureaucracy to racism (14).

This methodology seems ideally suited to consider the interplay between family and character, especially as form itself transcends, and hence bridges, the gap between cultural representation and reality, allowing us to compare the historical and the fictional.

Levine's formalism primarily uses two specific tools—affordances and intersections. "Affordance," a term borrowed from architectural design, describes the potential and limitation embedded within a given material. The novel can reveal the relationships between the one and the many in ways that, say, a sonnet cannot. Similarly, a family diary can tell us information about relationships between individual people and the family that a conduct book cannot; both are useful for teasing out historical particularities, but in very different ways. Without looking at the actual text of either the conduct book or the diary we may not know the specific information they contain, but we have a pretty good idea of what kinds of information we can find in each, and simply having knowledge of potential can be valuable.

For example, Samuel Johnson's dictionary provides three different definitions of family, each of which has a distinct form with different affordances:

1. Those who live in the same house; household.
2. Those that descend from one common progenitor; a race; a tribe; a generation.
3. A class; a tribe; a species.

Each definition describes a different potential shape for the family based on size, but the *kinds* of sizes vary from definition to definition. "Those who live in the same house; household," gives us clear spatial and temporal parameters. The household is a bounded space that clearly delineates who does and doesn't count as family, and while household members may come and go—servants leave, children are born and then marry—it is possible to count the members of a household at any given point in time.

The second definition is not so compact. If the number of "lost" relations who populate eighteenth-century fiction are any indication, the boundary here is much less definite. There is always the uncanny possibility that the stranger you meet in a tavern may share a common ancestor with you. This is how Tom Jones ends up in bed with someone who might be his mother, or Mr. Macartney finds himself courting a woman who may or may not be his sister. At the same time, while the boundaries are fuzzy, the size is less so. Only so many people can share a common progenitor. This is also why when Tom Jones ends up in bed with someone who might be his mother it feels like punishment from fate, because what are the odds? The last definition, "a class; a tribe; a species," is the inverse. We have rigid boundaries, but no limit to how large an area they might enclose. Finding yet another example of a class, tribe or species does not change the defining traits of what constitutes a class, tribe or species—it merely swells the ranks.

As the repetition of "tribe" in the second and third definitions might indicate, forms are not always crisply delineated. This brings us to Levine's other major tool: intersections. Moments when forms clash reveal gaps, hidden power structures, and critical opportunities. As one form forces another to give way, we learn about the underlying values and systems of power that reinforce the previously tacit hierarchies.

Take Mr. Macartney from Frances Burney's *Evelina.* He wishes to marry a certain Miss Belmont, but cannot because her father forbids it. At first, Lord Belmont forbids their marriage because of class—he cannot give his daughter to someone so far below her station. Then, it transpires that the real reason he refuses to give his blessing to the match is because he had an affair with Mr. Macartney's mother, leading to the possibility that Macartney and Miss Belmont are siblings. When Lord Belmont learns the truth—that the woman who he has raised is not his biological daughter—he relents and blesses the match.

Here two different forms of family as tribe come into competition with one another, and with the institution of marriage (which Levine would describe as another form). First, the tribe of class in the guise of Macartney's poverty, and then the tribe as blood relations in the possibility that Miss Belmont and Macartney are related. While both definitions (blood and class) are in play, Belmont does not need to clarify his objection, he simply has to fall back on an assumed hierarchy:

Family Duty > Romantic Love

However, when the lovers disagree and find that form insufficient, he is forced to reveal his own past transgressions, revealing two new hierarchies:

Possibility of incest > Romantic Love;

Saving Face >Romantic Love

Then, when the threat of consanguinity is removed, we find two more hierarchies emerging:

Love of child > (Saving Face − possibility of incest);

(Romantic love − possibility of incest) > Class;

The constant mystifications and clarifications, the re-arranging of hierarchies and alliances, reveal information about the fictional form and the social institutions that crisscross Burney's novel.

In this dissertation, I use similar techniques to parse how the form of the novel and the form of the family echo one another to create the gentleman's authority. I focus on the three major affordances baked into the form of the domestic family:

- Boundaries: It is possible to distinguish who is in the family and who is not.
- Hierarchy: Some members of the family have authority over others. In strict patriarchal families the paterfamilias has moral and economic authority and can make decisions affecting the whole family unit in ways other members cannot.
- Temporality: Families also come with a built-in chronology. Fathers come before sons—both socially and temporally—employers before servants, etc. [20]

These three affordances are critical to characterizing the gentleman within the eighteenth-century novel. As the form of the novel of sociability recreates the form of the family, the gentleman becomes the paterfamilias of the character system within his novel. The limits of the social world are used to imply the unstated hierarchies and temporalities of the family, implying that the same kinds of affective connections and hierarchies structure the social relationships between characters. In bridging the gaps between public and private, the social and the individual, and the affective and the economic, the family usefully conflates the public-facing roles of a gentleman

[20] Levine calls this "rhythm," which I think works better for literary works than social formations.

with private affections, making public shows of economic strength feel sentimentally inflected and private displays of affection sufficiently masculine, imparting stability to the economy of character.

Returning to patriarchy's form, I want to compare two different "wholes" that demonstrate how certain relationships end up as signifiers of a single person's character. Compare the family to another form that collapses the many into one: the corporation. John O'Brien describes the corporation as consciously artificial, a public fiction that acknowledges its own fictionality. He cites William Sheppard's 1659 *Of Corporations*, which defines "A Corporation or an Incorporation (which is all one) is a Body, in fiction of law; or, a Body Politick that indureth in perpetual succession" (3). And, on some level, it's the corporation's fictionality that lends it power—a corporation is more than the sum of its individual parts. O'Brien cites Hobbes's *Leviathan* as an example of the corporation in early modern thought, reading the famous frontispiece of the book, a drawing of the sovereign comprised of his subjects, as "an image of incorporation" (14). Hobbes's political treatise uses the monster as a metaphor for the state: "For by Art is created that great Leviathan called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE…which is but an Artificiall Man; though of greater stature and strength than the Naturall, for whose protection and defence it was intended" (47). Hobbes's choice of metaphor for his artificial commonwealth—a giant, unnatural, fish-monster—highlights not only the artificiality but the unwieldiness of the state. The finished product is larger than any natural body could be on its own.

In contrast, the patriarchal family is *exactly* the sum of its parts. In a passage from *The Gentleman's Calling,* Allestree differentiates the gentleman from the poor man by comparing their relative influence:

> The poor Man's Authority is bounded within the narrow Circuit of his little Cottage, being in effect no other than the Proportion of that Power Nature hath given him over his own Body, to those Branches which spring from it, his Children; and to that Cien[21] which is ingrafted into it, his Wife. (15-16)

The addition of a wife and children does not increase the reach of the poor man's authority within the broader community—his dominion is still confined to the authority over a single person, except the single person encompasses his wife and children. If the leviathan sprawls, the "little cottage" functions like a Russian doll, with each family member completely contained within the person of the paterfamilias.

Eighteenth-century England could be a disorienting time and place. It was a world where the relationship between birth, worth, and wealth had been destabilized. Chesterfield recommend dissembling flattery because such tactics *worked*—in Lynch's "changed and commercialized world" it made more sense to "adapt your conversation to the people you are conversing with" (Chesterfield 27). The novels I read here provide a fantasy that counterbalances the instability of the public world of fluctuating meanings and values, and the gentleman is the embodiment of that fantasy: a character who was both good and *legible*. His pleasant face signified an equally pleasant nature, and he would not misuse the authority conferred onto him by wealth and birth. In the chapters that follow, I read mid-century novels that use the figure of the gentleman to stabilize their own semiotic economies.

In my first chapter, I focus on Samuel Richardson's *History of Sir Charles Grandison* to show how metaphors of family allow the gentleman to create and maintain a moral economy.

---

[21] An early spelling of Scion, defined by the OED as "Something likened to a branch, shoot, or graft."

Richardson imagines a gentleman whose character is so exemplary it can stabilize a community that reaches from England to Italy and back again. The most optimistic and utopian example of the novel of sociability, Sir Charles becomes a paterfamilias of a sentimental family of seemingly infinite capacity. I argue that Richardson's metaphors of family allow him to reimagine character as a series of potential relationships rather than as interiority, giving the imaginative family a suppleness that both conjugal family and broader kinship structure lack.

Richardson's economy falls apart, though, if the central figure is less virtuous than a Sir Charles Grandison. In my second chapter, I read Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, which splits the Sir Charles character between two landlords—the benevolent Sir William Thornhill and his no-good nephew Squire Thornhill. Reverend Primrose, the titular vicar, is caught between his positions as leader of his family and tenant to the Thornhills. If Sir Charles determines the value of currency in his neighborhood economy of character, Primrose has to learn how to value himself and his family when the standard fluctuates wildly between the two Thornhills. I read Primrose's crisis of authority as the paterfamilias negotiating the disparate expectations between patriarchal authority and citizenship. Primrose's wife and children end up relegated to a kind of currency, cheapening both the family and the community in the process.

My third chapter departs from the novel to explore the relationship between gentlemen and their servants. I show the role servants play in creating the gentleman's character through their own emotional labor. Caught between the family and the free-market, servants were the subject of a lively debate about the relationship between affect and labor. I trace a contemporary debate about servants' "vails," i.e. the tips servants received from visitors to the house. I argue that the affective family's resemblance to the character system of the novel helped camouflage

emotional labor as character, and the vails debate exposes a moment when that camouflage breaks down.

Collapsing the many into a single, harmonious community solves problems of individual vulnerability and conflicting desire, but at the expense of the rewards characters usually reap from such clashes. The realist novel is so closely associated with these kinds of conflicts that it's almost impossible to imagine a novel without them. But if we shift our gaze from the novel that rises to the novel that sits comfortably at home and waits for visitors, we discover new affordances embedded within the form. One of these affordances reveals a new kind of character in an old kind of gentleman and hopefully breathes life into a not-quite-stock figure.

Chapter One

The Gold Standard:

Fictive Kin and Moral Community in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*

Apparently, some readers did wish Samuel Richardson's novels longer. Unsatisfied with the ending of *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753-54), Julia Bere wrote to petition Richardson for another volume. Bere particularly wanted to "*see Sir* Charles *in the Parental Character*" (7:467; italics original). Richardson's reply explains why an extension to his novel is both unnecessary and impossible. It was unnecessary because, after cataloging the endings for all of the major and some of the minor characters in the novel, he concludes that their stories had already achieved satisfactory resolutions. The only character who remained unaccounted for was Lady Olivia, and she alone would not be worth another volume (7:469). It was impossible because the novel takes place in "pretty near the present time," and any additional writing would carry his characters into the future. Richardson thought it improper to speculate, even in fiction.

But, even if Richardson cannot or will not predict his characters' futures, he concludes that his readers already have the information they need to imagine Sir Charles as a father. Attentive readers could already anticipate Sir Charles's "parental character" by watching him interact with other people's children:

> See we not, from his tenderness to Mrs. Reeve's little boy; from his goodness to Lady L's son; and to Lady G's little girl; from the observation of his Lady, that the Brave are always tender and humane; from his general prudence, as well as from his own duty to a blameable Father, whose failings he occasionally deplored with a piety worthy of

> himself; that he would have shone in every part of the parental character? [Who ever knew a dutiful Son that made not a good Father?]. (7:469-470; brackets original)

Richardson asserts that if we know how Sir Charles would act in any situation, we understand how he will act in every situation. His character is portable: because there is no distinction between "should" and "would" for him; we can insert him into any scene and know how he would act. In the preface Richardson describes him as "the Example of a Man acting uniformly well thro' a Variety of trying Scenes" (1:4). The "parental character" is only a role in one of these scenes and remains secondary to Sir Charles's core identity. Richardson actively invites his readers to speculate, imagining *Grandison* as a kind of writing prompt. The result is fan fiction in the form of a conduct book: because Sir Charles is consistent, the reader can imagine him in any of their own scenes knowing what he *would* do is what they *should* do.

However, Sir Charles's "consistency" creates a narrative problem for Richardson. Sir Charles is his first male protagonist—his attempt to create a character who is as good a man as Pamela Andrews and Clarissa Harlowe are women. Sir Walter Scott summed up the problem best:

> The author did not sufficiently reflect that the beacon, upon an exposed headland, sending forth its saving light amid the rain and the storm, and burning where all around combines to its extinction, is a far grander and more interesting object to the imagination than the chandelier in a lordly hall, secured by walls and casements from the possibility even of a transient breeze agitating its brilliancy of lustre. (32)

As a gentleman, and a Baronet at that, Sir Charles faces very few challenges that he cannot easily surmount. Where Clarissa and Pamela experienced real existential threats in their bids for autonomy, Sir Charles has both the inner and outer resources to overcome anything the novel can

throw at him. Richardson's solution to this problem was to take focus away from the chandelier and turn to the hall it illuminates. Rather than simply telling the story of Sir Charles, the novel focuses on the community that forms around his good example.

In this chapter, I argue that *Grandison* uses literary character to prompt readers to prioritize imaginative speculation about relationships over interiority. One of the ways Richardson does this is by strategically deploying family relationships between unrelated people. Sir Charles starts the novel with two legal biological sisters and acquires two brothers-in-law over the course of the narrative. But, by my count, at the end of the book Sir Charles has eight sisters and ten brothers, and that doesn't include the sentimental siblings adopted in turn by his own real and imagined siblings. By using morality, rather than blood or marriage, to expand the family, *Grandison* presents a fantasy of community that is infinitely adaptable and expandable while still retaining hierarchy.

Critical Background

The plot of *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* is relatively straightforward. Sir Charles is a moderately wealthy but extraordinarily virtuous baronet who loves, and is loved in turn, by two equally beautiful, kind, and virtuous ladies. The novel begins when Harriet Byron, an English rose who has turned down marriage proposals from six men and counting, is kidnapped by a rejected suitor. She is rescued by Sir Charles, and, while convalescing with his family, they develop feelings for one another. Sir Charles cannot propose marriage, though, because he had previously proposed to Signorina Clementina Della Porretta, an Italian noblewoman. Despite the fact that she has refused his proposal for the sake of her family, she loves him deeply and is tortured by her inability to reconcile her duty to her family with her own desires. Hearing that

Clementina has been driven mad by her love for him and believing she has the prior claim, Sir Charles travels to Italy to renew his proposal of marriage, while Harriet stays behind and pines for him. However, as a devoted Catholic, Clementina cannot reconcile her faith with marriage to an Anglican, and she ultimately decides to reject his second plea. Sir Charles then returns to England, proposes marriage to Harriet, and is accepted.

While it is still a (very long) epistolary novel, *Grandison* feels like a departure from Richardson's usual mode. Not only are the conflicts faced by the main characters lower stakes than they are in either *Pamela* or *Clarissa*, but Sir Charles feels like a completely different kind of character. Richardson's place in a traditional history-of-the-novel canon comes from the innovations in character we see in *Pamela* and *Clarissa*. In *The Rise of the Novel*, Ian Watt credits him with the creation of individualized characters with subjectivity in realist fiction. Watt describes Richardson's novels as having "a direction…towards the delineation of the domestic life and the private experience of the characters who belong to it: the two go together—we get inside their minds as well as their houses" (175). Nancy Armstrong uses Pamela Andrews as blueprint for subjectivity itself, arguing that Richardson is among the novelists who invented subjectivity as we know it. But critics interested in individuality and subjectivity have a difficult time accounting for *Grandison,* which is far more concerned with the formation of community than the individual. This has always made Sir Charles the odd man out in Richardson's oeuvre, and *Grandison* seems to have faded in and out of fashion since the popularity it enjoyed after its initial publication.[22] Currently, *Grandison* is only available via special order, while *Pamela* and *Clarissa* are available in multiple editions and regularly make appearances on university syllabi.

[22] For reception history see Bonnie Latimer's *Making Gender, Culture, and the Self in the Fiction of Samuel Richardson: The Novel Individual*, 1-2; and Sylvia Kasey Marks, *Sir Charles Grandison: The Compleat Conduct Book*, 15-18.

Critics offer two explanations for *Grandison's* unpopularity, both having to do with the way character functions in the novel. The first explanation comes from the novel's prioritizing of communal harmony over individual subjectivity. Rather than plumbing the depths of a fictional psyche, as in Richardson's previous work, *Grandison* presents a world where the needs of individual characters are intentionally subverted to an extraordinary morality for the good of the greater community. Betty Schellenberg claims it as an example of a genre of conservative fiction from the mid- to late eighteenth century that prioritizes "the circumscription of socially threatening individualistic desire in a plot structure that models a community of consensus as the ideal unit from which a stable society is constructed" (4). She considers *Grandison* as one of "the most fully developed and the most optimistic" examples of the genre, and as a consequence the community formed at the end of the novel is the most capacious of the novels Schellenberg explores (52).

But this kind of character formation can be challenging for modern readers. In her treatise on boredom, Patricia Meyers Spacks blames *Grandison's* reputation as a boring novel on its preference for "exemplary rather than unique" characters (138). Readers who have been "trained by nineteenth-century fiction" find its rejection of individual subjectivity challenging at best and hostile at worst (133). Boredom, argues Spacks, is the reader's way of dismissing the challenge the text poses to our own sense of individuality. Rebecca Anne Barr fundamentally agrees with Spacks about character in the novel, but she is interested in excavating the kinds of pleasure that can come from rejecting individuality. She describes the community in *Grandison* as "totalitarian" and coins the term "anti-individualist subjectivity" to describe the novel's vision of communal character:

> *Grandison's* idiosyncratic blend of coercion, subordination to a central figure of power, of constant self-examination and openness mirrors the structure of power and knowledge characteristic of totalitarianism. Reading *Grandison* as a novel of totalitarian morality offers insight into the delights of self-negation, and the appeal of this anti-individualist novel, helps explicate critical rejection. (393)

What I would like to stress in these arguments is the fact that the moral community that tugs against individual subjectivity is directly related to the kind of hero we find in Sir Charles. An example for everyone, good at everything, something about his perfection demands self-negation from the other individual members of his community.

When writing to her cousin and confidant Lucy, Harriet justifies her feelings for Sir Charles because he is such a worthy object. "A *worthy* object, I repeat; for that is what will warrant an open heart" (3:2). The equation between moral worth and openness runs throughout the novel. Openness is voluntary, but only just—the legal resonances of "warrant" connote a demand buried in Harriet's remark. Indeed, it's fruitless to attempt to hide anything from Sir Charles because "his superior excellence, like sunshine, breaking out on a sudden, finds out, and brings to sight, those spots and freckles, that were hardly before discoverable" (2:375). Where Lovelace and Mr. B have to resort to trickery and violence to see Clarissa and Pamela's letters, Sir Charles can passively wait for his goodness to exercise a kind of compulsion over Harriet to reveal herself. Many of the minor conflicts arise because two "admirers" have unfettered access to one another, and the tension comes from denying themselves the pleasure of gratification. As a brief example, both Harriet and Sir Charles find themselves at different times tempted by letters that they should not read, and both heroically resist. The same energy and passion that Mr.

B. puts into stripping Pamela to find her letters is converted into the will power to *not* read what lies open before them.

The second explanation for the novel's unpopularity comes from Sir Charles's perfection, which is often dismissed as a form of pandering to female audiences. In *Grandison's Heirs*, Gerald Barker argues that the success of the Sir Charles figure comes from his status as "the feminine wishdream of the ideal male suitor" but, because women's expectations were unrealistic, Sir Charles is ultimately doomed to be an "imaginative failure" (15, 36). Richardson himself was aware of the narrative challenges posed by his title character. In a famous letter to Lady Bradshaigh, he complains of the difficulties of writing about a "good man":

> I own that a good woman is my favourite character…. I can do twenty agreeable things for her, none of which would appear in a striking light in a man. Softness of heart, gentleness of manners, tears, beauty, will allow of pathetic scenes in the story of one, which cannot have place in that of the other. Philanthropy, humanity is all he can properly rise to. (174)

There simply aren't as many ways to make philanthropy and humanity narratively interesting; partially because, as civic goods, they lead us away from the world inside the mind and inside the house and toward the decorous world of sociability.

But, I argue, this "imaginative failure" is a feature rather than a bug: it springs from a desire to preserve what I would call Sir Charles's imaginative potential. Sir Charles's consistency, his ability to act "uniformly," assures us that his character will remain steady no matter the external circumstances. This very characteristic consistency is what Barker and others believe makes him especially attractive to female readers. Margret Ann Doody claims that the biggest difference between Sir Charles and Richardson's heroines is that for Sir Charles, "there

is nothing unknowable about the consequence of moral action," whereas Clarissa and Pamela can do everything right but still find themselves in danger (257). Thus the promise of a person who not only is everything he appears to be, but also makes the world around him more legible, is an undeniably attractive prospect.

The critiques of Sir Charles's unrealistic perfection and of the eradication of subjectivity in his novel are linked. The perfection that demands openness mitigates the double standards that allows men far greater freedom than women. When Sir Rowland argues that masculine bad behavior is justifiable, as long as it is kept out of sight of ladies, Harriet rebukes him: "A pure heart, whether in man or woman, will be always, in every company, on every occasion, pure" (1:41). Harriet frames that kind of consistency as a question of morality, but it is not such a large leap from morality to safety here. After all, Harriet is abducted at a masquerade ball, a space of sanctioned dissembling. A number of critics highlight the playfulness and autonomy Harriet has to give up to join Sir Charles's family, which I am not disputing. [23] But Sir Charles demands the same thing of every character in his circle, male and female alike, and we can see how that bargain might be more attractive for Harriet than it would be for someone like Sir Rowland or the other novel's other high-status male characters.

Sir Charles's perfection and the denigration of individual subjectivity are really two sides of the same critique: the literary tradition that produces Mr. Darcy produces some very dull sermons about the dangers of dueling on the way. We might think of the community that springs up around Sir Charles within the novel as a kind of fan club—individuals are united to one another through a shared love of an external object. As characters swap "Sir Charles stories," they develop ties with one another and invite readers to join them. The result is a community

[23] See, for example, Tassie Gwilliam's chapter on *Grandison* in *Samuel Richardson's Fictions of Gender*. Gwilliam stresses the masquerade as a punishment for Harriet's tendency to inhabit other characters' subjectivities.

with boundaries but no limits: *anyone* can join if they admire Sir Charles enough. The novel creates a Sir-Charles-backed economy (based on the Sir Charles standard): his character becomes both the currency that circulates between the other characters and the guarantor of that currency's worth.

Imaginative expansion and character formation

There seems to be no such thing as personal correspondence in the world of *Grandison*. Harriet expects her letters will be read aloud by all of the inhabitants of Selby House and their neighbors, and because of this she shares stories she expects her audience will find instructive or amusing. This not only reinforces the aforementioned "transparency" that Harriet demands of herself; it also has the function of creating a community of readers. Characters such as the Selbys and the Porrettas, who eventually become part of Sir Charles's sentimental family, read about Sir Charles in letters long before they meet him in the flesh. Sir Charles is a textual creation even to the other characters in the novel, which is perhaps why I find the most useful critical tools for understanding character in *Grandison* come from the literature that tries to understand the relationship between readers and characters. I turn especially to Catherine Gallagher and David Brewer, who both provide us with the tools needed to understand the relationship between character and community formation in *Grandison.*

Catherine Gallagher's work focuses on the relationship between realism and the eighteenth-century's invention of stories about everyday life that were somehow neither lies nor truths. Gallagher argues that fictional reality—as opposed to blatantly fantastic fiction—forges a special bond between reader and character that gave eighteenth-century readers the cognitive tools they needed to navigate an uncertain new world. In her article "The Rise of Fictionality,"

Gallagher argues that "the novel provided its reader a seemingly free space in which to temporarily indulge imaginative play" (347). Following Hume, she believes that the appeal of fictional characters stems from the dissolution of the barriers between reader and character:

> The body of the other person, although it conveys the original sense data and serves as the basis for all the modes of relationship that supposedly allow sympathetic identification, is also paradoxically imagined to be a barrier…This proprietary barrier of the other's body is what fiction freely dispenses with; by representing feelings that belong to no other body, fiction actually facilitates the process of sympathy. (*Nobody's Story*, 171)

Gallagher's model of fictionality theorizes a kind of energy created by the potential embedded in the form of character. The space created by the nobody in the text is a vacuum that begs to be filled by the reader's imagination.

In *Grandison* we find the potential energy generated by character transferred onto the relationships between the characters. One of the cases Gallagher presents in "The Rise of Fictionality" is of a young woman of marriageable age engaging in "affective speculation" about a potential suitor (346). Experience of fictional character gives the woman the "ironic credulity" necessary to see beyond "the literal truth of a representation" (346). Young women of marriageable age abound in *Grandison,* but, because Sir Charles "acts uniformly," there is no need to speculate about his intentions or motives. Harriet baldly states: "I am sure I should not esteem him, were he not the good man he is," and she is never given any reason to doubt his sincerity (3:13). Instead, her imaginative speculation comes from picturing the different relationships she might possibly have with Sir Charles. When she fears marriage will never be an option, she gracefully accepts a role as his "third sister."

Harriet's frustrated love for Sir Charles reveals the central problem at the core of *Grandison:* there's simply not enough Sir Charles to go around. As an exemplar he is infinitely available, but as a husband he must be limited to a single wife. Writing in 1754, a man who identifies himself as "A Lover of Virtue" takes Richardson to task for making Sir Charles's *such* an exemplary character:

> In *Grandison*, you have endeavoured to give an example of universal goodness and benevolence. But I am afraid you have strained and stretched that character too far; you have furnished him with too great a variety of accomplishments, some of them destructive, at least not so consistent with the principal and most shining virtue. *The man is every thing*, as Lucy or Harriet says; which no man ever was or will be. (18)

Actually, it's Mrs. Shirley who says he is "every thing," but the lover of virtue is not alone in objecting to the sentiment. This critique (that the character of Sir Charles is unrealistic) is the same one Barker makes when he accuses Richardson of imaginative failure; so many good qualities could never fit into a single Sir-Charles-sized container. Gallagher helps us understand the appeal of a figure that "no man" could ever be: without a real body to invest with meaning readers are left with the infinite potential of a "nobody."

While Gallagher helps us see the relationship between an individual character and a reader, David Brewer's *The Afterlife of Character* delineates the symbiotic relationship between readers. Brewer coins the term "imaginative expansion" to describe certain eighteenth-century reading practices "by which the characters in broadly successful texts were treated as if they were both fundamentally incomplete and the common property of all" (2). He traces what I would call eighteenth-century fan fiction: reader-generated content about certain favorite characters that continues their stories outside the pages of their own novels or plays. Brewer

writes about real readers' treatment of fictional characters, but imaginative expansion is also a shockingly accurate model of the way Sir Charles's character operates *within* his own novel.

Sir Charles, too, is "incomplete and the property of all." Harriet claims as much when, after their marriage, she describes Sir Charles's comportment while hosting a ball together: "Sir Charles was every-where, and with every-body. He was almost as much every Lady's as mine" (281). Sir Charles's sheer availability—every-where, every-body, every-thing—creates the fan club that encourages his circulation. Again, the relationship between characters here seems more like the relationship between readers as Brewer describes it:

> Readers who imagine characters as common, and hence available to the public, also imagine themselves as part of a public, a virtual community interested in the same things as they are, which in turn requires a common object to rally around even as it enhances that object's felt value… by making it the commons around which the virtual community organized itself. (14)

The intense admiration that "fans" feel for Sir Charles becomes the glue that connects them to one another.

Brewer uses Simon Stern's model of an "economy of abundance" to describe the way this kind of circulation creates value: "any future use becomes a form of increase…value is added merely by additional iteration and circulation" (11). The more people who describe Sir Charles's exploits, the more impressive those exploits become. As Charlotte explains to Mr. Reeves: "Forgive me, that I bring *him* in, whenever any good person, or thing, or action, is spoken of. Every-body, I believe, who is strongly possessed of a subject, makes every-thing seen, heard, or read of, that bears the least resemblance, turn into and illustrate that subject" (1:136). This ability to circulate and multiply bypasses the marriage problem, i.e., the fact that Sir Charles can only

marry one woman. In an economy of abundance, Sir Charles can marry Harriet and still be available to all the world. In fact, the more people who admire Sir Charles, the better the position of Sir Charles's wife.

The economy of plenty that Brewer describes is authorized by Sir Charles essentially underwriting the community, both morally and economically. His physical body may be limited, but his character can "stretch" enough to accommodate anyone willing to reform. Elaine McGirr argues that Sir Charles is a hybrid of two, very different, kinds of eighteenth-century heroes—the man of feeling and the rake. [24] Both of these archetypes are warnings in their own way. The rake is profligate, squandering his money, health and reputation on his pleasures. The man of feeling, though, is too stingy. He hoards sentiment for himself rather than allowing for a prosperous exchange of sociability.[25] Sir Charles represents the golden mean between the two because of his prudent investments. The section of the novel that takes place after Sir Charles returns from Europe for the first time shows him engaging in a series of administrative coups. Starting with his own household and working his way through his friends and relatives, Sir Charles acts as combination accountant and life coach, helping others solve their personal and financial problems. Harriet gushes:

> After the Anderson, the Danby, the Lord W. affairs, he appeared to me in a much more shining light than any hero would have done, returning in a triumphal car covered with

[24] Richardson was haunted by the idea of the rake throughout writing *Grandison*. Part of the impetus for writing the novel was his horror at the number of readers who wanted Clarissa to end up with Lovelace. The marriage between Sir Charles's parents was meant to demonstrate the sorry outcome of a marriage between a good woman and a semi-reformed rake. But Lovelace's attractions still plagued Richardson. Lady Bradshaigh begs him to retain some of the rake's more attractive qualities: "But would a good man be the worse for carrying the outside of such a one as I mean? Would it hurt a man's morals, to have the appearance of even *Lovelace*, as Miss Howe describes him at Colonel Ambrose's ball?" (176). She advocates for a character who retains the rake's charm and social graces without having those charms signify rakish morals.

[25] For more on the stinginess of the man of feeling see Lynch's *Economy of Character*, 112-119. Lynch describes sentimental fiction as exploiting the tension between "possession and exchange and between the coin's currency and its quiddity" (116).

> laurels, and dragging captive princes at its wheels. How much more glorious a character is that of *The Friend of Mankind*, than that of *The Conqueror of Nations!* (3:70).

Richardson is going out of his way to make sure the reader knows that this kind of administration is modern heroism. Richardson is anxious that we understand that this kind of problem solving is not only good, it's *manly*. McGirr names "the husband" as the figure who strikes the golden mean between the rake and the man of feeling. Sir Charles's financial involvement with his friends and relatives is a form of husbandry in every sense. As he grows their estates through prudent investments, he asserts his role as a kind of paterfamilias.

McGirr notes that prudent management became "an increasingly central term in eighteenth-century debates about the nature of masculinity; the husbandry of estates was linked, metaphorically and literally, with marital roles and male sexuality" (269). We get long digressions on the management of Grandison Hall to illustrate Sir Charles' prudence and prowess. While the other young men he encounters on grand tours spend their time in Europe carousing, Sir Charles spends his time abroad learning "husbandry and law" that he might become "his father's steward" (7:288). His training allows him to revitalize the flagging estate he inherits from his rake-father. But his organization goes far beyond simply managing land: he provides medical care and poor relief for his tenants and is also available to settle any disputes that might arise. He is so attentive to the day-to-day running of his lands that Dr. Bartlett claims Sir Charles "will find out the sighing heart before it is overwhelmed with calamity" and offer relief before the situation becomes dire (7:288). His prudent economy means that the estate is never overtaxed—there seems to be enough land and resources to accommodate anyone who makes their way to Grandison Hall. In fact, these services fund themselves. Describing the excellent organization of the house servants, Harriet reflects: "It is a house of harmony…What

do good people leave to good people to do? Nothing! Every one knowing and doing his and her duty; and having, by means of their own diligence, time for themselves" (7:285-286). What I want to highlight is the connection between this kind of material wealth and Sir Charles's moral abundance, his "stretched" character. Both underwrite each other, allowing an estate that could barely support his father's luxuries to provide for "every worthy man and woman (7:288).

As usual, Sir Charles's management is meant to be "exemplary." The hope is that other estate holders will enact the kinds of reforms they read about here—keeping an apothecary in the neighborhood and instituting yearly inspections and repairs. But this is a moment that seems to stretch beyond the usual conduct book subjects of manners and comportment. Grandison Hall sees Sir Charles taking over the roles that Ruth Perry claims were being taken up more and more by the state during this period.[26] He provides poor relief and infrastructure for his tenants. (He even taxes his servants—they are made to pay for small infractions, apparently at their own behest). But he undertakes these tasks strictly as a private citizen—this is not meant to be Richardson's treatise on governmental administration but rather his recipe for a fulfilling private life. Harriet believes that the purpose of sharing her tour of Grandison Hall is to display the virtues of a life withdrawn from "public" action: "The Domestic man, The chearful Friend, The kind Master, The enlivening Companion, The polite Neighbour, The tender Husband! Let nobody who sees Sir Charles Grandison at home, say, that the private station is not that of true

[26]"In many areas of life, the state replaced family functioning and appeared to insert itself in matters once handled by kin, such as poor relief. The nation state's extraction of surplus in the form of taxes to pay for colonial wars at the expense of family incomes. Similarly, taking male kin from their families as soldiers for these wars, and exchanging nationalism for family loyalty, created a substitute family in the militarized state." (Perry 35)

happiness" (7:281). It's another instance of Sir Charles getting to be every thing, as long as he stays in the private sphere.

"Private sphere" is perhaps a misleading term.[27] After all, if Sir Charles is meant to be an example, then he has to be seen to be followed. Mrs. Shirley even cautions Harriet that Sir Charles may not be able to return her affection because he might have to consider other people's welfare, not just his own:

> But shall we, my dear, prescribe to Providence? How know we what that has designed for Sir Charles Grandison? His welfare is the concern of hundreds, perhaps. He, compared to us, is as the public to the private. I hope we are good people: Comparatively, I am sure, we are good. That, however, is not the way by which we shall be judged hereafter. But yet, to him, we are but as that private. (2:307)

Following Mrs. Shirley's lead, let us say that Sir Charles is *comparatively* private: Sir Charles's behavior is "public" in the sense that it is legible and private only in the sense that it is divorced from the state.[28] Doody claims that Sir Charles's publicity is at the heart of Richardson's different conceptions of male and female virtue:

> Right intentions and right consequences belong to the public domain, and are known with certainty, so Sir Charles's motives require little examination; the dial of his intentions has been previously adjusted to the correct point. Masculine virtue is official; feminine virtue is unofficial. (257)

---

[27] It is certainly a loaded one, and has an impressive bibliography to detail its construction and meaning in the eighteenth century. For a very partial list see: Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity;* Amanda Vickery, "Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History," Patricia Meyers Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self.*

[28] See introduction, footnote 16.

There is an important element of volition to Sir Charles's moral community—nobody ends up at Grandison Hall because they have to be there; they are there because they want to be. Richardson ends up using the language of family to describe the semi-public relationships between Sir Charles and his flock. Olivia Cook describes the epistolary format of Richardson's novels as creating a "quasi-public" space, "modelled on the relations of the affective family" (cited in Burgess, 27). The family is already a combination of privacy and sociability—it is a retreat from a competitive society, but it is a retreat into other people. As Kristin A. Kelly notes in a different context, privacy of the family is very different from privacy within the family. The kind of community Sir Charles engenders models this kind of family—separate from the world but united with one another through a shared desire to emulate Sir Charles.

So what happens to the economy of plenty when it is kept within the family? One of the major structural advantages of family is the ability to create boundaries between members and non-members, which would seem to negate the advantages of an economy of plenty. In the next section, I explore how Sir Charles's particular moral leadership fundamentally changes the form of the family.

Extending Family: Fictive Kin and Moral Authority

In the world of *Grandison*, the family is the most important social unit, responsible for meeting all the emotional, economic, and cultural needs of the individual. Early in the novel Harriet tells us: "Families are little communities, there are but few solid friendships out of them; and that they help to make up worthily, and to secure, the great community, of which they are so many miniatures" (1:25). As such, one would expect the family to be portrayed like female virtue: dangerously permeable and always under siege. But if anything, the worry in *Grandison* seems

to be that family boundaries are not permeable enough. Consanguine characters are constantly looking to expand their family circle and enlarge their little community beyond marriage and procreation. They do this by replacing those standard methods of family extension with sentimental attachment. When Sir Charles realizes he cannot marry Harriet, he "sisters" her—that is, he claims her as an adopted sister. But this connection is not just limited to sibling pairings. Here is an incomplete list of imagined familial relationships in *Grandison*:

- The Porrettas adopt Sir Charles as their son and brother.
- Sir Charles, Lady L. and Charlotte all adopt Harriet as their sister.
- Emily adopts Harriet as her "mamma."
- Harriet adopts Sir Rowland as her father.
- Lord W., Sir Charles's uncle, adopts Sir Charles as his father.
- Jeronymo della Porretta adopts Charlotte's child as his own.

All of these are examples of "fictive kinship," a term I'm borrowing from anthropology. Fictive kinship provides a "public validation of a special kind of association," without the official recognition of law (Ibsen and Klobus, 615). These kinds of relationships are at the heart of what Cook describes as Sir Charles's quasi-publicity—the sentimental adoptions create a group of people larger than a usual kinship network but also inscribe that network as domestic and hence separate from the state.

Fictive kinship grants the family new affordances that change its shape and authorize different kinds of connection. At first, *Grandison's* conception of the family seems to align with the shift from consanguinity to conjugality that Ruth Perry describes: Sir Charles successfully ignores the confines of the biological family and claims kinship with men, women, and Italians who are not related to him by birth. But Sir Charles's chosen family is not the conjugal family as

Perry conceptualizes it. Sir Charles places just as much emphasis on securing ties with the older generations as he does on marriage.

If anything, marriage is actually Sir Charles's greatest obstacle—not only because it forces him to choose only one wife, but also because it can only grow the extended family at a linear rate. When Harriet realizes that she has romantic feelings for Sir Charles, she experiences jealousy for the first time. "Is love, if I must own love, a narrower of the heart?" (2:387). The fantasy of the conjugal family is that of one unique individual recognizing another individual's particularity, of the heart narrowing to gratify romantic and sexual interest. Sentimental adoption has a major structural advantage over marriage: because it doesn't fetishize particularity, it can accommodate more people and expand at a faster clip. After Harriet rejects Lord D.'s proposal of marriage, he requests friendship with her partially so that he may become friends with Sir Charles by proxy. He assures her that even if she marries someone else, the bonds between all would be secure: "Dearest Miss Byron, take another worthy young man into your friendship but with a tender name: I shall then claim the fourth place in it for myself. O my dear! What a quadruple knot will you tie!" (4:385). Marriage will only ever tie two people together, but the brother and sister alliances that the characters adopt give the sentimental family infinite room to grow.

By prioritizing fictive kinship over biological or legal family, family relationships acquire the imaginative potential that Gallagher ascribes to character. Schellenberg describes the model of family in *Grandison* as almost inside out—on the one hand, the novel imagines family as radically inclusive, breaking down "barriers between sexes, generations, nationalities and faiths," yet at the same time, "erecting barriers to dangerous desire" (59). We see this when Harriet imagines herself as Sir Charles's sister—both eradicating the barriers imposed by biological and

legal relationship and also guarding against her romantic desire for him. Cynical readers may see this kind of adoption as nothing more than an excuse for intimacy under the guise of fraternal affection ("What business had he to take my hand? But indeed, the character of *brother* might warrant the freedom" [2:391]), but this reorganization does not only benefit Sir Charles.

When the novel begins, Harriet finds herself in a common position for a novel's heroine: unmarried and orphaned, in between her father's house and that of some imagined future husband. As a woman without a male protector, Harriet should be vulnerable, but her fictive kinship ties are so strong that she never feels her vulnerability. She has managed to build up an extended family around her consisting of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins who allow her an appropriate degree of both autonomy and protection. In his correspondence, Richardson claims that his aim in creating Harriet was "to make her what I would have supposed Clarissa to be, had she not met with such persecutions at home" (March 24th, 1751; 173). Harriet's extended family trusts her judgement, and she responds to them with an appropriate reverence. After a barrage of advice from her family about how to handle her budding attraction to Sir Charles, she playfully replies:

> And now let me take it a little unkindly, that you call me your *orphan-girl!* You two, and my honoured uncle, have supplied all wanting relations to me: My father then, my grandmamma, and my other mamma, continue to pray for, and to bless, not your orphan, but your real, daughter in all love and reverence,
>
> Harriet Byron-Shirley-Selby (2:309)

The hyphenated last name is indicative of the way family functions as a characterological device in *Grandison.* Harriet's metaphorical family is cumulative, and she imagines herself as a child with more than two parents. Harriet feels cared for because Mrs. Shirley and the Selbys have

offered her prudent advice when she needs it most, substituting a practical morality for nearer blood relationships.

But while these sentimental adoptions have real weight, *how much* weight remains deliberately unclear. When Charlotte thinks Sir Charles has proposed to Harriet, whom the Grandisons have long claimed as a fourth sibling, she asks, "Do I, or do I not, embrace my sister, my *real* sister, my sister Grandison?" (3:132; italics original). Charlotte knows that the fictive sisterhood she feels for Harriet is less *real* than a legal relationship constructed through Harriet's hypothetical marriage to Sir Charles would be. But the potential to acquire fictive siblings also destabilizes the meaning of the real sibling tie. Charlotte seems to have internalized these fears; she worries that if she displeases her brother, "he would think her unworthy of that tender relation to him" (2:416). Charlotte's consanguineal relationship with her brother is not so *real* that it cannot be annulled by Sir Charles himself. Sir Charles politely threatens as much when Charlotte has gone a little too far in her treatment of Lord G.:

> If she should show herself capable of returning slight for tenderness; of taking *such* liberties with a man who loves her, after she had given him her vows, as should depreciate him, and, of consequence, *herself,* in the eye of the world; I should be apt to forget that I had more than *one* sister: For, in cases of right or wrong, we ought not to know either relation or friend. (114; vol 2)

The slips between third and first person and between singular and plural are revealing here. On the one hand, Sir Charles sounds like a conduct book—he is not talking about his family, but rather how every woman should conduct "herself." But he slips a little in the last two sentences, making Charlotte aware that what is at stake is not merely her own self-respect, but her inclusion in the family. The slip also reminds her that he is the final arbiter of who is and isn't a

Grandison. This is reminiscent of Doody's claim that male virtue is "official," hence the movement in the last sentence from "I" to "we." Sir Charles's pronouncement may have personal consequences for Charlotte, but he can get away with this kind of cruelty by claiming he is only sticking to the official rulebook.

The contrast between Harriet and Charlotte's fictive and consanguineal siblinghood reveals the potential and the limits of this kind of family expansion. On the one hand, fictive kinship makes the family supple: boundaries are rewritten to include anyone moral enough to befriend Sir Charles. On the other hand, this is part of what prompts Barr to claim that *Grandison* operates with a totalitarian power structure: the other members of the community trust completely in Sir Charles's judgement. In order for fictive kinship to work to the extent depicted in *Grandison,* then the central authority needs to be total.

We have already seen how Sir Charles's moral authority changes the way the family delineates boundaries, but it also changes the relation between hierarchy and time. In the usual order of things, family hierarchy is tied to age—the people who have been part of the family the longest tend to have the most power. There are of course some exceptions here—a loyal family retainer may wield less power than a new daughter-in-law—but usually we can count on generations to make family hierarchy legible to outsiders. However, in the Grandison extended family there is really only one hierarchical relationship—Sir Charles over everybody else. The rigid hierarchy takes over the same function that boundaries might do in other families. Schellenberg claims that *Grandison's* moral community is the most capacious of all the other novels she analyzes, but it is also the strictest. Sir Charles makes it clear that his good opinion is yours to lose:

> I have sometimes where the merit is not very striking, allowed persons, at first acquaintance, a short lease only in my good opinions; some for three, some for six, some for nine, others for twelve months, renewable or not, as they answer expectation. And by this means I leave it to every one to make his own character with me; I preserve my charity, and my complacency; and enter directly, with frankness, into conversation with him; and generally continue that freedom to the end of the respective person's lease. (428)

Sir Charles only speaks in terms of his own "good opinion," but it's easy to substitute "character" for good opinion here, especially because his good opinion is part of the "Sir Charles standard" that everyone else tests themselves against. In the world of the novel Sir Charles owns character; everyone else only rents.

Fictive Kinship and the Economy of Plenty: Lord W. and Mrs. Oldham

Perhaps the most perplexing example of Sir Charles's ability to be "every thing" comes when he arranges a marriage for his uncle, Lord W. Describing the incident Harriet exclaims "He has been more than a father to his *uncle* : Does not that sound strange?" (3:38). Yes, it does rather. As the younger family member, with a lesser title and smaller estate, Sir Charles has no material, cultural, or legal claim to authority over his uncle. But the situation looks very different when Sir Charles serves as a surrogate father to his ward or even for his own sisters. Lord W. has to cede authority he already possesses, while characters like Charlotte, Harriet, or Emily, have no authority to lose. The disenfranchised women have a lot less to lose and a lot more to gain from submitting to Sir Charles. In this final section, I want to explore two similar situations that reveal the capacity and the limitations of Sir Charles's ability to use fictive kinship to mold his community.

In the scene with Lord W., Sir Charles intervenes between his uncle and Mrs. Giffard, his uncle's housekeeper and former mistress. He is able to negotiate Mrs. Giffard's departure from the family and coax his uncle back onto the path of righteousness. I contrast this incident with the Mrs. Oldham episode. The situations are similar: Mrs. Oldham is Sir Thomas's mistress, and the legitimate Grandison children have to decide what to do with her and her illegitimate children after the death of their father. Again, Sir Charles successfully negotiates an amicable separation. The two episodes show the potentials and limitations of fictive kinship by demonstrating its ability to cope with two extreme outliers: the patriarch who becomes a son and the disenfranchised mistress.

Lord W. claims he has been brought back to the path of righteousness by Sir Charles's example:

> Lessons of morality, given in so noble a manner by regular *practice,* rather than by preaching *theory* (those were his words) not only where there is no interest proposed to be served, but *against* interest, must have subdued us both [Lord W. and his father]; and that by our own consents. (3:59)

At first, it would seem that the practice Sir Charles has modeled is matrimony: Lord W. is so impressed by Sir Charles's behavior that he wants to emulate his good example by taking a bride and even requests that Sir Charles find a suitable match for him. He's not the only person to be inspired to matrimony by Sir Charles's "example." The Lord W. episode comes at the end of a series of administrative coups for Sir Charles, where he has made possible three different marriages—two of the Danby children and Lord W. all marry at his urging: "Sir Charles's example, in short, fired every one with emulation; and three marriages, with the happiest prospects, are likely very soon to follow these noble instances of generosity" (3:61). But Sir

Charles himself isn't married at this point in the book, nor will he be for some time. For reasons I have already detailed, the novel wants to keep him single for as long as possible—thus he finds himself in the position of preaching "theory;" urging others to marry while avoiding matrimony himself.

Instead, the "practice" and "example" that Lord W. admires is Sir Charles's willingness to sacrifice material gain for the greater good. Sir Charles has ended a standoff between Lord W. and Mrs Giffard: if Lord W. dismisses Mrs. Giffard, she will receive an annuity of £250 per year, but if she leaves by her own accord he will only have to pay her £150. Despite both wishing to end the relationship, neither will budge because they see the £100 difference as a matter of pride.

Sir Charles resolves the situation by offering to pay the extra £100 himself, claiming "the respect I pay to my mother's brother, and the regard I have for his honour, will make me chearfully pay the 100*l* a year in dispute out of my own pocket" (3:55). This not only succeeds in settling the dispute with Mrs. Giffard but humbles Lord W. considerably. When he hears about Sir Charles's willingness to pay, he bursts into tears:

> And is it thus, Is it thus, you subdue me? Is it thus you convince me of my shameful littleness? I cannot bear it: All that this woman has done to me, is nothing to this. I can neither leave you, nor stay in your presence. Leave me, leave me, for six minutes only--Jesus! How shall I bear my own littleness? (3:55)

This is the moment when traditional family hierarchy is reversed—Lord W. is the "little" child, crying in shame and Sir Charles the strict but loving parent. What moves Lord W. is Sir Charles's willingness to sacrifice his own wealth for other people's happiness.

It is the pecuniary sacrifice that Lord W. takes as Sir Charles's example *of marriage*. Sir Charles paints the idea of marriage as a sacrificefor everyone involved. Lord W. is old and

gouty, and he needs a female attendant to take care of him.[29] For Lord W. to establish a successful marriage everyone involved will have to relinquish a good deal of autonomy. Lord W. will have to pledge himself to monogamy, his wife will have to marry a much older invalid, and even Sir Charles will lose out on a potential estate if there is an heir.

Sir Charles's intervention involves reorienting his uncle's sense of value. Before Sir Charles convinces him to marry, Lord W.'s solution is to hire a servant; he sees the exchange of money for care and probably sex as a deal that benefits everyone involved. And it does, to some extent, but Sir Charles argues that it weakens the greater moral economy. First, this transaction would run the risk of enriching people who are not worthy of wealth—after all, Mrs. Giffard first joined the family as Lord W.'s nurse. And second, it takes the potential good Lord W. might do for a penniless gentlewoman and squanders it on a servant's wages:

> The man or woman deserves not to be benefited in the disposition of your affairs, that would wish you to continue in the hands of mean people, and to rob you of the joys of confidence, and the comfort of tender help, from an equal or from one who deserves to be made your equal in degree. (3:58)

Second, it will ultimately be a bad investment for Lord W. A servant will be able to sell him her labor, but that is all. However, a wife would enrich the moral economy even if she were an immediate drain on funds: "A man gives his own consequence to the woman he marries; and he sees himself respected in the respect paid her: She extends his dignity, and confirms it" (3:58). By consenting to matrimony, Lord W. is actually creating morality in the same way investment increases wealth; between wife and husband, more dignity is created than either brought to the initial match. Originally, Lord W. sees the consanguineal and the conjugal family as at odds with

[29] Apparently "Male nurses are unnatural creatures!" (3:58).

one another—a marriage will dilute his estate and Sir Charles will lose out. Sir Charles successfully merges the two versions of family by using fictive kinship: if *everyone* can be a member of the family, then the family grows and tensions between generations resolve. The price is Lord W.'s personal humility. As Barr states:

> *Grandison* attempts…to render the sacrifice of pleasure, of autonomy, of privacy, a necessary delight. Insisting upon the inevitability of mitigated happiness, on individual imperfection, the symptom becomes the assurance of "moral" subjection and the means by which characters gain significance and representation. Grandison elevates those who prefer another's happiness to their own. (407)

I agree with Barr here about the function of sacrifice in the novel, but I would like to extend her claim by contrasting the Lord W. episode with the experience of Mrs. Oldham. Because Lord W. has status to lose, he can only be brought into the sentimental family through sacrifice. For Mrs. Oldham, though, who is a woman and a servant without the benefit of legal protections, this kind of "sacrifice" actually becomes a net gain.

Mrs. Oldham's conflict is not with her former benefactor, Sir Thomas, but with his children. There are no legal provisions made for her, and, though Sir Thomas has gifted her around £1,200 over the course of their time together, there is no proof that the money belongs to her. A male cousin, Everard Grandison, acting as the head of household while the sisters wait for Sir Charles to arrive from Italy, throws Mrs. Oldham out of the house with only "one suit of cloaths, besides those she had on," and Caroline and Charlotte do nothing to intercede (2:356). Harriet chides the sisters for being unfeeling, but they are in an awkward position. Sir Thomas eradicated any possibility of coalition between the three women by making Mrs. Oldham his mistress. "She appealed to the ladies; but they reproach'd her with having lived a life of

shame…now she must take the consequence" (2:356). Sir Thomas structured his family so that he literally had to choose between his mistress and his daughters. The three of them cannot live in the same house because Mrs. Oldham's presence would automatically tarnish Caroline and Charlotte's reputations. Thus, Sir Thomas's choice to continue living with Mrs. Oldham came at the direct expense of his daughters.

Like Lord W., Sir Thomas imagines the consanguineal family and the conjugal family as mutually exclusive. Sir Thomas, Harlowe-like, has refused to provide dowries for his daughters, prioritizing his own pleasure over their security. When Lord L. asks about Caroline's dowry, Sir Thomas balks at the implication that he should provide one for her: "I have a good share of health: I have not quitted the world so entirely, nor think I ought, as to look upon myself as the necessary tool of my children, to promote their happiness at the expence of my own" (2:326). This has, of course, taken a toll on Charlotte and Caroline, and following their father's example they think of family economy as an economy of scarcity. When Sir Charles returns to the family, he will be under no legal obligation to provide for his sisters, and they are rightly apprehensive. They are now "in the worldly-wise way of thinking" thanks to their father and know their provision can only come at the expense of their brother: "it was now…become his *interest* to keep up the distance which their unhappy father had been solicitous to create between them" (2:358).

But, true to form, Sir Charles upends his sisters' expectations. He greets them warmly, mourns his father piously, and then goes about setting the estate to rights. His generous treatment of Charlotte and Caroline paves the way for their eventual rapprochement with Mrs. Oldham. In one typical scene, when the three siblings are dividing their mother's jewels, they come across

various bonds and denominations of money that she has set aside for each child, as well as a "miniature picture of his mother, set in gold" (2:368). Then, Sir Charles:

> took [his sisters' purses]; and emptying them on the table, mingled the contents of both together: There may be a difference in the value of each: Thus mingled, you, my sisters, will equally divide them between you. This picture…is of infinite more value than all the three purses contained besides. (2:369)

The purses allow Sir Charles to literalize the sentimental value he places on his female relations. He mingles the purses to show that Charlotte and Caroline are not in competition for his affection or his resources—he plans to treat them equally. And just in case they still have doubts, he makes sure they know he values the portrait of his mother over pecuniary gain.

Sir Charles makes a number of generously tactful misreadings that allow him to use his father's authority to reconcile the various interests of all parties. He (somewhat disingenuously) transfers imaginative potential away from the uncertain relationships between the characters to the character of Sir Thomas. He claims that, because his father made no will, they can never truly know his intentions towards Mrs. Oldham or his daughters. Sir Charles, it should be noted, always keeps "a will by me. I should think it a kind of *presumption* to be a week without one" (2:371). His father's lack of clarity allows for a certain amount of productive presumption. He reasons that *if* his father had made a will, he *would* have provided for Mrs. Oldham. And not necessarily for lascivious reasons: "I dare say, that my father's bounty enabled even his meanest *servants* to save money. I would not keep one, that I thought did not" (2:371). The relationship between housekeeper and master thus requires the kind of consideration that would allow the family to provide for Mrs. Oldham. In addition to reordering the family in a way that includes

Mrs. Oldham in a semi-legitimate role, he also undercuts the potential rivalry between the housekeeper and the sisters:

> You may look upon the justice I aim at doing to persons who can claim *only* justice from me, as an earnest, that I will do *more* than justice to my beloved sisters….The moment I know what I can do, I will do it; and I request you to hope, largely: If I have ability, I will exceed your hopes. (2:374)

By conflating financial and moral justice, Sir Charles teaches his sisters to view the family economy as an economy of plenty: whatever he gives to Mrs. Oldham increases rather than decreases their individual portions.

However, there are some obstacles that even polite wishful thinking cannot overcome. Mrs. Oldham can be financially provided for, but she can never be a full member of the sentimental family. It's telling that even with the number of adoptive "siblings" in the novel, Sir Charles never counts Mrs. Oldham's illegitimate children as his family despite the fact that they share a father (although he does provide for them economically and designates Dr. Bartlett to see to their education.) The one relationship fictive kinship has difficulty accounting for is the parent/child relationship. If fictive kinship is imagined as a series of consensual contractual relationships between characters who share a moral code, reproduction bypasses the contract. Children are the only people whose relationship to a family is not (initially) contractual.[30] Mrs. Oldham's illegitimate children dispel the imaginative potential of her relationship to the larger Grandison family—they are certainties rather than potentials. Thus, she can benefit from Sir Charles's generosity, but she is cut out of any kind of affective ties to the rest of the family.

[30] For more on this see Tadmor, "By defining the family as owing allegiance to the same authority, the family becomes a series of contractual relationships with the head of house, including the marriage contract, the service contract, apprentice indentures, etc." (27).

Conclusion

My favorite reading of *Grandison* can be found in Jane Austen's juvenilia. In "Jack and Alice," she pokes gentle fun at the Sir Charles character at a masquerade ball:

> Of the Males a Mask representing the Sun, was the most universally admired. The Beams that darted from his Eyes were like those of that glorious Luminary tho' infinitely superior. So strong were they that no one dared venture within half a mile of them; he had therefore the best part of the Room to himself, its size not amounting to more than 3 quarters of a mile in length and half a one in breadth. The Gentleman at last finding the fierceness of his beams to be very inconvenient to the concourse by obliging them to croud together in one corner of the room, half shut his eyes by which means, the Company discovered him to be Charles Adams in his plain green Coat, without any mask at all. (12)

It's as if someone invited Scott's chandelier to the neighborhood dance. Austen takes aim at Sir Charles's improbable perfection, but she also astutely demonstrates the connections between Sir Charles and the rest of the community. Charles Adams's eyes are so bright, his example so shining, that his presence is inconvenient, lumping all the other party guests in a single corner of the room.

Richardson created Sir Charles for emulation. His behavior is so consistent that we should be able to intuit how he would act in situations that we never encounter in the novel. The consequence of Sir Charles's perfection, however, is that we end up with two kinds of people: Sir Charles, and everyone else huddled in a corner shielding themselves from his rays. The

community thus coalesces around both a desire to emulate Sir Charles *and* a firm conviction that such emulation is ultimately impossible.

But I don't want to end on a down note here. I endorse the myriad readings that show how a figure like Sir Charles exercises totalitarian control over his community and demands personal sacrifice for the good of the larger community, but as I hope I've shown, that sacrifice can end up being a pretty good bargain for people like Harriet and Mrs. Oldham who are already disenfranchised. The moral community formed around Sir Charles's example both demands less of the powerless and provides them more protection. There are even compensations for powerful men like Lord W. who are willing to submit to Sir Charles. I think particularly of the trajectory of Signor Jeronymo, Clementina's brother and Sir Charles's friend.

Against Sir Charles's wishes, Signor Jeronymo embroils himself in a plot that results in his coming under attack by ruffians. He suffers a wound to his "hip joint" which prevents him from ever being "the man he was" and eventually undergoes a surgery that leaves him incapable of ever producing children (2:121). This seems like a straightforward morality tale—disobey Sir Charles and undergo castration—but the novel goes beyond the usual rake's progress plot. Reunited with Sir Charles, Jeronymo eventually follows Clementina to England and into Sir Charles's extended family. There he becomes "charmed with" Charlotte and her infant child (affectionately termed her "marmouset") and effectively moves in with Charlotte and her family. "He rejoices that he is with us; and is in charming spirits. He is extremely fond of children; particularly so of Lady G's…And he calls it, after her, HIS *Marmouset*, hugging it twenty times a day to his good natured bosom" (7:460). Here, morality replaces kinship, nationality and even gender as an Italian man becomes a second mother to an English child. These are rich compensations, especially for characters who would otherwise be shut out from marriage and

reproduction. If one is only willing to accept second place, then life with Sir Charles can be pretty good.

Chapter Two

The Three Greatest Characters and the "Little Republic": Family, Fatherhood and Civic Identity in *The Vicar of Wakefield*

In 1768, when she was sixteen years old, Frances Burney read Oliver Goldsmith's 1766 novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* and recorded her impressions in her diary:

> I own I began it with distaste and disrelish… the beginning of it even disgusted me—he mentions his wife with such indifference—such contempt… I own I was tempted to thro' the book aside—but there was something in the situation of his family, which, if it did not interest me, at least drew me on—and as I proceeded I was better pleased. (Rousseau 52)

Who is the protagonist of *The Vicar of Wakefield:* Charles Primrose or his family? Burney excuses Primrose's occasional obtuseness and even unkindness for the sake of his wife and children, whom she finds compelling in ways the humble vicar is not. She can be forgiven for doing so; it's a conflation that Primrose himself often makes as well. A vicar is meant to be "one who takes the place of, or acts instead of, another; a substitute, representative, or proxy" (OED). As a religious leader he should stand in for God with his congregation, the representative of a force more powerful than himself. But here we have the opposite: the Primrose family functioning as a proxy for Charles Primrose.

In *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*, we saw the family as a rhetorical form used to expand a moral community, bringing together unrelated characters under the auspices of Sir Charles's benevolence. In that novel the family can support a nearly unlimited number of people because Sir Charles's character is *so* virtuous it can "underwrite" a capacious economy of plenty.

In *Wakefield* we get the inverse: the Primrose family becomes the unit of account that underwrites Charles Primrose's character. Goldsmith's advertisement for *The Vicar of Wakefield* claims that Primrose "unites in himself the three greatest characters on earth; he is a priest, an husbandman, and the father of a family" (3). But the first and second of these characters seem to be routed through the third. For Charles Primrose, fatherhood encompasses civic duty, religious authority, and economic productivity. With so much riding on Primrose's paternity, it's no wonder the Primrose family finds itself stretched almost to breaking as the narrative progresses.

If *Grandison* is the dream version of a community engendered by a benevolent patriarch, *The Vicar of Wakefield* shows us the nightmare. Harriet describes families as "little communities"—that are the "miniatures" of the "great Community" overseen by God, (or possibly Sir Charles) (1:25). *Wakefield*, by contrast, endorses a Lockean vision of family where the family is not the "miniature" of the great Community as much as the site of individual character formation. Lawrence Stone describes *Wakefield* as the *"*literary apotheosis" of eighteenth-century companionate marriage, and the novel's emphasis on domesticity has long been one of its defining features (219). In 1845 George Craik called *Wakefield* "our first genuine novel of domestic life," and Primrose himself bases his moral authority almost entirely on his role as husband and father (Rousseau 303). But part of the novel's reverence for family means understanding it as something categorically different from the hectic world outside its walls. On the one hand, this means that the family becomes the site of affective depth, as sentimental attachments between family members become the proof of individual worth. On the other, it leaves individual family members ill-equipped to deal with the predatory outside world.

The Vicar of Wakefield both understands the necessity for a private, domestic, sphere that separates the roles of father and citizen, while longing for a world in which such a separation is

unnecessary. In this chapter, I explore the relationship of the family to paternal character and the politics of Goldsmith's novel. *Wakefield* exploits the tension between the family as the site of individual character formation and the family as the source of patriarchal authority. The novel's tonal instability springs from its inability to reconcile the affective depth Primrose derives from his role as paterfamilias with the political values of a world that has moved beyond patriarchal government.

Family Values

The Vicar of Wakefield tells the story of Charles Primrose and his family—his wife Deborah and his six children, including three older children of marriageable age: George, Olivia, and Sophia. When we first meet the family, they are living in idyllic harmony in the town of Wakefield, where Charles works as Vicar. After they lose their fortune, they can no longer stay in Wakefield, so the family decamps to another village with a living to offer Primrose. This move brings them to the notice of Squire Thornhill, their new landlord. Squire Thornhill is occupying the role vacated by his virtuous uncle, Sir William Thornhill, who has left his estate in his nephew's hands while he travels the world incognito. The Squire insinuates himself into the Vicar's family, eventually seducing and abandoning Olivia. To keep Primrose from publicly denouncing him, he engages in a series of attacks on the Primroses' estate and good name that ultimately lead to the family's incarceration and places the three oldest children in various states of mortal peril. Just when all appears to be lost, the family is rescued by Sir William Thornhill, who has been masquerading as a penniless wanderer named Burchell. Sir William overrules the Squire and, after a series of improbable events and coincidences, restores all three Primrose

children to their family and good names. Olivia's marriage to the Squire is recognized, Sophia marries Sir William, and George marries his childhood sweetheart Arabella Wilmot. The Vicar has his reputation, wealth, and family restored, and the novel ends with Primrose declaring: "It now only remained that my gratitude in good fortune should exceed my former submission in adversity" (170).

With its avalanche of improbable misfortunes and an equally improbable happy ending, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is often compared to the Biblical Book of Job. Martin Battestin considers the novel to be the "comedy of Job," as it recreates the Job story but with a comic reversal at the end that neutralizes the fable's human costs. But the comedic elements also introduce a troubling ambiguity into the book—is this a novel about faith and forbearance or about expecting an earthly reward for good behavior? This question has been at the heart of *Wakefield* criticism almost since its publication. There is robust disagreement about whether or not Goldsmith's attitude toward Charles Primrose is satirical or sentimental. Strong arguments can, and have, been made in either direction.[31] I am less interested in arbitrating the debate than I am in pointing out its durability. There is something fundamentally unstable about the novel's tone which, despite the narrative's seeming simplicity, makes it difficult to produce a definitive reading.

I agree with James Kim's argument that the "book's notorious generic instability merely symptomatizes a more fundamental gender instability" (22). For Kim, *Wakefield's* tonal inconsistencies spring from Primrose's attempt to reconcile the period's seemingly contradictory constructions of masculinity, particularly robust heterosexual desire, and "the ascension of a

[31] For the sentimental reading see John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Clarendon Press, 1990)*;* David Aaron Murray, "From Patrimony to Paternity in *The Vicar of Wakefield"* in *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, (vol. 9, no. 3, 1997, 328 – 336). For satiric readings, see Robert H. Hopkins, *The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith* (Baltimore 1969); Margaret Anderson, *Stoic Constructions of Virtue in the Vicar of Wakefield* (*Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2008).

feminizing culture of sensibility" (22). While I concur that Primrose's gender identity is at the core of the novel's tonal instabilities, I locate the instability in Primrose's fatherhood rather than his sexuality. The same forces Kim describes as complicating the relationship between masculinity and heterosexuality also exist as a conflict between a patriarchal model of fatherhood—i.e. fatherhood as a social status—and a newer, affective, mode of fatherhood that sees close family relationships as signs of personal depth and interiority.

Primrose locates his entire sense of self-worth, we might even say his sense of self, in fatherhood. We never get to know him as a bachelor—the very first lines of the book announce his commitment to matrimony, and by the end of the first chapter Deborah has given birth to their six children. His priestly duties seem to consist mostly of "exhorting the married men to temperance and the bachelors to matrimony" (12). His own marriage is motivated by the belief that marriage and "population" are a civic as well as personal good. As he introduces his family he reflects with great pride: "Though I had but six [children], I considered them as a very valuable present made to my country, and consequently looked upon it as my debtor" (10). Family becomes the collateral that underwrites Primrose's version of the social contract—he believes that offering his family "to his country" creates an obligation for the state to respect his individual liberties, so much so that the state is Primrose's "debtor": it owes him more than he owes it.

But the problem with valuing your family above everything else is that it means family has value—the sentimental worth of the family threatens to become a kind of exchange value. Primrose offers his children to his country not because of their charms or unique personalities, but because "population" is a good unto itself. At the same time, his affective connection to his children is sincere, to the point where they become liabilities for Primrose and one another.

When the family shelters together in a debtor's prison, he finds comfort in their presence: "I would not be without them for the world; for they can make a dungeon seem a palace. There is but one way in this life of wounding my happiness, and that is by injuring them" (130). The narrative sadistically takes him up on this proposition. The trials and torments *he* undergoes are often carried out upon the bodies of his children.

Primrose remains emphatic that each member of his family is irreplaceable, and I do not doubt his sincerity. A comparison to the Book of Job might be helpful here. One of the ways God "tests" Job is by slaying his wife and children. Afterwards, when Job has proven himself worthy, he gets a new wife who "gives him" more children. In the context of the Bible story, this is a happy ending, and Job is more than amply recompensed for his suffering. As a patriarch, as long as he has *a* wife it recompenses for the loss of his first wife. Imagine an ending to *The Vicar of Wakefield* where Olivia really does die of her broken heart. Even if Primrose had everything restored to him, and we find out that Deborah is pregnant with a new child, the ending would still read as tragic. Olivia is not merely any child, she is *Olivia*, and Primrose's attachment to her makes both more vulnerable.

The question of who can be replaced before the meaning of family changes lies at the heart of *Wakefield*. The book seems to be genuinely ambivalent about whether or not the Primrose children are more valuable as individuals or as part of the totalizing whole of the family. Here, I again find it useful to attend to the affordances created by the form of the family rather than focusing on the Primroses. The family creates a strong connection between hierarchy and temporality. Generally, the people with the most authority in a family are also the ones who have been part of it the longest. This impacts the assumptions an outside observer makes about shared familial character: we expect parents to have a major impact on their children's character,

while we do not expect parents' character to be as fundamentally impacted by their children. When we encounter polite, well-behaved children, it's likely we would infer they have polite, well-behaved parents. At the same time, if we encounter a polite, well-behaved couple we do not normally assume that this is owing to the influence of children that they may or may not have. So, parents (usually) form their children's characters, and children's behavior (usually) reflects on our assessment of parental character.

Primrose is hyper-conscious of the fact that his children's behavior reflects back on his own character. This awareness creates a strange economy of character where his children are both irreplaceable and interchangeable. The same family borders that separate the Primroses from the rest of the world also dissolve boundaries between individual family members. At the beginning of the novel, Primrose claims his children share "one character" between them: "In short, a family likeness prevailed through all, and properly speaking, they had but one character, that of being all equally generous, credulous, simple, and inoffensive" (12). The image here is not only of identical blank slates, lined up and waiting to experience the world, but of a single character shared amongst six people. The shared character impacts the way the Primrose children can face the universe outside the confines of the Primrose family; something that impresses on *any* slate ends up marking *every* slate.

Within the family, character can be freely traded. When Primrose contrasts Olivia and Sophia, he stresses their complementary natures: Olivia is vivacious and anxious to please; Sophia is prudent and afraid to offend. Each of the daughters has a "job" within the family: "The one entertained me with her vivacity when I was gay, the other with her sense when I was serious" (11). Within the family, Sophia and Olivia offer contrast, variety, and specialization, allowing for a certain amount of playful trade: "These qualities were never carried to excess in

either, and I have often seen them exchange characters for a whole day together" (11). But outside the boundaries of the family these differences fall away. As part of the complicated denouement, we learn that the Squire is "in love with both sisters at the same time" (156). He views Olivia less as an irreplaceable, specific, human being and more as someone who is of low enough status to be "fair game." The kinds of playful exchanges that exist within the family become dangerous transactions outside the home. We see this literally in Primrose and Moses's disastrous attempts to go to market but also in the danger that attaches to the older childrens' marriages. Each marriage comes with the threat of prison, rape, or death, and in each case the danger transfers from the individual child to the family as a whole.

Caroline Levine devotes an entire chapter of *Forms* to "wholes." She acknowledges that the field has been rightly wary of totalizing wholes, but that wholes also have affordances beyond exclusion and oppression. Levine gives a very convincing (and somewhat cheeky) reading of Mary Poovey's *Uneven Developments* to show that even the most staunchly anti-formalist critics still rely on wholes and totalities, if only to deconstruct them. For Levine, as for Plato, wholes enable conceptualization—allowing us to generate abstract concepts that we can use to think through problems that exceed our day-to-day realities. In *The Vicar of Wakefield*, however, the need for conceptualization often edges out the possibilities of particularity. Or, put another way, even minor particularities become a threat to the institutions they are meant to exemplify.

We can see this tension in Primrose's pet theological concern: "monogamy," which in this case means refusal to marry after the death of a spouse, not faithfulness during marriage. Indeed, monogamy is of such importance to him that he not only jeopardizes his son's

engagement over it, but goes so far as to write an epitaph for his wife—while she's still alive—that designates her the "only wife" of Reverend Primrose:

> I wrote [an] epitaph for my wife, though still living, in which I extolled her prudence, œconomy, and obedience till death; and having got it copied fair, with an elegant frame, it was placed over the chimney-piece, where it answered several very useful purposes. It admonished my wife of her duty to me, and my fidelity to her; it inspired her with a passion for fame, and constantly put her in mind of her end. (13)

This is one of those moments that throw the generic instability of the novel into relief. Should we take Primrose seriously here? Certainly, reminding one's wife of her mortality is not a typical expression of romantic attachment. This is an example of what Kim calls "self-subversion through hyperbole" (24). Primrose's devotion to monogamy is so complete that we begin to wonder if he cares about *Deborah* or just monogamy itself. Certainly, his reverence for monogamy precludes any of the kinds of extended family attachments we saw in *Grandison*: there will be no step-siblings or step children for the Primroses.

Patriarchy, Sacred Patriarchy!

The most cynical and the most frightening instance of interchangeable character in the novel is the two Squires Thornhill. The family misfortunes are only narrowly averted at the end of the book after Sir William reveals himself and banishes the Squire. This *Sir William ex machina* reveals the dangerous fragility of the world outside the family: there are no checks or balances in the system to defend Primrose from the naked exercise of power. But for all that, Primrose, like Goldsmith, identifies as a strict monarchist. This is a somewhat surprising stance for a figure who many consider to be the literary apotheosis of the petit bourgeoisie, but the contradiction

resolves itself when we begin to tease apart patriarchy and monarchy. In the philosophical debate between Locke and Filmer, Primrose is a Hobbes: he believes in both the social contract and the necessity for a strong, centralized authority. But these preferences spring less from a firm belief in a social contract than from the desire to keep the patriarchal relations of the family pristine. Here, I explore the contrast between Goldsmith's ardent support for patriarchy and his understanding of political power. For Goldsmith, the distinction springs from his need to preserve the family as the source of individual character rather than a belief in the efficacy of monarchy.

Goldsmith lays out his thoughts on government in a famous digression in which Primrose stops to argue with a "well-drest gentleman" about the relative merits of monarchy and liberty.[32] He believes that monarchy, while not ideal, is the best means of protecting "that order of men which subsists between the very rich and the very rabble," and "alone is known to be the true preserver of freedom, and may be called the People" (87-88). The middle classes are constantly under pressure. On one side lie the wealthy who want to exploit them; on the other lie the poor who want to take advantage of them (as exemplified by the "well-drest gentleman," who turns out to be a butler masquerading as his master). Primrose describes the imperiled middle classes as a village under siege:

> The middle order may be compared to a town of which the opulent are forming the siege, and which the governor from without is hastening the relief. While the besiegers are in dread of the enemy over them, it is but natural to offer the townsmen the most specious terms; to flatter them with sounds, and amuse them with privileges: but if they once

[32] Goldsmith puts his own political beliefs into Primrose's mouth. Parts of this theory are found in *The Citizen of the World* (1762); and *An History of England, in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son* (1764). Perhaps that's why Primrose is uncharacteristically practical here. For an overview of Goldsmith's political beliefs and influences see James P. Carson "The Little Republic of the Family: Goldsmith's Politics of Nostalgia" (2004).

> defeat the governor from behind, the walls of the town will be but a small defence to its inhabitants. (88)

The image of Goldsmith's besieged town might be the story of the Primrose family in miniature. Apart from the obvious similarities between the metaphor of the town and the Primrose's relationship with the two Squires Thornhill, the analogy hints at Primrose's understanding of family affordances. Like the town, the family is a bounded whole fighting off a breach. It has no offensive capacity. Without the potential for second or third marriages, there is no possibility of step-families or extending kinship through any medium other than marriage or procreation with one's first spouse. And without dowries for his daughters or prospects for his sons, Primrose has little hope of growing or creating kinship networks. The best he can hope for is to fend off violent intrusion.

Perhaps this is why his vision for protecting the middle classes is so dependent upon a strong, centralized authority. Primrose's defense of monarchy feels uncharacteristically cynical for the good vicar. He reasons that there will always be tyrants, "for as sure as your groom rides your horses, because he is a cunninger animal than he, so surely will the animal that is cunninger or stronger than he, sit upon his shoulders in turn" (86). Eliminating tyrants, then, can only create a power vacuum. Instead, the best option is to isolate tyranny into the person of a single ruler:

> Now sir, for my own part, as I naturally hate the face of a tyrant, the farther off he is removed from me, the better pleased am I. The generality of mankind are of my thinking, and have unanimously created one king, whose election at once diminishes the number of tyrants, and put tyranny the greatest distance from the greatest number of people. (86)

Primrose thus echoes the prayer of the Rabbi of Anatevka: "May God bless and keep the Czar… far away from us!" But the forces that empower the opulent are so strong, and so automatic, that

only a conscious intervention from a centralized authority can interrupt the natural process long enough to give the middle class a fighting chance.

Without a strong centralized authority, the wealthy will only get wealthier and more powerful. Goldsmith describes the concentration of wealth and power as if it were a force of nature:

> Now the possessor of accumulated wealth, when furnished with the necessaries and pleasures of life, has no other method to employ the superfluity of his fortune but in purchasing power. That is, differently speaking, in making dependents, by purchasing the liberty of the needy or the venal, of men who are willing to bear the mortification of continuous tyranny for bread… Thus each very opulent man generally gathers round him a circle of the poorest of the people; and the polity abounding in accumulated wealth, may be compared to a Cartesian system, each orb with a vortex of its own. (87)

Primrose refers to Descartes's theory of the formation of the universe, sometimes also called the "theory of vortices." This theory posited that "space was filled with particles of subtle matter in various states, all of which matter was endowed with a rotary motion postulated as spinning around the sun" (Friedman 191). Primrose's image is of a series of vortices popping up around the country, each with the potential to suck individuals into its sphere of influence.

The only recourse the middle orders have is to create their own centers of gravity and hope they can withstand the pull of "the opulent." What keeps the family from becoming yet another vortex is the patriarchal structure of the household that allows it to retain hierarchy and preserve a sense of order. Primrose tries to establish the family as one such center of gravity, but in nearly every contest he loses to the pull of an outside force. Squire Thornhill seems to have

control over two particularly powerful forces: wealth and sentiment. Each of these exert strong pulls but provide no structure beyond gratifying the will of the central figure.

Sentimental Vortices vs John Locke

The Vicar of Wakefield is often read as a sentimental novel, partially because of the Vicar's powerlessness in the face of overwhelming forces. But sentiment is actually the Vicar's enemy; it is one of the forces that attacks his family rather than a way to engage with the world. His ideal family is predicated on the philosophy of John Locke and combines patriarchal duty with affection, but sentiment introduces a force that is potentially stronger than either. Primrose is often counted as the third member of a trio of characters who exemplify the "man of feeling" archetype, including Laurence Sterne's Parson Yorick and Henry Mackenzie's Harley. But Primrose is a markedly different specimen from the other two. Harley and Yorick are both sentimental *subjects*: they are the onlookers who are moved by the tragedy of others. Primrose, however, is the sentimental *object*: he *elicits* sympathy from readers through manly displays of stoicism in the face of unspeakable tragedy.[33]

Sentiment's super-power is its ability to "move" us. It can bring together disparate people into a single unit, bounded together by shared passion—not unlike the "vortices" of the wealthy. George Haggerty calls these sentimental clusters "pseudofamilies," and they follow Eve Sedgwick's observation that these texts use the "new narrative of the 'private' bourgeois family" to create cross-class sentimental families (76). The sentimental family has a paterfamilias, but all other roles are deliberately hazy. Haggerty observes: "These pseudofamilies are almost by

[33] The stoic man of feeling is another important vein in the sentimental tradition. For more on the history of British stoicism see Julie Ellison's *Cato's Tears*, which does an excellent job tracing the intellectual heritage of the man of feeling and its importance to British politics. For more about stoicism and sentiment in *The Vicar of Wakefield*, see Margaret Anderson's "Stoic Constructions of Virtue in *The Vicar of Wakefield.*"

definition the projection of male ego: the man of feeling needs to feel that he is the support of any number of dependents" (83). For Yorick and Harley, single men both, the sentimental exchanges help organize their worlds, making them the paterfamilias of a series of temporary sentimental families. But for Primrose, this kind of family formation can only be a threat; sentiment brings people together—*any people*. Not only does this lay the groundwork for potentially dangerous associations, such as Olivia and Squire Thornhill, it also brings figures like Squire Thornhill and the Vicar together. Without an overarching value system to give the family shape, Primrose loses his position and authority as paterfamilias. The result of Olivia and Squire Thornhill's attraction is not just her elopement; it's the loss of all of the Primrose property and the Vicar's liberty.

In contrast to the sentimental "pseudofamily," Goldsmith gives us what I call the "Lockean family." *The Vicar of Wakefield* is remarkable in its choice to narrate the parent/child relationship from the point of view of the parent, and even more particularly the father.[34] The Vicar is Lockean in as much as he believes parents have the capacity and duty to shape their children's characters, but he is also a bad reader of Locke. In his eagerness to conflate the roles he plays in the family and the state, he inappropriately treats his members of his community like family, and the members of his family like fellow citizens.

In the *Second Treatise on Government*, Locke explains, in great detail, why the state is not a patriarchy: "the power of a MAGISTRATE over a subject maybe distinguished from that of a FATHER over his children, a MASTER over his servant, a HUSBAND over his wife, and a LORD over his slave" (II.2). But while Locke banishes patriarchy from politics, as Carole

[34] Raymond Hilliard remarks: "Of the other harried or delinquent fathers in eighteenth-century fiction, none, to my knowledge, is presented as a main character, and only one other, Smollett's Matthew Bramble, is allowed to tell his own, potentially incriminating story" (467).

Pateman and other feminist scholars have been quick to note, he does so by reifying a patriarchal power structure within the home. The family and the state are thus locked together in kind of reciprocal relationship, each continuing to not be the other.

While the state has authority over life and death, a Lockean father's power is purely "but a help to the weakness and imperfection of their [children's] nonage, a discipline necessary to their education" (II, 65). As children grow and learn civic responsibility from their parents, they come into their own natural rights, at which point the father's authority ceases.[35] The meaning of family shifts, then, after the children outgrow their nonage. After a child grows into the full state of equality, he no longer owes his father obedience, but he still owes him respect: "[God] has laid on the children a perpetual obligation of honouring their parents, which containing in it an inward esteem and reverence to be shewn by all outward expressions" (II.66). But because no one in the family has dominion over life and death, there is no mechanism for enforcing this kind of deference. Thus, affection that remains after the child has grown out of their nonage becomes a sign of character, proof that the child has learned what it needs to and that the parents have correctly fulfilled their duties.

Patricia Meyers Spacks claims that the consensual nature of the parent/older child relationship is at the heart of Primrose's character: "The use of a father as narrator emphasizes how *The Vicar of Wakefield* realizes the dream implicit in many adjurations of the moralists, the dream of ultimate adolescent submission, of a continued 'love' based on necessity" (15). The Vicar has six children, but only the three eldest are narratively interesting to Goldsmith. After the

[35] Locke believed that divorce should be permissible in certain situations:

> But tho' these are ties upon *mankind*, which make the conjugal bonds more firm and lasting in man, than the other special of animals; yet it would give one reason to enquire, why this *compact*, where procreation and education are secured, and inheritance taken care for, may not be made determinable, either by consent, or at a certain time, or upon certain conditions, as well as other voluntary compacts, there being no necessity in the nature of the thing, nor to the ends of it, that it should always be for life. (II, 81)

plot tests each child, they return to their family, demonstrating the tie to their parents that comes not only from duty, but from affection and good judgement.

And raising affectionate children with good judgement is hard! In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke claims that "I think I may say, that of all the Men we meet with, nine Parts out of ten are what they are, good or evil, useful or not, by their Education" (1). Education is the value Primrose adds to whatever nature his children have been born with. This is why his children are his gifts to his country: he knows he made them, both biologically and morally. In emphasizing his "exaltation" and pride in his children, Primrose not only acknowledges their goodness, but also insists on the value of his role in their education.

Affection is important between parent and child, but it's also a trap. The parent-child bond creates inherent difficulties in child rearing. Locke argues that a parent's chief concern should be teaching children self-control and self-denial:

> And the great Principle and Foundation of all Virtue and Worth is plac'd in this: That a Man is able to deny himself his own Desires, cross his own Inclinations, and purely follow what Reason directs as best, tho' the Appetite lean the other way (21).

However, there are two related obstacles for parents who want to teach their child forbearance. First, there is a very definite chronological window that parents must take advantage of: "The great Mistake I have observ'd in People's breeding their Children, has been, that this has not been taken Care enough of in its due Season" (21). The intervention has to begin when the child is still young, before reason develops. Otherwise, the child will learn bad habits and, when they are no longer cute, the parents will no longer find the bad habits charming. This is the second challenge: the due Season is also the season when parents are most inclined to be indulgent; thus, "Children's Constitutions are either spoil'd, or at least harmed, by Cockering and Tenderness"

(2). It is the father's place, he believes, to show forbearance in order to teach it. This is in line with the kind of love Primrose shows his own children. He claims that because his children were educated "without softness," they grew to be "well-formed and healthy; my sons hardy and active, my daughters beautiful and blooming" (10).

While he doesn't use this language, one of the tenets of Locke's parenting is that real virtue comes from a form of sociability learned in the home. When he lays out his guidelines for disciplining children, he cautions against bribing them (which will only instill an unwholesome taste for luxury), and against corporal punishment. Instead, he argues that parents should learn to inculcate "love of credit" in their children. This happens when a child learns to value praise from his parents, and to feel shame when he believes he has disappointed them. "Ingenuous shame," argues Locke, "and the apprehension of displeasure, are the only true restraints; these alone ought to hold the reins, and keep the child in order" (34). Locke believes that the family teaches children theory of mind, and the only way for them to develop virtue is to hone the ability to understand what someone else is thinking.

Crucially, this kind of mind-reading develops within and replicates the hierarchies of the family. Children begin without knowing what their parents are thinking and have to be slowly taught over the course of their childhood. However, the structure of the family is such that this process cannot occur in reverse. Indeed, parents risk harming their children if they engage in a "too active sympathy." When a parent gives in to sympathy for his or her child, he or she is more likely to harm the child through overindulgence. Locke cautions against overly tender mothers and leaving children alone with servants, both of whom will be too ready to tend to the child's immediate needs and coddle them.

The family structure, then, dictates who learns sensitivity and self-control through *appropriate* sympathy and who actively causes harm with a *surfeit* of sympathy. One of Charles Primrose's defining characteristics is his comic inability to correctly anticipate other people's behaviors. I argue that this springs from his fundamental misreading of Locke. The Vicar is an excellent Lockean parent: loving but firm, always looking to teach proper lessons, and basking in the shared glory of his children's accomplishments. But he falls short as a Lockean citizen. He assumes the same responsibility towards fellow strangers that he assumes towards his children. He is too willing to lecture his neighbors or discipline his son's future father-in-law. What Primrose lacks is the ability to engage with other characters' subjectivity. It seldom, if ever, occurs to him that other characters might want something different from what he wants for them.

There's also the danger that ignoring sentiment can take the parent too far in the other direction. Primrose's rejection of sentiment means that he misses the warning signs of attraction between Olivia and Squire Thornhill. He is willing to contract Olivia to an honest farmer he knows she does not love as part of a stratagem to gauge Squire Thornhill's true intentions. Primrose fails to see the very real heterosexual passion swirling around under his roof. Olivia acknowledges that her desire for the Squire is foolish, but it is also so strong that it seriously overwhelms her judgement.[36] But for Primrose the plot to bring Squire Thornhill to a declaration is motivated more by earthly concerns than sentiment. He warns Olivia that she has to be prepared to go through with the marriage to Farmer Williams if the Squire does not come through: "I must absolutely insist that honest Mr. Williams shall be rewarded for his fidelity. The character which I have hitherto supported in life demands this from me, and my tenderness, as a parent, shall never influence my integrity as a man" (75). This is not something Yorick would

[36] Timothy Dykstal gives a thorough reading of Olivia's desire and Primrose's misreading in "The Story of O: Politics and Pleasure in *The Vicar of Wakefield.*"

ever exclaim from his *Desobligeant*! Primrose does not lack paternal affection (which is made even more evident when he takes Olivia back into the family after her elopement), but he has the sangfroid to prioritize duty over tenderness. I see this moment as Primrose's fundamental misreading of character—not of Olivia's character, necessarily, but of what parts of the human experience count as character. He believes that Olivia's desire and his tenderness exist, but that they have no power to move.

The Little Republic in the Big World

Critics have been baffled as to why Primrose, the consummate monarchist, would describe his family as "the little republic to which I gave laws" (22). I would argue that Primrose's vision of his family as a little republic is less about the way he envisions sharing (or not sharing) power with his wife and children and more about the kind of community he wants them to emulate. James P. Carson argues that Primrose's approach to both parenting and politics is consistent if one accounts for the nostalgic concept of republican government presented by the town of Wakefield: Goldsmith "would be a republican himself if Britain were a different kind of country—that is, if Britain were a smaller, more homogenous and more unified nation" (173). The opening chapters, where Primrose describes his life in the town of Wakefield, represent this vision. In Wakefield, the family "had no revolutions to fear, nor fatigues to undergo; all our adventures were by the fire-side, and all our migrations from the blue bed to the brown" (9). These are the conditions the family spends the rest of the novel trying, and failing, to recreate.

There are two things that make Wakefield such a paradise. First, it is a place of stable identity. The first two chapters are the only time Primrose is truly the Vicar of Wakefield, since he resigns his post after losing his fortune. That stability is predicated on the town's other

extraordinary quality—the near perfect overlap of private and public power structures. Here, the family really is the miniature of the greater community: each contains discrete boundaries that mark the difference between members and non-members. Carson cites Rousseau's image of the Republic of Geneva in *A Discourse on Inequality*: "a state where, every individual being acquainted with every other, neither the dark manouevres of vice nor the modesty of virtue was concealed from public gaze and judgement" (Rousseau, quoted in Carson 173). For Goldsmith, the optimal theory of government shifts not depending on the quality of the ruler, but on the size of the community. Hence a "little republic" is manageable, provided it is small enough to fit into a single circle of acquaintance.

What feels a little odd about this construction, though, is the assumption that if the town is small enough, it is possible to know not only who everybody is, but to have sense of their character broadly writ. In Rousseau's formation, vice and virtue are defined entirely through social actions, and hence are observable; the village has access to all of the necessary data it needs to correctly assess the character of the individual members. Perhaps this is why Primrose believes he can approach everybody as a patriarch instead of as a potential competitor. He has learned to equate external signs with internal meaning: "as some men gaze with admiration at the colours of a tulip, or the wing of a butterfly, so I was by nature an admirer of happy human faces" (10). In Wakefield, this system works because social roles are legible.

By only judging people based on external signs, Primrose avoids the pit-falls that might come with investing in other people's subjectivity. He never has to worry that he will pick up bad habits from his neighbors; instead he is confident that influence only flows in one direction. Primrose is able to become acquainted with "every man in the parish," and by discoursing with them to "exhort… the married men to temperance and the bachelors to matrimony" (12). The

reputation of the village and the reputation of its vicar are synonymous: “In a few years it was a common saying, that there were three strange wants at Wakefield, a parson wanting pride, young men wanting wives and ale-houses wanting customers” (12). The “common saying” presents a chain of influence that mirrors Primrose’s ideal social organization—the personal integrity of the vicar influences single men to marry, and family life influences their ability to eschew vice (presumably for the joys of sober hard work and domestic felicity). By refusing to get sucked into other people’s subjectivity, Primrose crafts a paternal relationship to his parishioners in Wakefield, and he is able to take pride in their accomplishments the same way he takes pride in his children. The problem is that Primrose continues in this vein after the family leaves the town of Wakefield. Once he can no longer control the boundaries of his community, refusing to invest in other characters’ subjectivity becomes a liability rather than an asset.

Of course, Primrose only has limited control of the boundaries of the world outside his family, even in the town of Wakefield. But there seems to be no boundaries between family and community in the town. We seldom see Primrose at his clerical duties, but we do see him dispense charity from his home:

> Our cousins too, even to the fortieth remove, all remembered their affinity, without any help from the Herald's office, and came very frequently to see us. Some of them did us no great honor by these claims of kindred; as we had the blind, the maimed, and the halt amongst the number. However, my wife always insisted that as they were the same *flesh and blood*, they should sit with us at our table. (9-10, italics in original)

It is unclear if the people who stream through the Primrose home are really their relatives, but neither Primrose nor Deborah care if the people they entertain are actual blood relations. The family is capable of expanding to fit an endless stream of pseudo-relatives while retaining its

structural integrity. By coming to the Primroses under the guise of kinship, everyone tacitly creates a new family that both erases boundaries between the Primroses and "the blind, the halt and the lame" while maintaining the hierarchy of the household.

The hierarchy manifests itself in the affect of the gatherings. In Wakefield, Primrose describes his dinner parties as merry because "the poorer the guest, the better pleased he ever is with being treated" (10). Primrose is usually comically obtuse, but in these scenes he explicitly articulates the usually unspoken relationship between sympathy and currency. Here we see both the food *and* the emotional connectivity of the family offered to Wakefield's parishioners, who purchase both with properly deferential sociability. This very exchange is what curates the vicar's moral community and ensures stability. Anyone who fails to pass the litmus test of preferring sociability to material wealth is weeded out by playing on the "bad character" of the individual:

> However, when anyone of our relations was found to be a person of very bad character, a troublesome guest, or even one we desired to get rid of, upon his leaving my house, I ever took care to lend him a riding coat, or a pair of boots… and I always had the satisfaction of finding he never came back to return them (10).

The family in Wakefield is not only whole but also self-sustaining. Primrose's charity creates its own virtuous cycle of charity begetting sociability and sociability begetting charity. Anyone who does not share the vicar's values fails to make it past the first turn of the wheel.

The painful loss that accompanies the Primroses' expulsion from Wakefield is a loss of the family's overall *capacity*. After the family is forced out of Wakefield, the same impulses that made them charitable now make them vulnerable. Margaret Anderson has argued that it is the loss of these "relatives" that marks the limits of virtue in the vicar's altered state. When the

Primroses are forced to focus on their own subsistence, they can no longer expand the family to accommodate whoever knocks at their door for gooseberry wine.

In place of their poor relations, the family now finds themselves entertaining the predatory Squire Thornhill. From the beginning, the Squire makes it clear that it is the family, rather than the guest, who should be honored by the visit. The Squire actually provides the food that the Primroses serve him when he comes to dine. The Vicar is rightly wary of striking up a "disproportionate friendship" with his landlord, but as he's cautioning his family he is interrupted by the Squire's messenger, arriving with a promise to dine with them and a side of venison. He concedes that "This well-timed present pleaded more powerfully in his favour, than any thing I had to say could obviate" (27). The Vicar's paternal warnings are no match for a present of game and a rich potential suitor. The Squire knows this better than the Vicar. He is engaged in a similar fiction to the "cousins" at Wakefield—he pretends that enjoying the hospitality of the house will make him "family." But the social world of the Squire's neighborhood does not map onto the Primrose family as seamlessly as it did in Wakefield. With Primrose the authority inside the house and Thornhill the authority outside, two potential bounded social worlds clash, and one is forced to buckle under the pressure of the other. Not surprisingly, it is the family that gives.

Before Olivia's elopement, we see the pressure put on the family as a bounded unit in the family portrait scene. In competition with their neighbors the Flamboroughs, the Primroses commission a family portrait from a limner, who "travelled the country, and took likenesses for fifteen shillings a head" (70). The Primroses have learned to scoff at the Flamboroughs' tastelessness, but that bad taste is actually family uniformity—they are all drawn in the same poses with the same props. Instead, the Primroses hit on the idea of "large historical family

piece" (70). But, as the family "did not immediately recollect an historical subject to hit us, we were contented with each being drawn as independent historical figures" (70). The result is a comical hodge-podge, with each family member set in their own historical time and place. In the end, the canvass is so massive they cannot hang in in their house, and it stands in the corner of their kitchen "much too large to be got through any of the doors, and the jest of all our neighbors" (71).

In addition to serving as the final comic set-piece before real calamity strikes, the portrait shows how disjointed the Primrose family has become outside of Wakefield. The Squire himself asks to be included in the family portrait as Alexander the Great at the feet of Olivia dressed as an Amazon. The Vicar and his wife believe that the inclusion is solid proof the Squire "designed to become one of our family," but it instead illustrates how far the family has become fractured (70). Not only are the disparate members of the Primrose family now in completely different stories, times, and places, their "conqueror" lies complacently in their midst. This puts the family members out of sync with one another and also with the larger community. The Squire's inclusion is "an honour too great to escape envy" (71). To illustrate the complete collapse of the family character, Primrose compares the portrait to Robinson Crusoe's long-boat, which is too big for the castaway to maneuver off of land and into the water. Although he's explicitly referring to the portrait's unwieldy size, the choice of *Robinson Crusoe* reveals the extent to which Primrose's Eden has transformed from a community of interconnected family and parishioners into a desert island where each member of the family may as well be shipwrecked alone.

Prison

Outside the village of Wakefield, the only place where Primrose seems to have any innate authority is debtor's prison. Similar to the digression on monarchy, the prison scenes are a moment when Goldsmith seems to pause the story to lay out a program for prison reform. The most famous reading of these scenes is John Bender's argument that they reveal "ideology which is at once pervasively encoded throughout the novel and contradicted by the text's political rhetoric" (181). In *Imagining the Penitentiary,* Bender, expanding on Michel Foucault's argument, sees the modern reforms as a way for an all-powerful state to consolidate authority. A less-often read analysis is David Aaron Murray's response to Bender, "From Patrimony to Paternity in *The Vicar of Wakefield*." If Bender is Foucault's champion, Murray fights under the banner of Richard Sennett. Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man* (1974) stresses that the eighteenth century was able to create a culture of sociability based on impersonal civility. He refutes Bender's reading that *Wakefield* anticipates the panoptic control of the nineteenth-century novel; following Sennett, he believes culture got more, not less, "personal" after the eighteenth century. For Murray, the prison is the site of Primrose's redemption precisely because it reinstalls him into a system of impersonal *civility*, as opposed to impersonal panoptic surveillance.

Where both critics agree, however, is that prison is the place where the world around Primrose becomes legible again, at least partially because Primrose concerns himself with the governance of the prison instead of the stewardship of family. The character who is the most emblematic of the effect of prison is Ephraim Jenkinson, a con man who has previously cheated Primrose, his son Moses, and their neighbor Flamborough. When the Vicar meets Jenkinson in prison, he is "surprised at his present youthful aspect" because the last time he encountered Jenkinson he appeared about sixty (126). Jenkinson explains "Sir… you are a little acquainted with the world; I had at the time false hair, and have learnt the art of counterfeiting every age

from seventeen to seventy" (126). In the world outside of prison Jenkinson can be any age and assume any status. He has been forced into confidence work because, well, he looks the part. "At twenty, though I was perfectly honest, yet every one thought me so cunning, that not one would trust me. Thus I was at last obliged to turn sharper in my own defence" (131). Both Jenkinson and Primrose are relieved of their handicaps from the outside world. Jenkinson is no longer forced to dissemble, and Primrose is no longer taxed with reading a world whose signs are unstable.

With boundaries and identity restored to his world, Primrose is able to assume an authority in prison that he has not attained since Wakefield. As in Wakefield, where Primrose influenced his parishioners and not the other way around, Primrose can hope to affect the prisoners without fear of their affecting him. He preaches to them with the full knowledge that most will likely not listen to him: "However, I continued with my natural solemnity to read on, sensible that what I did might amend some, but could itself receive no contamination to any" (128). Sure enough, Primrose's steady influence is enough to form the prisoners within a fortnight "into something social and more humane, and [I] had the pleasure of regarding myself legislator, who had brought men from their native ferocity into friendship and obedience" (133). Finally, a little republic where he makes the laws.

But the boundaries of prison alone are not enough to restore the Vicar to his rightful position. Primrose would never have both his authority *and* liberty restored without the aid of Sir William Thornhill. If anything marks the novel as fairy-tale-like, it is Sir William's sudden appearance and his ability to set the world to rights by fiat. Most critics read this as a corroboration of Goldsmith's support of monarchy: order is imposed from the outside by a strong central authority figure who recognizes the worth of the helpless middle classes. But I want to

pay particular attention to what, exactly, Sir William restores to the community that has been lacking. Bender sees Sir William as the personification of "the impersonal principle of inspection" (181). It's true that he has spent the whole of the novel up to this point disguising himself and spying on the other characters. He comes to the Vicar's aid because "I have long been a disguised spectator of thy father's benevolence" (153). I agree with Bender, but only to a point—Sir William has preternaturally good judgement, and Goldsmith believes that restoring Sir William to power gives the novel a satisfactorily happy ending. What Sir William doesn't have, though, is the kind of omniscient sight that would make him a stand-in for the panoptic authority of the impersonal state.

Sir William embodies the dangers of monarchy just as much as the necessity. If anything destabilizes the novel's happy ending, it is the fact that so much comes down to Sir William's final judgement. After all, if power is vested in the role of monarch, then the community has no protection against bad rulers. They could just as readily end up with a Squire Thornhill as a Sir William. Sir William's omnipotence also raises some potentially troublesome questions about his actions throughout the narrative. As Walter Scott says:

> It may be added that the character of Burchell, or Sir William Thornhill, is in itself extravagantly unnatural. A man of his benevolence would never have so long left his nephew in the possession of wealth which he employed to the worst of purposes. Far less would he have permitted his scheme upon Olivia in a great measure to succeed, and that upon Sophia also to approach consummation; for, in the first instance, he does not interfere at all, and in the second, his intervention is accidental. (70)[37]

[37] Also, as Scott notices, because Sir William has the title, Squire Thornhill must be the full-grown son of a younger brother. Since Primrose tells us Burchell is "not yet thirty," the relationship between the two makes no sense.

If Sir William is all-knowing, then his non-intervention in his nephew's history of debauchery can be understood as tacit approval of his bad behavior. Indeed, it raises the troubling possibility that Sir William only intervened for the Primroses because of his interest in Sophia and not because he is a force for impartial justice.

In order for Sir William to be a benevolent figure, we have to assume that Squire Thornhill has successfully deluded his uncle. This is not a far-fetched supposition—Squire Thornhill is easily the shrewdest character in the novel. Thornhill's plots are successful precisely because he anticipates Sir William's supposedly panoptic authority and creates cover stories tailored precisely to Sir William's gaze. When he defends himself, he provides plausible explanations for all of his misdeeds. Primrose "cannot contradict a single particular" because Thornhill has taken the trouble to anticipate what will and will not sound believable to his uncle (156). Sir William is not perspicacious enough to see through his nephew's story, at least at first. He is willing to believe him and even to proceed with George's trial.

Sir William is certainly a fantasy figure, one of what Bender calls "the overdetermined personifications of authority [that] crowd the whole text" of the novel (18). But the fantasy is as much about community as it is about authority. After Sir William appears in the prison and is recognized by George, a dizzying series of unmaskings begin: Jenkinson is able to identify Baxter, Baxter and Jenkinson then implicate Thornhill Thornhill's guilt reveals George to Arabella, and Arabella's love for George reanimates Olivia. The one thing Squire Thornhill does not anticipate is Sir William counting Jenkinson and Baxter as creditable witnesses. He requests that "two such abandoned wretches might not be admitted as evidences against him" (157). But Sir William is now as ready to believe Jenkinson as Thornhill, and he admits Jenkinson's evidence into the *ad hoc* trial. The result is an almost instantaneous expansion of community: "A

burst of pleasure now seemed to fill the whole apartment; our joy reached even to the common room, where the prisoners themselves sympathized…Happiness was expanded upon every face" (164). Even the miserly Mr. Wilmot is inspired to give the prisoners money because of Sir William's example. Characters who previously could not see one another now recognize each other's needs. It is not quite Wakefield (they are still in prison, after all), but it is close.

Sir William possesses panoptic authority in as far as he compresses all of the characters into a single narrative. As soon as Sir William gives up his disguise as Burchell, disguise in general ceases to work in the novel. When George recognizes Sir William, the transformation is almost physical: "Our guest at last perceived himself to be known, and assuming all his native dignity, desired my son to come forward. Never before had I seen any thing so truly majestic as the air he assumed upon this occasion" (151). After the Squire is confronted by Jenkinson and Baxter, he too undergoes a physical transformation: "he seemed to shrink back with terror. His face became pale with conscious guilt" (156). But his guilt is now not just legible to Sir William but to everyone, even characters who were not present for Jenkins's testimony. When Squire Thornhill calls on his butler to testify to his character, "he soon perceived by his former master's looks that all his power was now over" (157). The language here is telling. What has been restored is the proper hierarchy. With Sir William clothed in his "native dignity" and Squire Thornhill "pale with guilt," the butler is able to immediately understand which character possesses "power" over his future livelihood and to testify accordingly.

Sir William may be just another vortex, but his centripetal force still manages to preserve the hierarchies of the people who swirl about him. If Primrose cannot regain the paradise of Wakefield, the next best option is to marry into Sir William's family. Once he becomes Sir

William's father-in-law, Primrose can enjoy a paternal relationship to Sir William in private, while still being able to defer to him in public.

Husbandman

Sir William's *deus ex machina* is certainly a conservative answer to the dilemma of how to organize an increasing illegible society. But there is a moment earlier in the text when we are presented with the possibility of a radical solution instead. As Primrose is being led away to prison, he is intercepted by a posse of "about fifty of my poorest parishioners" who seize his captors and vow "they would never see their minister go to the gaol while they had a drop of blood to shed in his defense" (123). Primrose talks them down, refuses their help, and allows the bailiffs to escort him to prison. It's a brief interlude, but Goldsmith calls back to it after the plot has been resolved. At the wedding feast, Primrose points out the ring-leaders to Sir William, "who went out and reproved them with great severity," but he makes up for it by giving them drinking money (169). In many ways, the parishioners rushing to free "their minister" would have represented real justice and would have reflected well on Primrose as their moral leader. This was his chance to establish his own economy of plenty without Sir William's aid, but he rejects it in favor of reinscribing hierarchy.

The parishioners' understanding of Primrose's situation is more accurate than Sir William's: Squire Thornhill has made no effort to hide his villainy from them, and they have first-hand experience of his character. After all, it is their daughters on whom the Squire has been preying in Sir William's absence. Not only does Primrose refuse their help, he makes sure that Sir William knows that he personally quashed the rebellion. Instead, the Vicar's solution is to sit

in prison and wait to be rescued. The lesson he wants to impart is: “Let us be inflexible, and fortune will at last change in our favour”—which the plot certainly bears out (148). But this also reveals something crucial about the utility of family in the novel. When Primrose disperses the mob, he does so by claiming they will actually help him more by submitting to unjust authority than by imposing justice: “But let it at least be my comfort when I pen my fold for immortality, that not one here shall be wanting” (124). The husbandry metaphor is, of course, a stock phrase but shows the kind of role Primrose could hope to inhabit in a world where he lets himself be rescued by the mob. The relationship between a shepherd and his herd is very different than that between a parent and child—and a single sheep is worth much less than a child. By urging his “dear deluded flock,” to “return back to the duty you owe to God, to your country, and to me,” Primrose restores a structure that places him in the center of a series of concentric circles (124). This may be a world where he has less power personally, but the stock he controls is of greater value.

And ultimately, it is through his children’s marriages at the end of the novel that Primrose reaps his final rewards. Each Primrose child marries someone wealthier than the Vicar. These marriages enhance the Vicar’s status with the community precisely because his children are rare. When Burchell affirms his love for Sophia he exclaims:

> My loveliest, my most sensible of girls… how could you ever think your own Burchell could deceive you, or that Sir William Thornhill could ever cease to admire a mistress who loved him for himself alone? I have for years sought for a woman, who a stranger to my fortune could think that I had merit as a man. After having tried in vain, even amongst the pert and the ugly, how great at last must my rapture be to have made a conquest of such sense and such heavenly beauty? (166)

Sir William makes it clear that Sophia is something special and her worth is tied to her rarity. Goldsmith claims that Primrose is a priest, a husbandman, and the father of a family. We see him fulfilling his fatherly and priestly duties, but his husbandry—his growing of crops and livestock—takes place mostly outside of the narrative. Just as family comes to signify his priestly duties, here I see his family demonstrating his husbandry. Primrose is not unaware of his daughters' exchange values in this new world and takes full credit for their actions. This is why he rejects the potential new order of the mob: he comes out much better investing in his children than his flock.

The marriage between Sophia and Sir William represents the best hope for the new community. Wealth has been redistributed so it does not congeal in the hands of the few, and the middle classes have infused the nobility with a much-needed dose of virtue, of "Sophia" in the sense of wisdom. At the wedding scene Primrose gives us a glimpse of new order: "the company should sit indiscriminately, every gentleman by his lady" (169). But seating arrangements notwithstanding, the new order is not entirely without structure or hierarchy. In marrying Sophia, Sir William is in some ways repaying the "debt" Primrose believes the state owes him for his six children. The bargain Primrose makes is to regain the perfect overlap between family and community in exchange for ceding his personal authority. It is now not the political borders of Wakefield or the walls of the prison that enclose the Vicar's world; it is Sir William's pleasure and Sir William's capital.

During the denouement, when it appears that Arabella Wilmot has lost her fortune, she worries that her father will not consent to a marriage with still impoverished George Primrose. Sir William assures her that his influence will overrule any of Mr. Wilmot's objections (161). Here, Sir William actively usurps the patriarchal power of Mr. Wilmot, assuming that his status

in the larger community will outweigh Mr. Wilmot's influence over his own daughter. But the most interesting example of Sir William's ability to shape both family and community is his handling of his nephew. Having lost Arabella's fortune, the former Squire Thornhill is once again dependent upon Sir William. Sir William decides that "a bare competence shall be supplied, to support the wants of life, but not its follies" (165). However, the result of his action is not only to expel Thornhill from the immediate presence of the Primrose family but to keep him on a leash tight enough that he is forced into at least the semblance of reform.

We learn that after the deposed Squire quits the neighborhood he finds a position as a relative's companion:

> He now resides in quality of companion at a relations house, being very well liked and seldom sitting at the side-table, except when there is no room at the other… His time is pretty much taken up in keeping his relation, who is a little melancholy, in spirits, and in learning to blow the French Horn. (169)

Thornhill's punishment forces him into the same position of the Primrose's dinner guests in Wakefield. He is now a dependent who is forced to trade cheer for his keep. It's a fitting punishment for a villain whose chief sins lie in gratifying his own needs at the expense of other people. By turning him from a Squire with all of the freedom of an independent land owner to a dependent, Sir William essentially restores the self-sustaining community Primrose enjoyed in Wakefield. The price of inclusion is dependence, and if it's a price someone is not willing to pay, then they're probably not someone Primrose would want hanging around his daughters.

There is some evidence that an older Frances Burney went back and altered her sixteen-year-old opinions. The phrase "The book is not all satisfactory" has been imperfectly erased, and the description of Primrose as "quite a darling character," seems to be a later addition (Rousseau, 53). Anne R. Ellis, the editor of Burney's diaries, defends the young writer thus:

> If Goldsmith was, as has been said, a puzzle to his contemporaries, we can hardly wonder at a young girl who, at an age when she had 'few sorrows of her own,' and 'loved best the songs that made her grieve' was perplexed by the *Vicar of Wakefield*… This passage has been to all appearance touched by the writer at a much later time, when she knew better how to estimate the *Vicar of Wakefield*. (Rousseau 53)

It seems that an older Burney changed her estimate of the novel because by that time she better understood its value. Touching up her own diary makes the sixteen-year-old Burney look like a prescient reader—someone who could always see the "real" worth of an odd cross-genre experiment that baffled some of her contemporaries.

It's fitting that in Burney's reappraisal it is Charles Primrose himself whose worth has increased. Her interest has shifted from the trials of his family to the character of Primrose himself: "The Vicar is a very vulnerable old man, his distress must move you" (53). But while Burney has changed, the novel has not. The same accidents and misfortunes that affected the Vicar's family are now transferred to him. It could be that the adult Burney had more refined tastes, but I like to think the sixteen-year-old Burney was engaging in a minor rebellion, reading past the protagonist father to recognize the sufferings of Primrose's own adolescent daughters. What both appraisals reveal is Primrose's complete interdependence with his family for his own characterization. Primrose loves his children, but he also knows what they are worth.

Chapter Three

"That Dirty Paultry Custom":

Emotional Labor and the Vails Debate, 1750-1780

In the summer of 1711, Mr. Spectator told his readers about an upcoming visit to the countryside, where he intended to spend a month at the estate of his friend Sir Roger de Coverley. His anticipates the time with pleasure because his friend keeps such a well-ordered household:

> I am the more at Ease in Sir **Roger**'s Family, because it consists of sober and staid Persons; for as the Knight is the best Master in the World, he seldom changes his Servants; and as he is beloved by all about him, his Servants never care for leaving him; by this means his Domesticks are all in Years, and grown old with their Master. You would take his Valet de Chambre for his Brother, his Butler is grey-headed, his Groom is one of the gravest Men that I have ever seen, and his Coachman has the Looks of a Privy-Counsellor. (324, bolding original)

Here again we see the same pattern that began in *Grandison* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*; a gentleman's moral character corroborated by the orderly manner and true affection of his family. But unlike *Grandison*, which focused on the gentleman-as-husband, or *Wakefield*, which showed us the gentleman-as-father, Sir Roger's gentlemanly bona fides come from his position as an employer. Being a head of household means fulfilling a triple role of husband, father, and master, and Sir Roger excels at the third.

My previous chapters focused on the kinds of character that emerge from a gentleman's relationship to marriage (*Grandison*) and fatherhood (*Wakefield*). Those chapters focused on

how the structure of the novel's character system allowed for a gentleman to underwrite the closed community. But functioning communities are never the result of a single person's actions—even Grandison Hall could not run without a staff. In this chapter, I want to pivot away from the gentlemen at the center of these systems to focus on those supporting figures that allow him to maintain the kind "character-supremacy" we see in *Grandison*.

I argue that the relationship between a gentleman and his domestic servants was not just about status and economic position; it was also a matter of character. Just as good servants had to maintain a decent character in order to gain and retain employment, a gentleman's character was partially dependent on the emotional labor his servants performed. I focus in particular on the so-called "vails debate," an ongoing public debate about tipping practices that reveal hidden attitudes about the expectation of what we would today call "emotional labor." Although my primary reading is drawn from conduct books and newspaper articles rather than a specific novel, I argue that the novel's impact on attitudes towards character systems is evident from both sides of the vails debate. Here, I hope to start answering the question of who does the work in an economy of character.

Servants' Characters

Most literary studies of eighteenth-century servants cannot help but slip between servants in novels and historical reality.[38] Part of the conundrum is that, with a few notable exceptions such as the Andrews siblings, most servants are two-dimensional minor characters. "The problem,"

[38] Kristina Straub and Kristina Booker both have monographs dedicated to servants in eighteenth-century fiction. Bruce Robbins's book gives us more of a bird's eye view, tracing the role of servants within the western canon, and taking us from antiquity to modernism. For a historical study of servants in eighteenth-century England see J. Jean Hecht's *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth-century England*, and Bridget Hill's *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century.*

writes Bruce Robbins, “is that forced into the mold of character, servants reveal so little worth investigating. Criticism on the subject is like a stroll down an endless gallery of look-alikes: each portrait is the same all-too-loyal retainer” (34-35). Robbins’s gallery of look-alikes reveals flat figures not painted from life but from a bundle of cultural expectations that result in the same handful of loyal retainers, bumbling manservants, and lascivious maids. But this particular character “mold” seems to have applied not just to servants in novels but to servants in life as well; so much so that we cannot help but read the two as mutually reinforcing.

Character is already overdetermined for servants. Servants work not only for wages but for an actual “character,” a physical letter of recommendation that employers provided to servants leaving their household in good standing. Robbins refers to these documents as “labor passports,” as without them it could be difficult or impossible to find another job. Dependence on written characters meant that servants could not enter a new family without first presenting a textual representation of themselves, so by the time they began work they had already become characters. These characters consist of two documents—a request for a character from a prospective employer to a former employer and the former employer’s response. They were ephemeral documents, more often carried with the servants themselves than kept in the archive of the estates they worked for, and hence less likely to be preserved. However, I was fortunate to find a cache of fourteen servants’ characters in the Northamptonshire county archives. Most of these were within the papers of Lady Godolphin (1745-1802), who kept meticulous copies of both her own requests for servants’ characters from their previous employers as well as the characters that she wrote for servants leaving her employ. The letters are brief and formal as well as formulaic. Below are two examples that illustrate the basic form:

Character of Thomas Tale, January 30th, 1795:

Request:

Lady Portmore presents her Compliments to Lady Godolphin, and will be extremely obliged to her for the Character of Thomas Tale, Who has offer'd to her as Footman, and says he lived with her Ladyship in that Capacity near a year, Lady Portmore begs to know if he is honest & sober, & if Lady Godolphin parted with him for any particular fault

Response:

L.y G: presents her Comp.ts to L.y Portmore, Tho.s Tale lived with her the time he mentioned to her La.sp she found him honest, & sober & cleanly & was parted with for no essential fault.

Character of Elizabeth Taylor, February 17th, 1795:

Request:

Lady Godolphin presents her Com.ts to Mrs. Thompson, would be much obliged to her for the Character of Eliz. Taylor, who has offered herself as an under Housemaid she says she has been not quite a year with her but L.dy G: makes it a rule always to enquire the Character from the last place which is the reason of her giving Mrs. Thompson this trouble to know if she thinks her perfectly honest, sober, cleanly, & a good tempered servant, & if she parts with her for any essential fault.

Response:

Mrs. Thompson has the honor to inform Lady Godolphin, that Elizabeth Taylor leaves her service by her own design and has not been discharged for any faults. Mrs. Thompson believes her to be perfectly sober and honest.

In every character I examined, the writer asks for two to four adjectives to describe the prospective servant, and there is surprisingly little variation in the adjectives listed. Of the fourteen characters I looked at, every single one wanted to know if the servant was honest and sober. The next most common inquiry was whether or not the servant was cleanly (eight mentions) followed by good-tempered (five). While it makes sense that a single employer writing fourteen characters would use similar if not identical phrasing for each letter, it's worth noting that these adjectives come from both Lady Godolphin and her varying correspondents. Only four of the characters mentioned how proficient the person was at their job either in the inquiry or in the reply, and this seemed to be the most common for cooks.

The one consistent opportunity to deviate from the standard form comes at the description of the "essential fault." Every character enquires about a servant's faults, usually an "essential" or "particular" fault that might make them unemployable. None of the characters I looked at were negative, per se, but occasionally an employer would give a concrete reason for the servant leaving. Usually these pertain to their duties ("she objected to the washing") or abilities ("he could not read, which I found inconvenient"). Employers used these documents not to determine who a servant is, or even what their good qualities might be. Because the "essential fault" is the only portion of the character that allowed for improvisation, it is also the part of the formula that contains the potential for servants' individuality. This creates an odd paradox: servants do not so much have a character as they have a character to lose. But losing character in

this case actually means obtaining the qualities we traditionally associate with round character—a mind of their own, so to speak, separate from and perhaps contrary to the minds of their masters. Servants without an essential fault are flat characters—they lack an individualizing feature that might distinguish them from the other members of their class.

Critics such as Robbins and Kristina Booker have emphasized the control that the labor for character system allowed employers to exert over servants, and I concur with their assessments of domestic power relations, but I believe that the interplay between servants and employers is more nuanced than either Robbins or Booker asserts. When employers give servants characters, they put their own moral judgement up for scrutiny. Employers and servants' characters are intertwined and dependent upon each other, such that the character work the servant performs to attain and keep their job becomes an aspect of the employer's reputation. In the *Covent Garden Journal* (1752), Henry Fielding complains about this phenomenon. After hiring a series of servants who have received excellent characters from their previous employers but who turn out to be scamps, he conjectures "that half the Masters and Mistresses of this Kingdom, by the Characters they give their Servants, live in fear of, and are dependent upon them" (104). Of course, the stakes are vastly different for employers and servants—servants risk unemployment and poverty if they receive a bad character, while employers' reputations suffer more slowly and less completely.

This interdependence can be seen in written characters, but I argue it is a product of bonds formed within the domestic sphere. Kristina Straub emphasizes that when we discuss servants, we are always discussing class and labor, but we are also always talking about family and domesticity. [39] Servants are caught in the middle of the transition from the patriarchal family

[39] Straub also emphasizes that one of the tensions that we see surrounding servants throughout the eighteenth century is the dialectic between servants' child-like economic dependence on the family, and their existence as

to the affective family that occurred over the long eighteenth century. The servant-employer relationship looked very different in 1700 than it did by 1800: "A Victorian duke would have found it inconceivable to be waited on by servants who served him with bended knee; but he would have been equally appalled by the idea of playing poker dice in the drawing room with his butler" (Girouard 11). In the patriarchal family, servants would have inhabited a position similar to children. They owed full deference to their employers but could also expect a measure of protection and familiarity in return. But servants are excluded from the "modern" affective family, which recognizes ties of blood as stronger and more important than other connections. However, they are also afforded more personal autonomy. In the middle of the eighteenth century these boundaries were still being negotiated and could vary from household to household, potentially confusing guests and new employees alike. If we return to thinking about affordances of the family form, the patriarchal family has malleable boundaries but rigid hierarchies, while the affective family has malleable hierarchy and rigid boundaries.

When servants entered the privacy of the household, they brought two conflicting hierarchies with them—the familial hierarchy of child and parent and the classed hierarchy of capital and labor. Both of these relationships come with proscribed affective ties that shape the household. In my last chapter, I discussed the mind-reading hierarchy within the affective family: In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, John Locke advocates teaching children to anticipate the thoughts and feelings of their parents, while cautioning parents against indulging a "too-active sympathy" for their children. Using a very different theoretical framework, Adam

---

sexually autonomous individuals, capable of starting their own families. She argues that the sexualization of servants facilitated the emergence of "the sexually innocent child, one who must be protected from adult eroticism, …The sexuality of servants, male and female, serves as a foil against which the sexually innocent middle-class child comes into historical relief" (34). Another example, I think, of the interdependence between servant and employer character.

Smith describes a similar dynamic that structures class. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith explains that a sufferer "can only hope to obtain [sympathy] by lowering his passion to that pitch, in which the spectators are capable of going along with him." Smith believes the ability to imagine others' interiority bonds sufferer and sympathizer:

> As [spectators] are constantly considering what they themselves would feel, if they actually were the sufferers, so he [the sufferer] is as constantly led to imagine in what manner he would be affected if he was only one of the spectators of his own situation. As their sympathy makes them look at it, in some measure, with his eyes, so his sympathy makes him look at it, in some measure, with theirs. (17)

This sympathetic exchange never happens outside of social class, and the relative ranks of the sympathetic victim and sympathizing viewer influence who can feel what about whom. The nobility incite sympathy more "naturally" than the poor: "Every calamity that befals [the nobility], every injury that is done to them, excites in the breast of the spectator ten times more compassion and resentment than he would have felt, had the same things happened to other men" (46). But this is partially because high social status and wealth elicit observation: "The man of rank and distinction…is observed by all the world. Every body is eager to look at him, and to conceive, at least by sympathy, that joy and exultation with which his circumstances naturally inspire him" (45).

Bringing this dynamic into the privacy of the middle-class home complicates the politics of the gaze considerably as privacy turns visibility into a kind of vulnerability. In their dual role as family members and employees, servants created a kind of paranoid sympathy—masters wondered what their servants were thinking when servants thought about them. Did they view their employers with appropriate filial piety or with the critical eyes of over-worked employees?

I will return to paranoid sympathy at the end of this chapter, because I think it plays an important role in the vails debate that I outline below, but for now I want to emphasize that the complication of the public/private dichotomy was explicitly affective as well as economic. Privacy gains its symbolic power from the separation of the domestic sphere from a competitive and commercialized public life.[40] The luxury of domesticity is that it creates the illusion of separation necessary to imagine oneself as an autonomous round character, even when that separation is explicitly enabled by bonds with other people. John Zomchik describes the private sphere feeding off of the public sphere "not unlike the way that Antaeus derives strength from the earth. The greater the war of all against all in civil society, the greater the attraction its own non-competitive pleasures enjoy" (20). Part of this division is designating the family as the site of character formation—the place where individuals become themselves. Admitting servants to the family was to risk intimacy with strangers, but it also meant risking the tidy separation of domesticity from commerce.

While other professions created a divide between work- and home-life, servants were always at home *and* always working. British law created a special designation for servants "intra maenia," or domestic servants. This type of service was defined as living in the home of their masters—if a servant went home to their own household they were not entitled to some of the particular benefits that accrued to domestic servants (such as the ability to establish residency in a parish). As a result, domestic servants were never truly "off the clock." In *A Serious Advice and Warning to Servants*, Thomas Broughton compares servants' leisure time to theft:

[40]See introduction, footnote 16.

> When you hired yourselves, you sold all your time to your Masters; except what GOD and Nature more immediately require to be reserved. Therefore you de-fraud them if you idle away an hour that should be employed in their Business. (22-23)

In a pro-servant op-ed, a writer calling himself Lucius compares servants' labor to day labor and notes that "every hour of his life is at his master's disposal; whereas the mechanick's time for labour hath a beginning and an ending" (347). Without a beginning or ending to the work day it was impossible to separate a servant's character from the performance of their duties.

It was far more comforting to imagine servants simply as flat characters. Part of this was a fantasy of a person who did not age or indulge in any of the non-homely comforts. One of the most powerful arguments *for* vails was that they allowed servants to save for retirement. Anti-vails activists argued that vails were pernicious in part because they provided servants with more than what they needed for day-to-day life. The editorials fret about servants gambling away their excess income or spending their money on luxuries that ought to be above their station. Their stance imagines a servant who will never grow old and who will always be able to work to support themselves—in other words, a servant who never achieves independence and is untouched by the narrative of Bildung.

Character Systems

The rigid boundaries of the affective family invite analogy between the family and the realist novel. Alex Woloch argues that character within the novel is a zero-sum game: because all novels must end, the time and attention devoted to one character necessarily detracts from the potential attention we might have devoted to others.[41] Woloch argues that "minor characters are

[41] Woloch describes characterization as a question of space within the novel. He coins the terms "character space" and "character system." Character space is "the interaction of an implied human personality…with the definitively

the proletariat of the novel" (27). He seizes on Marx's analysis of utility to point out that minor characters *do something* in and for the novel; they have specific uses that eclipse their opportunity to become full, round, characters. At the same time, within the realist novel, their utility is camouflaged as character. What they do for the plot has to meld with an implied humanity in order for the story to hang together. So, while their imagined humanity is subverted by their utility, it is nevertheless necessary to maintain the world of the novel. If we think of the family as its own character system, then servants are the flat characters of the family. It is literally true that servants are the proletariat of the family: they are the only members of the family who are paid to be a part of it and can be discarded when they no longer fulfill their functions. But servants, like Woloch's minor characters, also have to camouflage their labor as character. I will explain what that looks like in the next section, but for now I want to highlight that when servants create character it benefits the *entire* family system: their participation in the closed family system means that there is more character within that system, and hence more to go around.

Service is generally thought of as unproductive labor.[42] However, I would argue that the flat servants of literature, as well as the non-specific servant character documents of history, illustrate an interdependence between master and servant that hints at more than purely unproductive labor. They produce a certain socio-emotional state—a combination of prestige and status born from the employer's elevated moral position and affective wellbeing. We can call this combination of prestige, morality, and affect "character." In a closed family character system,

---

circumscribed form of narrative"; and a character system is "the management of multiple different characters' spaces…into a unified narrative structure" (13).

[42] In *The Wealth of Nations* Adam Smith distinguishes between productive and unproductive labor. Productive labor "adds, generally, to the value of the materials which he works upon, that of his own maintenance, and of his master's profit," while unproductive labor "adds to the value of nothing" (360).

keeping servants “flat,” so to speak, ultimately generates more family character, and that character then gets credited to members of the affective family rather than to members of the household.

For an illustration of servants creating character we can return to the family of Sir Roger de Coverley. Mr. Spectator watches Sir Roger’s return to the country, and, with his characteristic perspicacity, can see mutual affection between servants and their employer:

> I could not but observe with a great deal of Pleasure the Joy that appeared in the Countenances of these ancient Domesticks upon my Friend's Arrival at his Country-Seat. Some of them could not refrain from Tears at the Sight of their old Master; every one of them press'd forward to do something for him, and seemed discouraged if they were not employed. At the same time the good old Knight, with a Mixture of the Father and the Master of the Family, tempered the Enquiries after his own Affairs with several kind Questions relating to themselves. This Humanity and good Nature engages every Body to him, so that when he is pleasant upon any of them, all his Family are in good Humour, and none so much as the Person whom he diverts himself with: On the contrary, if he coughs, or betrays any Infirmity of old Age, it is easy for a Stander-by to observe a secret Concern in the Looks of all his Servants. (324)

Pause here and take a moment to imagine the look on these servants’ faces. Their countenances reflect:

a) Joy, but also
b) Worry for their master;
c) That is hidden from Sir Roger,
d) But visible to Mr. Spectator,

e) Who can nonetheless discern the effort they put into trying to hide their concern.

I have difficulty imagining such an expression, let alone making it. What I *can* imagine is how difficult it would be to maintain a display of such a carefully calibrated emotional balance. Whether their affection for their master is real or feigned they have to apply emotional energy to either *showing* feigned affection or *hiding* real affection. And yet, Mr. Spectator's takeaway from this bravura performance of affective control is that Sir Roger, who is warmly but casually greeting his staff, must be an excellent employer. I see Mr. Spectator's estimation of Sir Roger's goodness as something produced by the servants' emotional labor—they produce the feelings, and Sir Roger reaps the character.

Emotional Labor

Emotional labor can be tricky to pin down. It is a component of both remunerated and unremunerated work, and whether a person's emotional response or affective connection to another person falls under the category of emotional labor or is simply a function of personality can be difficult to distinguish. Is caring for your own children emotional labor? For other peoples' children? Is it present when a woman is asked to smile during her morning commute? Or when an ad executive goes out of their way to charm a client?

The answer is all of the above. The philosopher Johanna Oksala provides a useful taxonomy of the different forms of emotional labor, noting that it encompasses both productive and unproductive labor, as well as remunerated and unremunerated labor. Oksala's categories are:

1) Care work that is not commodified, such as stay-at-home-mom childcare, or looking after a sick elderly relative.

2) Care work that is commodified, such as nannies and home health attendants.
3) Waged and unwaged labor that produces affects through interpersonal communication, such as flight attendants, customer service representatives, and therapists.
4) Waged work aimed at producing affects without personal contact, such as entertainers and models.

I'm most interested in the eighteenth-century domestic workers who fall into the third category. For servants, emotional labor most often boiled down to interpersonal contact with their employers, which required them to police their own affects and to monitor other people's un-regulated emotion.

The term emotional labor comes from Arlie Russell Hochschild 1983 sociological study, *The Managed Heart.* Emotional labor to describes "the management of feeling to create a publicly observed facial and bodily display" (Leidner 82). Hochschild studied flight attendants and noticed that a large part of their job was simply producing affect: smiling at customers in the face of misbehavior and complaining. Hochschild identified these behaviors, where workers were called on to manufacture or suppress specific affects, as a distinct kind of labor that was both intangible and commodified. Her work became a touchstone for discussing all kinds of service work, and is especially useful for scholars who want to reconcile Marxism and feminism. Like Hochschild's flight attendants, servants were required to discipline their affect to reflect what their employer expected to see rather than to reveal what they themselves might be feeling. It is important to stress here that emotional labor does not necessarily mean manufacturing specific emotional displays; instead, it is more about controlling affect to accord with someone else's expectations: think long-suffering customer service representative instead of sympathetic tears.

Just because an emotional state is performed—a smiling flight attendant, a curtsying maid—does not mean that the feelings resulting from the action are not "real." New, uncontrollable affects are created when someone disciplines their own emotional response. Attempting to reconcile the different forms of emotional labor, Shiloh Whitney posits that the unifying characteristic of emotional labor is that it is always *byproductive,* a neologism she uses to describe work that creates left-over affects within the body of the worker. Returning to Hochschild's flight attendants, Whitney observes that any airplane passenger can tell you that cheerful flight attendants do not necessarily produce happy passengers. Instead, their job is to absorb passengers' anger and frustration, thereby (hopefully) containing the passengers' negative affect. For Whitney, emotional labor means "metabolizing unwanted affects" (638). In a closed family system, having a person who filters negative affect and metabolizes the unwanted anger and stress of the household not only enhances the closed system, it enables it. As a figure who is neither part of nor separate from the family, the servant provides an outlet for familial frustrations, acting like an affective garbage disposal.

In order for emotional labor to be effective, everyone involved has to pretend that it is not labor. As with Hochschild's flight attendants, who were told to produce "real smiles," servants were expected to not merely comport themselves as servants, they were expected to *be* the way they behaved (or risk revealing an essential fault). After all, one of the most common charges that Henry Fielding and others levied against Pamela was hypocrisy. Most conduct literature for servants warns against becoming an "eye servant," i.e. a servant who is only diligent while being watched. In *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum,* Samuel Richardson cautions "no one can well have a worse character than he that deserves the Name of an *Eye-Servant"* (27). This created an epistemic problem for employers: "good" servants who genuinely respected their employers

were indistinguishable from those who were simply pretending. Under such conditions, it's understandable if employers became a little paranoid. No matter how deferential the servant, they were still like the toys in *Toy Story:* they come alive only once the master leaves the room.

It was in the masters' best interest, then, to encourage servants to shorten the distance between servant feelings and servant belief. In *A Present for a Servant-Maid*, Eliza Haywood's conduct book for female servants, Haywood cautions against "eye service" by appealing to her readers' sympathies:

> To appear diligent in Sight and be found neglectful when out of it, shew[s] you both deceitful and lazy; and when once discovered to be so, as this is a Fault cannot be long concealed, how irksome will it be to you to hear the just Reproaches made you on this Score, and to be watched and followed in every thing you do; and how great a Trouble must you give your Mistress in forcing her to it! People who keep Servants, keep them for their Ease, not to increase their Care; and nothing can be more cruel, as well as more unjust, than to disappoint them in a View they have so much a Right to expect. (14-15)

The servant is encouraged to think of her mistress as a round character. The mistress has thoughts and feelings that might not be evident, but which the servant must learn to anticipate. Not doing so becomes a form of "cruelty." I would argue that the maid's predicament is an example of the kinds of liability Sandra Macpherson describes in *Harm's Way.* Macpherson conceives of the individual as "the bearer of a harm that is substantive but not particularized" (21). The maid does not have to do anything *to* the mistress to cause her distress, but she nonetheless bears responsibility for her employers' affect.

We can see another example of this kind of labor in a heart-breaking passage from *A Present for a Servant-Maid.* A long section of the manual tries to coach maids through the best

course of action if they are being sexually assaulted by their employer. Haywood admits that there is not much a servant can do *except* discipline her own affect. *Serving Maid* provides specific strategies for coping with different kinds of predatory employers, including what to do if the offending master has a wife. In that case, secrecy becomes vital, not to preserve the servant's reputation, but to preserve her mistress's feelings:

> Greater Caution is still to be observed, if he is a married Man …Your only Way then is to give Warning; but be very careful not to let your Mistress know the Motive of it: That is a Point too tender to be touched upon, even in the most distant manner, much less plainly told: Such a Discovery would not only give her an infinite Uneasiness, (for in such Cases the Innocent suffer for the Crimes of the Guilty) but turn the Inclination your Master had for you into extremest Hatred. (44)

Here, we see the expectation that the servant will act as an affective garbage disposal by performing byproductive labor. The maid is called upon to discipline her own affect in order to contain the feelings of both the master and the mistress. Haywood stresses the extent to which the servant and the employers are interconnected: if the maid refuses to contain her emotions she and her employers will all share "extremest hatred" and "infinite uneasiness." However, it is the maid and not the master or mistress who is ultimately responsible for the heightened affect of the system. If a maid complains, at worst she loses her "reputation," but she also risks destroying the happiness of the household: "it would be a Thing which you ought never to forgive yourself for, if by any imprudent Hint you gave Occasion for a Breach of that Amity and Confidence which is the greatest Blessing of the married State, and when once dissolved, continual Jarring, and mutual Discontent, are the unfailing Consequence" (45-46). The proper thing for the maid to do

is to remove the "discontent" from the system entirely by giving notice. She bears all of the responsibility and none of the power.

Emotional Labor and The Vails Debate

It is difficult to write about emotional labor in the novel precisely because emotional labor is its own kind of fiction. If we were to take a stroll down Robbins's gallery of fictional servants, we would not find a hall full of emotionally attuned, intuitive figures anticipating their masters' every need. Instead, we most often find the opposite: gullible comic figures woefully inept at understanding other people's subjectivity. We may occasionally find a Figaro or Suzanne, but we're more likely to encounter a Partridge or a Lucy. The servants' inability to parse the world around them gives their masters a chance to demonstrate intellectual and social superiority.[43] The public debate about servants' vails that occurred in the three decades between 1750 and 1780 demonstrates servants' emotional labor by highlighting its conspicuous absence. I argue that the intense affect surrounding the questions of servants' tips was the result of servants refusing to metabolize their employers' affect.

Tensions were sufficiently high by the end of the fifties that in January of 1760 a rash of servant riots began to break out in London. The catalyst was a production of James Townely's satirical play *High Life Below Stairs.* Servants seated in the "footman's gallery" objected to the burlesqued portrayal of their profession and interrupted the performance with drunken catcalls.

[43] In spite of the fictional servants' obtuseness, novels do contain families that function *as if* someone has been performing the emotional labor expected of real-life servants. Families manage to process and remove unpleasant affect, and the servants in those families create character for their employers. Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* is an excellent example of a novel that writes out servant emotional labor while depicting a family that functions *as if* that emotional labor were still being performed. The title character, a manservant, is a bumbling naïf who has difficulty understanding text, let alone subtext. But while Humphry Clinker himself is unaware of the thoughts and feelings swirling around him, he nonetheless has the same salutary effect on the family that an emotionally attuned servant would.

The incident represents a boiling point in a fight over servant's wages that had been brewing for a decade. Vails became a representative issue in the debate over a servant's role in the family. Bridget Hill is one of the few writers whose work on servants devotes substantial attention to vails. She theorizes that the vails debate:

> Reflects the often-unresolved tension between the old paternalistic relationship between masters and servants (in which servants had clearly defined duties and responsibilities towards their employers, their masters had equally clear duties and responsibilities towards their servants), and a strictly wage contract relationship. (88)

Adopting a "strictly wage contract relationship" freed employers from parent-like responsibilities towards their servants but also freed servants from having to treat their work as anything other than labor. Vails shifted from a sentimental exchange of money for loyalty to a semi-obligatory tip that rounded out servants' wages. Some servants depended on vails. A footman signing his name "Integrity" wrote in to the *London Chronicle* with hard numbers. Over nine years of service to a gentleman "in the middling station of life," his wages amounted to £59, and his vails over that same period were a whopping £25 7*s* 6*d*. His expenses over that same period of time came to £48 5*s* 3*d*. Without vails, he argues, "I should have no more to show for my nine years of service than £10 14*s* 9*d*, a great sum indeed to keep me when out of place, in sickness or other casualties" (187). I believe that refusing to give up their vails with good grace also meant refusing to perform the emotional labor their employers did not know they expected. Now, employers had to contend with the un-metabolized affects that surrounded the class imbalance between master and servant, and they were deeply uncomfortable.

Employers' ire seems not to have been directed at the practice of tipping, per se, but at a servant's expectations that one *should* be tipped. Jonas Hanway, a philanthropist and particularly virulent anti-vails activist, describes vails as servants taxing the rich:

> how seldom do we find the Servant return even the three poor monosyllables, *I thank you*? This indeed may be a proof of his judgement, for it would be *impolitic* to return *thanks*; *that* would be making an acknowledgement of its being *a gift*, whereas he does not intend to make any such acknowledgement. (*Eight Letters to his Grace the Duke of* -- 28-29.)

Buried beneath the complaint that vails ruined servants' characters was the looming fear that it was not servants but employers whose characters could be jeopardized by vails. Vails threatened to expose the dependence of morality and breeding on affect—an unstable basis for any kind of identity.

The Case Against Vails

Unlike perquisites, which were extras given to servants by their employers (like candle ends or discarded clothing), vails were always cash and were usually given by guests to the household. It became customary, when dining at a friend's house, to tip the various servants who waited on table and when staying overnight to tip the entire household staff according to their rank. Supposedly, by the 1750s vails had risen to an exorbitant level; it was a common complaint that it cost more to dine at a neighbor's table than at an inn. Vails were also a distinctly British custom, and writers reported feeling shamed when visitors from the continent used vails to impugn British hospitality. A loosely organized movement of gentlemen began waging a campaign through the newspapers and gentlemen's clubs to abolish the practice.

A push for reformation began in the north and culminated in a Scotch ban on vails in the winter of 1759. In December 1759, The Honourable Company of Scotch Huntsmen resolved to put an end to vails—vowing they would no longer give vails to other peoples' servants and would not allow their own servants to accept them. In exchange, they would raise their servants' wages to compensate for the loss of vails. English newspapers published editorials that urged England to adopt the same policy, with some even arguing that counties should legislate against vails. Three other counties in England followed suit, and the question of servants' vails was a hot topic in the newspapers throughout the 1760s and continued at a lesser pitch until about the 1780s when the debate petered out. There is some question as to whether or not the practice of vails itself died out at the end of the eighteenth century: J. Jean Hecht claims that vails ceased to be a significant part of a servants' income by the last quarter of the eighteenth century, while Hill posits that the practice continued well into the nineteenth century, "even after private families had given them up, in inns and taverns all over the country" (84).

Vails were perceived as a threat to the moral and financial dependence of servants on their employers. A writer who identifies himself as "A Country Gentleman" points to this upheaval when he claims that vails "pervert all order and subordination" (260). If service work had been camouflaged as character, vails threatened that fantasy. No longer could employers pretend that there was a perfect alignment between servant's roles and their personalities: vails showed that servants, even good servants, were prey to the same capitalist motivations that existed outside the home. Inevitably, certain guests tipped better than others, and servants were incentivized to provide better service to the big spenders. Some writers intimate that servants became neglectful of their other duties in order to spend more time on those tasks that resulted in

higher vails. More grievously, it was suggested that servants would actually sabotage guests who had a reputation for being stingy by adulterating their food or laming their horses.

The fear of capitalism intruding into household management quickly became a question of character. In "A Letter from a Gentleman to his Friend concerning Giving and Taking of Vails," Hanway voices the argument that vails sway servants' loyalty from their masters to the highest bidder:

> The custom has totally destroyed the reciprocal relation between master and servant, instituted by an authority no less than divine. On whom does a servant where vails are taken depend, on his master? no on the guest; as these increase the servant is willing to keep or leave his place. Can a master expect fidelity, love or gratitude from a servant who is always grumbling when the house is not filled with vails-giving company; and lives with him with such uncertainty, that his staying or going from quarter to quarter depends merely upon the number and disposition of the visitants?

Hanway's objections are ostensibly moral—vails disrupt what he saw as a divinely ordained order, leading to a larger social breakdown. However, the consequences he portrays are almost entirely affective, bringing to light the emotional labor that he does not know he expects. The chief ill Hanway imagines here is "uneasiness," as masters are forced to live with the "uncertainty" produced by discontented servants. Similarly, the misbehavior Hanway fears from servants is not criminal malfeasance but "grumbling."

Anti-vails literature is rife with descriptions of employers' awkwardness and embarrassment, as in this vivid example:

> What a sneaking awkward figure does a gentleman make (I blush while I write it, as I recollect all the shame and uneasiness I have a hundred times suffer'd on these occasions)

> when waiting on his friend to his horse or vehicle, his guests right hand lock'd in his, and the other fumbling in his pocket for half crowns and shillings, while they pass thro' a parcle of trim, lazy pamper'd serving men, who with an insolent demanding eye, watch the motions of the hand, and hold theirs more than half extended to receive these shameful doles…In vain the master, with averted look, pretends not to see what he is asham'd of, but has not courage to prevent. ("A Country Gentleman" 260)

Again, the harm is far more emotional than economic. The masters experience "shame" and "uneasiness," while the servants stare unabashedly at the fumbling gentlemen. The footmen here are charged not only with greed and laziness but also with a failure of sympathy. Here, they are Smith's spectators refusing to calibrate their emotional response to the suffering employer's expectations. Another editorial writer grumbled that the problem with vails was their nebulousness: "Wages are pretty much a stated thing, but vails are altogether imaginary." The problem, argued the writer, was that servant expectations could vary from house to house or county to county, leaving guests confused and frustrated. Without a pre-agreed-upon rate or standardized practice, guests had to anticipate what a given servant might expect. Suddenly, the conduct book relationship between servant and master had been reversed—instead of servants imagining what their employers might be thinking and feeling, employers had to imagine what servants might expect—a disruption of the divine order indeed!

Anti-vails writers could smear servants as placing their own self-interest above the interests of the family they served, but servants could just as easily reverse the argument: who were these employers who grudged a few shillings and crowns to faithful retainers? Surely not gentlemen. Hill writes that vails riots were an example of E.P. Thompson's "moral economy of the poor," and claims that "When the footmen of London rioted against attempts to do away with

vails they were just as convinced they were defending the traditional rights as the crowds that rioted against high bread prices" (65). The anti-vails writers found themselves in a difficult position, having to argue both that servants valued money too much *and* that they, as employers, were not getting their money's worth of labor. The contradiction was ripe for exploitation by the pro-vails writers.

First, if vails threaten the privacy of the home by alienating servant loyalty, it is just as easy to make the argument that a ban on vails would restrict personal liberty. "Lucius," a pro-vails editorial writer, defends vails as an example of British liberty: "every individual hath the withholding or disposing of his own property; and I heartily concur with a noble Lord, who lately said, and with some resolution, *that he would knock the first man down who refused his money*" (347). Hanway and the other anti-vails writers often try to claim the moral high ground by asserting that they represent the voice of tradition standing against a corrupted modernity: "It is not many years since Vails had any being… Now the barrier is beaten down, and all distinctions destroyed; we are all princes, and by the same rule of conduct we shall be all beggars" (34). But one of the strongest arguments *for* vails was in fact that the practice was an established, and peculiarly British, custom. "Robin Rainbow," a pro-vails editorialist, concedes that the practice of giving vails is flawed, but also claims:

> this has been an ancient custom in this country, from the generosity of the Great, and undoubtedly was designed to reward diligence and careful attendance, would our superiors but make this distinction, there would be no need to destroy a native of Britain, in complaisance to foreign molds. (202)

The fault, implies Rainbow, lies not with the servants but with the employers who simply don't know how to tip like gentlemen. It's a point echoed more bluntly by "Lucius:" "I am persuaded

that the authors of the several epistles, are such whom fortune hath put it out of the power to act as gentlemen, and Nature hath not adapted them for servants" (347).

Where Hanway wants to take the affective discomfort created by vails and interpret it as an example of servants' shortcomings, Robin Rainbow and Lucius claim that the discomfort comes not from servant misconduct but from social climbing employers who do not understand how to treat servants. Here again, affective comfort is inextricably combined with moral and social prestige, allowing writers on both sides of the argument to interpret discomfort as symptomatic of deeper character flaws.

Paranoid Sympathy

Along with the discomfort of servant judgement came the fear that employers would suffer actual damage to their reputation through servant misconduct. Jonas Hanway fears that instead of employers giving servants their characters, vails emboldened servants to give characters to employers:

> Moreover, it is this dirty, paultry Custom of giving and taking Vails, that emboldens Servants to take upon them to canvass over every Body that comes to the House, how much this, how much the other Gentleman gives, and each Guest acquires throughout the Neighbourhood the false Character of Generous or Covetous, in Proportion as he is more or less lavish in his Favours to Servants (17).

Here, it is masters and not servants who have to worry about false characters, which will impact both their private life and their public reputation. Another anecdote Hanway relates with horror involves servants providing *written* characters for their masters. In one house, servants "forgot themselves so much as to write in *large Characters* in the *Servants hall*, 'Mr.— *is a Scoundrel,*

for he was here six weeks and gave us but five Guineas"" (53, emphasis in original). Just as servants became textual characters in order to find employment, here Mr.— is turned into written characters. The "large characters" on the wall become a material manifestation of the gentleman's intangible qualities.

That last quotation comes from *The Sentiments and Advice of Thomas Trueman*, a pamphlet Hanway wrote in the voice of a fictional footman. The anecdote may indeed be based on a true story, even a story Hanway heard from his own servants, but it is hard not to read these two examples as symptoms of employers' paranoia. The accounts rely on insider knowledge of what servants say to each other, supposedly when their masters are not listening. More deliciously, close reading reveals that Thomas Trueman is not just a footman,; he is actually Jonas Hanway's footman—the narrator reveals part-way through *Sentiments* that his master, who "I love and respect with all my soul," is currently writing *A Letter to His Grace the Duke of—*, Hanway's other anti-vails pamphlet that was published alongside *Sentiments* in 1760. Hanway thinks he knows what it's like to be his own servant. The perfect "reciprocal relationship" between servant and master is one that admits of no distinction in thought and belief, only in station and behavior.

Paranoid sympathy arises once employers begin to suspect that servants might possess inaccessible thoughts and beliefs. Samuel Johnson believed that "The danger of betraying our weakness to our servants and the impossibility of concealing it from them, may be justly considered as one motive to a regular and irreproachable life." Imagining interiority becomes a kind of Foucauldian self-monitoring as employers wonder if their servants view them the same way that they would themselves if the situation were reversed. In the middle of the vails debate, a writer claiming to be a servant called Oliver Grey published a series of pro-servant articles in

the *Public Ledger*. Grey describes a scene where an honest servant convenes a meeting of male servants from different houses. The result is a servant's club—the mirror image of the gentleman's clubs that would have received subscriptions to papers like *The Ledger*, and where employers would have gathered in real life. The servants make a proposition that they will go home and, "make it our business to find out what our masters opinions of us are, and report it this day month to the club" (9). It transpires that every vice of which the masters accuse their servants are projections of their own bad habits and tics:

> I had the pleasure to find that my master had but one very material objection to me. "Oliver, I have overheard him say to a friend, is a very good servant; but he brings me in confounded bills, and such a variety of articles too; it is an enormous sum that I pay the fellow for one trumpery thing or other." What business is your master of? says the chairman. I bowed respectfully, and answered an attorney at law. Mr. Chairman then gave a nod, and a wink, and the company joined in a laugh.

The implication is that the Lawyer projects his propensity to overbill his clients onto his servant, because that's what he would do in Oliver's place.

It turns out, "Oliver Grey" is an experiment in sympathy unto himself. The articles in the *Ledger* were eventually published in a pamphlet entitled "An Apology for the Servants," which revealed that the writer behind Grey was none other than James Townley, the author of *High Life Below Stairs*. The Oliver Grey essays were published in the months after *High Life Below Stairs* had caused the footman's riot at the Drury Lane Theater and seem to exhibit real sympathy for the difficulties of life in service. Perhaps Oliver Grey is more of an apology *to* the servants than an apology for the servants. I see Grey and Townley as another version of Thomas Trueman and

Jonas Hanway. Where Hanway creates a servant who "loves and respects" his master above all others, Townley imagines a servant who might be able to see things his employer cannot.

Of course, paranoid sympathy isn't the only possible kind of projection. If Hanway can imagine no distinction between himself and his footman, he has a very different relationship with his serving maids. Hanway concludes the "Letter to the Duke of—" by admitting that there are a few, very specific, situations where he thinks moderate vails might be appropriate:

> I must however confess to your Grace, that when I have dined where there have been only female Servants, my partiality for the sex has induced me sometimes to drop a Shilling, especially if a Girl has been young and handsome: and I justified the action with this reflection, that I should be glad to see her in a condition to be happily married to some honest man, that her beauty might not prove her bane; and, there has been some pleasure in seeing her receive this Largess with a bended knee, and not with the lofty look of a Tax-gatherer, as is generally seen in the Men Servants. (55)

The serving maid provides Hanway with a moment of scopophilic pleasure that he parlays into paternal concern. Instead of imagining how he would feel waiting on table, he imagines himself in the position of a father with a daughter, providing for her dowry and shielding her from the harmful effects of the mixture of beauty and poverty. One of the complaints about vails was that they turned servants' attention from their family to guests who interacted with them like paying customers. Here, we see the reverse—Hanway is imagining fictive kinship ties to his friends' serving maids, similar to what we saw in *Grandison.* Of course, it's also not *dissimilar* from what we saw in *Wakefield*, where Squire Thornhill's charity to the Primroses signifies his wicked intentions towards Olivia. The burden of separating the Grandisons from the Thornhills belongs to the serving maid on bended knee.

A similar situation occurs towards the beginning of *Pamela*, when Pamela and her parents debate the "four golden guineas" that were about the person of her mistress when she died, and which Mr. B gives to her "with his own hand." Ever the dutiful daughter, Pamela sends the money home, but her parents refuse to spend it until they are sure the money is not intended to purchase her favors. Mr. Andrews consults with a neighbor and is reassured that "she says it is not unusual, when a lady dies, to give what she has about her person to her waiting-maid, and to such as sit up with her in her illness" (8). At the same time, he worries, "But then, why should he smile so kindly on you?" (8). Pamela and her parents are stuck trying to parse whether Mr. B's generosity is due to custom or feeling. In this case, it is custom and not feeling that can legitimate the money. In a world where vails were merely a "dirty paultry custom," Pamela would be quite safe, because Mr. B would be expected to provide financially for his "family." However, the fact that the extra income is up to the owner's discretion means that what they were buying was also perilously undefined.

While vails in the eighteenth century were a source of uneasiness for gentlemen who felt their generosity was not properly appreciated, we have come to accept tipping as part of everyday life and even to appreciate it for many of the same reasons Hanway and others find infuriating. In the United States, we still tip service workers. We leave tips in hotel rooms for maids or on the table after dining out. In an NPR story, Stacey Vanek Smith and Cardiff Garcia found that both service workers and patrons actually like tipping despite the fact that, economically, it makes very little sense. Smith and Garcia found that tipping creates the illusion of connection between waiter and diner or Uber driver and passenger. Because the amount of the tip is supposedly voluntary, we

imagine it is freely given and thus personalizes the exchange. What we are actually purchasing, and what service workers are selling, is affect—the idea there has been something personal about the exchange we just had with a worker we are literally paying to engage with us. For just a moment we allow ourselves to imagine someone else's interiority and hope that, perhaps, they feel kindly towards us.

In *The Communist Manifesto* Marx proclaims that, under capitalism, "capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality" (79). In the eighteenth century, when marketplace capitalism was still emergent, the connection between capital and personality was actively being redefined. One of the questions under litigation was the extent to which capital could purchase personality—not just in the sense of obtaining personality for a buyer, but in the sense of whether or not one could purchase another person's feelings. When Samuel Johnson claims that "the highest panegyrick that private virtue can receive is the praise of servants," he is on some level stating that personality cannot be bought because deep down a servant retains his own judgement, no matter what he is paid. When Jonas Hanway complains about servants neglecting him in favor of better tippers, he is worried that it can.

The vails debate presents a moment when the meanings of this kind of exchange were still being parsed. What was before a patriarchal lord/vassal connection—with servants pledging their loyalty to a household authority and receiving protection in return—was becoming a market transaction, and nobody knew who got to feel what about whom. And domestic service *is* personal: the stakes are that much more fraught when one party gets to see the other in their underwear. When footmen rioted or gentlemen wrote angry letters to the *London Chronicle,* they were jockeying for the same things. Each side wanted to believe that the other recognized them

as full people, as round characters with interiority as opposed to being simply masters and servants.

Conclusion

Gerard Barker has created a genealogy of Sir Charles Grandison's literary descendants. For Barker, the apotheosis of the Grandison-style gentleman is Jane Austen's Mr. Darcy who "emerges as a corrective to Grandison" (164). Austen's cool, ironizing touch purges Sir Charles of his improbable perfection, resulting in a figure who has Sir Charles's virtue without his didacticism. Barker's genealogy understands Sir Charles as the ultimate romantic lead, accessible to the female novelists of the late eighteenth-century who, "like Frances Burney and Frances Sheridan, were ill at ease in the world of male psychology [Sir Charles is] a hero perfectly equipped to complement their genteel heroines" (36). Leaving aside Barker's assessment of Burney and Sheridan, I agree that this is certainly one branch of Sir Charles's family tree. Romantic leads and "good guys" have their root in Samuel Richardson's perfect gentleman. But I do not think they are his only progeny. Sir Charles has another, more direct, descendent in Austen's oeuvre that Barker overlooks: *Emma's* Mr. Woodhouse.

A.C. Bradley has called Mr. Woodhouse "the most perfect gentleman in literature, apart from Don Quixote" (52). Only a gentleman could maintain the genteel resistance to empiricism evinced by figures like Mr. Woodhouse and Don Quixote. It does not matter how many happy marriages Mr. Woodhouse sees or how many people are able to eat cake and suffer no ill-effects: Mr. Woodhouse will continue to judge others based on how their behaviors make him feel. I see *Emma* as Austen's reworking of the eighteenth-century novel of sociability and Mr. Woodhouse as a comment on the gentlemen at the center of these social worlds.

There is also a slightly sinister edge to Mr. Woodhouse. Richard Jenkyns agues: "Mr. Woodhouse is one of Jane Austen's finest achievements. Of course, he has always been enjoyed—quite rightly—as one of her best comic creations, a loveable old silly, but her

cleverness lies in making him at the same time a monster, the villain of the piece" (443). Mr. Woodhouse is the most powerful external force preventing the marriage between Emma and Mr. Knightly, in the same manner that Lucy Steele interferes with Elinor and Edward or Mrs. Norris undermines Fanny Price.

If we look purely at intentions, Mr. Woodhouse is an excellent father: he loves Emma, wants to keep her safe and healthy, and believes he has her best interests at heart. But his fundamental "habits of gentle selfishness and of being never able to suppose that other people could feel differently from himself" make him an obstacle to Emma's marriage, as well as other characters' everyday pleasures, and social conviviality (7). Most egregiously, his solipsism disguises and enables Emma's own, more subtle failures to understand that people are "different from herself." Of course, he's not the only solipsist in Austen, or even in *Emma*, but where Mr. Woodhouse differs from other comically oblivious characters, like Harriet Smith or Mrs. Bates, is that other people go out of their way to corroborate his reality. Emma is able to arrange an active social life for him comprised entirely of people willing to play by his rules:

> Mr. Woodhouse was fond of society in his own way. He liked very much to have his friends come and see him; and from various united causes, from his long residence at Hartfield, and his good nature, from his fortune, his house, and his daughter, he could command the visits of his own little circle, in a great measure, as he liked. He had not much intercourse with any families beyond that circle; his horror of late hours, and large dinner-parties, made him unfit for any acquaintance but such as would visit him on his own terms. (15-16)

The "little circle" that meets at Hartfield is created and maintained by Mr. Woodhouse's character. Because the group necessarily omits anybody who will not visit Mr. Woodhouse "on

his own terms," everyone in attendance has been prescreened for a willingness to acquiesce to his whims. Some members, like the Westons, come because of "real esteem" for him, while others like Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Goddard come because their esteem is tempered with their social subordination and the welcome entertainment of a night-out they couldn't otherwise afford. Thus, a community within the larger community of Highbury forms—one whose size and shape are determined by Mr. Woodhouse's wealth, status, and neuroses.

It is very easy to imagine Sir Charles making the same kinds of recommendations Mr. Woodhouse makes—for things like light suppers and early bedtimes—but Richardson's readers are meant to take Sir Charles's advice seriously while Austen wants us to laugh. Just as Sir Charles is the gold standard for his community, Mr. Woodhouse dictates the reality of his "little circle" at Hartfield. The difference, I think, is less between the gentlemen themselves and more between our perspective as readers. There is no world outside of Sir Charles's reach, no person who cannot be incorporated into his moral community provided they are willing to accept his terms. But Highbury is bigger than just Hartfield, and we see Mr. Woodhouse drawn to scale.

Consider Mrs. Bates's dinner with the gentleman in question. We learn through Miss Bates:

> There was a little disappointment.—The baked apples and biscuits, excellent in their way, you know; but there was a delicate fricassee of sweetbread and some asparagus brought in at first, and good Mr. Woodhouse, not thinking the asparagus quite boiled enough sent it all out again. Now there is nothing grandmamma loves better than sweetbread and some asparagus—so she was rather disappointed. (227)

This is one of the episodes that causes Jenkyns to label Mr. Woodhouse a villain ("That was a good evening's work for Mr. Woodhouse—depriving a poor old woman of one of her few

enjoyments" (446)). Certainly, the moment tells us more about Mr. Woodhouse than Mrs. Bates and illustrates the degree to which Mr. Woodhouse's perception of the world has become the unit of account for the Hartfield circle. If something gives Mr. Woodhouse heartburn, then that food is treated like it causes heartburn, no matter the actual effects. Mrs. Bates's acquiescence to the fiat authorizes and enables Mr. Woodhouse as the final arbiter of such questions. But equally true, his authority only stretches as far as his own supper table—only at Hartfield do sweetbreads and asparagus cause heartburn.

The difference between the supper table at Highbury and Grandison Hall is only one of degree, not kind. Sir Charles's supremacy is presented as a viable solution to any social fissures that occur in *The History of Sir Charles Grandison,* but Austen shows what such a community might look like if the gentleman in question is not as rational or as virtuous as Sir Charles.

In Boston, in the 1920s, humorist Ralph Bergeren discovered an eighteenth-century conduct book called *The Gentleman's Pocket Library*, which listed a series of instructions the reader could follow to become the "perfect gentleman." Struck by the exercise, and unable to find anything similar that had been published after 1795, Bergeren undertook to write his own version of the *Gentleman's Pocket Library* for the modern era. Bergeren was ultimately stymied, though, by the gap between the genre of the conduct book and the ineffable nature of the perfect gentleman.

> Mr. George H. Calvert […] wrote a small book about gentlemen […] in which he cited Bayard, Sir Philip Sidney, Charles Lamb, Brutus, St. Paul, and Socrates as notable examples. Perfect Gentlemen all, as Emerson would agree, I question if any of them ever

> gave a moment's thought to his manner of sitting; yet any two, sitting together, would have recognized each other as Perfect Gentlemen at once and thought no more about it. (8-9).

Although conduct books can tell someone how to sit, what they should wear, how to act, Bergeren realizes that all of these things would ultimately be insufficient for any home user who might be "bravely hoping to become a Perfect Gentleman by sheer diligence of spare-time study" (3). Perhaps Allestree had it right, and being a gentleman is a "calling" more than a skill.

But Bergeren also knows that perfection is a perspective rather than a quality. Whether or not someone can be considered a perfect gentleman depends on his audience:

> Somewhere in the back of every man's mind there dwells a strange wistful desire to be thought a Perfect Gentleman. And this is much to his credit, for the Perfect Gentleman, as thus wistfully contemplated, is a high ideal of human behavior, although, in the narrower but honest admiration of many, he is also the Perfect Ass. Thus, indeed, he comes down the centuries—a sort of Siamese Twins, each miraculously visible only to its own admirers; a worthy personage proceeding at one end of the connecting cartilage, and a popinjay prancing at the other. (1)

Figures like Sir Charles and Sir William Thornhill have curated communities that only see the worthy personage. But a writer like Austen will always show us the popinjay.

Works Cited

Addison, Joseph**.** “Spectator 106.” *The Spectator in Four Volumes*, edited by Gregory Smith, J.M. Dent and Sons LTD, 1958.

Allestree, Richard. *Gentlemans Calling*. Accessed at Early English Books Online. Originally Printed for T. Garthwait at the little north-doore of S. Pauls, 1660

Anderson, Margaret. "Stoic Constructions of Virtue In the Vicar of Wakefield." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 69, no. 3, 2008, pp. 419 - 439.

Austen, Jane. *Emma, A Norton Critical Edition*. Edited by George Justice, 4th ed., W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 2012.

---. “Jack and Alice.” *Catharine and Other Writings*. Edited my Margaret Anne Doody and Douglas Murray. Oxford University Press, 2009.

---. *Pride and Prejudice*. Preface by Frank Swinnerton. The Easton Press, 1977.

Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. 2nd ed. / introduction by Margaret Canovan. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by Ernest Barker. Oxford University Press, 1995.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. Oxford University Press, 1987.

Ballaster, Rosalind. *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction From 1684-1740*. Clarendon Press, 1992.

Barker, Gerard A. *Grandison's Heirs: The Paragon's Progress In the Late Eighteenth-Century English Novel*. University of Delaware Press, 1985.

Barker-Benfield, G. J. *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society In Eighteenth-century Britain*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Barr, Rebecca Anne. "Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison and the Symptoms of Subjectivity." *Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation (University of Pennsylvania Press)*, vol. 51, no. 4, 2010, pp. 391 - 411.

Barrell, John. *English Literature In History, 1730-80: An Equal, Wide Survey*. St. Martin's Press, 1983.

Battestin, Martin C. *The Providence of Wit: Aspects of Form In Augustan Literature and the Arts*. Clarendon Press, 1974.

Bender, John. “Prison Reform and the Sentence of Narration in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.” From

The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics, English Literature. ed. Felicity Nussbaum and Laura Brown. Methuen, 1987.

Bergengren, Ralph Wilhelm. *The Perfect Gentleman*. The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1920.

Booker, Kristina. *Menials: Domestic Service and the Cultural Transformation of British Society, 1650-1850.* Bucknell University Press, 2018.

Boswell, James. *Life of Johnson*. Edited by R.W. Chapman. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Bradley, A. C. (Andrew Cecil). *A Miscellany*. Macmillan and co., limited, 1929.

Brewer, David. *The Afterlife of Character, 1726-1825*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Broughton, Thomas. *Serious Advice and Warning to Servants: More Especially Those of the Nobility and Gentry.* The sixth edition. Printed for F. and C. Rivington by Bye and Law, St. John's Square, Clerkenwell, 1800.

Burgess, Miranda J. *British Fiction and the Production of Social Order, 1740-1830*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Carson, James P.. "'The Little Republic' of the Family: Goldsmith's Politics of Nostalgia." *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2004, pp. 173 - 196.

Chandler, James. *An Archaeology of Sympathy: The Sentimental Mode In Literature and Cinema*. University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Chesterfield, Philip Dormer Stanhope. *Letters*. Edited by David Roberts. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Country Gentleman. “To the Author of the London Chronicle.” *London Chronicle*. 502. 13-15 March, 1760.

Crane, R.S. “Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the ‘Man of Feeling’.” *ELH*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1934, 205 - 230.

Davidoff, Leonore, and Catherine Hall. *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. Rev. ed. Routledge, 2002.

Davidson, Jenny. *Hypocrisy and the Politics of Politeness: Manners and Morals From Locke to Austen.* Cambridge University Press, 2004.

DiBattista, Maria. *Novel Characters: A Genealogy*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Doody, Margaret Anne. *A Natural Passion: A Study of the Novels of Samuel Richardson*. Clarendon Press, 1974.

Dykstal, Timothy. "The Story of o: Politics and Pleasure In 'The Vicar of Wakefield'." *ELH*, vol. 62, no. 2, 1995, p. 329.

Ellis, Markman. *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce In the Sentimental Novel*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Ellison, Julie K. *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.

Festa, Lynn M.. *Sentimental Figures of Empire In Eighteenth-century Britain and France*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Fielding, Henry. "An Essay on the Knowledge and Characters of Man" in *Complete Works*. London, 1845.
--, and Gerard Edward Jensen. *The Covent-Garden Journal*. Yale University Press, 1915.

Figlerowicz, Marta. *Flat Protagonists: A Theory of Novel Character.* Oxford Scholarship Online – VIVA, Oxford University Press, 2016.

Flint, Christopher. *Family Fictions: Narrative and Domestic Relations In Britain, 1688-1798*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

Forster, E. M. (Edward Morgan). *Aspects of the Novel*. Arnold, 1961.

Freeman, Lisa A. *Character's Theater: Genre and Identity On the Eighteenth-century English Stage*. Ebook Central - Academic Complete. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002.

Gallagher, Catherine. "The Rise of Fictionality." *The Novel, Vol.1*. edited by Franco Moretti, Princeton University Press, 2006.
---. *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers In the Marketplace, 1670-1820*. University of California Press, 1994.

Girouard, Mark. *Life In the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History*. Yale University Press, 1978.

Godolphin, Lady Anne. Character of Thomas Tale. 31st January 1795. Fitzwilliam Godolphin Papers. F (M) G 955 x4180. Northamptonshire Archives, Northamptonshire UK.
---. Character of Elizabeth Taylor. 17th February 1795. Fitzwilliam Godolphin Papers. F (M) G 956 x4180. Northamptonshire Archives, Northamptonshire UK.

Goldsmith, Oliver. *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Edited by Arthur Friedman, Oxford University Press, 2008.

Haggerty, George E. *Men In Love: Masculinity and Sexuality In the Eighteenth Century*. Columbia University Press, 1999.

Hanway, Jonas. “Eight Letters to His Grace ---- Duke of ----, On the Custom of Vails-giving In England. Shewing the Absurdity, Inconveniency, National Disreputation, and Many Pernicious Consequences of It to All Ranks of the People. With Proposals for an Encrease of Wages, and Other Advantages to Domestic Servants.” printed for C. Henderson, under the Royal-Exchange, 1760.

---. “A Letter From a Gentleman to His Friend: Concerning the Custom of Giving and Taking Vails.” printed for the author: and sold by Mr. Dodsley, in Pall-Mall; Mr. Longman, in Pater-Noster-Row; and Mr. Robson, in New Bond-Street, London, 1767.

---. *The Sentiments and Advice of Thomas Trueman, a Virtuous and Understanding Footman: In a Letter to His Brother Jonathan, Setting Forth the Custom of Vails-giving, In a Candid and Most Interesting Point of View, With Regard to the Private and Public Happiness Which Depends On This Practice*. printed for C. Henderson, under the Royal-Exchange, 1760.

Haywood, Eliza Fowler. *A Present for Servants From Their Ministers, Masters, Or Other Friends: And a Present for a Servant-maid.* Garland Pub, 1985.

Hecht, J. Jean. *The Domestic Servant Class In Eighteenth-century England.* Routledge & Paul, 1956.

Hill, Bridget. *Servants: English Domestics In the Eighteenth Century*. Clarendon Press, 1996.

Hilliard, Raymond F.. "The Redemption of Fatherhood In the Vicar of Wakefield." *Studies In English Literature, 1500-1900,* vol. 23, no. 3, 1983, pp. 465 - 480.

Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan.* In Encyclopedia Britannica “The Great Books” vol. 23, University of Chicago, 1989

Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling.* 20th anniversary ed. University of California Press, 2003.

Hopkins, Robert Hazen. *The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith*. Johns Hopkins Press, 1969.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature.* Reprinted from the Original Edition in three volumes and edited, with an analytical index, by L.A. Selby-Bigge, M.A. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896. Accessed online, https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/342, 5/23/2020.

Hunter, J. Paul. *Before Novels: The Cultural Contexts of Eighteenth-century English Fiction*. Norton, 1990.

Ibsen, Charles A., and Patricia Klobus. “Fictive Kin Term Use and Social Relationships: Alternative Interpretations.” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, vol. 34, no. 4, 1972, pp. 615–620. *JSTOR,* www.jstor.org/stable/350312.

Integrity. “Sir, I have made an observation.” *London Chronicle,* 493, 21-23 February, 1760.

James, Henry. “Introduction” from *The Vicar of Wakefield: A Tale*. The Century Co, 1900.

Jenkyns, Richard. “A Fine Brush on Ivory: An Appreciation of Jane Austen.” *Emma, A Norton Critical Edition,* Edited by George Justice, 4thed., W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 2012.

Johnson, Samuel, “Ramber 68” Accessed in JackLynch.net/Texts. 1750

Kelleher, Paul. *Making Love: Sentiment and Sexuality In Eighteenth-Century British Literature*. Bucknell University Press, 2015.

Kelly, Kristin A.. "Private Family, Private Individual: John Locke's Distinction Between Paternal and Political Power." *Social Theory & Practice,* vol. 28, no. 3, 1 Jul. 2002, pp. 361 - 380.

Kim, James. "Goldsmith's Manhood: Hegemonic Masculinity and Sentimental Irony In the Vicar of Wakefield." *Eighteenth Century: Theory & Interpretation (University of Pennsylvania Press),* vol. 59, no. 1, 2018, pp. 21 - 44.

King, Thomas A. *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: Volume 1 The English Phallus.* The University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.
---. *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750: Volume 2 Queer Articulations*. The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008.

Knights, Ben. *Writing Masculinities: Male Narratives in Twentieth-Century Fiction*. Macmillan, 1999.

Kunin, Aaron B. *Character as Form.* Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

Latimer, Bonnie, and E-Book Central Complete. *Making Gender, Culture and the Self In the Fiction of Samuel Richardson: The Novel Individual.* Ashgate, 2013.

Laqueur, Thomas Walter. *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud*. Harvard University Press, 1992.

Robin Leidner. "Emotional Labor In Service Work." The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, vol. 561, 1 Jan. 1999, pp. 81 - 95.

Levine, Caroline. *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network*. Princeton University Press, 2017.

Locke, John L, and C. B. Macpherson. *Second Treatise of Government*. Hackett Publishing Company, inc., 1980.
---, and Robert Hebert Quick. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education: With Introduction and Notes by R.H. Quick*. Rev. ed. University Press, 1913.

Lover of virtue. *Critical Remarks On Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela (1754).*

William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1950.

Lucius. “To the Author of the London Chronicle.” *London Chronicle*, 513, 8-10 April, 1760.

Lynch, Deidre. *The Economy of Character: Novels, Market Culture, and the Business of Inner Meaning*. University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Mack, Robert L. Introduction. *The Vicar of Wakefield,* by Oliver Goldsmith, Oxford University Press, 2008, pp. vii-xxxix.

Macpherson, Sandra. *Harm’s Way: Tragic Responsibility and the Novel Form*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Mandeville, Bernard. *The Fable of the Bees*. Edited by Phillip Harth, Penguin, 1970.

Marks, Sylvia Kasey. *Sir Charles Grandison: The Compeat Conduct Book*. Bucknell University Press, 1986.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels. *The Communist Manifesto.* Edited by John E. Toews. Bedford/St. Martins, 1999.

Maurer, Shawn L. *Proposing Men: Dialectics of Gender and Class In the Eighteenth-century English Periodical*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

McKeon, Michael. *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

---. “Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference In England, 1660-1760.” Eighteenth-Century Studies, vol. 28, no. 3, 1 Mar. 1995, pp. 295 - 322.

Mullan, John. *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century*. Paperback with corrections. ed. Clarendon Press, 1990.

Murray, David Aaron. “From Patrimony to Paternity In the Vicar of Wakefield.” *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, vol. 9, no. 3, 1997, pp. 328 - 336.

O'Brien, John. *Literature Incorporated: The Cultural Unconscious of the Business Corporation, 1650-1850.* The University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Oksala, Johanna. "Affective Labor and Feminist Politics." *Signs: Journal of Women In Culture & Society*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1 Jan. 2016, 281 - 303.

Pateman, Carole. *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford University Press, 1988.

Perry, Ruth. *Novel Relations: The Transformation of Kinship In English Literature and Culture, 1748-1818*. Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Pinch, Adela. *Strange Fits of Passion: Epistemologies of Emotion, Hume to Austen*. Stanford University Press, 1996.

Rainbow, Robin. “I have somewhere heard it mentioned.” *The London Chronicle*. 495. 26-28 February, 1760.

Richardson, Samuel. *The Apprentice's Vade Mecum* (1734). William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 1975.
---. *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*. Edited by Jocelyn Harris, Oxford University Press, 1986.
---. *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. Edited by Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely. Oxford University Press, 2008.
---. “Samuel Richardson to Lady Bradshaigh.” 24 Mar, 1751. *The Cambridge Edition of the Correspondence of Samuel Richardson: Correspondence with Lady Bradshaigh and Lady Echlin* Edited by Peter Sabor, vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Robbins, Bruce. *The Servant's Hand: English Fiction from Below*. Columbia University Press, 1986.

Rousseau, G. S. *Goldsmith, the Critical Heritage*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

Schellenberg, Betty A. *The Conversational Circle: Re-Reading the English Novel, 1740-1775*. University Press of Kentucky, 1996.

Scott, Sir Walter. *Sir Walter Scott on Novelist and Fiction*. Edited by Ioan Williams, Routledge, 1968.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.

Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper Earl of. *Characteristicks of Men: Manners, Opinions, Times*. A new ed. printed by R. Urie, 1758. Accessed through Eighteenth Century Collections Online.

Sheriff, John K. *The Good-Natured Man: The Evolution of a Moral Ideal 1660-1800*. University of Alabama Press, 1982.

Skinner, Gillian. *Sensibility and Economics In the Novel, 1740-1800: The Price of a Tear*. Macmillan, 1999.

Smith, Adam. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Edited by D.D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, Oxford University Press, 1976. Reprint by The Liberty Fund, 1982.
---. *The Wealth of Nations*. Edited by Edwin Cannan, Modern Library, 1994.

Smith, Stacey Vanek, and Cardiff Garcia. “Why Americans Can't Quit Tipping.” *NPR*, NPR, 20 Feb. 2019, www.npr.org/sections/money/2019/02/20/696426869/why-americans-can-t-quit-tipping.

Smollett, Tobias. *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*. Edited by Shaun Regan. Penguin Classics, 2008.

Spacks, Patricia Meyer. *Boredom: The Literary History of a State of Mind*. University of Chicago Press, 1995.

---. *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.

---, and W. B Carnochan. *A Distant Prospect: Eighteenth-Century Views of Childhood: Papers Read At a Clark Library Seminar, 13 October 1979*. William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles, 1982.

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977.

Straub, Kristina. *Domestic Affairs: Intimacy, Eroticism, and Violence Between Servants and Masters in Eighteenth-century Britain.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

Tadmor, Naomi. *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Townley, James. *An Apology for the Servants.* printed for J. Newbery, at the Bible and Sun, in St. Paul's Church-Yard, 1760.

---. *High Life Below Stairs: A Farce of Two Acts*. As It Is Performed At the Theatre-Royal In Drury-Lane. The sixth ed. Printed for J. Newbury. R. Bailye, at Litchfield; J. Leake and W. Frederick, at Bath; B. Collins, at Salisbury; and S. Stabler, at York, 1760.

Trumbach, R. *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in Eighteenth-Century England*. New York, Academic Press, 1978.

Vermeule, Blakey. “The Fantasy of Exposure and Narrative Development in Eighteenth-Century Britain.” *Why Do We Care About Literary Characters?* The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010.

Vickery, Amanda. *Behind Closed Doors: At Home In Georgian England*. Yale University Press, 2009.

---. “Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History.” *The Historical Journal*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1993, pp. 383–414. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2639654. Accessed 23 June 2020.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. University of California Press, 2001.

Whitney, Shiloh. “Byproductive Labor: A Feminist Theory of Affective Labor Beyond the Productive-reproductive Distinction.” *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 44, no. 6, 1 Jul. 2018, pp. 637 - 660.

Woloch, Alex. *The One Vs. The Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist In the Novel.* Princeton University Press, 2003.

Woodworth, Megan A. *Eighteenth-century Women Writers and the Gentleman's Liberation Movement: Independence, War, Masculinity, and the Novel, 1778-1818*. Ashgate, 2011.

Zomchick, John P. *Family and the Law in Eighteenth-Century Fiction: The Public Conscience In the Private Sphere*. Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the many people who have helped and supported me over the course of writing this dissertation. I would not have made it to the end without the intellectual guidance, financial support and, yes, emotional labor of the following people and institutions.

The University of Virginia English department, which provided funds for a trip to Northamptonshire Archives in the UK and provided the summer funding that helped keep body and soul together. The Lewis Walpole Library in Connecticut, whose summer fellowship gave me access to their remarkable collection, and where I first discovered the term "vails."

To my dissertation committee Brad Pasanek, Stephen Arata and Cynthia Wall, whose mentorship and intellectual guidance kept this from becoming the mediocre dissertation I had initially envisioned.

To my graduate student colleagues who provided emotional support and shrewd insight while this work was still in the early stages. Particularly my first dissertation group—James Ascher, Ethan Reed, and Christian Howard—who helped me when I was just getting started, and my productivity group, James Ascher, Neal Curtis and Alexandra Kennedy, who helped me down the home stretch. Although he has already appeared twice, James Ascher deserves special mention for exemplifying what it means to be both a colleague and a friend.

To the friends and family who provided food, caffeine, companionship, and emergency proof-reading when I needed it most; especially Austin Hetrick and Katelyn Durkin who both fed me and allowed me to feed them when I needed it most. And infinite love and gratitude to my sister Rebecca Berkowitz, who fielded emergency requests for copy-editing and always knew I could do it; and my parents Emily Frank and Edward Berkowitz who taught me to love books.

Last and always, for Tom—the closest thing in my life to a perfect gentleman.