

“And woman’s heart hath left a trace”: The Romantic Woman’s Elegy as Affective
History

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Abstract

My project addresses the paucity of criticism on the Romantic woman's elegy and demonstrates that women poets from this era create their own tradition by adapting the classical elegy to reflect their own emphasis on sympathy and community. I draw from the historiographical theories of Mark Salber Phillips to illustrate that the elegies of Romantic women poets may be considered as miniature histories because of their immersion in the quotidian rather than in the idealized classical past. Their elegies may be read as histories in the same way that obituaries are read, according to Phillips, as a valid historiographical genre (*On Historical Distance* 19). Phillips articulates four ways of mediating the past: formal, affective, ethical, and critical distance. Throughout the thesis I am guided by Celeste Schenck's observation that the female elegy is "a poem of connectedness" (15); therefore, I emphasize the affective dimension of each Romantic woman's elegy. I refer to the historiographical theorists of each woman's era as they are discussed by Phillips, in order to show the historical relevance of these poets' works. My first chapter involves the critical distance yet affective proximity between Phillis Wheatley, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and their moral exemplars, showing that the women poets' detached perspective is reminiscent of the histories of David Hume and Edward Gibbon. Chapter 2 demonstrates that Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith are nearer to their subject than were their predecessors; Robinson and Smith resemble the historian James Mackintosh in that they are transitional between the age of abstraction and that of imagination. In Chapter 3, I consider Helen Maria Williams, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon as enablers of sympathy through the monument and suggest that their imaginative approaches are redolent of the historiographical theories of Godwin, Scott, and Wordsworth. Chapter 4 explores the affective response to the death of Princess Charlotte and her child through analysis of the elegies of

Barbauld, Hemans, and Landon, together with references to Robert Southey's elegy to the princess. These elegies assess historical distance in contrasting ways. Finally, Barbauld, Hemans, and Landon are invoked yet again in Chapter 5 to stress these elegists' sense of community rather than competition with other women poets. My analysis of all these poems is meant to exhibit the distinctiveness of Romantic women's elegies and to indicate that they fill a literary niche.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, my brothers, and their wives, for being my strongest supporters.

Introduction

Critical Context

Anne K. Mellor asks in her 2010 article “ ‘Anguish No Cessation Knows:’ Elegy and the British Woman Poet, 1660-1834,” “Why has the female-authored elegy been so neglected in the history of British literary criticism?” (442). My own question is why, while the modern woman’s elegy has recently garnered critical consideration, the woman’s elegy written in the Romantic period has not received equivalent attention. The relative scarcity of critical notice has had the effect of relegating the topic by default to a footnote beneath the Romantic male elegy, as though the contemporaneous woman’s elegy were merely an imitation, a workmanlike exercise undertaken to feed herself and / or her children. Such a perspective, however, would do a serious disservice to the formal mastery and emotive virtuosity of many of the major Romantic women’s elegies. My thesis aims to rehabilitate the Romantic woman’s elegy without also perpetuating the stereotype, cited by Mellor, that grieving is “what women do” (450). I do not intend a simple alignment of women with grief. Mellor demonstrates that recent psychological research has shown that women are “intuitive grievers” who “experience grief as feelings,” emotions that are expressed through bodily signs (443). This does not indicate, however, that women, more than men, are wired for expressing grief. Such a suggestion would be undermined by several centuries of male elegies and by several decades of elegiac criticism. Rather than looking at the Romantic woman’s elegy as proof that her femininity destined her to write elegies, I seek to demonstrate that these women poets wrote for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to that of their sensibility. I begin my discussion in 1773 with the publication of Anna Letitia Barbauld’s and Phillis Wheatley’s first volumes of poems, and I posit the existence of a woman’s elegiac

tradition that runs parallel to the male line in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. My focus is on the elegiac, defined by Esther Schor as “a mode, rather than a genre or form” (7), not on the classical pastoral elegy. This approach allows me to include poems such as Barbauld’s *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812), and other poems addressing deaths of civilizations. The female elegy is not derivative from the male tradition, but is instead unique in its combination of sensibility and historical awareness. To achieve fuller understanding of the female elegiac tradition, it is important to grasp how it differs from the male elegiac tradition and the scholarship that the latter poetry has attracted.

The male monopoly of the elegiac genre is sometimes reinforced by modern critics of the elegy, whose studies imply that a history of the elegy should be confined to the major canonical elegies written by men. The male elegy was for many centuries associated with the artifice of the pastoral, and the putative father of the pastoral and pastoral elegy was Theocritus in the third century BCE. Pastoral elegies are notable for their artifice and their creation of an idyllic world through language. In the eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson would famously write of Milton’s “Lycidas” that “[w]here there is leisure for fiction, there is little grief” (65). He questioned the possibility of genuine emotion in the flourishes of the pastoral elegy. In addition to the elegy’s artifice, Karen Weisman discovers in the entire genre the straining of language to its utmost limits, the “inefficacy of language precisely when we need it most” (1). I contend that the artifice, strained language, and “implicit self-reflexivity” of elegy (Weisman, “Introduction” 1) are marks specific to the canonical male elegy, which has pride of place in many histories of the elegy, even those published within the last few decades. In general, Romantic women’s elegies tend to eschew artifice and to favour plainer and more emotionally direct speech. It is as though

their style has the freshness of new growth, without being weighed down by over two millennia of elegiac history and its potentially cumbersome conventions.

A few examples of pivotal monographs on the elegy will suffice to illustrate my point about critical preference for male elegies. Eric Smith's *By Mourning Tongues: Studies in English Elegy* (1977) suggests that "Lycidas" marks the inception of the modern pastoral elegy, although there is continuity from Theocritus right through to "Virgil, Marot, Castiglione and Petrarch, and on to Spenser, Milton, Shelley, Arnold and Tennyson," and even as far as Auden (ii). In this history of the pastoral elegy, there is apparently no place for a woman elegist. These male poets without exception engage with the pastoral elegy and its conventions, and, in fact, Smith confirms that the "elegy is a particular sort of pastoral, for elegy is specifically about what is missing, and also about what is more certainly known to have been formerly possessed" (2). That elegy means "nostalgia and artifice" implies Smith's ultimate point: that male pastoral elegy is the only authentic type of elegy. Peter M. Sacks's monograph, *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985), which Patrick Vincent in 2002 called "the normative book on the elegy" (198), similarly focuses on pastoral, male-authored, canonical elegies and their artifice. Sacks adopts a Freudian / Lacanian perspective which, in the opinion of Melissa F. Zeiger, entails injustice to female mythic figures such as Daphne or Syrinx. Zeiger points out that the female's "metamorphosis" and "the fragmentation of her physical being" is not "loss" and recuperation as it is for the god who pursues her (5). In addition to his Freudian and Lacanian observations, Sacks traces the development of masculine elegiac trappings such as "the flower catalogue, the procession of mourners, the decking of the hearse, the shorn lock of hair, the final resurgence of heavenly light" (Zeiger, Review 1166). Specifically, Sacks is interested in the history of elegiac artifice as it is manifested in male pastoral elegies. This masculine

occlusion of the feminine aesthetic can be seen even in such excellent monographs as that by W. David Shaw, whose book, *Elegy and Paradox: Testing the Conventions* (1994), spans the centuries, making an essential connection between elegy and paradox because of the liminal nature of death. Although he begins with the medieval *Pearl* and travels to modern elegy, he represents the female elegy only in the figure of Amy Clampitt, to whom he affords scant attention.

In the past few decades, the Romantic woman's elegy, particularly that of Charlotte Smith, has finally received critical attention; however, much work remains to be done on the female elegiac tradition in its own right. The first critic to champion the female elegy as a distinct tradition was Celeste M. Schenck in her 1986 article, "Feminism and Deconstruction: Re-Constructing the Elegy." Schenck discusses those conventions of the elegy that women poets choose to deconstruct, and suggests that their main target of criticism is the male pastoral elegy, which, she argues, features poetic inheritance and competition: "The pastoral elegy, most vatic form within an apprenticeship genre, is primarily a poetry of ambition, focusing as it does on issues of literary succession and poetic potency." Instead of mourning an illustrious predecessor, Schenck says, the female elegist tends to remember her personal dead. Pivotal, "the female elegy is a poem of connectedness" rather than of competition (15). I propose, with Schenck, that the female elegy is indeed a "poem of connectedness" but also that it is a valid historical genre that questions the value of the pastoral. Romantic women's elegies are the vehicle for a trans-temporal sensibility which remembers and historicizes the deceased. This historical thrust, I will show, can run counter to the conventions of the male pastoral elegy, which sometimes disavows history. Unlike earlier women writers of the pastoral elegy, described by Ann Messenger in her book *Pastoral Tradition and the Female Talent: Studies in Augustan Poetry* (2001), Romantic

women poets were disinclined to write idyllic, pastoral poetry that was suggestive of Theocritus and Virgil and the male elegiac tradition. Mellor, cited above, reiterates Schenck's point, that the female elegy is a "poem of connectedness," and similarly suggests that the reason for the paucity of critical attention is owing to "the conventions of the pastoral elegy, originally developed by Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus" ("Anguish" 442). Mellor's article, however, though replete with information about the female elegy, is primarily a survey of its different manifestations rather than a unified argument.

A further comment on the Romantic woman's elegy is Patrick Vincent's "Elegiac Muses: Romantic Women Poets and the Elegy" (2002). Interestingly, he also observes that the female elegy has been little studied, and that feminist scholars such as Schenck and Zeiger have argued that "post-Romantic interpretations of elegy usually view the genre as emphatically masculine and masculinist" (198). Vincent also identifies sensibility, "the feminized cultures of sensibility and sentiment," as the impetus behind the Romantic woman's elegy (198). I will show that the feminine sensibility in the poems under discussion can be characterized as examples of David Hume's or Adam Smith's respective theories of emotion. Thus the discussion of "affect" in my thesis refers to sympathy in either its Smithian or Humean context. Finally, along with the aforementioned articles, there is a monograph on elegy by Melissa F. Zeiger as "a primary site of critical renegotiation" (1). In *Beyond Consolation: Death, Sexuality, and the Changing Shapes of Elegy* (1997), Zeiger discusses both male and female elegies, and contrasts the former with the feminine revisions of the latter. Like Sacks, Zeiger utilizes a Greek myth, in this case that of Orpheus and Eurydice, to explicate the pastoral elegy; however, she is criticized for employing a trope that hardly supports the feminist cause because Eurydice is dead (Gilbert 306). Zeiger's monograph begins chronologically where my own thesis closes. Instead of locating tragedy in

disease, as Zeiger does in modern breast cancer elegies, my project links tragedy with the Romantic women poets' elegies, complex examples of the interaction of history and affect. In the manner of Keats in "Sleep and Poetry," Romantic women poets increasingly allied themselves with the quotidian instead of with Keats's allegedly "[c]old pastoral" in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (45). To illustrate my poets' sense of history, I draw on the resources of historiography and adduce examples of a male historical sense, illustrating that the women poets' response to death rivals the response of the men.

Methodology

Because I approach the Romantic woman's elegy as distinct in its particular combination of sensibility and historical perspective, I am drawing substantially from the historiographical theories of Mark Salber Phillips, whose groundbreaking research incorporates affect. His theory of "distantiation," the manner in which historical distance is mediated, developed over several years, starting in the 1980s. Phillips's 2003 article, "Histories, Micro- and Literary: Problems of Genre and Distance," describes "writers working in a series of historiographical genres" (215) that all mediate distance in different ways. His main example is that of biography, which renders the past, even the far past, imminent and relatable. Contrary to the long-held mode established by R.G. Collingwood and his school, who held assumptions about the "properly historical" point of view ("Histories" 217), Phillips argues that there is no privileged perspective regarding history, but rather various methods of "constructing" historical distance. He proposes that instead of thinking of "distance in the singular," we adopt "a set of balances or tensions that tie together different dimensions of our texts" ("Histories" 217-18). These balances are, in brief, form, affect, ideology, and cognition. Phillips suggests that each historian juggles these tensions in ways that relate to genre, but also to her personal perspective; in other words, there are both a range of

historical genres and a much broader range of historical perspectives. He emphasizes that the “sentimentalist idea of sympathy” in the later eighteenth century gave a new “justification for history,” which had previously depended upon imitable heroic deeds (“Histories” 215). Now history could be seen to depend upon lives lived rather than glory won. David Hume and Adam Smith, Phillips says, posit distance as the “measure of spontaneous human sympathy” and moral education as “the acquisition of a capacity for redistancing” (“Relocating” 442). If the subject does not learn to redistance, that person naturally sympathizes only with those who are closest in proximity or in bloodline, and thus cannot sympathize with those remote in time, space, or genetic relationship. This shift in form and affect was followed by another shift, this time in cognition. Phillips outlined this shift in 2003, with his “Relocating Inwardness: Historical Distance and the Transition from Enlightenment to Romantic Historiography.” My argument demonstrates that this shift in distance is reflected in women’s elegies as well, with Barbauld and Wheatley concentrating on generalities in their Enlightenment elegies, and women elegists after 1800 making the effort to empathize imaginatively with the dead and with the grieving. There is a shift in understanding (cognition) between the two groups of women elegists, with Charlotte Smith and Mary Robinson standing as transitional figures.

Phillips’s fullest exposition of his approach appears in his 2013 monograph, *On Historical Distance*, which, together with *Society and Sentiment* (2000), provides the theoretical underpinnings of my argument. In the former he explains: “Formal structures and rhetorics, affective coloring, the strong summons of ideology, the quest for intelligibility and understanding—the push and pull of these fundamental investments gives distance a new complexity that has been missing from older formulations” (1). He goes on to suggest that whereas the formal dimension belongs to the history’s present, affect involves the past, and

ideology anticipates the future (8). As in his previous articles, Phillips stresses that despite Romantic historiographers' rejection of Enlightenment historiography, the earlier mode was trying to accomplish an emotional exchange between poet and reader that the later generation would indeed achieve. Hume embarked on a groundbreaking project with his *History of England*. He urged his readers, for instance, to "shed a generous tear" for poor King Charles (Phillips, *On Historical* 78). This direction was unprecedented in classical histories. When the Romantic historians arrived, however, they overlooked the sensibility in Hume's *History* and instead focused on its cognitive distance from his historical subjects. Much of the value of Phillips's scholarship lies in his insistence on the continuity as well as the difference between Enlightenment and Romantic historiography. Paul Westover avers that "Romantic historiography, which essentially exaggerated the Scottish Enlightenment's emphasis on sentiment and identification, thus justified a methodological tension that really has yet to be resolved in writing about the past" (78). The Romantics were not unlike their predecessors in wishing their readers to sympathize with people from the past; the difference was *how* they achieved that hope, and to what purpose. Phillips demonstrates that the Romantics, through imagination, were cognitively closer to the dead, and not close only in terms of feeling, but also in perspective. Like the Enlightenment philosophers, the Romantic historians adopted the style of close narration; however, they were significantly nearer to their historical subjects in understanding, aiming at "empathetic absorption in the materials of the past" (Phillips, "Distance and Historical" 132).

I have chosen to develop my argument using Phillips's theories in order to demonstrate that these women elegists lend gravitas to their work by envisioning and writing about their historical subjects in the form of histories while they appeal to affect (sensibility) in their

narrations. Phillips's ideas allow me to extract the dominant note in each miniature history, while remaining aware of the overview, to demonstrate the changes in women's elegies between 1773 and 1838. Because Phillips regards historiography as encompassing an entire range of genres, I am justified in analyzing poetry rather than history. "Throughout most of human history, before literacy became widespread, poetry was the most common means of cultural dissemination" (Elhassan). I deploy the New Critical technique of "close narration" (Phillips, "Distance" 132) of these women's poetic content because detailed close reading of their poems—and sometimes, of their lives—reveals the historiographical nature of their elegies. Messenger's project *Pastoral Tradition and the Female Talent* bears similarities to mine in that, to quote her reviewer, Bridget Keegan, Messenger "moves between biography and literary analysis to defend her thesis that woman poets 'used their art, including the pastoral, to tell about their lives—about the world they as women lived in, including their marginal position as artists, about the things that happened to them, their feelings, their relationships, their thoughts' " (146). I was encouraged to explore this topic by Phillips's proposal in *On Historical Distance* that even the obituary is a form of historiography, "a historical form caught up in the contradiction between the honesty demanded of a final reckoning and the charity we owe to the dead" (19). If the obituary is an historical form, then so is the elegy, and through discussion in correspondence, Phillips endorsed my project, even though he is presently unavailable for detailed consultation. Paul Westover, whose *Necromanticism: Travelling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860* (2012) I draw on extensively in my subsequent chapters, similarly adduces Phillips, and quotes him in arguing that "[e]xploring the tensions such a model exposes can help critics understand a wide range of Romantic-era texts, since 'the questions of presence and distance...are not confined to genres we now regard as canonically historiographical' " (Phillips qtd. by Westover 78). Through careful textual analysis,

I will be examining the tensions in Romantic women's elegies in light of Phillips's theories, a method that will illustrate the historiographical seriousness of their work.

Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter 1, I analyze representative elegies by Anna Letitia Barbauld and Phillis Wheatley to illustrate that, in a manner resembling Hume's methods in his *History of England* (first volume published in 1754) and Gibbon's methods in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (first volume published in 1776), the two women adopt affective proximity while at the same time maintaining a cognitive distance from their elegiac subjects. The women's style differs from Hume's in that theirs is formally distant as well as critically distant. While both of them were probably familiar with at least part of Hume's *History*, it is Barbauld's *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* that speaks to Gibbon's *Decline*. Each poet elevates exemplars as subjects worthy of being elegized; Wheatley, for instance, elegizes, among others, a famous preacher, a decorated soldier, and a beloved physician. Her exemplars were sometimes not such sterling characters as she professed to believe. Barbauld, on the other hand, elegizes those who are exemplary in their virtue, such as Mrs. Jennings or Mrs. Martineau. This is also the case with the newly identified Wheatley poems I am fortunate to discuss, one a definite identification and the other a possible attribution. And while Barbauld was an English polymath, Wheatley was a Black slave in Boston. It is true that her owners treated her more like a daughter than a slave, but Wheatley had to rise above her situation to prove herself with her poetry in a way never expected of Barbauld. As I demonstrate, the ruckus that followed the publication of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* was one of the first significant challenges to her artistic judgment. I examine this perplexing poem in depth, and illuminate my discussion with references to her political essays of the 1790s. The poem is her elegy for what Britain would become if it continued on its current

trajectory. Wheatley faced constant challenges, but the impediments she faced are not always recognized by those critics who believe she betrayed her roots to cater to a white audience. Wheatley presents herself as a poet who is markedly different or “distanced” from her audience, but simultaneously she shows she is like them in her experience of death and assurance of heaven. Though their backgrounds were so dissimilar, both poets wrote elegies for their contemporaries, thus building community (though in Wheatley’s case she often did not know the deceased personally). Both also profess hope in heaven for those they elegize. Because Barbauld was so long lived, she appears more frequently than the other poets discussed in this study.

It is not Hume’s contagious model of sympathy that Barbauld and Wheatley follow, but rather the volitional model of Adam Smith. Esther Schor contrasts the former, a “metaphor of contagion,” with the latter, “an imaginative act” (33-4). Wheatley makes a Smithian choice to sympathize with the bereaved in her elegies; she imagines herself in their position and proffers the religious consolation that she herself would want. For instance, in the elegy that brought her fame, “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, 1770,” Wheatley sympathizes with all those mourning the vicar who was more influential than John Wesley and whose style of preaching was relatable to the Black community (Carretta, *Phillis* 26, 29). Her poetic methods and those of Barbauld are comparable to Hume’s technique in his *History of England*, in which his emphasis is on the understanding of the reader rather than on the viewpoint of the historian; Hume the man’s invitation to weep for King Charles does not impact on Hume the historian’s perspective. Phillips argues that “for the eighteenth-century writers the search for immediacy centred on the psychology of reading, not on the quality of knowing” (“Relocating” 447). It was the knowingness of the elegist that was altered by the Romantics. Mellor claims that with the great Romantic women elegists, Smith, Robinson, Hemans, Landon, and Williams, “grief is not

so much an emotion as a literary performance” (“Anguish” 450). Yet despite the sometimes insincerity of their grief, these women aimed to know their elegiac subjects.

In Chapter 2 I argue that Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith are transitional figures between Enlightenment elegy and Romantic elegy, and that as transitional figures they approach understanding through a melancholy associated with the French Revolution. Robinson’s “A Pastoral Elegy,” written in her Della Cruscan period, gestures towards the male elegiac tradition while feminizing it through an idiosyncratic search for truth. Her “Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton” assumes the melancholic tone of Thomas Gray and the Graveyard School, while her elegy “To Werter” has, as well as melancholy, the implicit ethical plea that her readers respect the memory of this poor suicide. Though Robinson’s language is still distantiating for the reader, it is evident that she is relating imaginatively to her elegiac subjects more than did Wheatley and Barbauld in the 1770s. Her ultimate identification is with the murdered Marie Antoinette, whom Robinson admired after meeting in France, and whose fashions she brought back to England (Byrne 166). She projects onto the dead Queen her own anxiety about being the victim of slanderous tongues posthumously. In “Monody on the Late Queen of France,” there is a melancholic scene in a jail in which the ghost of Antoinette appears to console her orphaned children. Robinson takes the opportunity to meditate on truth-telling versus falsehood in historiography; she is distanced from her topic while at the same time embracing her recollected Antoinette.

In this section, I adduce the historian James Mackintosh, who provides a bridge between Hume and later Romantic historians. While heartily admiring Hume, Mackintosh thought him too detached from the history he recounted. For him, Hume “was too habitually a speculator and too little of an antiquary, to have a great power of throwing back his mind into former ages, and

of clothing his persons and events in their moral dress; his personages are too modern and argumentative—if we must not say too rational” (qtd in Phillips, “Relocating” 446). Phillips traces this idea of “throwing back [one’s] mind into former ages,” showing that this idea was key to Romantic historiographers. There is no evidence that Robinson and Smith read Mackintosh, but they seem to have caught the spirit of the age.

Before looking at Charlotte Smith’s elegiac work *The Emigrants*, I examine representative sonnets from her sonnet cycle. *Elegiac Sonnets* has received significant critical attention; Smith is the historian of her own transient emotions, the different shades of which she skillfully weaves to surprising effectiveness in each sonnet. The sonnets as a whole convey a general sense of injury and sadness, which is suited to the ambiguity of the elegiac mode. Schor explains that in the eighteenth century, “[a]s rhetoricians came to place greater emphasis on the evocation of pathos, critical interest came to focus on ‘the elegiac’—a mode, rather than a genre or form” (7). The female complaint (Berlant) allows Smith oblique reference to her suffering at the hands of a man, her profligate husband. Her sensibility causes her pain, but she chooses to remain in history; she often appeals wistfully to the pastoral life through figures like the shepherd. In her Sonnet XLVI, “Written at Penshurst, in Autumn 1788,” she illustrates that it is poets who conserve and cherish history; she equates “the historic page—[with] the poet’s tender lay” (14). This sonnet is suffused with melancholy because the age of Penshurst is past; Smith represents herself as succeeding to the post of Edmund Waller, the most recent poet of Penshurst. In her renowned Sonnet XLIV, Smith becomes not only her own historian but also that of the tiny community of Middleton; both its history and her own are washed up on the shore in the form of bones. She has endowed her passions as conveyed in her poetry with the contagious aspect of Hume’s model.

The form of the sonnet itself, chosen by Smith to communicate her passions, can be seen as both intimate and competitive, both a confession to her reader and a public challenge to earlier sonneteers. She translates sonnets by Petrarch, and devotes several sonnets to Goethe's character Werther, implying that she can compete with the male literary tradition of similarly purposed poems. The sonnet to Werther examined in this study seems to have been the inspiration for Mary Robinson's "To Werter." Smith's sonnets on the one hand gesture to the long sonnet tradition and on the other hand point to the Romantics yet to come. Curran notes that Smith and Robinson were "the leading women writers of poetry and fiction during this decade" and that their emphasis on "the dispossessed and marginalized was widely replicated" by other women writers (Curran, "Women" 178). The dispossessed are the focal point in Smith's long poem *The Emigrants* (1793), in which she relates to all levels of French society through interacting as a character with those who have fled their homeland. A melancholic sea is both their path *back* home and the obstacle *to* home.

In Chapter 3 I introduce male authors from the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries who theorized about relating personally to the dead; I demonstrate that women had a comparable tradition in their mode of apprehending the dead through imagination. Elegiac literature by both men and women from the early nineteenth century supports Phillips's arguments about a change in the perception of historiographical distance circa 1800. Phillips illustrates this increasingly interior historical sense in his book *Society and Sentiment* (107), in which he addresses Godwin's essays "Of History and Romance" (1797) and *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809). In the former essay Godwin pits abstract history (like that of Hume) against a history of the great individual who is knowable through the historian's sympathy with him. In Godwin's later essay, his focus is on the dust of the great man which, "covered by his tomb, is simply and

literally *the great man himself*” (qtd. in Phillips, *Society*, 325). These ashes are inevitably linked to a particular place and should inspire a reverie resembling Lord Kames’s “ideal presence.” For Kames, “the force of writing lies in ‘raising complete images; which cannot be done till the reader, forgetting himself, be transported as by magic, into the very place and time of the important action, and be converted, as it were, into a real spectator, beholding everything that passes’ ” (qtd. in Phillips, *Society* 109). Phillips records that Godwin’s “evocation of the historical associations of place aims to intensify the sense of inward engagement with historical experience as much as to mark a public space” (*Society* 323-4). The emphasis on the author’s interior response to the past can also be seen in William Wordsworth’s “Essays on Epitaphs” (published 1810-76) and Sir Walter Scott’s 1816 novel, *Old Mortality*. Ina Ferris shows that this doubled-framed narrative, including *Old Mortality*’s story, has many implications for distance. The novel makes clear, she argues, that the peace of a given society “requires a forgetting, or, to put it another way, a remembering in another mode: the mode of distance and difference rather than identity and repetition” (172). I see *Old Mortality*’s character as signalling a nineteenth-century response to history, in which memorials of the past invite re-inscription in poetic form (cf. Haley 187).

My discussion of Helen Maria Williams, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon comprises the main part of this chapter and establishes that their poetry reveals the same cognitive shift in historical perspective that is evident in men’s elegiac literature from the turn of the century. I emphasize those female elegies that feature monuments and graves to illustrate that the women, too, saw the importance of material signs to enable the imagination. Interestingly, Eric Smith regards the elegy as itself a kind of monument, made of “a sequence of communicating words, produced by self-expression and able to influence the reader by example”

(21). To show this identification of the elegy with the monument, I draw from *Living Forms: The Romantics and the Monumental Figure* (2003), in which Bruce Haley describes the private memorial entering the public realm of the symbol only to return to the private realm of the reader through the elegy (165, 190). Part of my chapter deals with the elegists' use of ekphrasis, not in reference to marble statues like those accessed by Haley, but rather that which concerns paintings of departed civilizations. Hemans's "Tombs of Plataea" and Landon's "Tombs of the Kings of Golconda" both lament a vanished culture while evincing the value of evoking them in poetry. "The Festal Hour" by Hemans concerns the fall of several cultures and famous people, who in her eyes tempted fate. Those whisperings Kames caught in the 1760s with his notion of "ideal presence" are instantiated with varying degrees of effectiveness in the Romantic woman's elegy. Phillips describes "ideal presence" as the degree of vividness carried by a scene, so that the result is "a loss of critical distance, a kind of 'waking dream' " (*Society* 108).

Another kind of ekphrasis is that of mortuary pillars in the wilderness, a topic dealt with both by Hemans and by Williams, in, respectively, "The Memorial Pillar" and "Lines Written on the Pillar Erecting to the Memory of Mr. Barlow, Minister to the United States at Paris, Who Died in Narowitch in Poland, On His Return from Wilna, Dec. 26, 1812." In each case, the poet makes herself present in her description of the monument; Hemans's "I" is conflated with the tokens which bear "[t]he impress of the dead" (50) and Williams is equally present in her poem through the "[s]ad fancy" that "hovers on the distant grave" (20), like that of the bereaved lover. Another ekphrastic poem is Hemans's "The Image in Lava," in which Hemans connects with the departed mother and child by "filling" the mould with sympathy. I compare in depth "The Tombs of Plataea," "The Festal Hour," and "The Image in Lava," seeing in the first and second classical historiography, but also, in the third poem, a woman's unique historiography. In each of

the elegies I consider in this chapter, there is the paradox of the grave marker bringing those grieving near the loved one while at the same time announcing his or her inaccessibility. It is up to imagination even to attempt to bridge that gap.

The ethical dimension of these elegies by Hemans and Landon is the ostensibly simple one that the uncelebrated, hidden life of the common person should be validated. Landon celebrates the owner of a “Nameless Grave,” knowing that he or she deserves attention as much as do the possessors of illustrious names. Again, the poem resonates with Gray’s *Elegy*. Both Hemans and Landon write feelingly of Sir Walter Scott, whose works were formative for each of them, not only literarily but also morally through sensibility. He fought for the common man. While Hemans writes about his grave, Landon expresses fondness for her shelf of Scott’s books, her own private monument. Her elegy “Sir Walter Scott” evokes a pastoral paradise, the setting for her childhood perusal of his works. Landon recalls her first acquaintance with Scott in a place where “[t]he green boughs closed above [her] head / A natural hermitage” (27-8). This paradise Landon describes as lost, although her memories from Scott’s works endure. Hemans sees Scott’s characters as remaining on “the brightly troubled air” (27), even after his death. She and Landon both know that one cannot remain in the idyll, but must return to history with all its heartbreak; they also emphasize that one may take refuge in the past through the power of imagination.

Chapter 4 continues with abovementioned poets, Barbauld, Hemans, and Landon, but this time via their poetical responses to a national tragedy, the death of the Princess Charlotte and her baby in childbirth on 5 / 6 November 1817. The ideological stakes are high in these elegies, as the princess inspired the political hope of radicals and conservatives alike; however, though all three women have an ideological component in their elegies, they negotiate the distance between

themselves and their subjects through differing strategies. The form Barbauld deploys in “On the Death of the Princess Charlotte” is interesting, as she opted for blank verse with multiple enjambments and caesuras. Our sympathy is not to be directed only to the dead princess and stillborn child, but additionally to the absent and insane King: “Think then, O think of him, and breathe one prayer, / From the full tide of sorrow spare one tear, / For him who does not weep!” (35-7). The fact that he is Barbauld’s focus intensifies the ideological message of her poem, as does her opening suggestion that such a funeral levels classes because all levels of society are in sympathy with the dead. As in Hemans’s poem, the sympathy which Barbauld invokes is the Humean one of “contagion” (Schor 33), because everyone in Britain, great and small, “mourns, as with electric shock, / For youth, for love, for happiness destroyed” (1-2). Significantly, Barbauld moves from Humean sympathy to the “imaginative act” (Schor 33) of Smith in order to sympathize with the absent King.

In his book on the Princess Charlotte phenomenon, Stephen Behrendt takes special notice of Barbauld, saying that she resisted the temptation to mythmaking so ubiquitous in elegies to Charlotte (33). I would argue that this is because Barbauld is both cognitively distant from her subject and affectively close. Like Hemans and Landon, Barbauld envisions the princess as a “blossom” that has been cut before its time (20). In “Stanzas on the Late National Calamity, the Death of the Princess Charlotte,” Hemans places herself definitively among the mourning throng via Humean sympathy, yet she also relates deliberately to the dead princess and her bereaved consort. Her emphasis is that this is a *national calamity*, even though she relates to Charlotte like a sister. Her use of Spenserian stanzas does not have the immediacy of Barbauld’s blank verse, but it confides in us the merits of the deceased, and of her pastoral childhood.

Finally, I examine Landon's two poems to Charlotte, one warmly sympathetic to the princess and her consort and the other acerbic about Leopold's remarriage. "Lines on the Mausoleum of the Princess Charlotte, at Claremont" (1824) is not only distant temporally from the princess's death, but is also distant critically and ethically. This tribute to the dead princess resembles Barbauld's and Hemans's poems in evoking the destroyed royal flower (3), but differs in that this is quite literally an epitaph to accompany the mausoleum. Whereas Barbauld's elegy has immediacy and does not confront the finality of the princess's tomb, Hemans's elegy evokes the place where "the funeral torch its deep-red radiance throws" (143-44) and at the same time offers the hope of heaven. Landon leaves us with the princess's monument, our only hope being the devotion of the consort who raised it. Landon makes herself present in the mausoleum with the princess; as a person who has also suffered the "sorrows" of young love (11), she relates to the princess imaginatively. Her epitaph suggests that it is easier to be ideologically distant from an event if there are intervening years. In her second poem, simply called "The Princess Charlotte" (1833), Landon implies that our hope in "Young Love" (9) has been betrayed. Landon remembers the exact circumstance of the catastrophe, but bitingly reproves Leopold for bringing a new bride to Claremont, his home once shared with Charlotte. Landon's ethical and affective distance is here evident.

In Chapter 5, I begin with Barbauld but then look at the kind of poetical no man's land in which Hemans and Landon published. These poets and Barbauld provided elegies for other female poets and demonstrated that yes, women's elegies build community, and they are also miniature histories that can be evaluated like other historical genres. I concur with Celeste Schenck's observation that the female elegy is "a poem of connectedness" (15) and affirmation of other women, whether these are ancestors, friends, or other poets. Through analysis of elegies

on the deaths of other poets by Barbauld, Hemans, and Landon, I demonstrate that Romantic women elegists do not compete with their literary precursors in the manner of the pastoral elegy, but rather take inspiration and comfort from them. Moreover, the Romantic woman elegist does not deify the dead “in a process that lifts him out of nature, out of the poem, and out of the successor’s way” (Schenck 15). Instead, the woman’s precursors are celebrated as participants in history, even though they are addressed as heavenly denizens. In the elegy “Verses on Mrs. Rowe,” Barbauld remembers a fellow Dissenter, also a poet, who after her husband’s death wrote *Friendship in Death* (1728), a series of letters that were meant to draw her readers towards heavenly things. Barbauld, as in her other early elegies, catalogues Rowe’s virtues in heroic couplets, emphasizing her retirement from the world and dedication to “heavenly flames” (26). Enlisting Rowe as a mentor, Barbauld adopts all the notable people mentioned in the elegy as her own influencers as well as Rowe’s. This is a recalibration of distance. What is notable is that though Barbauld purportedly feels inadequate as a bard, she will spend her life “transcrib[ing] the saint” (44). Her own history, Barbauld is saying, will rewrite Rowe’s history, in which virtue played a key part. Here there is no competition, but rather warm admiration and a will to extend the life of the other, not a will to compete with and replace another poet. Barbauld cherishes Rowe’s memory, though the tone of her elegy suggests cognitive detachment.

Hemans’s three elegies to Mary Tighe illustrate Phillips’s recognition that there was a shift in the understanding of historical distance after 1800 in that Hemans imaginatively relates to her dead. Hemans wrote about her Irish precursor, Mary Tighe, author of *Psyche; or, The Legend of Love* (1805) in “The Grave of a Poetess,” but also in “Lines Written for the Album at Rosanna, in 1829” and in “Written after Visiting a Tomb near Woodstock, near the country of Kilkenny.” Tighe is not mentioned by name in any of the elegies mentioned, not even in the

titles. Westover writes that in this “imaginary pilgrimage” to a grave, the “Grave of a Poetess,” “literary history emerges as a series of intimate interpersonal relationships, felt in the blood and along the heart, carried on in texts and in special spaces” (75). He suggests that Hemans has constructed a relationship with Tighe, even though at the time of “The Grave,” she never met her or saw her tomb. In this “special space,” Hemans addresses Tighe and tells her that she herself grows “mournful” because Tighe cannot enjoy “the vernal dawn” experienced by Hemans (13, 20). It is evident that Hemans is imagining how she would feel were she dead like Tighe, in whom “The light of song was shrined” (16), a song comparable to Hemans’s own literary gift. Hemans pits the bright, vernal world of her imagination against the oblivion on the other side of the grave, but her “immortal spirit” wakes (31) and reminds her of heaven, where “peace the woman’s heart hath found / And joy the poet’s eye” (51-2). Similarly in “Written after Visiting a Tomb near Woodstock,” a butterfly appearing on the scene of Tighe’s tomb becomes the complex symbol of both transience and permanence, that is, of eternal life. Hemans in “Lines Written” also speaks for the ephemeral; she identifies the “sweet spirit” (2), memory of which will “sanctify the scene” (7). Interestingly, as with Wheatley’s mini histories of her exemplars, there is a disjunction between the “history” that Hemans writes and the disillusioning facts about the elegized that she discovered afterwards.

In “Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans” (1835) as well as “Felicia Hemans” (1838) Landon deploys two contrasting distances between herself and her subject. In both poems, Landon sympathizes with the dead Hemans in a manner similar to that in which Hemans earlier identified with Tighe, through a Smithian “act of imagination” (Schor 34). Landon emphasizes Hemans’s unmatched gifts and their heavenly origin, only to deplore the sufferings putatively experienced by Hemans, partly through the dead poet’s experiences of being misunderstood.

Landon indicts “[t]he crowd—they only see the crown... / They mark not that the cheek is pale, / and that the eye is dim” (“Stanzas” 53-6). Landon wants that audience finally to understand and to sympathize with Hemans, and implicitly with herself; this is her ethical plea. Especially in her second elegy to Hemans, Landon indicates that she herself stands apart from the crowd in that she did and does indeed appreciate Hemans. In that poem, which is written from a more detached perspective, not only is Hemans remote, but she and Landon are superior and set apart from the uncomprehending crowd. I bring Landon’s essay “On the Character of Mrs. Hemans” (1835) to bear on my interpretation of her poems to Hemans. Landon describes Hemans’s poetic gift as transformative of the natural world—Hemans wrote “[t]ill common scenes grew fair” (16)—just as Scott’s talent transfigured the landscape through his literary works. Landon probably hoped that her own poetic gift would be similarly transformative. As does Hemans with Tighe, Landon closely identifies with her poetic subject, even though she never met Hemans, and expects “the two will share an inevitable fate” (Ryan 259). Landon is here Janus-faced, looking backwards to Hemans’s sad life and forward to all those who will keep alive the reputations and histories of both Hemans and Landon. In “The Grave of a Poetess” and its accompanying elegies, Hemans is dead alongside of her subject, Tighe, and in “Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans” and “Felicia Hemans” Landon is inscribed within each poem. Here there is no pastoral poetic competition and no apotheosis of the deceased; rather, Barbauld, Hemans, and Landon regard their poetic precursors as their muses, and consider it their duty and pleasure to remember them in song. Theirs are sad, affective histories, giving us a sense of a life lived as well as of a laurel wreath won.

Chapter 1

Affect through Exemplarity: the Elegies of Phillis Wheatley and Anna Letitia Barbauld

The literary careers and life experience of Phillis Wheatley and Anna Letitia Barbauld were profoundly different. Wheatley was a superbly gifted woman of colour (FIGURE 1) who published her first book of poems while still enslaved to John and Susanna Wheatley in Boston, Massachusetts. Barbauld was an English author gifted in many genres, whose career was that of “‘a typical person of letters’ ”; in fact, “she belongs to the first generation of professional woman writers whose work was received with unqualified admiration” (McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 12). She was the daughter and granddaughter of Dissenting schoolmasters and her *Lessons for Children* and *Hymns in Prose for Children* were to influence British schoolchildren for over one hundred years (McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 13, 11). It is Wheatley who has received more recent critical attention (FIGURE 2), including the honour of the title “[M]other of African American literature” (Carretta, *Phillis* 201). Yet, the two women have more in common than meets the eye. Not only did they both publish their respective first books of poetry in 1773, but their elegies are examples of “Enlightenment elegies,” with an emphasis on the exemplarity of the persons who died. It is through this exemplarity that Barbauld and Wheatley appeal to readers’ emotions; also, the poets show that sensibility can facilitate the imitation of exemplars. Applying Mark Phillips’s theories, this chapter will analyze representative elegies by each poet to show that the women adopt ideological and affective proximity while maintaining a cognitive and formal distance from their subjects. This distance does not preclude imaginative sympathy with their subjects. David Hume’s *History of England* and Edward Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* will be adduced to demonstrate analogous

historical modes, although Hume and Gibbon formally draw near their subject through close, evocative descriptions. Essentially, Hume's account of the execution of King Charles I in Volume V of his *History* (1778) and Gibbon's tracing of Rome's fall (the first volume appearing in 1776) are each a kind of elegy. Looking at their stylistic approaches to history will help to illumine the methods of the two poets as they consider in verse the deaths of their contemporaries, employing their own voices to express the loss of people with whom they enjoyed relationship within their familial and religious communities.

Barbauld's modern reputation in the past century has not been challenged on the same level as has Wheatley's. *New York Times* reviews of David Waldstreicher's 2023 biography *The Odyssey of Phillis Wheatley* adumbrate her twentieth-century reputation. Jennifer Schuessler, in "A Fresh Look at a Pioneering Black Voice of Revolutionary America," argues that Waldstreicher's biography puts Wheatley "smack in the middle of the raging debate over the relationship between the American Revolution and slavery." In another review, "Smithsonian Acquires Major Collection About Enslaved Poet," Schuessler reports that

[d]uring the Black Arts movement of the 1960s, Wheatley was disdained by some Black male intellectuals, who dismissed her as an 'early Boston Aunt Jemima,' as one put it.

Her poem 'On Being Brought from Africa,' with its seemingly sycophantic gratitude, has been called perhaps the most reviled poem in American literature.

Another *New York Times* reviewer of Waldstreicher's biography, Kerri Greenidge, in "The Subversive Art of Phillis Wheatley," quotes Addison Gayle Jr., quoted by Waldstreicher, that "Wheatley and most other Black writers of the pre-Harlem Renaissance era 'negated or falsified their racial experience in an attempt to transform the pragmatics of their everyday lives into abstract formulas and theorems'." Greenidge observes that "Gayle approvingly quoted Richard

Wright, who said that Wheatley writes ‘as a Negro reacting, not as a Negro.’ ” Greenidge shows that Waldstreicher reverses the frequent criticism that Wheatley merely parrots white poetic forms because he is

the first to reconstruct the poet’s world by situating her work within the context of the Revolutionary era’s neoclassical discourse. His analysis re-establishes the woman Carretta calls ‘the founding mother of African American literature’ as a sophisticated thinker who actively challenged the religious and political culture around her.

I concur with Waldstreicher that “[w]hen Wheatley began to compose in the elegiac mode, she could be both assimilating to post-Puritan New England and bending what was available to fit what she knew. She could even be making kin” (qtd. by Greenidge). Rather than a sycophant, Wheatley is a prodigiously gifted poet who deploys “sass” (Bly 317) to convey subtle ideological messages, or who, in other words, has a pattern “of beginning with statements straight out of the discourse of American Africanism only to convert that discourse to antislavery argument” (Bassard 43).

As a precocious genius, Wheatley may well have been influenced by pivotal histories such as Hume’s. Phillips’s work suggests that Hume’s *History* both departs from the neoclassical use of exemplars and embraces exemplary pathetic tableaux for the sentimental benefit of his readers. The *History*, Phillips argues, marks “an important redirection of historical writing” and a move away from “the neoclassical stress on exemplarity” in order to offer his readers “the more vivid and accessible emotions favoured by an age of sensibility.” This shift, Phillips says, came when history “became the property of a wider class of readers of both genders as well as the vehicle of a much more extensive body of description” (*On Historical Distance* 76). Hume’s evocation of King Charles’s death is exemplary to an audience steeped in sentimentalism, even

though in general Hume no longer has recourse to traditional exemplars. Hume's point in evoking the King's farewell to his children is not to delineate exemplary characters, but rather to elicit the tender feelings which prove his audience's moral worth. Hume's account of the execution calls for the same response as the elegies of Wheatley and Barbauld: to "shed a generous tear" (*On Historical* 78). All three writers make affective appeals. A significant difference, however, is the notable temporal distance between Hume and King Charles as compared to that between the women poets and their subjects. Distantiation still applies, but the poems have more immediate ramifications than does the *History*, because the elegies are written about the recently deceased.

A question to be asked is how Wheatley's cultural background affected her poetry. This is not to make her art "merely a battleground, where creative agency is reduced to a single consideration, the artist's complicity with or subversion of racist discourses" (Franke 225). Even though Astrid Franke deters her readers from finding "African elements in Wheatley's poetry," in the same essay she argues that "the aesthetic intricacies of Wheatley's poems lie precisely in the startling simultaneity of literal and symbolic references and in the particular way she adapts poetic traditions to her own unique situation" (234n18, 244). Perceptive reading of Wheatley's work indicates that she retained memories of her brief time in Africa. Relative to her recollections, Alan Rice discusses the difference between history and memory. Whereas history is "systematic and sequential" and "an anchor for memory," he says, "[m]emory is an essential attribute of the human psyche and is therefore more personal than historical or material knowledge." Official history must be supplemented by the memories of those who suffered in the Black diaspora in order for us to attain a comprehensive understanding (12). Paul Gilroy, who introduced the critical model of the Black Atlantic in 1993, argued for it "as one single

complex unit of analysis” for “an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective” (qtd by Carretta and Gould 3). Such a model, argue Vincent Carretta and Philip Gould, “is in keeping with the de-centering of ethnic identity that the postcolonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha claims in the concept of “hybridity” (3). Such hybridity can be seen in the subtext of Wheatley’s elegies because her memories of Africa coexist with her experiences of Boston.

Poems such as Wheatley’s “On being brought from AFRICA to AMERICA” have led some Wheatley critics to characterize “the slave-poet’s work as examples of a colonized mind” (Bly 317). Schuessler reports that this poem—“once called ‘the most reviled poem in African American literature’—has been hard for many to take, including the generations of Black poets who have claimed Wheatley as foremother” (“A Fresh Look”). Some believe that Wheatley was brainwashed to accept all the tenets of Evangelical Christianity, as she seems to have in this poem:

‘T’WAS mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there’s a God, that there’s a *Saviour* too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew. (1-4)

Waldstreicher argues that Wheatley’s last “two couplets appear to be the real point, set up by the first four lines that seem to bathe enslavement in evangelical glory, something white folks might want to believe” (84). Wheatley continues:

Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
‘Their colour is a diabolic die.’
Remember *Christians, Negroes*, black as *Cain*,
May be refined, and join th’ angelic train. (5-8)

Wheatley's emphasis is the "scornful eye" of the white person, who makes judgments based on "colour." Waldstreicher proposes that "[i]n eight lines Phillis gives a seminar on race as a fiction, an ideology, a projection of sinfulness, a construct that is getting in the way of universal salvation" (85). Wheatley is far from denigrating her own race, for in her admonition to Christians, she subversively quotes their stereotypical assessment of the Black person. She suggests that this very typecasting may keep white "*Christians*" from joining "th' angelic train."

The subtle references to Africa in Wheatley's poetry indicate that, rather than rejecting or forgetting her heritage, she balances her two worlds through embracing what Bhabha calls "hybridity." Carretta and Gould claim that the metaphoric "white envelope" which mediates our access to Wheatley "would include such powerful cultural institutions and influences as English Methodism—particularly figures like George Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon" (3). Yet, although Wheatley is mediated for her readers, she stubbornly resists being pigeonholed. As Antonio T. Bly and John C. Shields argue, even a poem like "On the Death of the Rev. GEORGE WHITEFIELD" pays subtle tribute to Africa. There is the possibility of ancestor worship in the word "throne" (1) for Whitefield (Bly 322), and certainly an emphasis on oral history (Bly 326). There is also a potential reference to sun worship in the metaphoric lines "Unhappy we the setting sun deplore, / So glorious once, but ah! it shines no more" (9-10). This conclusion is supported by Shields's citation from an early memoir of Wheatley. In her *Memoir and Poems of Phillis Wheatley: A Native African and a Slave. Also, Poems by a Slave* (1834), Margaretta M. Odell relates that the only recollection of her native land that Wheatley could convey to her owners was that "her mother *poured out water before the sun at his rising*" and then "prostrate[d] herself" outside her hut facing the rising sun (qtd. in Shields 97). More recently, Odell has been partially discredited "for her unverifiable claims about Wheatley's life

after her emancipation” (Greenidge); however, her account of the child Wheatley seems to be unquestioned. Shields points to sun worship in Gambia in “PHILIS’S [sic] Reply to the Answer in our last by the Gentleman in the Navy” (Shields 98-9): “pleasing Gambia” (22) is one of those “realms devoted to the God of day” (36). This poem was extant, though not published, in Wheatley’s lifetime; it conveys the sense of a lost pastoral. James A. Levernier contends that “Wheatley, like Milton, considered her fall from Gambia’s ‘Eden’ a fortunate one because through it she received Christianity and salvation, but like Milton she was able to penetrate and comprehend the various ironies inherent in such a fall” (183).

The most convincing proof that Africa was much in Wheatley’s thoughts is her emphasis on death; Gilroy observes in *The Black Atlantic* (1993) that “[t]he turn toward death...points to the ways in which black cultural forms have hosted and even cultivated a dynamic rapport with the presence of death and suffering.” In fact, death “emerges continually in the literature and expressive cultures of the black Atlantic” (qtd. in Shields 100). Brooks records that “twenty-one of thirty-nine poems in the 1773 volume are elegies or occasional poems, and at least twelve of them are written about or for white women” (11). Carretta hypothesizes that Wheatley’s focus on death reflects her frequent exposure to death in her crossing of the Atlantic (*Phillis* 10). Greenidge reports that “[a]lthough Wheatley doesn’t mention Africa, Waldstreicher tells us we cannot assume that she described the death customs of eighteenth-century British North America without reference to her past.” In other words, Wheatley balances her memories of Africa with her acceptance of the demands of her white audience. Odell writes that because Wheatley accepted poetic requests, “many of her pieces are funeral poems, many of them, no doubt, being written at the request of friends” (qtd. by Brooks 10-11).

Wheatley's early education helps illuminate her adult competence. Franz Fanon "argued long ago [that] every colonial society 'finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation' "(qtd in Carretta and Gould 3). This was doubtless the case for Wheatley, who "was frequently seen endeavoring to make letters upon [the Wheatleys' wall in Arabic] with a piece of chalk or charcoal" (Odell qtd in Shields 103). The distance between her native language and that of the Wheatleys was vast, and yet she immediately showed proficiency with the English language. She received an unprecedented education for a female slave, and "was taught English and Classical literature (especially poetry), geography, and history, as well as the Bible, some Latin, and Christianity" (Carretta, "Introduction" xiii-xiv). Yet she clearly retained and drew upon many childhood memories. Shields painstakingly demonstrates how the verses about "Afric's blameless race" (30) in "On the Death of General Wooster" conform to "the sort of rhythmic pattern Dathorne and Okpewho describe [as characteristic of] African oral poetry, where the caesurae mark the end of a speech unit in each of which is contained at least one primary stress" (qtd in Shields 112). Levernier notes "that irony is the dominant stylistic characteristic of oral literature in the region of Africa where Wheatley is thought to have lived the first seven or eight years of her life" (179). It appears, therefore, that Wheatley drew on her Gambian heritage, especially regarding prosody and oral tradition, even as she conformed to the American education that shaped her poetry.

Wheatley self-fashions herself as a slave who yet has the authority to write. The consensus of biographers is that she was born in Gambia and that she arrived in Boston in 1761 on the ship *Phillis* at the age of seven or eight, where she was purchased by John and / or Susanna Wheatley. This is her official history, but it is supplemented by subtle suggestions in Wheatley's *Poems* that her most formative experience was that of her passage across the Atlantic

at a young age; the latter is evident from all her references to bodies of water that must be crossed (Bly 326 ff.). Brooks argues that Wheatley's elegies "consistently mobilize images that are deeply evocative of her own experience of enslavement, such as familial separations, bereaved parents, and ocean transits" (11). According to Brooks, the "poet appears to have bolstered her elegiac authority by quietly referencing her situation as a slave" (12). In terms of character fashioning, I concur with Bly that orality from her own culture may be prominent in Wheatley's poems because of all her references to mellifluous sounds and her culture's "vital task of preserving a record of the past through song, words, and performance" (Bly 326). Wheatley does not fashion herself only as an African oral poet. Levernier suggests that Wheatley not only took on moral authority in her poems (176) but that she also assumed an ironic stance based on that of Alexander Pope, a stance which came naturally because of her familiarity with irony from her own culture (179). Franke argues that Wheatley in her 1773 *Poems* assumes the role of the "melancholy muse," a "source that is humble and yet inspired" and which allows her "to address powerful public figures and comment on public occasions" (229). I believe there is some truth in all of these theories.

As I will show through analysis of Wheatley's "On the Death of the Rev. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, 1770," Wheatley's most famous elegy is an historical performance, one she enacts for a variety of purposes. The poem was first published as a broadside and "appeared, not only in Boston but also in Newport, New York, Philadelphia, and in London" (Franke 230). Franke maintains that the elegy falls within the genre of the funeral elegy, which "maintained its revered status" within "the evangelical revivalist movement" (230). For Wheatley, Whitefield is an exemplar of the charismatic preacher, to whose death we are meant to respond with tears. With John and Charles Wesley at Oxford, Whitefield founded Methodism and initiated

America's Great Awakening (Schlenter). Though he disagreed with the Wesley brothers in his adherence to the doctrine of predestination, he preached so widely that he probably made more converts than they did. Whitefield was vehemently opposed to the theatre, yet his preaching style was that of "a consummate actor, bringing drama and novelty to countless people" (Schlenter). According to Carretta, it is possible that Phillis Wheatley met Whitefield. Susanna Wheatley corresponded with the Countess of Huntingdon, Whitefield's patron, and he "may well have been a guest at the Wheatley house" during his time in Boston in August, 1770 (Carretta, "Introduction" xiv). Indeed, he had been their guest thirty years before (Waldstreicher 114). He died suddenly shortly after his 1770 trip. Waldstreicher comments on Wheatley's broadside and her subsequent rise to stardom:

Suddenly she was not only an author, but an acknowledged one, at a time when most women who wrote for print did not sign their works. Phillis actually headlines her elegy, her name above the image of the corpse and the title of the poem in the pamphlet reprint. For an eighteenth-century author, this was star billing. (117)

Wheatley eulogizes Whitefield as a preacher who could "[i]nflame the heart, and captivate the mind" (8). In the first stanza she imagines his apotheosis in heaven, and his worth is interestingly conveyed through sound, as though both he and she were oral historians. The poem speaks of "the music of [his] tongue" (3), "unequalled accents" (5), and later, the "lips" on which she "with list'ning pleasure hung" (27). Franke claims that here Wheatley, "[l]ike an evangelical preacher," "faces the audience directly, challenging it to look and see, to answer, or to join in prayer" (231). It is notable that there is no reference to heavenly music and that the voice which Wheatley gives Whitefield in the present is her own, using poetic ventriloquism to attain her end. Stanza three is an imagined speech from Whitefield in which Wheatley indicts slavery; she thus

employs form as a medium for a fervent ideological message. Her heroic couplets are distancing for the reader, but the supposed quotation from Whitefield leaves no doubt about how we readers are intended to respond to the institution of slavery. Wheatley's appeal in the final version of her poem is more passive than in the two variants:

“Take him, ye *Africans*, he longs for you,

Impartial Saviour is his title due:

Wash'd in the fountain of redeeming blood,

You shall be sons, and kings, and priests to God.” (34-7)

Franke points out that the reference to the “*Impartial Saviour*” “would have reminded all Christians, but particularly Americans, of the ‘partiality’ of their social system, that is, of slavery” (232). While in this version of the poem slaves achieve religious equality with “*Americans*” through being “[w]ash’d,” in the variants the link between religious equality and personal freedom is more explicit. In Variant I, religious equality comes through personal choice: “If you will chuse to walk in grace’s road, / You shall be sons, and kings, and priests to GOD” (43-4). Finally, in Variant II, the political message is clear: “If you will walk in Grace’s heavenly Road, / He’ll make you free, and Kings, and Priests to God” (43-4). That is, if slaves choose to accept Christianity, they will be free in more ways than one. According to Waldstreicher, “[w]hat’s shocking is how little time she spends on Whitefield’s works, his popularity, or even the accessible style that must have interested her as a writer as well as a Christian, before returning to the politics” (118).

Wheatley thus celebrates an exemplary preacher and gives him the message that appeals to both the ethics and affections of her readers. Which of her contemporaries could censure her? It is “Whitefield” who speaks, and the real Whitefield’s “sympathetic position in imperial

politics becomes [in Wheatley's elegy] a reflection, an epitome, of his piety, made specific and personal by the image of the good reverend as friend" (Waldstreicher 118). Wheatley paints him as a friend. He was known for drawing African listeners because "his energetic and emotive oratorical style was similar to that found in many native African religions" (Carretta, *Phillis* 29). Bly characterizes Wheatley's ideological thrusts as "Sass" (cf. 317). Wheatley, with her reported speech, subversively asserts the Blacks' equal access to the same Saviour. She could have said with Keats, "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections" (Letter to Benjamin Bailey, 22 November 1817); she demonstrates that sensibility does not depend upon race. In a letter to John Thornton on 1 December 1773, Wheatley insists that the hearts of Black people hold the same possibilities as do the hearts of white people; "though despised on earth on account of our colour," she insists, "we have this Consolation... 'that God dwells in the humble and contrite heart' " (*Complete Writings* 150). It is implicit here that disrespect for fellow human beings in an institution such as slavery always undermines the heart's affections.

Hume, in his account of the time preceding the execution of King Charles I, also deploys reported speech to heighten his emotional appeal in one of his "pathetic tableaux" (*On Historical* 76). Though Phillips does not claim that Hume has an ideological motive in portraying the King's farewell to his children, I see such a purpose at work alongside the appeal to our affections, as it is with Wheatley's verse. This is the case despite the temporal distance that separates Hanoverian England and Civil-War-time England. As Phillips illustrates, Hume felt safe describing the latter era because of the difference between his "now" and their "then" (*On Historical* 75). His vantage point in the *History* is "post-revolutionary, Hanoverian, enlightened, skeptical," and "an unapologetic reference point in the narrative" (*On Historical* 69). Yet he can

still engage his readers' emotions with fraught scenes, and their wills with calls to action. Here is such a scene from Hume's *History*:

To the young Duke too, [Charles] could not forbear giving some advice, in order to season his mind with early principles of loyalty and obedience towards his brother, who was so soon to be his sovereign. Holding him on his knee, he said, 'Now they will cut off thy father's head.' At these words, the child looked very stedfastly [*sic*] upon him. 'Mark! child, what I say: They will cut off my head! and perhaps make thee a king: but mark what I say: Thou must not be a king, as long as thy brothers, Charles and James, are alive. They will cut off thy brothers' heads, when they can catch them! And thy head too they will cut off at last! And therefore I charge thee do not be made a king by them!' the Duke, sighing, replied, 'I will be torn in pieces first!' So determined an answer, from one of such tender years, filled the King's eyes with tears of joy and admiration. (539)

This scene, resembling one from Henry Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling* (1771), is meant to elicit "a generous tear" (qtd. in *On Historical* 78), but it is also exemplary of virtue in distress, that of the King and that of the Duke. Both prove themselves valiant and gentlemanly under the most severe trial of character.

Yet Hume, in his sympathetic depiction of the King, is not suggesting that Hanoverian England revert to those days when the monarchy's "power, though very extensive in theory, rested simply "on the opinion of the people," which in turn was shaped by "ancient precedent and example" (qtd in *On Historical* 73). Rather, parliament was to be enshrined as a guardian of civil liberties. What Hume is implicitly warning his readers against is "the hideousness of power when bigotry acquires a free hand" (*On Historical* 78). He also decries the power that infiltrates the most sacred domestic circles, even that of a king. Hume invites us to grieve with him over the

“historical blindness” of Charles in an unprecedented situation, and to “approach individuals on both sides of the conflict with a warmer appreciation of the pathos of their historical situation” (*On Historical* 74). Hume, like Wheatley, prompts us to feel, but not without drawing ethical benefit.

Wheatley as historian is unlike Hume in that, like other women elegists, she emphasizes the eschatological possibilities of the person she is elegizing. Anne K. Mellor argues that most female elegies show consolation is possible in heaven, and “in the Christian faith in an afterlife that promises union with the lost beloved” (449). Carretta argues that “[r]eligion would give Phillis the motive, means, and opportunity to begin writing in 1765” (23). Evangelical Christianity equipped her to write her first elegy, “On the Death of the Rev. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, 1770,” and to gain the illustrious patronage of Whitefield’s Methodist patron, the Countess of Huntingdon, with whom Wheatley identified through imaginative Smithian sympathy in her poem. Wheatley imagines the Countess’s “grief sincere” (39). It is also possible that the Countess sympathized with Wheatley, as is indicated by their similar melancholic portraits (Franke 227). Brooks contends that the “authenticating dedication of Lady Huntingdon helped propel [Wheatley’s] manuscript forward toward publication, even before the arrival of the attestation on English shores” (7). In addition, through her patronage Wheatley would visit England in 1773, just before the publication of her *Poems on Various Subjects: Religious and Moral*. Brooks argues that this publication was enabled by Wheatley’s “months-long strategy to secure the London publication of her *Poems*, obtaining signatures from prominent Boston citizens at a town meeting on 28 October 1772” (7). Brooks makes the case that Wheatley never stood before a panel of judges in order to receive her attestation, as has been commonly thought (3). While Wheatley was unable to meet the Countess in person, she attained her freedom after

her return to Boston, in October 1773. Though her manumission was facilitated by the “Mansfield ruling” in England, 1771, it was achieved mainly through the Countess’s patronage, which she had also granted to Olaudah Equiano and other Black authors (Carretta, “Introduction” xvi).

Politics and Evangelical Christianity provided Wheatley with the means to freedom, and Christianity also gave her a frame of reference through which to express her affections. Franke argues that “[p]olitical and evangelical rhetoric are public languages, and [Wheatley] needs both simultaneously to acknowledge her difference in publicly acceptable terms and to inscribe herself into the ‘sameness’ shared by all American Christian patriots” (237). That Wheatley’s viewpoint combines evangelical sentiment with savvy business sense is demonstrated by many of her letters. For instance, in her letter to the Countess offering her the elegy on Whitefield on 25 October 1770, Wheatley avers, “The tongues of the learned are insufficient, much less the pen of an untutor’d African, to paint in lively characters, the excellencies of this Citizen of Zion! I beg an Interest in your Ladyship’s prayers” (*Complete Writings* 139). Wheatley’s hope for patronage and her affection for Whitefield are present in this religious appeal. On 30 October 1773, after Wheatley returned from England, she wrote to her African friend Arbour (or Obour) Tanner, “Dear Obour let us not sell our Birth right for a thousand worlds, which indeed would be as dust upon the Ballance [*sic*].—The God of the Seas and dry Land, has graciously Brought me home in safety” (*Complete Writings* 148). Tara A. Bynum comments that Wheatley and Tanner “are two Black women who are having to navigate the war that brings forth the founding” of their adoptive country (qtd. by Schuessler). It is interesting that Wheatley would refer to “the sale” of her religious birthright, because with the success of her *Poems*, she became a shrewd businesswoman, who with her manumission achieved ownership over the proceeds of her book

(Carretta, *Phillis* 141). Wheatley's successful economic venture led her to equate loss of profit with the loss of her "Birth right," the Christian faith. Wheatley, through her religion and practical stance, became a free woman.

The abyss between Wheatley's native culture and her adoptive culture may explain some of the cognitive distance between herself and her subject, George Whitefield. As Phillips illustrates, in a representative eighteenth-century history such as Hume's, cognitive distance was not only expected but was required. It was thought that "[o]nly the comprehensive philosophical eye...could discern the underlying patterns that give order to the development of society" ("Relocating Inwardness" 444). In other words, the cameo of the King's farewell to his children should be regarded as exemplary and capable of explanation through an understanding of the deeper patterns of history. What Phillips calls the tension between "cognitive distantiation and affective proximity" ("Relocating Inwardness" 444) appears not only in eighteenth-century histories but also in the period's elegies. Wheatley as historian of Whitefield has cognitive distance from her subject, doubtless in part because she did not know him well. In the first stanza she paints Whitefield as a hero who has achieved apotheosis. Either she did not know—or chose not to acknowledge—that Whitefield was reputedly cruel to the children at his orphanage, and that he "emerged as perhaps the most energetic, and conspicuous, evangelical defender and practitioner of slavery" of all his contemporaries, owning many slaves in South Carolina (Schlenther). Wheatley portrays Whitefield as a saint and a model preacher. Franke contends, however, that her 11 February 1774 letter to the Rev. Samson Occom suggests that she was aware of "the contradiction inherent in an American slaveholder crying for liberty or a slaveholding minister preaching Christianity" (237). Whitefield's exemplarity as a preacher is what raised him up as "an American icon" even though he was British and a slaveholder

(Schlenthner). Wheatley emphasizes his remarkable rhetorical gifts—these, the elegy claims, are what should be singled out for praise.

Wheatley's elegy "On the death of Dr. SAMUEL MARSHALL" holds up a different kind of exemplar, a physician who not only had a "healing hand" (15) but who was also "[t]he spouse, the sire, the universal friend" (28). The poem was published anonymously in the *Boston Evening-Post*, on 7 October 1771, but it was "also circulated in manuscript under [Wheatley's] name" (Waldstreicher 262n131, 131). Interestingly, Wheatley here assumes a classical, not a Christian, perspective. Waldstreicher proposes that Wheatley in her poetry is at once "Homer and Odysseus and the slaves and the women they knew or imagined" (8). Her earliest models, he shows, were "the most popular of the neoclassical texts translated by the most ambitious English poets of the previous two generations" (4). Waldstreicher describes how Wheatley's elegy is an intimate one for the husband of Lucy Tyler Marshall, a relative of Susanna Wheatley. Lucy had joined Old South Church on the same day as Phillis Wheatley, and Lucy's husband, Dr. Marshall, died only six weeks later (Waldstreicher 125, 131). Because of the family connection, "Wheatley can merge the medical and familial, again participating in the community of mourning" (Waldstreicher 131). This community is suggested by the invitation to the dead to "look down and see / A town involv'd in grief" (3-4) and by the admission that "Boston for her dear physician mourns" (14). Wheatley implicitly joins this community, but she offers no Christian consolation. Instead, she asks, "whither art thou gone?" (9), and acknowledges that he is "lost for ever to [his] wife and son" (10). Whereas in other elegies, such as "On the Death of a young Lady of Five Years of Age," Wheatley promises a final happy family reunion in heaven, in this poem she alludes only to the "immortal hopes" which "attend / The spouse, the sire, the universal friend" (27-8). "Immortal hopes" could be either pagan or Christian, and Wheatley

seems to blur the boundary deliberately. She refers to Marshall as “*AEsculapius*” (19), the “Greco-Roman god of medicine and son of Apollo” (Britannica), and as Apollo himself: “Gone is Apollo from his house of earth, / But leaves the sweet memorials of his worth” (23-4). Here there is the suggestion of a physical afterlife through earthly monuments, even including the patients Marshall cured, rather than an eternal life in a Christian heaven.

Wheatley also employs dark, gothic imagery instead of Christian references to light so as to convey the personal devastation caused by Marshall’s death. Marshall himself is an “immortal shade” (1), whose wife Lucy “rends the graceful tresses from her head” (6) and who, “[w]ild in her woe, with grief unknown opprest” (7), exhales sigh following “sigh deep heaving from her breast” (9). This is a woman whose grief is out of control. Waldstreicher observes that Wheatley “is able audaciously to raise what must have been on everyone’s mind: Lucy Marshall’s pregnancy” (131), the advent of her second child. He argues that “[i]t was a small step further from imagining captured, confined children, bereft of protective fathers as she herself had been, to focusing on the children themselves, and giving them voice, as [she] had begun to do in other elegies” (131). The unborn baby in the elegy to Marshall does not have a voice, but it expresses itself. Rather than the promise of new life, Wheatley emphasizes the confusion of the infant: “The babe unborn in the dark womb is tost, / And seems in anguish for its father lost” (17-8). The baby’s location in “the dark womb” (17) refers back to its father looking back “THROUGH thickest glooms” (1). Both father and child are in darkness, a fact implying that the state before birth resembles that after death. In other elegies, like that on Whitefield, Wheatley shows that death is bearable because of the light of the next life. For instance, she affirms that “[t]here Whitefield wings with rapid course his way, / And sails to Zion through vast seas of day” (14-15). In the elegy to Marshall, she focuses on darkness instead, suggesting the underworld in

classical mythology, like that in Homer (Waldstreicher 5). Wheatley is putatively within a community of mourners, but there is no light illuminating them or the deceased.

In the unpublished poem “On the Death of General Wooster” (1778), Wheatley again portrays her subject as exemplary, but here as a model soldier fighting in the worthy cause of independence from Britain. Carretta suggests that Wheatley’s overwhelmingly warm reception in England in 1773 must have divided her loyalties between America and Britain (*Phillis* 154), yet in this elegy she celebrates an American hero who happened to have switched loyalties from Britain to America. This is despite the fact that, after the capture of Louisburg in 1745, “the young American officer, as he was called, was presented to the king, and became the favourite of the court” (Kenneth). Wheatley begins her elegy to Wooster with praise:

He nobly perish’d in his Country’s cause

His Country’s Cause that ever fir’d his mind

Where martial flames, and Christian virtues join’d. (2-4).

Wheatley repeats the phrase “his Country’s Cause,” to suggest that she, too, is an American patriot. Waldstreicher illustrates that “[t]his poem is about the construction of the revolutionary community, much as the letter that contains the poem is about Phillis’s own network” (323). She regards Wooster as combining edifying Christian virtue with inspiring bellicose fire. As with George Whitefield, Wheatley’s emphasis is on the type she is celebrating rather than on the person’s qualities or idiosyncrasies. It would not have been possible for her to know that Wooster was later described as “dull and uninspired, garrulous about his thirty years of service...tactless, hearty rather than firm with his undisciplined troops who adored him, at times brutal towards the civilian population of Montreal” (qtd. in “Wooster, David”). For Wheatley’s purposes, he was an icon of moral courage.

Wheatley takes the opportunity to write Wooster's elegy in order to make him the unassailable mouthpiece for her own cause of liberation for Black slaves. As in her elegy on Whitefield and in Hume's account of King Charles' goodbye to his children, she employs reported speech and elicited affect to further her ideological case. Waldstreicher observes that "[p]icturing [Wooster's] dying moments and last words like one of Homer's heroes on the battlefield, Wheatley makes the most of the opportunity to memorialize by putting her most explicit and challenging antislavery arguments into Wooster's mouth" (322). Just as Wooster fought for Americans' liberty, Wheatley suggests that he would also fight for the liberty of Blacks, thus aligning Black slaves with oppressed Americans (Carretta, *Phillis* 159). As he is dying on the battlefield, Wheatley gives him this prayer to deliver after his appeal for freedom for America:

“But how, presumptuous shall we hope to find
Divine acceptance with th' Almighty mind—
While yet (O deed ungenerous!) they disgrace
And hold in bondage Afric's blameless race?
Let virtue reign—And thou accord our prayers
Be victory our's, and generous freedom theirs.” (27-32)

This alignment of freedom for slaves with freedom for Americans appears again in Wheatley's letter to the Rev. Occom on 11 February 1774, in which she compared slaveholders to “Modern Egyptians” who should realize that the “Principle, which we call Love of Freedom” lives in Blacks, too (*Complete Writings* 153). It is likely that Mary Wooster was the only contemporary reader of this poem, and one wonders how she would have taken the portrayal of her brave

husband as the mouthpiece for Wheatley's sentiments. It is because of his exemplarity she can appeal to our emotions and also to our ethics.

Wheatley was personally known by the Woosters, at least by correspondence, so it would seem that she had some insight—although not the clarity of his later biographers, as noted earlier—into the General's personality, and still chose to make him exemplary. Brooks records that in "New Haven, Connecticut, Wheatley found a powerful advocate in Mary Clap Wooster" (1729-1807). Brooks continues, "When Mary's sister Temperance Clap Pitkin died on 19 May 1772, Wheatley composed an elegy in her honour, which appears under the title "To the Rev. Mr. Pitkin on the Death of his Lady" in the 1773 *Poems*. In her letter of 8 October 1773, Wheatley details to David "Worcester" her trip to England and conveys for the first time in writing the fact of her manumission. Here she shows herself evolving into the competent businesswoman she later became. Talking about her deed of freedom, she says to Wooster, "The Instrument is drawn, so as to secure me and my property from the hands of Executrs [sic]." Wheatley also looks to Wooster for more subscriptions by wealthy people. She remarks, "This I am the more Solicitous for, as I am now upon my own footing and whatever I get by this is entirely mine, & it is the Chief I have to depend upon" (*Complete Writings* 147). Interestingly, it is also about sales of her poetic work that Wheatley writes on 15 July 1778 to Mary Wooster after her husband's death. Along with the flattering tribute in the enclosed elegy, there was a request for remittance of the money for the volumes of the *Poems* that had sold and also for the return of copies that remained unsold (*Complete Writings* 161). It appears that it was not only others who saw a valuable commodity in Wheatley, but that Wheatley regarded herself that way. Brooks writes that the "potent image of the Wooster elegy wrapped in business instructions for his grieving widow suggests that Wheatley's white female audiences understood that they might

complete these emotional transactions by helping her promote her book” (11). It is highly unlikely that this brilliant, shrewd woman would simply parrot the language and religion of her captors. Bly goes so far as to claim that Wheatley possessed the intelligence to make subtle points in favour of her own agency through the typeface of her poems. According to Bly, “the poet’s manipulation of typography is particularly evident in her elegiac writing, where her use of the altered word shows altered levels of meaning” (320).

Before leaving Wheatley, I am pleased to examine two newly discovered poems, one a confident identification by Wendy Raphael Roberts and the other a speculative attribution by the same scholar. It is a tremendous privilege to analyze both poems. “On the Death of Love Rotch” and “The Black Rose” suggest a wider circulation of Wheatley poems than was previously thought (Roberts 157). In “On the Death of Love Rotch,” Roberts finds both “extensive contextual evidence” of the poem’s authenticity and “solid internal evidence of the poem’s subject, style, and language” (156). She affirms that this poem, “written in 1767 and printed for the first time below, is now the earliest known full-length elegy attributed to the early American poet Phillis Wheatley (Peters)” (155). Roberts discovered the poem in the commonplace book of Mary Powell Potts, who introduced it as “A few lines Written by a Negro Girl about 15 Years of Age on the Death of Love Rotch her Mistress” (Roberts 175). Roberts situates the commonplace book within the trajectory of Quaker teacher Rebecca Jones, who worked closely “with the Rotches of Nantucket (later New Bedford) and other leaders in Quaker abolitionist efforts” (160). Though the designation of “Mistress” for Love Rotch seems problematic in light of Wheatley’s history, Roberts argues that it “would not be out of the question for Wheatley’s enslavers to have loaned her out to the Rotch family for a time, especially to provide comfort and company or to serve as an amanuensis for an ailing Love Rotch while her husband and sons were

making plans to move to New Bedford” (164). Waldstreicher also addresses connections between the Rotch and Wheatley families. John Wheatley “ventured in whaling supplies with Joseph Rotch of the prominent whaling family” (Waldstreicher 24), and “Love Rotch was the mother of Joseph Rotch Jr. (1743-72), who is the subject of Wheatley’s poem “To a Gentleman on his Voyage to Great-Britain for the Recovery of his Health,” written in 1772 and published in Wheatley’s *Poems* (1773)” (Roberts 161-2). Waldstreicher reveals that one of the Rotches went to view Wheatley, “who has been just returned from England—where she has been much caress’d” (247). Roberts points out that “[w]hen Wheatley’s soon-to-be published book travelled to London under Captain Calef’s care in 1772, when Wheatley sailed to London in 1773, and when her first edition of *Poems* (1773) shipped from London to the colonies, they were all on vessels owned by the Rotch family” (163). Additionally, “[w]hile the patriots decided to let Francis Rotch bring other cargo besides the tea into town after a tense several days, the ensuing Boston Tea Party postponed [Wheatley’s] book’s initial distribution and newspaper advertisements, which finally appeared in January” (Waldstreicher 254). Roberts concludes that not only did Francis Rotch live next door to the Wheatleys in Boston, but that “the Wheatley family’s finances were tied to the Rotches and their industry, and they had plenty of opportunities to interact” (163).

“On the Death of Love Rotch” makes even clearer the tension between horizontal and vertical journeys identified in and through Wheatley’s elegies by Caroline Wigginton, who discusses how Wheatley took her position as elegist between a community of Black mourners and their dead. To the enslaved, the idea of a vertical journey through death to heaven provided hope during their horizontal journey of enslavement (Wigginton 94). Wheatley’s poems also travelled horizontally, and her newly available poem allows for an extended estimate of the

geographical dissemination of Wheatley's consolatory poetry, of its material and performative horizontal movement. Wigginton illustrates that "[t]he circulation of her work beyond her geographic neighborhoods itself became a medium that black Christians comprehended and read in a way that insisted on the distinctiveness of themselves and their experiences" (106). Wigginton could doubly affirm this truth after the discovery of a Wheatley poem travelling as far as Potts's commonplace book in Pennsylvania. She remarks that Wheatley's "claim to discernment and authority arose from the resonance between death's vertical journey and enslavement's horizontal journey" (94), and that "[o]nly by virtue of her own forced migration could Wheatley witness that other neighborhood where consolation and transcendence were possible" (96). Her experience of slavery was that which justified her poetic mediation for other slaves. Wheatley presented her Black audience with the idea of "enslavement as deathlike in that it resulted in divine knowledge and transcendence over earthly concerns" (Wigginton 101). Her own captivity within time Wheatley saw as intersecting with eternity, the joys of which she shows in this elegy may be lived on earth.

This new poem offers consolation through what Wigginton calls a "slippage between the transspheric vertical and the transoceanic horizontal" (94). That is, vertical and horizontal thrusts are not completely distinct in "Love Rotch," which begins with a question, "What? Gone and left us all in Misery—/ While thou are fled up to the Regions High?" (1-2). Wheatley compares "Regions High" to the transient "worldly sorrows Volatile as Wind" (2, 10). Her elegy features the idea that the world is a place of suffering but that we can begin the pleasures of heaven even now through faith. Roberts observes that the "Love Rotch elegy ends with a...rejoinder that seems to point the reader to heaven but just as quickly asks them to refocus and bring the heavenly virtues to the earthly present: 'There vast profuse Humanity doth flow / All these

enjoyed is Happiness Below' ” (23-4 qtd. by Roberts 170). Wheatley's statement “Ye know not Friends you yet may meet with Joy / At Consummation every one reply” (15-16) suggests not only community resumed in heaven, but also the end, the consummation of the world, when everyone will “reply” to God. This event will complete the fusion of the horizontal with the vertical, a fusion that is initiated in Wheatley's poem. In this elegy she comforts her Black community not only with promise of heaven as in other elegies, but also with the idea that they may attain heaven on earth; rather than simply telling them they must not grieve, she shows them how to rejoice. She portrays herself as mediator between the realm above and that below; her “Love Emmerce that now Inspires the Pen” (13)¹ contradicts her previous refusal of the vatic stance, “I opened not my Mouth” (5).

Though “On the Death of Love Rotch” does not have an obvious hero like Whitefield the preacher, Wooster the soldier, or Marshall the physician, there is yet an exemplar in this poem: the faithful Quaker interlocutor. The “Friend” (9) whom Wheatley addresses is not only a symbol of the surviving community, but is also the ideal disciple who docilely accepts the theology Wheatley offers. This Friend is told to “Weep not” (4), a likely reference to Luke 23: 28, which reads, “It is not for me that you should weep, daughters of Jerusalem.” Roberts reflects that “[t]he poem reads as one enmeshed in Quaker women's culture and verse, with addresses like ‘O Friend,’ ‘Love and Friendship Universal Give,’ and an emphasis on relationship and loss and how these evolve in meaning over time (‘each tedious Night’)” (170). There is no conflict between Wheatley the Evangelical and Wheatley the Quaker, because “Evangelical Friends [Quakers] were concerned with emphasizing the inerrancy and uniqueness of the Bible, the Incarnation and atonement of Christ, and other characteristic Protestant doctrines which,

¹ “Emmerce” is glossed by Roberts as a “misspelling or variant spelling of *emersed*, listed in the OED as a variant spelling of *immersed*” (180n32).

although seldom denied outright by Friends, had tended to be subordinated to the quietistic emphasis on the Inner Light” (Britannica). A modern Quaker remarks that, in his religion, adherents are “much more concerned with what is happening in the here and now and tend to work very earnestly towards achieving the peaceable kingdom in this life” (“RJ’s Corner”). This emphasis is obvious in Wheatley’s conclusion, “All these enjoyed is Happiness Below” (24). Wheatley advises the grieving “Friend” to return to ordinary life with the words “thou must resume again” (14), suggesting that if one does one’s duty in life, the reward will be heaven. She follows this command with an evocation of heaven and the interlocutor in it:

Happy thrice Happy, thou thyself shall view
Of Grace and virtue ev’ry Soft’ning dew
There bliss and happiness forever Reign
And uncontrouled Sing a Celestial Strain
There peace and virtue never ending Live
Where Love and Friendship Universal Give.
There vast profuse Humanity doth flow
All these enjoyed is Happiness Below. (17-24)

Roberts remarks that “Wheatley uses her common phrase ‘Thrice happy,’ as well as the phrase ‘bliss and happiness,’ as she turns mourners away from their grief and toward their own personal renewal in heaven” (169). The word “thyself” (17) could be either the emphatic of “thou” or the direct object of “view.” What seems unmistakable is that the Quaker interlocutor is imagined in heaven already because, according to Quaker beliefs, heaven begins on earth.

Roberts’s speculative attribution, “The Black Rose,” also proposes an exemplar based on her virtue. This is another poem from Potts’s commonplace book, and though it departs from the

usual pattern of Wheatley's elegies, this is unsurprising because "this would be her only known elegy for a Black woman" (Roberts 173). The title above the poem reads, "A Negro Woman of that Name lately deceas'd, being remarkable for her Innocent and & sincerely pious Life." The poem is dated "Philad.a 9th mo 3rd 1772" (Roberts 176). The poem does not begin with the deceased in heaven, as so many other of Wheatley's elegies do, but rather with a justification as to why she would write this poem at all (Roberts 173). Wheatley begins by offering her readers a theology lesson:

Reason distinguishing 'twixt Man & Brute,
One Flesh, One Blood all Nations constitute,
The same the sooty Maid on Afric's Coast,
As in the British Court, the brilliant Toast;
Objects alike of the Creator's Care,
Alike belov'd, the swarthy and the Fair,
Precious alike is each immortal Soul

To the great Lord and Father of the whole. (1-8)

The year after this poem was conceived, Wheatley would herself become "in the British Court, the brilliant Toast" (4), and she may have been prescient, or at least, aspiring to that lofty state. The theme of the poem is that real worth, like that of Black Rose, often lacks the celebration achieved after death by worldly honour and wealth. Because Rose was not among the honoured / wealthy at death, the poet's Muse must be "honest" (23) rather than "[s]ervile" (13), an entity with integrity rather than a sycophant who lies about the merits the poet is extolling in the hope of winning an emolument. Notably, the poet insists that to praise the wealthy dead reveals "low purpose" (18), so logically, to eulogize lowly virtue must involve high purpose. To praise

“honest Rose” (31), the poet must condemn “sordid Views” and “degenerate Custom’s Laws” (20), rising above the former and disregarding the latter. Roberts observes that “[t]he phrase ‘Rise honest muse; and sing’ is in quotation marks, which highlights it as a variation of Alexander Pope’s line ‘Rise, honest muse! And sing the Man of Ross,’ in which Pope too questioned why ‘all our praises...should Lords engross’ ” (173).

The paradoxes of Black Rose’s virtue underline the poet’s message that virtue, not race, should be the polarizing issue in eighteenth-century American society. Beginning with the non-issue of colour in the economy of salvation, the poet finishes by enumerating Rose’s paradoxical virtues, such as being “[w]ise without Learning, Without Riches great” (25). She praises God:

Whose Love can wash the Ethiopian white;
Whose Wisdom can the thing of nought prepare,
To bring to nought the boasted things that are,
Exalt his little Ones whom Men despise,
And thus confound the Wisdom of the Wise,
Hath from this sorrowing Vale of mortal Woes,
Call’d to immortal joys his faithful Rose. (33-9)

Roberts clarifies that “the idea of God washing the Ethiopian white, often used by Quakers [is the one] Wheatley deconstructs in ‘On Being Brought from Africa to America’ ” (173). The scriptural references are I Corinthians 1: 19, “I will confound the wisdom of wise men, disappoint the calculations of the prudent,” and I Corinthians 1: 28, “God has chosen what the world holds base and contemptible, nay, has chosen what is nothing, so as to bring to nothing what is now in being.” It is Rose’s paradoxical virtues that render her worthy of salvation, not her race, and the poet demonstrates that it should be virtue and wickedness that polarize society,

not race and wealth: “If in so rich a Garden Honour blows / Illustrious then the life of honest Rose” (30-31). That is, if anything is worth exalting, it is the “Black Rose” of God’s garden.

It has been thought that Phillis Wheatley died in obscurity and desperate poverty in 1784 after bearing to her wastrel husband three children who died in infancy (see Carretta, “Introduction” xxxiv-xxxv for a summary of previous scholarship). Yet, according to more recent research, what happened was much more nuanced. Waldstreicher “draws on Dayton’s work, which argues that Wheatley’s husband, long dismissed as a ne’er-do-well who abandoned her, attempted to provide her with financial security and spared her typical household drudgery, to support her continuing literary ambitions” (Schuessler). Additionally, John Peters was hardly responsible for the disappearance of the manuscript of Wheatley’s second book of poetry. Future poets took up Wheatley’s legacy, and some, like Anna Letitia Barbauld, took to heart the cause of freedom for Black slaves. There is no evidence that Barbauld met Wheatley on her abbreviated trip to England, but it is likely that in Barbauld’s own social milieu she had heard of the Black prodigy, as the “literary quality of Wheatley’s poetry” was often invoked by Abolitionists to denote Black people’s humanity and talent (Carretta, *Phillis* 201). By the time of William Wilberforce’s April 1791 motion against the slave trade, “Abolitionist sentiment had swelled during the 1770s and 1780s, pouring forth in sermons, tracts, and—especially—poems” (McCarthy 291). Wheatley was, of course, part of this literary deluge, and she contributed to the issue’s final resolution.

Like Wheatley, Barbauld composed elegies in heroic couplets and focused on the exemplarity of the people she elegized (FIGURE 3). She also adopted a cognitive distance from her elegiac subjects while at the same time approaching near in affect and ideology. Like Wheatley, Barbauld similarly appeals to her readers’ emotions while making an ethical point;

however, she focuses more on the imitation of exemplars than on the possibility of conveying her own sentiments through them. As I will show, her strongest ethical “sally” (Cox 93) occurs in the long poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, which is an excoriating attack on England’s involvement in war with France and on the consequent loss of life and damage to nature. First, though, I will discuss shorter poems explicitly designated as elegies in order to demonstrate Barbauld’s resemblances to and departures from Wheatley’s approach.

Barbauld’s elegy “On the Death of Mrs. Jennings” appeared in the volume *Poems* in 1773, the same year in which Wheatley’s poems were published. Mrs. Jennings was not only Barbauld’s grandmother, but also her namesake, and Barbauld appropriately celebrates this matriarch with a paean to her virtues. There are suggestions throughout the poem that Mrs. Jennings’ legacy is that of stalwart Christian faith, an inheritance which, Barbauld hints, she herself embodies. As for Wheatley, for Barbauld the tenets of the Christian faith provided a frame of reference for her poetry. She was the daughter of Dissenting minister and teacher, Dr. John Aikin, and was tutored under his auspices at Warrington Academy in Kibworth. Her biographer, William McCarthy, avers that “[s]he must early have developed the habit of intense curiosity, the appetite to know things, the ambition to see beyond the bounds of her utmost view that characterize her mature intellect” (21). Like Wheatley, Barbauld received an education that was uncommon for girls; at Warrington she was surrounded by boys and became used to their company (McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 17). Though later she would resent her parents, she certainly adhered to Dissenting Christianity because of their influence. Their sect offered “a revised, optimistic faith” that countered the bleak aspects of Methodism (McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 14). Barbauld’s praise of her grandmother is therefore steeped in the Christian assurance of Mrs. Jennings’ salvation. For Barbauld, the manner of her grandmother’s death

reveals her “blameless life” (2). The opening heroic couplets are an apostrophe to the dead woman and evince sorrow through what McCarthy calls “cool” metaphors (4). Barbauld’s image of the “frosty sun” (4), to denote the span of her grandmother’s life, resembles Wheatley’s phrase in her elegy to Whitefield, “Unhappy we the setting sun deplore” (9), but whereas Barbauld’s sun is “healthy” (4), Wheatley’s sun “shines no more” (10). This difference may reflect their different religious backgrounds, for Wheatley could be taking leave of sun worship, while Barbauld is indicating the “health” of a long, Christian life.

That Mrs. Jennings’ life was long and Christian is evident from the biblical references in the poem. These also point implicitly to Barbauld’s own Christian conviction, the legacy from her grandmother, who gave her “the dearest blessing” she possesses (28). This is the tribute with which Barbauld ends the poem, but it is present in a subtle way throughout the elegy. When the poet attributes to her grandmother “a Patriarch’s length of days” (8), she is invoking Old Testament figures who lived for even hundreds of years (McCarthy and Kraft 66n3). More significantly, Barbauld claims that “To holy Anna’s spirit not more dear / The Church of Israel, and the house of prayer” (15-6), meaning that Mrs. Jennings was as devout as the biblical prophetess. The epithet “holy Anna” obviously refers to Anna in the Book of Luke, “a widow of about four score and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (qtd in McCarthy and Kraft, “Editorial Comment” 67n2). Yet Barbauld is also gesturing to her grandmother, another Anna Letitia, and indirectly to herself, her grandmother’s namesake. It is as though she were saying that “the house of prayer” is not dearer to her than is her beloved grandmother. Barbauld is as devout a Christian as Wheatley; the principal difference is that Wheatley adopted the Christian faith of her owners whereas Barbauld

inherited Christianity from her forebears such as Mrs. Jennings. Wheatley, however, would have understood the “ancestor worship” (Bly 322) involved in an elegy such as this one.

Wheatley demonstrates an unusual historical consciousness because her earliest history was truncated and then resumed in a completely new context. That is why her poems reflect both backgrounds, though of course her Gambian origins are only intimated. Barbauld, on the other hand, had a unified historical awareness that matured over time as she read and wrote. After all, it was she who wrote that “[b]ooks influence manners; and manners, in return, influence the taste for books” (qtd. in Phillips, *On Historical* 140), a process that is apparent even in the evolution of her own thought. At the time Barbauld wrote “On the Death of Mrs. Jennings,” she subscribed to the historical view taken by Hume, one which was regarded as coldly analytical by future historians. Instead of adumbrating King Charles in a way that made him relatable, Hume summarizes his virtues in abstract terms, with such phrases as “All these virtues, in him, maintained their proper bounds and merited unreserved praise” (*History* 542). Barbauld described her grandmother in a similar vein, saying, for instance, “The truest praise was hers, a cheerful heart, / Prone to enjoy and ready to impart” (9-10). Although Barbauld speaks of her grandmother’s “cherish’d image, ever dear” (25), implying that she, the poet, is contributing a verbal painting of the deceased, she does not “paint” a personal history in the manner that would become expected in the Romantic era. In that period, according to Phillips, “painting” was a key historical term, one that “suggests a historiographical equivalent of the picturesque...that transforms reading into a kind of historical spectatorship” (*Society and Sentiment* 202). Barbauld did not yet “paint,” but she had a keen sense of history, “the product of an established habit of looking to the arts as a register of what Hume calls ‘the variety of Taste and opinion’ ” (Phillips, *On Historical* 153). Conversely, she also looked to manners to deduce what would be the fitting

progeny of her pen. In writing her elegies Barbauld knew what kind of poem the bereaved would prefer, and of course her judgment was upheld by her own emotions regarding the deceased.

Barbauld's "On the Death of Mrs. Martineau" is not only sensitive to the grief of the Martineau and Taylor families, but is also severe towards her younger self, who was critical of her parents. This elegy is directed implicitly to her parents. The poem, again about a family matriarch, was printed privately for the Taylor and Martineau families in 1800 but was not published in England until the posthumous publication of Barbauld's *Works* in 1825 (McCarthy and Kraft, "Editorial Comment" 149). As with Barbauld's elegy to her grandmother, this elegy responds to the death of someone in the poet's circle, but here we see a poet at war with herself because of what she regards as a personal failure. Barbauld's advice to the grieving family to "Mourn not" and later to "Yet mourn" reflects not only contradictions in canonical male elegies but also her tendency "to turn up on both sides of every issue." McCarthy and Kraft argue that she "is often trying to redress some imbalance between reason and feeling" ("Introduction" 24). This tension, visible in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, is also present here with Barbauld's interior struggle over whether there is a purpose in mourning her dead. Can she actually reconcile with her parents beyond the grave?

The subsequent lines, claims McCarthy, betray Barbauld's grief over her putative ingratitude to her parents (397). Her admission that "No bitter drop, / midst Nature's kind relief, / Sheds gall into the fountain of [their] grief" (15-6) and the following four lines reflect her own regretted responses to her upbringing. To have "scorned her parents" was "a heavy charge in the ethics of that era" (McCarthy 397). She had resisted both her father's "impossible reasonableness" that disallowed feeling and also her mother's attempt to quell her ardent daughter with the writings of John Locke (McCarthy 33-4). Whatever justification for

resentment Barbauld had is omitted from this poem. In another poem, her 1789 “Epistle to Dr. Enfield , on his Revisiting Warrington,” she evokes the return of her father’s colleague to Warrington Academy, before the Dissenting School shut its doors. The final lines are telling. The poet implores:

Go seek the turf where worth, where wisdom lies,
Wisdom and worth, ah, never to return!
There, kneeling, weep my tears, and breathe my sighs,
A daughter’s sorrows o’er her father’s urn! (69-72)

Whereas Barbauld formerly employed the word “wisdom” ironically to refer to the Academy’s headmasters, now the sentiment is sincere (McCarthy 267). The poet is here imploring Enfield to sympathize with her grief—although he surely felt his own—through the “imaginative act” defined by Smith (Schor 34). Enfield’s sorrow, she implies, will be augmented through his sympathy with hers. In general, Barbauld’s elegies do not require of her the imaginative sympathy of Enfield, perhaps because she shares in the sorrow of each grieving family. Wheatley, however, because she often did not know the deceased personally, had to resort to Smith’s “imaginative act” in order to sympathize with those grieving. As readers who do not know these people, an “imaginative act” is how we can relate to the dead invoked.

While Wheatley’s elegies often exalt particular Bostonian men or military or religious heroes in the hopes that they can plead her cause, Barbauld’s elegies for the deceased of her intimate circle indicate that they are worthy of emulation on account of their virtue. This emphasis on following in the footsteps of the dead is evident in “On the Death of Mrs. Martineau.” Barbauld commends the family’s response, saying, in “her path you tread” (22) and further, that “Your lives more eloquent her worth shall tell” (26). The poet makes clear that the

kind of imitation involved is that of Mrs. Martineau's Christian virtue, which her descendants will embody in a way that speaks more highly of her than does their praise. Lines 21-30 concern following in Mrs. Martineau's path and speak about "[t]he treasured birthright of the spreading line" (30), the same birthright of faith of which Wheatley writes to Obour Tanner (*Complete Writings* 148). Wheatley did not receive Christianity literally as a birthright, handed down from Grandmother to Mother to herself. Her emphasis upon Whitefield's oral powers in such phrases as the "lips" on which she "with list'ning pleasure hung" (27) illustrates the sources of her faith, the great preachers. Her "list'ning pleasure" in hanging on Whitefield's words resembles Barbauld's counsel to the bereaved families, "On the loved theme your lips unblamed shall dwell" (25). Barbauld's verses, however, denote a community of mourners whereas Wheatley's lines indicate her personal inspiration through the deceased. The difference could be that Barbauld was born into a Christian community while Wheatley had to acquire her Christian faith through benefactors and celebrities. It is significant that Barbauld ends the poem with her deceased family and friends because, for her, all their histories are intertwined: "A boding voice, methinks, in Fancy's ear / Speaks from the tomb, and cries "Thy friends are here!" This reported speech suggests that the poet will have community even, maybe especially, after death; her march to the grave will be escorted by companions on either side. An apposite quotation is Wordsworth's "There is / One great society on earth: / The noble Living and the noble Dead" (*The Prelude*, 1850, XI, 393-5). Like Wordsworth, Barbauld sees the dead in the same realm as the living, and for that reason, she can sympathize with them. In the final lines, she indicates that the voice "in Fancy's ear" is meant for her especially so that there is at least the possibility in the next world of reconciling with her dead. What the Martineau and Taylor families have achieved is contrasted with her own putative failure.

By the 1790s, it was Britain that failed in Barbauld's eyes; she paints its fall in political tracts, and notably, in verse. Barbauld's long poem *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, intensely controversial when it appeared in 1812, is a significant challenge to the reader. It conveys Barbauld's belief in the "One great society on earth," spanning countries and eras and contrasting the actions of the living with the works of the dead. Barbauld's biographer confirms that "the complex of dismay, anger, and grief" that produced the poem "evolved during more than ten years" (McCarthy 459). England, although portrayed as the cultural, economic, artistic, and geographic centre of the poem, is shown to be well on its way to ruin; this is why the poem is variously called an eighteenth-century progress piece, a Juvenalian satire, a jeremiad, or an elegy (Levine 179). Here it will be discussed as an elegiac history because of its emphasis on the prospective desolation of England if the country remains on its current course of war and rapine. This is a conditional elegy, and is worth significant attention because of its nostalgic form and implications for historiography. All of a sudden, well into the Romantic era, Barbauld as in her earlier elegies assumes cognitive and formal distantiation while conveying a warm ethical message. The problem for Barbauld's readers was that the poem was vehemently anti-war at a time when patriotic emotions were high; the poem was considered "defeatist, unpatriotic, scandalous, all but treasonable" by many of Barbauld's contemporaries (McCarthy 476). This was a time when the most common experience of the working man was "training in arms under the state" and when "Britain's rulers themselves had no choice but to investigate the quality of popular patriotism—and to rely on it" (Colley 312, 284). Linda Colley points out that even martial music, to people unused to any kind of music, had an "immediate and powerful" effect in encouraging a spirit of state-sponsored patriotism (307). Barbauld's brand of patriotism was not that of the state.

Barbauld's understanding of patriotism becomes clearer when we peruse her powerful political essays of the 1790s. E.J. Clery opines that for Barbauld, "patriotism is a principled opposition to state corruption" (176). This opposition is evident both in *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* and in *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation, or, a Discourse for the Fast, Appointed on April 19, 1793. By a Volunteer*. In the former essay, Barbauld decries the parliamentary decision on 2 March 1790 to deny to Dissenting Christians equal rights with members of the Church of England. Dissenters were not allowed to hold various offices (McCarthy and Kraft, "Editorial Comment" 261). At this rosy dawn of the French Revolution, Barbauld, like other Romantics, sees France as exemplary in the way she has shaken off political tyranny. She believes that there should be a similar purging of political corruption from England, which has misguidedly blended "what God made separate...religion and civil polity" (280). She hopes to awaken the sentiments of her countrymen through her exaltation of France, Britain's long-time enemy. France is made the exemplar, and readers are invited to feel its influence through her stirring prose. As Craciun notes, "Barbauld assumed the role of an ungendered, 'active' citizen in her 1790s prose writing, maintaining a deeply-held connection to the British nation, yet thwarting a xenophobic nationalism at every rhetorical turn through her simultaneous allegiance to French revolutionary principles and universalist rhetoric" (16). With her entrance into the fray, Barbauld considered herself as joining the "word war" (qtd. by Craciun 18). In the last portion of her essay, she makes a bold ideological plea to her fellow Britons to follow in the footsteps of France, where, rather than monks and nobles, "Man, the creature of God, exists" (279). She gives a sweeping vision of the two countries' historical roles, which have now been reversed. Not only does Barbauld show confidence in her political position, but also evinces no doubts about her own patriotism.

In *Sins of Government*, which appeared in May of 1793 just as the War with France broke out, Barbauld again questions patriotism as loyalty to the state. She indicts that “species of patriotism, which consists in inverting the natural course of our feelings, in being afraid of our neighbour’s prosperity, and rejoicing at his misfortunes” (309-10). “Writing with cool irony,” says Craciun, Barbauld “enters this word war extolling cherished republican values like transparency, nationalism and clarity, and all in a Dissenting sermon...on the government’s abuse of faith for unchristian ends” (18). Clery maintains that Barbauld’s patriotism “is allegiance to community rather than to the nation state” (175). We will see such communal solidarity in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, even though the poem is a denunciation of England’s involvement in the War. In *Sins of Government*, Barbauld responds to the royal call for “Public Fast and Humiliation” not only by modelling the position of a Dissenter critical of the government but also by showing that the real community is that which “stand[s] this day before the Lord” (318). This is her refrain as she takes her readers through a political examination of conscience which encourages them to seek in their own behaviour the causes of the corruption of the state. She affirms that “we are called upon to repent of national sins because we *can* help them, and because we ought to help them” (300). Barbauld hated war, partly for the reason that it “hardens human beings by inuring them to atrocities” (McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 22). Yet her position on war did not mean that she abnegated her responsibilities to her community, but rather the opposite.

The critical response to *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* was motivated partly by the generally increased sense of separate spheres for men and women during wartime. Women found a loophole in this prescription so that they could engage in public matters. As Colley makes clear, society’s tendency to invoke “women’s superior morality and virtue proved enormously

helpful” to women “because it converted the *desire* to act into an overwhelming *duty* to do so” (2). This privileging of women’s supposed moral superiority as a basis for intervention in politics lies behind Barbauld’s daring indictment of England’s involvement in the war. Critics responded both to her gender and to her self-confidence. The most vicious review was that in the *Quarterly Review* by John Wilson Croker, conservative statesman and author, now known mainly as the critic behind Keats’s most excoriating review. Croker attacked Barbauld’s age and gender with the dismissive comment that she should never have been moved to “dash down her shagreen spectacles and knitting needles” and to abandon her “superintendence...of the nursery” (qtd in Levine 178). Croker’s point is that a woman such as Barbauld should *not* be involved in affairs of state. Instead, she should limit herself to writing for children, as in her *Lessons and Hymns* (1778-81), which she wrote while managing Palgrave School for boys with her husband (Levine 178). Craciun points out that Croker aligns Barbauld with Robespierre, who “famously wore” green spectacles; Croker thus associates Barbauld’s “‘confident sense of commanding talents’ with the Reign of Terror” (23). This libel was putatively deserved because of Barbauld’s earlier championing of France in her essays of the 1790s.

As in *Sins of Government*, the tone of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* is solemn, and evokes a lone figure standing against the black political horizon, the “tempest blackening in the distant West” (60). Barbauld assumes the role of prophet, cognitively distancing herself from her subject and readers while drawing near to them and creating community through feeling. Drawing on the philosophy of Francis Hutcheson, Barbauld postulates a worldwide community that begins with the family and extends to the world, a vision which we would now call “multi-cultural” (McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 18). In her ardently-pursued ethical agenda, Barbauld resembles Wheatley in her passion for the liberation of Black slaves. Indeed, in both

essays from the 1790s, Barbauld expresses her outrage over the enslavement of Black people. In *An Address to the Opposers*, she proclaims that the Liberty unleashed by the French Revolution “extends a smile of hope and promise to the poor African, the victim of hard, impenetrable avarice” (278), and in *Sins of Government* she questions, “Are there not some *darker-coloured* children of the same family, over whom we assume a hard and unjust controul?” (sic 308). Barbauld desires that humanity be free from war and concomitant moral backsliding so as to fulfill its varied cultural potential.

The form of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* is as out-of-date as its message is passionate; Barbauld follows eighteenth-century models, achieving distance through conservative form. Her poem is nostalgic in versification, which “is conservative in defense of Enlightenment values. It asserts ideals of clarity and reason against the sprawl of ‘Gothic Night’ ” (McCarthy 468). One can see why heroic couplets would facilitate “clarity and reason,” because they impose order on the randomness of experience; Pope and Dryden deploy heroic couplets to achieve their neoclassical ordering of diverse material. Not only in versification, but also in structure, the poem demonstrates the need for the triumph of reason over chaos. William Keach observes that “by its form, [the poem] anticipates the ruin it predicts” (539). Jeffrey Cox attempts to make sense of the poem’s structure, asserting that the main part of the poem is comprised of “three additional, paralleled sallies, three different surveys of the world Britain has sought to win only to lose its soul” (108). The first of these sallies (67-112) follows the intellectual light that streams from English culture, while the second (113-214) involves future pilgrims’ visit to England’s ruins; finally, the third sally (215-334) follows the Spirit’s path from Asia to England (Cox 108). Generically and also nostalgically, Barbauld’s poem “draws upon Johnson’s *London* and Goldsmith’s *Deserted Village* and from the long tradition of classical satire and pastoral” (Cox

112). Barbauld does not only evoke a lost pastoral in her poem. In reference to a complementary poem, "The Caterpillar," Caroline Dauphin describes Barbauld's "step away from [didactic] georgic culture to create a counterculture against the arts of cultivation" (110). She champions nature's free generosity, and instead of elevating the "arts of cultivation," associates artfulness with what is amiss in society, much as do her Enlightenment forebears.

The confusing aspects in the poem, however, lie more in thematic than structural issues. Barbauld commences with a seeming contradiction; she evokes Britain, who "[b]ravely, though vainly, dares to strive with Fate" (5); then at line 46 she warns: "Thou who hast shared the guilt must share the woe." Rather than seeing a contradiction here and in later lines, I agree with McCarthy and Kraft that Barbauld's works in general reveal her as engaging with "both sides of every issue...trying to redress some imbalance between reason and feeling" ("Introduction" 24). She sees that feelings may deceive both regarding patriotism and regarding the privations of war. She then looks forward with sorrow to a time when the country will "rank amongst the names that once were great" (72), using the subjunctive mood to convey the probable passage of the arts and sciences to the New World: "westward streams the light that leaves thy shores" (79). "West" is "an elegiac word in Barbauld" (McCarthy 471) and suggests the progress of culture from East to West. Readers are invited to weep at England's projected ruin. Next through a prosopopoeia, Fancy prophesies the immanent "Night, Gothic night," of England, when "the seat of arts be only known / By the gray ruin and the mouldering stone" (121-4). The "gray ruins" are in the next passage the attraction drawing young Englishmen from the West, though they seem also to hope for some lingering intellectual fire. The final, and most confusing, part of the poem begins, "There walks a Spirit o'er the peopled earth" (215), and then proceeds to illustrate the Spirit's random enkindling of culture, beginning with ancient civilizations and proceeding to Germany

and then to Britain and finally to South America. Interestingly, Olivia Murphy hypothesizes that while “scholars writing out of a British tradition seem more likely to focus on the poem’s relationship to the historical conditions of 1811...North American critics tend to respond primarily to the poem’s visionary claims” (289). The present analysis fits in the latter camp.

Barbauld appeals to us ethically through distancing structural and thematic content, but meanwhile she passionately celebrates nature’s free and untrammelled expression to humanity, an expression that Britain does not merit. Barbauld implies through her use of the adverb “vainly” that there was no point in Britain going to war; this reading is supported not only by *Sins of Government* but also by instances of the word “vain” in relation to nature in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. Barbauld repeatedly employs the phrase “in vain” to convey the waste of nature’s lavishness to humanity; she also uses the phrase to imply the vanity of going to war. Clery affirms that the “phrase ‘in vain’ has become Barbauld’s own ‘white standard,’ the banner under which she rides into battle in the full knowledge that the battle has already been lost” (181). In the lines cited above about Britain, both Barbauld and her country “[b]ravely, though vainly, dare[] to strive with Fate” (5). In *Sins of Government*, Barbauld assesses the war with France as “ruinous,” and she castigates that “selfish monopolizing spirit” which wishes only its own nation to flourish (317, 310). Britons, according to Barbauld, would have done better as pacifists. Some eighteen years after *Sins of Government*, she illustrates the pointless extravagance of nature, similar to the wasting of men’s lives in battle. Nature is “[b]ounteous in vain, with frantic man at strife” and “[i]n vain with orange blossoms scents the vale” (11, 13). Barbauld sees futility in nature’s generosity, which is squandered and wasted upon warring humanity; similarly, a matron is twice said to be “[f]ruitful in vain,” because her sons die in

foreign countries (23, 27). One could label Barbauld a defeatist, but she is seeing in this war the end of the georgic and the embrace of history.

The progression of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* from present to future to past reveals a unique awareness of history on Barbauld's part. Phillips discusses Barbauld's understanding of historical distance while analyzing the works she edited, for instance, *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson . . . to which are prefixed, a biographical account of that author, and observations on his writing* (1804). Evoking the kind of intimacy that the reader can have with the deceased, Barbauld insists: "To have their very letters, their very handwriting before our eyes, gives a more intimate feeling of their existence, than any other memorial of them" (qtd. in Phillips, *On Historical* 144). Barbauld, with her sense of the materiality of letters, gestures towards the affect associated with place in Godwin. As will be shown, in *Essay on Sepulchers* (1809), Godwin connects presence at the burial sites of eminent men with the ability to commune with the illustrious dead. Godwin, like Barbauld, has distinct faith in the power of the material to conjure up the great. Barbauld's brother John Aikin, "while conceding the evocative power of such places...refuses to give in to indiscriminate sentimentalism of place" (Phillips, *Society* 339). Barbauld, however, does not practice relating to the dead only through material relics, but argues for the likely disparity in images of the famous between one generation and another. In her 1805 *Selections from the Spectator, Tatler, Guardian and Freeholder, with a preliminary Essay*, Barbauld compares how she and other young women were formed by Addison, only to see him become irrelevant to the next generation. Phillips opines that "a less subtle reader might have responded to the change in Addison's fortunes with simple nostalgia for the times of her youth"; Barbauld, on the other hand, examines these trends for "their wider significance and—like Hume, Johnson, or Drake—finds her answer in the close connections between literature,

manners, and opinion” (*On Historical* 153-4). She knew that what one generation finds stellar and even pivotal in literature is not necessarily seen that way by subsequent generations.

In addition to this recognition of historical distance, Barbauld would have felt the influence of Edward Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* during the time her poem was forming in her mind. McCarthy explains that “[i]mperial decline and fall became a topic of national conversation with the appearance of Gibbon’s *History* in 1776” (472). As a “student of history” (McCarthy 471), Barbauld would have been familiar with Gibbon’s five volumes which appeared between 1776 and 1788 and with their theme of the “vicissitudes of empire” (Mueller xxvii). She evokes the fall of Rome near the end of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* through referring to the “enthusiast love” with which “the pilgrim roves / To seek his footsteps in forsaken groves” and to explore “the fractured arch, the ruined tower, / Those limbs disjointed of gigantic power” (251-4). Barbauld implies that London will fall as did Rome, saying that future tourists to London “[s]hall own with humbled pride the lesson just / By Time’s slow finger written in the dust” (213-14). Gibbon, in looking for historical causes in human actors and in tracing the fall “not just of an empire or city but of a way of life, a civilization” (Mueller xxviii, xxxv), provides a template for Barbauld as she assesses how blameworthy a nation can be and what its future may entail. Gibbon also supplies a model for *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, observing that if barbarians should bring desolation as far as the Atlantic, “Europe would revive and flourish in the American world which is already filled with her colonies and institutions” (qtd in Boorstin xxi). This passage of culture from East to West is precisely the theme of Barbauld’s poem, and her focus on the place of England’s famous men in the New World could reflect Gibbon’s emphasis on the great men of Rome. Yet the next generation would find Gibbon cold, just as they found Hume remote; the Romantic historian

James Mackintosh (1765-1832) reports of Gibbon: “Occupied too constantly in general views he gives us but few specimens...of that minute narrative which alone is painting” (qtd in Phillips, *Society* 202). Barbauld does not “paint” in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*; her cognition of the issue of war and her chosen form are deliberately distancing. She intended to deliver a stern warning to her fellow English about the disastrous course they were following within the context of the expected rise and fall of nations.

A poem that is complementary to *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* and cognitively intimate as well as affectively motivating is Barbauld’s “The Caterpillar,” written four years after the previous poem. Barbauld’s friendship with the physician and natural philosopher, Erasmus Darwin, is evident in “The Caterpillar”; from him she would have learned about physiological sympathy but also about pest control methods such as “saturated solutions of lead and water to test the resistance of the aphids” (Dauphin 109). Dauphin argues that the poem reveals the “banalization of violence and an ecological awakening made possible through an acknowledgment of individual life, as one caterpillar hangs around her finger” (108). The saving of one caterpillar is linked to the hypothetical sparing of a lone soldier, and Barbauld, in her essay *Thoughts on the Inequality of Conditions* (c. 1800), quotes Burns’ poem “To a Mouse,” regarding how even the tiniest living being, like the caterpillar, must support itself. Surely it was the long war that made her conscious of the value of even one life; we can see her empathizing with the caterpillar and regretting how violence has been normalized at all levels. Barbauld thus demonstrates the sympathy defined by her friend Darwin, who unlike other philosophers, emphasizes the physiological basis of sympathy, an “instinctive power” that can even draw a person without the assent of her will (Fairclough 251). This sympathy is at work in Barbauld’s impulsive concern for a garden pest. Yet, just as Darwin argues that this physiological sympathy

is the root of sympathy's "cohesive social and ethical function" (Fairclough 241), Barbauld extrapolates ethical meaning from her attraction to the insect, drawing an ethical point from an affective response. If an insect should be spared, how much more a "single sufferer from the field escaped / Panting and pale, and bleeding" at the victor's feet (36-37)? Through affect and "painting," Barbauld invites us to empathize with the tiny being curled around her finger and also with the vulnerable individual. That she can "paint" here indicates that she chose not to do so in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* four years previously; rather, in that poem she adopted "cognitive distantiation and affective proximity" (Phillips, "Relocating Inwardness" 444). Yet, despite its difference in cognitive and formal distance, that poem shares with the microcosmic "The Caterpillar" the idea that sympathy with one's fellow humans goes hand in hand with sympathy with nature.

Barbauld advocates for sympathy with exemplars so that we might imitate them. Interestingly, Barbauld's obvious exemplar in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* is the female dramatist Joanna Baillie, though the poet also holds up male figures for emulation. Cox cites from the poem such English heroes as "anti-slavery [Thomas] Clarkson, the Asiatic scholar [Sir William] Jones, the transatlantic scientists [Benjamin] Franklin and [Joseph] Priestly, and the cosmopolitan [William] Roscoe" (111). These figures are exalted as imitable, their fire as contagious, even after death. In the passage of the arts from East to West, Baillie is to become pivotal, like Shakespeare, so that their plays "[s]hall with alternate passion shake the stage" (104). Barbauld speaks of the "scenic pomp" of "storied groups" in the dramas of "loved Joanna" (101-4), suggesting that Baillie is able to achieve the historical "painting" so desired by Romantics. In the New World, Baillie's name attains "all its fame" (112), a subtle allusion to the government restrictions on the theatre during wartime (Cox 114). Barbauld anticipates a time

when “[t]he tragic Muse [shall] resume her just controul, / With pity and terror purge the soul” (109-10). It is ironically the fate of tragic times that dramatic tragedies should forfeit their power to affect feeling. Yet, Barbauld intimates, the genius that produced works such as Baillie’s or the fire that resulted in heroism such as Horatio Nelson’s will not die with them, but will rather live on to enkindle and inspire. This is another of Barbauld’s seeming contradictions, for if war is wrong, why is such a war hero as Nelson to be praised? Barbauld continues “seeing both sides of every issue” (McCarthy and Kraft 24).

England, and particularly London, Barbauld shows, are the home of moral and artistic exemplars; she adduces them in an elegiac tone. The most elegiac aspect of *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* is the prophecy that if England continues on its current course, only stone will remain; yet this prediction is softened by the possible transmission to the West of the intellectual fire that made England great. Apparently, this is why youth from the West will make pilgrimages to the wreck of England. Those “shades that ruled the realms of mind” (135) will be associated with their artworks and with the places they inhabited, an idea that arises in Esther Schor’s analysis (1994) of Mary Shelley’s *The Last Man*. In this novel, which progresses from England to Rome, “the art of the dead inherits the moral role of the dead themselves: to convey value upon human life” (Schor 240). In Barbauld’s poem, it is evident that the Christian belief of her earlier elegies met the challenge to meaning occasioned by war, so that she now emphasizes the value bestowed on life by the works of the dead. This value is obvious in the western youths’ pilgrimages to England, where with “fond adoring steps [they] press the sod / By statesmen, sages, poets, heroes trod (131-2). There is clear value in these traces of British exemplars, which are somehow communicable to the living and which predispose them to sympathy with others and nature. Paradoxically, the distance between the living and the dead makes the artworks of the

dead that much more valuable. The putative holiness of the relics of humanity can even be seen in the ekphrastic description of the “ponderous mass of Johnson’s form” in the ruin of St Paul’s, as well as “Howard’s sainted feet” (185-6). Barbauld contemplating the future ruin of England and seeing within it the transmissible fire of genius resembles Byron’s elegizing of Greece in *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*: “Fair Greece! sad relic of departed worth! / Immortal, though no more! though fallen, great!” (Canto II, st. 73). Bruce Haley remarks that, for Byron, “sculpture, not painting, presented living forms, monuments of genius rather than monuments to glory or power” (170). Both Byron and Barbauld would like to portray their respective countries as entirely imitable, but are prevented from doing so by the obvious decline of the cultures in question. In the two texts cited, sculpture is the primary means of igniting worthy emotions and uniting the dead with the living.

It is no coincidence that the exact middle of the poem extols London, which like the poem itself is “Ungirt by walls, irregularly great” (161). London is the foremost exemplar in the poem, the home and source of the abovementioned heroes and sages, and also the future inspiration to visiting pilgrims, such as those who tour St. Paul’s:

With throbbing bosoms shall the wanderers tread
The hallowed mansions of the silent dead,
Shall enter the long isle and vaulted dome
Where Genius and where Valour find a home. (177-80)

The genius and valour celebrated in St. Paul’s are eminently imitable to pilgrims coming to the Old World. Readers are meant to identify with the youths’ “throbbing bosoms” as they see future London; Barbauld wants us to relate to the young pilgrims’ sensibility in our search for the traces of exemplars. As signified by merchants of varying nationalities, London was a cultural centre

and will be a new kind of cultural centre in the future. Yes, she will have her flaws, but will be imitable because of genius, valour, and industry. Barbauld deliberately placed London at the heart of her poem.

Barbauld's male "Spirit" (215) or "Genius" (241) whose coming permits the evolution of a culture, has been interpreted as "a personification of culture" (Levine 182), or "glossed as liberty, truth and virtue, and the power of civilization" (Cox 110). I contend that *In Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, the spark that is transmissible in spite of the death of a person or a culture is Fancy, and that this Fancy is generated through Darwinian sympathy, the "Spirit" or "Genius" (215, 241) in the poem. Fancy is personified as a "Fond moody Power" who "longs, or dreads, to lift the awful veil" (115-6) to reveal "Night, Gothic night" (121). Yet Fancy is not only associated with sadness in the poem, but is also repeatedly connected with fire of the spirit; for instance, "[when] kindles Fancy, then expands the heart" (235); Fancy is also an "animating ray" which "bursts the mental day" (261-2). It is Fancy who fires "the ingenuous youth... / With pictured glories of illustrious sires" (127-8), that is, with imagined exemplars, to attempt the pilgrimage to the Old World. In other words, Fancy is a motivating and civilizing force. Yet this power needs to be communicable from one person to another or from the works of the dead to the living. This force is sympathy, but sympathy as defined by Erasmus Darwin, friend of the Barbaulds. Mary Fairclough analyzes in depth Darwin's notes to his *Temple of Nature* (1803), which rely on his previous work, *Zoonomia, or the laws of organic life* (1794). The notes outline a theory of sympathy that is instinctive and often non-volitional, but which is also cohesive in social and ethical function (Fairclough 241). Fairclough argues that Darwinian sympathy is like Smithian sympathy, except that Darwin rewrites *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to include the body (246). She proposes that for Darwin, imitation is crucial, illustrating that not only "our

physical sensations but also our emotional, ethical and social practices...are the result of a physiological process of sympathetic imitation” (Fairclough 247). Unlike his contemporaries such as Adam Smith, Darwin based his theory of sympathy on the body, which means that he founded his theory on a material entity. It is thus plausible to claim that one can sympathize with a material artifact which retains the artist’s fire. What is pivotal, however, is interpersonal sympathy, which has its beginning in “the fibres of our body” and is communicated to the fibres of another body. Darwin “makes such sympathy the basis of the ‘progress of the mind’ and of society” (qtd. in Fairclough 249). In *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, the progress of the mind is clearly analogous to the progress of society. Wherever the Spirit turns, he rouses “the human brute,” who forsakes “his sordid hut,” so that “[h]e thinks, he reasons, glows with purer fires, / Feels finer wants, and burns with new desires” (219-22). The “purer fires” refer to Fancy, but Fancy is only possible with the action of sympathy. This section of the poem is followed by an overview of cultures which once were great, indicating that the “human brute’s” emergence from his hut is tied to the growth—and fall—of nations.

Barbauld, like many Enlightenment authors, regards excessive luxury and corruption as conducive to the fall of nations such as Britain. She suggests that when “Genius” leaves a favoured shore, “[t]hen empires fall to dust, then arts decay” (243). With the loss of sympathetic connection among people, the poor suffer at the hands of the wealthy, so that the result is “Enfeebling Luxury and ghastly Want” (64). Cox observes that this line is “a neat summary of a land that was home to both the Regent with his opulent tastes and Luddites driven to industrial violence by economic distress” (107). The end of Barbauld’s poem evokes the rich of London, whose “[l]ight forms beneath transparent muslins float, / And tutored voices swell the artful note” (291-2). “Artful” is the crucial term here, and it is to be applied not only to dress and

speech but also to the art of growing produce in an unnatural environment, such as the “fragrant orange and the nectared pine” (296). These hothouse fruits, produced by art, were available only to the rich. A contemporary eight-year-old named Marjorie Fleming remarked that the price of a pineapple “might have sustained a poor family a whole week and more perhaps” (*Anna Letitia* 172n3). Because England has lost its moral compass and is self-indulgent at the expense of the poor, its culture becomes increasingly unnatural, manifest in phenomena like her “summer ices and her winter rose” (306). Nature herself suffers from the selfish rich, who “ask not gifts but tribute at her hands” (304), as though she were an English colony from whom tribute is demanded. This dismissal of nature refers us back to the beginning of the poem, where we are told that nature gives, but gives “in vain” (13-5). For Barbauld, disrespect for nature is closely allied with disrespect for human life, as she would later intimate in “The Caterpillar.” For her, sympathy is critical for understanding human and non-human nature. London has failed in this respect, but still retains many exemplars, past and present.

Twenty years before *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld had similarly associated decadence with a refusal to recognize one’s fellow human beings. Barbauld had always opposed the slave trade, but her stance was confirmed by the defeat of Wilberforce’s anti-slavery bill by two to one on the grounds that the economy would suffer if slavery were abolished. In an impassioned poem addressed to Wilberforce two months later, *Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for Abolishing the Slave Trade* (1788), Barbauld condemns luxury at the expense of human lives and paints a dark, inevitable future for Britain, just as she would in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*. This prospective history, which is also an elegy for Britain’s morality, means that luxury becomes putative Asiatic corruption. In a dark illustration of contagious sympathy, “from the gay East, on essenc’d wings, / Breathing unnam’d perfumes,

Contagion springs” (86-7). The portrayal of Asia as a source of corruption also appears in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, in which Asia is the first continent to be abandoned by the civilizing “Spirit” (126). In Barbauld’s *Epistle*, disastrous, contagious sympathy—corruption through luxury—is contrasted with deliberate, imaginative sympathy for the slaves. It is the latter that enables Barbauld to envision how “shrieks and yells disturb the balmy air” and “[d]umb sullen looks of woe announce despair,” while “angry eyes thro’ dusky features glare” (81-3). This is the scene that has replaced that of the georgic, evoked in the preceding lines. Barbauld portrays the Blacks as types, but, like Wheatley before her, sees Smithian imaginative sympathy as the way to understand them. Humean or Darwinian sympathy, on the other hand, has failed, because those who succumbed to the feelings of the majority are grievously wrong. Barbauld takes cognitive distance from her subject like “an Old Testament prophet” (McCarthy 295). Yet, her forceful ethical plea is conveyed from the start through an appeal to our emotions.

Barbauld would have sympathized with a Black prodigy who produced her *Poems* in the same year that she herself did; Wheatley produced elegies that are comparable to those of Barbauld, an Englishwoman and “ ‘a typical person of letters’ ” (qtd in McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 12). Had she lived longer, Wheatley would have responded to Barbauld’s challenge of the preservation of culture during wartime. Holding up American figures for admiration, Wheatley made them mouthpieces for her goal of freedom for Black slaves rather than simply imitable heroes. Barbauld’s vision of freedom seems quite different, involving respect for human life and nature, yet she would have fully supported Wheatley’s specific political agenda. Cox observes that *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* suggests that “culture’s power lies in its ability to cross boundaries and borders” (Cox 111), meaning that Wheatley herself would have found a place in Barbauld’s culture. Inter-culturalism is evident in *Eighteen Hundred*

and Eleven when Barbauld envisions the “faded glories” of future London contrasted with its present lucrative business. She sees “[s]treets, where the turban’d Moslem, bearded Jew, / And wooly Afric, met the brown Hindu” (165-6). Wheatley refers to herself as “the *Afric* muse” in “To His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, on the Death of His Lady, March 24, 1773” (28). Wheatley belongs to Barbauld’s world. Both poets feature exemplars worthy of imitation and show that admiration of the great can produce profitable feelings.



FIGURE 1. *Phillis Wheatley*, 1753 – 1784, in National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute.

Portrait attributed to Scipio Moorhead, c. 1773.

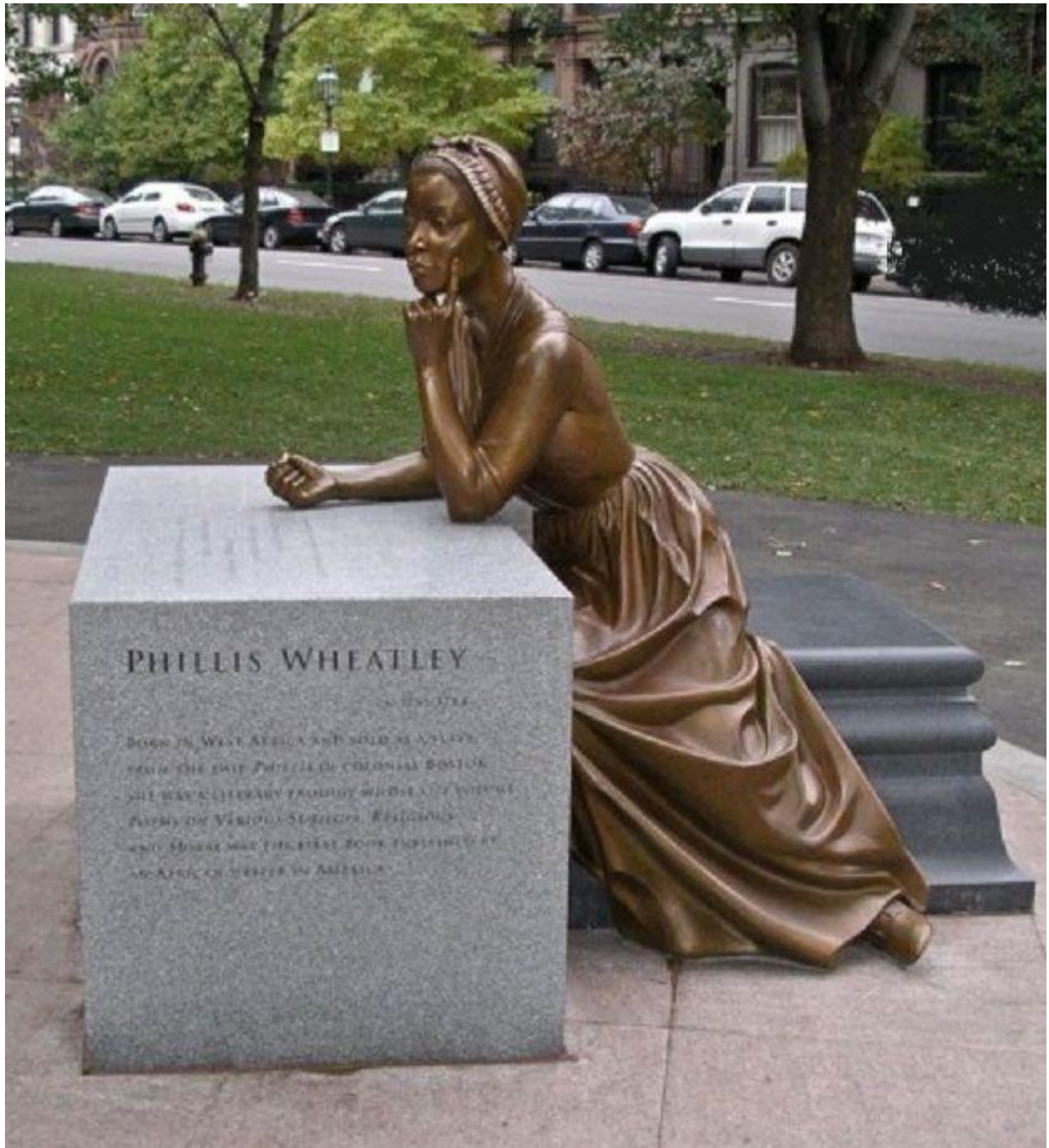


FIGURE 2. *Phillis Wheatley Women's Monument* in Boston, Massachusetts

by Meredith Bergmann, dedicated in 2003.

meredithbergmann.com/public-art-commissions/phillis-wheatley



FIGURE 3. *Anna Laetitia Barbauld (nee Akin)*, 1743-1825, by John Chapman after unknown artist, 1798, from Scottish National Portrait Gallery.

Chapter 2

A Melancholy Path to Understanding: The Elegies of Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith

Like Phillis Wheatley and Anna Barbauld, Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith were precocious students whose elegy writing had its roots in childhood. Judith Pascoe shows that Robinson and Smith shared with Barbauld “a common literary bent and a precocious poetic fluency” (“Unsex’d” 215), a bent observable in Wheatley, whose childhood has been discussed in chapter one. Barbauld’s mother Jane taught the young prodigy to read when she was only two (McCarthy 22). Smith “claimed she could not remember a time when she could not read, and at six or seven she was beginning to write poetry” (Fletcher 13). Robinson was familiar with elegies from childhood, for from the age of seven, she “had memorized several elegiac poems that were typical of the verse of the eighteenth century” (Byrne 6). In the cathedral adjoining her childhood home, she read poetry in stone, the monumental inscriptions (Byrne 31).

One must also recognize these poets’ later interconnections; Barbauld is the common factor because her longevity was so much greater than that of Robinson and Smith. Considering Robinson as a poet of the French Revolution, it is easy to forget that, similarly to Wheatley and Barbauld, she produced a book of poetry as early as 1775. Robinson read the poems of “Miss Aikin” (Barbauld’s maiden name) when both were very young, and she writes in her *Memoirs* that she received them “with rapture” because they were “the most beautiful poems” she had ever read; she considered the woman who penned them as “the most to be envied of human creatures” (qtd in Pascoe, “Unsex’d” 219). Robinson’s biographer, Paula Byrne, adds that “Barbauld’s poems fired a spirit of emulation” in Robinson (44). Janowitz points out that Robinson and Barbauld both lived in London in the “last decades of the 1700s” and belonged to

“overlapping social circles,” sharing “some important political and poetic values and ambitions” (2). These doubtless included their similarly favourable responses to the French Revolution, an event also supported by Smith in her novels. Pascoe comments that though “Smith published a novel more or less annually during the 1790s...Barbauld, in her edition of *The British Novelists*, advances Smith’s reputation as a poet rather than a novelist” (“Unsex’d” 221). Robinson was also primarily a novelist, though her poems were widely known. It was not unusual, says Pascoe, “for a Robinson poem to be published in four different venues” (“Unsex’d” 222).

In light of Mark Phillips’s heuristic, I will indicate the consistency that is evident between the elegies of the 1770s and the 1790s, while demonstrating the melancholic effects of the war on women elegists. That is, the French Revolution does not mark a complete shift in thought, but it does introduce a new viewpoint. Paula Backscheider comments that the “American Rebellion, the Gordon Riots, and the early embrace of the French Revolution created—as the War of the Spanish Succession had not—nostalgia for a simpler, more comfortable national consciousness” (331). The Gordon Riots constituted “the most destructive and intolerantly Protestant of all British riots” against Catholic emancipation, and for the first time these riots united English and Scottish artisans (Colley 22-3). I suggest that nostalgia particularly follows the onset of the French Revolution. Phillips cautions against the historiographical blunder of explaining too readily “the emergence of a modern historical consciousness” as directly related to the “watershed” of the French Revolution. He identifies in Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) “a more gradualist perspective that speaks directly to the experience of Britain, Europe’s most advanced commercial society” (*On Historical* 97-8). His position suggests that the British themselves in 1814 regarded the changes of the past fifty years as a gradual progression rather than a series of cataclysms. Following Phillips, I hold that the

French Revolution and conflicts of the previous twenty-four years do not mark a complete shift in British thought, but they do produce in elegiac poetry a new viewpoint, a melancholy one. Peter Fritzsche argues that, with the French Revolution, there was a “sense of loss” resulting from a perceived discontinuity with the past and the future (119). This “sense of loss” accords with Backscheider’s “nostalgia” (331). What Fritzsche calls the “melancholy of history” is “rooted in the recognition of loss...Since the past was no longer to be an extension of the present, it was also increasingly unknowable and opaque, even if it became an object of increasing attention” (Fritzsche 121). These observations interpret the French Revolution as a “watershed moment” (Phillips, *On Historical* 97). While I imitate Phillips’s gradualist position in *On Historical Distance*, I note his ambivalence about defining the “epochal character of the French Revolution” (183), and therefore adopt Fritzsche’s melancholy without subscribing to his theory of a complete rupture with the past. Melancholy is the intuitive expression that Robinson and Smith find for literary mourning at a time when Britain was hard-pressed by conflict.

Jennifer Radden traces a tradition of writings on melancholy in *The Nature of Melancholy from Aristotle to Kristeva* (2000). Yet it is the ongoing influence of the Graveyard School of poets that illuminates the melancholy of Barbauld, Robinson, and Smith. Pascoe points in particular to Edward Young, author of *Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality* (1742), to Thomas Gray, most famous for his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751), and to Robert Blair, author of *The Grave* (1743) (“Introduction” 48). Smith was sufficiently familiar with these writers that she included some, including Gray, in her works for children (Fletcher 232), and frequently displayed the influence of Gray’s *Elegy* in her own poems (Fletcher 53-4, 149, 263). Melancholy became more attractive to poets following the American Revolution in 1776 and the Gordon Riots in 1780, but particularly after the outbreak of the

French Revolution in 1789. In *The Graveyard School: An Anthology* (2015), Jack G. Voller reflects that “[m]elancholic musing” is a “requisite part of the psychological atmosphere in Graveyard School works.” He goes on to consider the melancholy of Milton’s “Il Penseroso” and that of “midnight seekers” such as Thomas Parnell, Thomas Warton, and Elizabeth Carter for whom “Graveyard poetry is a poetry of isolation, self-scrutiny, and solipsistic exploration of the farther corners—and, at times, darker registers—of human thought and feeling” (11). Eric Parisot, in his monograph *Graveyard Poetry: Religion, Aesthetics, and the Mid-Eighteenth-Century Poetic Condition* (2016), argues that some graveyard poets “looked to cultivate melancholy as a psychological source of poetic creativity and genius” (80). Melancholy was associated with men, and unfortunately a sexually-driven hysteria was often considered the equivalent for women (Keane 15), but Robinson and Smith adopt masculine melancholy in their poems. Radden cites Samuel Johnson’s definition of melancholy as “a gloomy, pensive, discontented temper” (30), but she opines that “it was not until after the excesses of the Gothic Revival ‘graveyard school’ of poetry, with its ruins, churchyards, cloisters, yews, and ghosts” and the overuse of melancholy “that Romanticism’s intensely personal and subjective utterance of ‘profound individual sorrow’ was possible” (32). This sequence of events in literary history suggests that by adopting an aspect of graveyard poetry, Robinson and Smith may be considered transitional figures between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. Barbauld may also be considered in this light because of her longevity, though there is little melancholy in her 1773 *Poems*. The question one may ask is why graveyard poetry, most of which appeared in the mid-eighteenth century, would suddenly become apposite in the revolutionary decade. I suggest it is because of “the melancholy of history” (Fritzsche 121) and the contemporary search for a literary model that would express the sense of loss incurred by war.

It is interesting that, according to Radden, at the turn of the nineteenth century there was an increasing polarity between cognition and affect in the study of melancholia (“Introduction” 26). In the field of historiography, almost the opposite trend occurred with stress placed on the historian’s understanding of historical events and persons, meaning that his understanding, through form, grew closer to affect and ethics in terms of the immediacy of historical representation. Phillips observes that there is a false dichotomy at work in the nineteenth-century assessment of Hume and eighteenth-century historiography. The latter perspective was not only an abstract approach to history, as alleged, but also engaged with “a strong sentimentalist influence that focused on the aesthetic attractions and moral training that result from soliciting the reader’s sympathy” (“Relocating Inwardness” 446). In other words, the inheritors of Hume and his contemporaries critiqued them for coldness in historical representation, when in fact Hume valued the affect shaping the form and morals of his historical account. What actually changed with the Romantic historians was a switch from the “immediacy centered on the psychology of reading” to the historian’s “quality of knowing” (“Relocating Inwardness” 447). The historian James Mackintosh was a transitional figure between Enlightenment and Romantic historiography; he supported Hume while criticizing the latter’s historical detachment. For Mackintosh, Hume “was too habitually a speculator and too little of an antiquary, to have a great power of throwing back his mind into former ages, and of clothing his persons and events in their moral dress; his personages are too modern and argumentative—if we must not say too rational” (qtd in Phillips, “Relocating Inwardness” 446). Robinson and Smith were long-established writers before these ideas were recorded in Mackintosh’s journal in 1811, but the women poets were likely influenced by the zeitgeist that demanded that the historian—or in their case, the poet—must *know* history on a more intimate level. In her “Elegy on the Death of Lady

Middleton,” Robinson models the dual emphasis of Hume’s historiographical practice by concentrating on the affect that attracts the reader while also focusing upon abstract qualities of the deceased. While Barbauld and Wheatley in their 1773 volumes adopt both cognitive and formal distance from their subjects, Robinson in 1789 (FIGURE 4) approaches her elegiac subjects through the medium of melancholy. Her position may be regarded as sympathy with those to whom “dark be the valley around [their] path” (Psalm 23: 4). She sympathizes with each grieving family through a sensitive portrayal of the deceased.

The melancholy of Robinson’s elegies contrasts with the spirit of literary indulgence, or over-ornamentation, obvious from her association with the Della Cruscan School starting in 1788. The fashion for Della Cruscan poetry in England was initiated by Robert Merry and other poets after their Italian sojourn, during which they published *The Florence Miscellany* (1785). Jerome McGann discusses how, though some of the other Romantic poets were influenced by the school (80), Wordsworth was antagonistic towards it: “Della Cruscan verse is conversational where Wordsworth’s is meditative, theatrical rather than overheard” (79). It is no wonder that the school appealed to Robinson, because “the verse had the same self-consciously theatrical quality that made Wordsworth uncomfortable in the streets of London” (Byrne 247). Byrne points out that experimenting with a variety of voices and “dresses” gave Robinson the opportunity to put her notorious identity as “Perdita,” mistress of the Prince of Wales, behind her (250).² In the autumn of 1788, under the name of “Laura” she began a “flirtation in print” with Robert Merry in *The World* and became a Della Cruscan (Byrne 248, 251). Robinson published in the newspapers *The World* and the *Oracle* poems that “embodied a Della Cruscan aesthetic

² It had been during one of her performances as Perdita in Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale* in December, 1779, that the teenage Prince of Wales fell in love with her and solicited her affections. He later failed, however, to recompense her with an afore-promised sum of twenty-thousand pounds, for loss of employment and reputation (Byrne 115).

predicated on emotional and ornamental excess” (Pascoe, “Introduction” 49). The critic “Gifford and others were appalled that the Della Cruscan’s fame should have emerged through low-brow periodical organs like the *Oracle* and the *World*” (McGann 83). In later years Robinson would be tarred with a broad brush by critics who regarded all her poetry as reflective of the Della Cruscan aesthetic, even though she later distanced herself from the school (Byrne 256). A reviewer from the *English Review*, commenting on Robinson’s poetic volume of 1791, regretted that she had been influenced by “the new school of poets...which sacrifices nature, simplicity, and passion, to luxuriant and ill-placed description, and to a load of imagery, and ornament of every kind” (qtd in Pascoe, “Introduction” 50). Yet, judging from McGann’s account of the pivotal influence of the Della Cruscan, Robinson was in good poetic company.

Robinson is one of the few women poets from this time who wrote pastoral elegies. In “A Pastoral Elegy” appearing in her 1775 *Poems*, a melancholic tone hangs over the death of the speaker’s beloved shepherd, Damon. Notably, in the shepherdess’s song we find a double emphasis on memorialisation and truth that would again appear in Robinson’s “Monody to the Memory of the Late Queen of France” (1793). For Robinson, both Damon and the Queen lived in truth, which for Robinson meant having integrity, being true to oneself. In the late 1790s, Robinson would become part of the “Godwin Circle,” a context of “radical sociability” but also a sphere where Godwin’s elevation of “truth,” particularly in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), proved to be fruitful (Garnai, *Revolutionary* 9-10). Truth was, for Godwin, as Amy Garnai states, “the basis of human action; humans act upon the ‘truths of morality and justice...infinite, omnipresent, and eternal’ ” (qtd in Garnai, *Revolutionary* 10). At this point in her career, Robinson does not fully anticipate Godwin’s definition of truth as participating in the “eternal.” In fact, here truth, though crucial, endures only while the subject lives; it is entirely

personal. The speaker insists that Damon's "truth was the pride of the plains" and that "[f]air truth ever dwelt in his sight" (6, 14). For that reason, "[a]s long as old time shall remain, / His memory ne'er shall decay" (39-40). His love of truth and union with nature—"[t]he Zephers...whispered his praise in each breeze"—portend that the same nature will recall him after his death (22-4); "[e]ach stream shall repeat the sad sound" (42). It is notable that the dead Damon is not deified, lifted "out of nature, out of the poem, and out of the successor's way" as he would be in a male pastoral elegy (Schenck 15). Instead, Damon is celebrated by nature and in the virtue of the swains who lament him.

Robinson bravely risks a male-dominated genre. Patrick Vincent notes that a celebrated study of the pastoral elegy, Peter Sack's *The English Elegy: Studies in the Genre from Spenser to Yeats* (1985), "reifies the elegy as perhaps the most canonical and masculinist of all genres, bound by an ideology of vocation and heroic succession" (199). Though it would be many years before she entered the Godwin Circle, Robinson can be seen in her "Pastoral Elegy" as working out her idea of truth. As a woman poet, she undermines the idea of heroic succession prevalent in male elegies and defines virtue, not poetic merit, as the reason for poetic succession:

Since truth like my Damon's must yield,
To death, that invincible foe,
Ye swains, ah! make virtue your shield,
Nor tremble to meet the dire blow. (45-8)

Since truth is personal and not absolute for Robinson, it dies with Damon, leaving only his example of virtue. Not only the swains, but also nature itself, must accord with virtue, and so all the flowers that the speaker lists not only deck the "cold grave" of Damon (32), but also signify his virtuous life. Here the elegiac convention of the flowers on the hearse is adapted to

emphasize virtue. The shepherdess sympathizes with the dead Damon, finally deciding on how he would be best remembered, that is, by similar men who value virtue: "Each shepherd the loss shall deplore....Since truth like [her] Damon's must yield" (42, 45). Late in the 1790s, Robinson must have enjoyed both comfort and relief in being among likeminded individuals who were endeavouring to define truth as they saw it. Garnai explains that "[t]ruth was a central tenet of Godwin's ideological and philosophical project...For Smith, Robinson and Inchbald the repeated invocation of "truth" carries with it important cultural and ideological baggage" (*Revolutionary* 10). Even at the early date of Robinson's "A Pastoral Elegy," she meant something singular by "truth." As we have seen, in the poem it accords with Robinson's idea of virtue or integrity but is not absolute.

In her "Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton" (published 18 July 1789; rpt 1791), Robinson laments the loss of someone she knew, in this case a woman of the upper class who died in childbirth (Byrne 263). Robinson adopts a dual focus like that of Hume in his *History of England*, giving precedence to affect while distancing herself from the dead woman with abstract praise. Robinson imagines the dead woman's passing and thus performs Adam Smith's "imaginative act" of sympathy (Schor 34). Barbauld also employs this identification in her elegy "On the Death of Mrs. Martineau," reporting the speech she fancies she hears from the grave: "Thy friends are here!" (36). Barbauld imagines Mrs. Martineau's relatives raising "her languid head" and catching "her last breath" (11-12); Barbauld attempts empathy with the dying woman, as does Robinson. It is evident that the main reason Robinson relates to her subject is that she, too, like Lady Middleton, was a society woman: "Tho' Splendour scatter'd round its dazzling ray, / Thro' Fashion's giddy scene, she calmly mov'd" (13-14). This is the milieu in which Robinson also moved, and she was similarly "Dear to the *social circle that she lov'd*" (16). To

stress the end of this valued life, Robinson repeats the phrase “*No more*” three times (9-11), an example of a favourite device of hers to signal before and after, the passage of time, with repeated words or phrases. She offers praise of the dead, as did Wheatley and Barbauld; “Her Soul, [was] *above* the pride of noble birth, / *Above* the praises of an empty name” (17-8). Yet this assessment could be applied widely, as could this line from “On the Death of Mrs. Martineau”: “Long may that worth, fair Virtue’s heritage, / From race to race descend, from age to age” (27-8).

The major difference between Barbauld’s “On the Death of Mrs. Martineau” and Robinson’s “Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton” is that the latter poem indulges in melancholy to the point that it can be categorized as an elegy in the tradition of the Graveyard School poets. Voller lists the eight attributes of a Graveyard School poem as defined by Peter Thorpe in 1975 (12-13n1); Robinson’s elegy accords with his parameters. First, her poem “serve[s] a *memento mori* function,” opening with “The KNELL OF DEATH” (1) that resonates with every attentive person. The poem “thematically engage[s] the “transitoriness of life” with the thrice-repeated phrase “*No more*” (9-11). Robinson’s poem must be “set at night in a churchyard,” for why else would the speaker hear the toll of the knell of death “on the twilight gale” (1)? Although Robinson’s poem does not represent the “decay of the corpse,” she does indicate its dissolution by saying “The gentle MIDDLETON shall breathe no more” (6). The poem suggests “the ‘Death as leveler’ trope,” because the speaker acknowledges the dead woman’s former place in “Splendour[s]...dazzling ray” and “Fashion’s giddy scene” (13-14). Robinson’s elegy “maintain[s] an exceedingly gloomy and funereal tone” in its first half by phrases such as “[t]he dreadful hour is past! the mandate giv’n!” (5). The poem very clearly

“move[s] toward “some sort of reconciliation, usually Christian, with the fact of death,” for it closes by affirming:

Yet, cease to mourn a sainted Spirit gone
To seek its resting place, beyond the skies;
From mortal woes her gentle Soul is flown,
To taste *Celestial joy*, that NEVER DIES (25-8).

The poem has an implicit “speaker in solitude,” because the ear that hears the knell of death is “pensive” (2). The question remains why Robinson in 1789, and not Barbauld in 1773, should adopt a melancholy persona. I argue that it is because of accumulating national conflict.

Robinson alludes in her “Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton” to Gray’s well-known *Elegy*, perhaps because self-conscious melancholy was yet another costume to assume, rather like that of the Della Cruscan. The following year, in 1790, she would throw her lot behind the ideals of the French Revolution, as would all the Della Cruscans (Byrne 254). In her Middleton elegy, Robinson engages with Gray’s melancholy. Not only is it in the quatrains that were made famous by Gray’s “elegiac stanza,” but some of her word choices recall that more famous poem. These formal elements make Robinson’s poem more accessible because Gray’s poem was widely known and loved. In the “mournful tale” repeated by death’s knell, Robinson suggests the “artless tale” of “th’ unhonour’d Dead” in Gray’s poem (93-4). Robinson could be implying that it is her responsibility to ensure that Lady Middleton does not go unhonoured by succeeding generations, and indeed, we likely would not be cognizant of her without Robinson. Her “tribute of a tender Tear” (4) could reflect the lines from Gray’s Epitaph, “*He gave to Mis’ry all he had, a tear, / He gain’d from Heav’n (’twas all he wish’d) a friend*” (123-4). Perhaps the allusion is meant to signify that Robinson herself has the place of a friend to Lady Middleton, in which case

she is making an ethical case to herself to remember the dead. Gray's *Elegy*, as Eric Parisot has shown, involves memorialisation and composition. He compares Gray's original "Stanzas" with the final *Elegy* and writes that in the latter, epitaphs "of the churchyard and the 'Elegy' itself both function as artefacts of the past, of what has been lost" (122). Robinson also focuses on "what has been lost," not only on the life of Lady Middleton. Robinson arguably inscribes herself into her elegy with the line "Thro' Fashion's giddy scene, she calmly mov'd" (14). In a similar way, argues Parisot, "the poet must inscribe himself into collective memory through his poetry; only in death can he aspire to what the village dead could not attain and achieve in life" (124). Robinson evidently turned to the world of letters with the desire to be remembered for more than her scandalous love affairs; with her constant publishing, she not only avoided a return visit to debtor's prison, but she inscribed herself "into collective memory through poetry." Although for several decades after her death Robinson was known mainly for her scandalous life, now she is recognized as "one of the most important poets of her time" (Wu 181).

Robinson's elegy in honour of a fictional character, "To the Memory of Werter," (reprinted as "Elegy to the Memory of Werter" in 1791) was published in *The World* on 15 July 1789. Like "Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton," the elegy to Werther reveals warm feeling and an urgent ethical message, but here the understanding of the subject is more intimate. Again it is the poet's assumption of a melancholic attitude that leads to clearer understanding. The poem can also be considered in the tradition of the Graveyard School of poetry; it is set in a graveyard and contains lugubrious phrases such as "the mournful song / Glides in slow numbers the dank woods among" (7-8). The publication of Johann Wolfgang Goethe's novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in 1774 created "a condition of exaggerated sensibility that came to be known as *Wertherism*" (Radden, Editorial Comment on "Werther's Death" 181). The novel concerns

the hopeless love and suicide of a young man in love with Charlotte, another man's wife. Werther was to become one of "the Romantic symbol[s] of the tragic genius" (Parisot 159). Radden quotes Goethe's own statement about the novel that "[i]ts function is not to communicate something to someone, but rather to make imaginatively accessible the tonality of a unique subjective experience" (qtd in Radden, Editorial Comment on "Werther's Death" 182). Robinson's elegy reflects Goethe's intention by revealing very few details about the novel while indulging in the melancholy that led Werther to his death. Contemporary doctor Phillipe Pinel's definition of melancholy (1801) is applicable to Werther: the "symptoms generally comprehended by the term melancholia are taciturnity, a thoughtful pensive air, gloomy suspicions, and a love of solitude" (205). In 1812, doctor and professor Benjamin Rush commented that "[p]artial derangement is defined as error in opinion and conduct upon some one subject only, with soundness of mind on other subjects" (213). Werther is clearly deranged upon one topic—that of Charlotte—and Robinson carefully shields him from blame for his actions. She assures the dead Werther that "[a]nd as the balmy dew ascends to heaven, / Thy *crime* shall steal away, thy *frailty* be forgiven!" (15-6). In the first lines of the poem, Robinson employs images of cloaking to indicate that he will find no blame from her pen; she refers to the time "[w]hen o'er the crimson sky, Night's curtains spread, / And the blue mountain's summit scarce appears" (3-4). She also speaks of when "languid EVENING, sinking to repose, / Her filmy mantle o'er the landscape throws" (5-6). Through the use of melancholic images, Robinson makes ethical appeals that the poor sufferer should not be judged. As in "Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton," she uses temporal word clues to indicate the passage of time; here she repeats the word "When" three times (1, 3, 5), and makes her action of "singing" (8) dependent upon these clauses. One of the few details of the novel referenced by Robinson is the location of

Werther's grave, which in a note she confirms is "[a]t the corner of the Church" by "two *lime-trees*." The only insight into Werther's mental state is conveyed through the speaker's melancholy, a state of mind in which the wanderers in the poem participate. The wanderers represent the multitude of readers who have already accessed the emotional possibilities of Goethe's text and, in Robinson's poem, come to pay tribute. It suggests that she herself is inscribed in the text as a wanderer, Charlotte, who models the sensibility required of Werther's devotees.

Phillips quotes Lord Kames regarding the legitimacy of sympathy for literary characters; "[i]f we think that a story is nothing but fiction...the effect will be dissipated, but the same is true if we reflect that the persons described are no longer alive." Kames remarks that "a man long dead, and insensible now of past misfortunes, cannot move our pity more than if he had never existed" (qtd in "Relocating Inwardness" 445). Robinson could be said to be guided by the idea that the sympathy we feel for Werther is equivalent to that we would feel for a person long dead. Our sympathy with his melancholy gives insight into his mental state, and Robinson introduces a wanderer, the "the *village MAID*," who is "[l]ed by soft Sympathy" to Werther's gravesite (17-18), and who is guided by a power she scarcely understands. Here, "SENSIBILITY" is a character in the poem, corresponding to the unnamed Melancholy, both of which we as readers are meant to channel. The village maid shows us how to spend the "currency of sympathy" (Schor 37), principally that of tears. Robinson has gradations of tears in the poem, beginning with the unattributed "silent tear," and progressing to the maid's "graceful tear," before finally moving to Charlotte's "sainted tear of pitying VIRTUE" (12, 23, 32). Tears, Robinson indicates, prove our sympathy with the "hopeless SUFFERER" (11). This seems to be a combination of Hume's sympathy and Smith's, for it is an entity we can share without knowing what we do.

The three wanderers in the elegy provide Robinson with a device to show her authorial presence at the tomb of Werther. Their displacement is reminiscent of Fritzsche's statement: "Conceived in this way, history is melancholic. It is written on the open road, along which fugitives and refugees travel and take stock of their displacement....The witnesses to history are, in the end, exiles and émigrés and strangers" (121). Janowitz observes Robinson's "own experience of social dislocation" (10) that would prompt her to relate to such figures. In Robinson's elegy, the wanderers are nonjudgmental witnesses to Werther's sad history. Like the speaker in "Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton," the village maid in the graveyard "hears the *death-bell's* solemn sound" (21), as though Werther had just died. The second wanderer, the "lorn TRAV'LER doom'd afar to roam" (25), seems to have no bearing on the story but appears to be led by the same power as the maid, for 'A glimm'ring star puts forth a silvery ray, / Warms his sad heart, and marks his thorny way" (27-8). The third and ultimate character in whom Robinson wishes to appear is that of Charlotte, whose tear is "sainted," and who is portrayed as the opposite of the " 'Churlish Priest,' " who forbids Werther Christian burial (33). Byrne argues that Robinson "knew how to manipulate her personal image and harness the insatiable public interest in her private life to her own advantage" (178-9). Commenting on the Reynolds portrait of Robinson in 1800, the *Morning Herald* "suggested a resemblance to the dejected Charlotte in the archetypal novel of sensibility, Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*" (Byrne 218). It appears to be an association that Robinson cultivated.

In her "Monody to the Memory of the Late Queen of France," published by Evans and Becket, 1793, Robinson clearly identifies with the deposed and murdered Queen. "Politically," opines Byrne, "Mary was torn between her sympathy for the Queen and her affiliation with the English supporters of the Revolution" (273). Robinson had grounds for her sympathy for Marie

Antoinette, for she knew the woman. When Robinson visited France in 1781, she was “feted as a heroine in the country that was still engaged in military skirmishes with the British” (Byrne 157). The youthful Queen was enraptured by the beautiful Robinson, and after dining with her sent an envoy to request the loan of a miniature of the Prince of Wales that he had conveyed to Robinson when he first saw her in the role of Perdita. The Queen gave Robinson in exchange “an exquisite netted purse” (Byrne 161). Byrne has the “impression...that Marie Antoinette, who was well known for her extremely intense female friendships, ha[d] fallen half in love with her” (161). Robinson benefitted from the relationship, for she returned to England sporting the newest fashions from France, which complemented her brilliant wit (Byrne 165-6). In the “Monody,” Robinson exclaims, “Oh, I have seen her, like a SUN, sublime! / Diffusing glory on the wings of time!” (159-60). Garnai points out that this sentiment contrasts “past and present states of being,” a pattern we have seen in other elegies. The image also recalls Edmund Burke’s famous encomium on the Queen in his 1790 *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Garnai, “One Victim” 391). An anonymous reviewer from the *Critical Review* concluded that the “Monody” “may be considered as a kind of paraphrase on Mr. Burke’s celebrated eulogium” (“Monody” Review 304). Throughout the “Monody,” Robinson relates to Marie Antoinette on two levels: as deposed celebrity and as domestic icon. Janowitz comments, “This appears to be another instance of Robinson making public records of what are linked as well to private feelings” (80). Robinson alludes to Antoinette’s “DOMESTIC VIRTUES, glitt’ring round THE THRONE” (42). The reviewer mentioned above wished that the poet had praised the Queen “without claiming for her the wreath of domestic virtues, without speaking of the wonders of her mind, of her peerless virtues, and enumerating amongst those virtues her truth and sincerity” (“Monody” Review 304). This focus on the domesticity of the Queen may reflect Robinson’s own

determination to live on two levels, as feted social celebrity and as devoted mother to Mary Elizabeth Robinson. The poet also related to the Queen as a victim of sexual slander; she says with feeling, “SHUNN’D be the FIEND, who, in these dreadful times, / Would brand HER mem’ry with INFERNAL CRIMES!” (177-8). Janowitz sees Robinson as everywhere trying to be “the heroine of [her] own romance” (11), but in this case the identification brings her pain as well as reassurance. In her sympathy with Marie Antoinette, she imagines what she would do if their roles were reversed; that is, she adopts Smithian sympathy. The affective aspect of the poem is intense, even though the form of heroic couplets and capitalized letters is distantiating. The ethical message of the poem is clear: accord with truth and virtue whatever your station, and thus eliminate social barriers. Robinson can therefore be seen as upholding the revolutionary ideal of equality, in spite of her approbation of the Queen.

As in Robinson’s “A Pastoral Elegy,” in her “Monody” truth and virtue are nearly equivalent and are the ideals for everyone, both queens and shepherds. Robinson’s epigraph from James Beattie’s *Minstrel*, Book II, points to this achievable ideal:

TRUE DIGNITY is his, whose tranquil mind
VIRTUE has rais’d above the things below;
WHO, ev’ry HOPE and FEAR to HEAV’N resign’d,
SHRINKS not, though FORTUNE aims her deadliest blow.

Robinson here refers to an unshakeable peace of mind enabled by a life of virtue. The first lines of the poem begin with Robinson’s temporal markers to indicate a certain time and place:

“WHEN...When...Then...Where PITY lingers on the MARTYR’S tomb,” she says, “Thy FAME, ILLUSTRIOUS SOUL! Shall NE’RE DECAY!” (1-10). The moment evoked is that immediately after Marie Antoinette’s execution; the speaker urges the reader to pity the dead Queen and to

promote her true reputation. The displaced person in the following lines is a “HOLY EXILE” who “weeps” for the lost life (13-22) and witnesses to it, much like the village maid in “To the Memory of Werter.” “The PILGRIM...with tearful eye” (23) is yet another displaced witness. Robinson relates to their sense of displacement (Janowitz 10) even as she fulfills her own injunctive and weeps for the Queen, memorializing her in the process. Throughout the poem there are instances of “truth” and “virtue” assaulted by evil men; the poet seems to regard sensibility as encompassing both truth and virtue, the desired attributes for everyone. Antoinette, “the BEAUTEOUS MARTYR” and “AUSTRIA’S pride” (139), is here portrayed as a sentimental heroine. Contrary to revolutionary rhetoric, she serves the poor, making “the mis’ries of mankind her own!” (164). Some lines belong to a sentimental novel: “There, bending o’er the aged widow’s form / With smiles celestial, [she would] chase the wint’ry storm!” (171-2). Crucially, Antoinette was “[f]orm’d to adorn a cottage or a throne” (201). Robinson subversively makes a case for ultimate equality while at the same time idealizing the Queen whose fate seems more tragic because of her status.

Sensibility, as much as death, Robinson seems to be saying, is the great leveler. She thereby reconciles the two poles of sympathy for the Queen with fidelity to her radical English friends. She implies that the Queen’s death is as tragic as the fate of the peasant, described in lines 399-440. Robinson repeatedly uses the phrase “No MORE” (401, 405, 411, 419, 423, 424) to contrast the peasant’s earlier bucolic bliss with his current hell as a soldier in the revolutionary army. For queen and peasant, the Revolution is devastating, and the only antidote is sensibility in practice. Such sensibility is what made the peasant “[t]he little monarch of LOVE’S FREE DOMAIN” (438). We can see this is the reversal of the idea that the Queen was formed for a cottage. Towards the end of the poem, Robinson makes her ethical plea obvious:

VIRTUE is still ILLUSTRIOUS, still sublime,

In EV'RY station, and in EV'RY clime!

TRUTH can derive no eminence from birth,

Rich in the proud supremacy of WORTH;

Its blest dominion vast and unconfin'd

Its CROWN ETERNAL, and its THRONE the MIND! (453-8)

Notable is Robinson's more Godwinian idea of truth, with "[i]ts CROWN ETERNAL" (457).

Truth and virtue, Robinson is saying, practiced through sensibility, cannot be augmented by the accident of noble birth. She glorifies equality, or at least that ideal as it was first expressed by the revolutionaries. Garnai thinks that even at this point, "Robinson can yet salvage the ideal of a community of literary meritocracy from the ruins of the failed Revolutionary promise, providing at least the possibility of representation amidst the struggle for survival" (*Revolutionary* 94).

Garnai sees in the poem Robinson's ideal of a meritocracy of artists who would become the "new nobility" (*Revolutionary* 94) while Janowitz regards the "Monody" in terms of "private domestic virtues being punished on the public stage of the guillotine" (80). But as I have noted, the poem recommends sensibility as the means of becoming an "historical actor" (Fritzsche 120), and it also concerns itself with how to approach written history in an age in which there has been little integrity, either in the royals themselves or in history writing. Robinson begins the poem with the hope that "Reason's calm eye TIME'S tablet shall explore" (2), implying that when reason triumphs, objective historiography will be attainable, or at least, distinguishable from false historiography. The poet repeatedly uses the word "truth," not only to indicate the ideal to which everyone should aspire, but also to signify what is at stake in history writing. Here truth is aligned with Godwin's "infinite, omnipresent, and eternal" (qtd in Garnai, *Revolutionary* 10).

Robinson speaks of “Truth’s white bosom stamp’d with falsehood’s stain” (54) and the “RAGE” that “roots up all the sacred rights of TRUTH” (91, 95). When excoriating the falsehoods propagated about the Queen, Robinson insists that

[t]he cherub, TRUTH, obliterates its stains.

Then let the MUSE her weary sorrows trace,

And CANDOUR blot the records of DISGRACE! (186-8)

“DETRACTION’S dart” (180) is represented as contributing to false history writing, which may only be detected in the future through the cool assessment of reason. The poet regards the King and Queen and French aristocracy as suffering for crimes of the past that they did not commit, “[w]hen TRUTH fled, trembling, and subdu’d with fears” (249). Robinson implies that truth in historiography has been compromised for decades, a lack that has only been matched by the absence of regal integrity to be described. She refers to “THAT HEART which shudder’d at recorded crimes / Stamp’d on the tablet of disastrous times” (253-4). By the “tablet,” Robinson seems to understand what actually happened, before any attempts were made to define it. It is the same, she suggests, with “all the legends of past times...blacken’d with such wanton crimes” (369-70). The crimes of the aristocracy were real, but, she asks, should truth suffer in the present because of what happened long ago? Robinson reiterates the phrase “Was it for THOSE” (259, 261, 265) to point to the culprits for whom “the last illustrious race / Wash’d with their blood, the page of dire disgrace!” (259-60). The current royals and aristocracy, she affirms, are innocents suffering for the crimes of others; they will wash the historical record in their blood. That “TRUTH can derive no eminence from birth” (455), however, also means that the discipline of history is egalitarian; she gestures once again towards the revolutionary ideal of equality while still supporting her friend Antoinette. At the end of the poem, Robinson refers to

“TRUTH’S invulnerable vest” (504) and prophecies that the revolutionaries, “REPTILES” and “INSECTS” (519, 522), will face “the dark channel of OBLIVION” (516). While they will not be distinguished on history’s page, “GENIUS” is the key to anyone’s memorialisation.

Robinson’s “Immortal GENIUS” (509) is rather like Barbauld’s “Genius” in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (241), a force that moves and inspires according to its own laws. Robinson’s “Genius,” like sensibility, is yet another leveler, and is thus a fitting final note sounded by a woman with revolutionary ideals.

There is a lugubrious tone to Robinson’s “Monody” which helps the reader arrive at the “truth” regarding the figure of Marie Antoinette. In the pointedly melancholic scenes, there is the ethical plea to preserve at least in memory the royal family. Their suffering in the palace is etched in ominous phrases:

Death stalks, unmask’d, beside the scepter’d hand,
While round the regal chair, dark demons stand;
With cries of murder, now the Palace shakes,
And all is RUIN, e’er REFLECTION wakes. (237-40)

In the most melancholic scene in the poem, the prisoners “[s]tart, if the winds along their prison creep; / Slumber to dream of DEATH, and wake to WEEP!” (317-8). They “[b]ehold, with FANCY’S all-creating eyes, / The bleeding SPECTRES of their KINDRED rise!” (323-4). This tableau recalls Robert Blair’s *The Grave* (1743), which features ghosts to convey his religious message. In the latter verses of Robinson’s “Monody,” the ghost who seems to be Marie Antoinette, “THE WIDOW’D MOTHER” (327), proclaims with “quiv’ring lips” (331):

“I COME, my CHERUBS, from the realms of day!
Thy father triumphs in the spheres of REST,

And shares the endless transports of the BLEST!

There, far remov'd from Fate's disastrous frown,

He LIVES, possess'd of an IMMORTAL CROWN!"

Then, as the feeble infants wond'ring stand,

The fleeting SPECTRE waves its snowy hand!

The paly lamps, that feebly gild the gloom,

A fainting gleam of blueish light assume:

The moaning wind though ev'ry crevice blows;

Down the damp wall the midnight vapour flows. (327-342)

The ghostly "WIDOW'D MOTHER" (327) conveying her husband's message to their children must be Marie Antoinette speaking to her little ones about Louis. The reviewer from the *Critical Review* assumes as much ("Monody" Review 305). Notable about this scene are not only the accoutrements of a Graveyard School poem, but also the continuance of the monarchy at a higher level. Louis has now more than a golden crown; he has an "IMMORTAL CROWN" (331), and by extension, so does Antoinette. This melancholy scene would bring comfort to the monarchy's supporters without compromising Robinson's radical beliefs. The reported speech is strangely reminiscent of the elegies of Phillis Wheatley, who also faced war in America. Wheatley writes to the wife of General Wooster that

[h]e waits [her] coming to the realms of light

Freed from his labours in the ethereal Skies

Where in Succession endless pleasures rise. (38-40)

Wooster, speaking from the grave, resembles Antoinette and Louis in being elevated above earthly woes. We may see in both Wheatley and Robinson an "historical self-consciousness"

because they have been forced to become “historical actors” (Fritzsche 127, 120), even though they witnessed war in different theatres.

Despite Robinson’s imaginative identification with the Queen of France, this “history” still resembles the historiographical perspective of David Hume. His proponent, the transitional historian Mackintosh, declares that “[n]o historian approached him in the union of the talent of painting pathetic scenes with that of exhibiting comprehensive views of human affairs” (*Memoirs* 2: 168). Mackintosh thus attributes to Hume a wide understanding and at the same time an ability to “paint” historical scenes. Interestingly, Phillips alerts us that “Mackintosh also amends the traditional formula, changing its emphasis considerably. History, always characterized as both instructive and truthful, is now understood to be “instructive and affecting” (*Society* 200). Robinson, who would probably have believed that history-writing should strive to be truthful and affecting, demonstrates in the “Monody” a wide comprehension and sympathetic portrayals. The reviewer from the *Critical Review* wishes that there were more truth in Robinson’s “praises than in [her] invectives,” but cynically admits that, “[t]o paint horrors we need only to consult history; when we would paint *en beau*, we must too often call in the assistance of our fancy” (“Monody” Review 306). It is noteworthy that the reviewer credits Robinson with historical “painting” and with truthful depiction of “horrors.” He acknowledges that Antoinette’s “memory, like that of Mary of Scotland, will probably be defended by future biographers, who, if she had ended her days upon a throne, would, perhaps, have represented her as loaded with the curses of the people” (“Monody” Review 305). He probably has in mind Hume’s famous account of the death of Mary of Scotland, and he implies a comparison between Robinson’s Antoinette and Hume’s Mary Stuart as tragic figures. Hume’s ability to use a wide-angle lens while focusing on details resembles Robinson’s approach in her “Monody,” although

she is drawing closer to cognitive proximity, or to a more intimate understanding of historical persons and events.

Although Robinson's defense of Antoinette was vehement, she never lost her ultimate allegiance to the original ideals of the Revolution (Garnai, *Revolutionary* 87). The same could be said of Robinson's contemporary, Charlotte Smith (FIGURE 5), who in the 1790s avoided sharp censure for her radical views by camouflaging them with the melancholic persona she had forged from 1784 (Knowles 68). This is certainly the case with her long political poem *The Emigrants* (1793), in which Smith similarly pities "the hapless Queen" (2: 154) while espousing radical views through a melancholic perspective. Like Robinson, Smith had her own definition in mind when she spoke of "truth," so it is interesting that both women were, at different times, part of Godwin's radical circle, where the meaning of truth was debated (Garnai 10). While for Robinson "truth" seems allied to "virtue," though virtue outlives truth, for Smith one truth is the egalitarian principle that "worth alone is true Nobility," an "unwelcome truth" for class-conscious Britons (*The Emigrants* 1: 240, 246). Tellingly, this sentiment precedes a quotation from James Thomson's adaptation of *Coriolanus*, which was banned from Covent Garden in 1792 (*Charlotte Smith* 138n3). Robinson expresses a view similar to Smith's in her "Monody," in which Antoinette is "[f]ormed to adorn a cottage or a throne" and a peasant is "[t]he little monarch of LOVE'S FREE DOMAIN" (201, 438). Both Robinson and Smith subscribed to the revolutionary ideal of equality for all, but perhaps this emphasis in their poems is veiled through references to their personal histories and those of revolutionary victims.

Another kind of 'truth' discernible in the writings of Robinson and Smith is truthful historical representation, particularly of themselves as poets and novelists who endured hard lives. Both women, after disastrous early marriages and time in Debtors' Prison with their

husbands, had to write constantly to support themselves and their children. Robinson became an invalid and Smith had to support the eight children still living out of twelve, because their inheritance was tied up in legalities. While both writers published books from prison, Smith's first edition of *Elegiac Sonnets* did far better than Robinson's *Poems* (Knowles 60n51). Knowles observes that "in another era the two women might have been friends" (60). Such a friendship was not to be, however, because of the scandal associated with Mary "Perdita" Robinson. In a 1797 letter to her publisher, William Davies, Smith avers that she has no desire "for being confounded with" "Mrs. Mary Robinson and other Mistresses" (*Collected Letters* 268). Smith was referring to her reluctance to expose her portrait and poems to the public in anthologies, an act which she seems to see as a different kind of prostitution. Ironically, Robinson in her "Monody" appears to be as sensitive to her public image as she is to that of Antoinette; she excoriates the "MONSTER, who, with recreant art / Beyond the GRAVE, would hurl DETRACTION'S dart" (179-80). This line, meant for Antoinette's posthumous reputation, also applies to Robinson's own fears of detraction after death. Her stress on truthful historiography has been discussed above, but the history for which she and Smith care most is that of their reputations, especially posthumous. Many critics have commented on the way Smith tailors the prefaces to the various editions of *Elegiac Sonnets* in order to project a certain image. She especially communicates sincerity (Knowles) and an autobiographical basis for the mournful characters she draws, finally saying in her Preface to the sixth edition (1792) that she "wrote mournfully because [she] was unhappy" (Goldberg 364-5). It could be said that Smith made a whole career out of being unhappy. A reviewer of the 1797 *Elegiac Sonnets, and other Poems* Volume II noted that "if the note of melancholy have [sic] already prevailed, it is not likely that she should now strike the harp with a livelier hand" (ART XXXV 158). So well did she craft her

image that when Judith Phillips Stanton published Smith's collected letters in 2003, the academic world was surprised by "the strident, canny and not entirely likeable woman" that emerges from the pages (Knowles 68).

Scholarship on Smith has blossomed in the last thirty years, especially after Stuart Curran published *The Poems of Charlotte Smith* in 1993. In his Introduction he begins by saying that "Charlotte Smith was the first poet in England whom in retrospect we would call Romantic." He also quotes Wordsworth's famous judgment that Smith was a poet "to whom English verse is under greater obligations than are likely to be either acknowledged or remembered" (1). In Curran's pivotal essay on the newly-discovered feminine Romantic voice, "The I Altered" (1988), he comments on the "rootless exile" of all the personae in the *Elegiac Sonnets*, who find permanence in "the external phenomena of nature" (200). While the tendency is to read Smith's poems in light of her distinctive autobiography—an approach her own writings invite—Jacqueline Labbe introduced a new perspective by looking at the malleability of Smith's character and poems in *Charlotte Smith: Romanticism, Poetry, and the Culture of Gender* (2003). Much as Robinson enjoyed "trying on" different poetical styles, Smith, according to Labbe, "inhabits roles all consonant with proper femininity, and advertises her feminine need each time she pleads for death or gasps for assistance" (13). Smith's femininity and her vulnerability were already addressed, though not specifically, in Lauren Berlant's 1988 essay "The Female Complaint." She argues that to "the extent that women employ the complaint as a mode of self-expression, it is an admission and a recognition both of privilege and powerlessness: it is a powerful record of patriarchal oppression, circumscribed by a knowledge of inevitable delegitimization within the patriarchal public sphere" (243). That is to say, while the female complaint is empowering for the speaker, the very fact that it has to be made

reinforces the patriarchy to which the voice objects. This model can be seen in Smith's battles with the male trustees of her children's inheritance, the cause of many of her woes.

More recent studies have focused on Smith's much-noted revival of the English sonnet and the sonnet in general. Smith's sonnet sequence accomplishes the same revivification of the sonnet that Robinson achieves through her sonnet cycle *Sappho and Phaon* (1796). Bethan Roberts and Karen A. Weisman both point out that Smith chose a form in which women have been traditionally silent and abstract rather than fleshly and authorial (Roberts, *Charlotte Smith* 6; Weisman 24). Roberts in her *Charlotte Smith and the Sonnet* (2019) shows that Smith "steers the sonnet form away from eighteenth-century practice by taking it in a different formal direction" at a time when only the Italian form was established and "the English sonnet was disconnected from literary tradition" (27). Roberts is not alone in noting that Thomas Warton's mid-century sonnets in Dodsley's *Collection* (1755) and *Poems. A New Edition* (1777) anticipate those of Smith. Roberts addresses Warton's poems in their "positive relationship with the literary past" and their contextualization in specific evocative locations (Roberts, *Charlotte Smith* 16-17). Various critics in the meantime, ranging from Esther Schor (1994) to Adela Pinch (1996) to James Metcalf (2020), have looked at the ways in which Smith expresses her relationship with the dead.

Charlotte Smith may be considered an elegist and an historian, though her subject is usually her own tempestuous feelings. Her *Elegiac Sonnets*, combining the tone of the elegy with the strictures of the sonnet form, achieve the perspective of the historiographer, particularly the literary historiographer. I am by no means the first to note that Smith is a literary historian. Roberts, for example, argues that her monograph is a "book about literary history, and about how Smith formulates her 'place'—in multiple ways—within it" (2). Robinson is a nostalgic historian

who accesses emotional possibilities through her literary allusions; she seizes the literary opportunities that are presented to her to be current. Smith, on the other hand, deliberately positions herself within literary history; she is more ambitious than Robinson. Here Smith the literary historian will be combined with Smith the melancholy historian. Phillips discusses how, in Smith's and Robinson's time, literary history was considered the best way to learn about past manners. He states that the "practice of literary history seems calculated to produce moments both of retrospect and prospect, giving writers reason to evoke the manners of earlier ages or to imagine the responses of readers one hundred years on" (*Society* 153). Smith rarely "evokes the manners of earlier ages," but she certainly imagines her posthumous reputation. She looks frequently to her past and to her future, which is envisioned without much hope; judging from her prefaces, however, she is hopeful for her posthumous future. Her means to understanding, like that of Robinson, is melancholy; however, Smith's understanding of herself is informed by literary history. Pinch argues that for Smith, melancholy is "a sign and a medium" of successful literary transmission (63). In her analysis of Sonnet XXXII, "To Melancholy, Written on the banks of the Arun, October, 1785," Pinch reveals that "Melancholy has the magic power to make one imagine other poets' misery in the landscape, and hence allows an imagined relation to other poets" (66). Thus melancholy enables sympathy with other literary figures. Paula Backscheider claims that Smith's sonnets contributed to making melancholy the "great reflective, intellectual, philosophical mood and the state of mind associated with subjectivity and genius" (328-9). Yet Smith's sonnets did not only help to establish melancholy as the mood of Romanticism. Melancholy is the necessary condition for historiography, which for Phillips is the difference between "now" and "then."³ Melancholic poetry fills in the gap between now and then, providing

³ In the graduate course I took with Professor Mark Phillips at Carleton University in 2004, he

for a sense of continuous history, because, just as Pinch shows, the mood of melancholy permits one to connect with past poets. Fritzsche's "melancholy of history," in which, because of the French Revolution, the past becomes "increasingly unknowable and opaque," (121), is shown to be ameliorated by Smith's melancholic poetry because of her links with the literary past. She demonstrates that gloomy poetry may bridge the gap between the present and the past.

Smith's Sonnet XLVI, "Written at Penshurst, in Autumn 1788," is an example of what Metcalf calls "topographical life writing" (58) and Roberts calls a "powerful, unmediated connection with place" (*Charlotte Smith* 38). A variation on the English sonnet, the poem has a confiding tone, making the speaker a friend of the reader; we wander on the grounds of Penshurst beside her. Unlike Robinson's usual elegiac settings, which are generic graveyards, Penshurst is a particular place, a graveyard, so to speak, of a specific past. Smith provides herself with a literary heritage by painting the speaker as the heir of Edmund Waller (1606-1687), addressed in the poem. The speaker is at the ancestral home of the Sidney family, which has the honour of its association with poet and statesman Sir Philip Sidney. It appears that the speaker, walking the grounds, exults in the site's "glories past" (4). She notes that "timid deer" (5) and "matted fern" (6) and a "discordant henn" (8) replace the former sound of "Waller's soothing lyre" (7). In these lines the sense of hearing is uppermost, especially the hearing of poetry. Waller wrote two poems to Penshurst, both called "At Penshurst." He associated the spot with his unsuccessful courtship in the 1630s of Lady Dorothy Sidney, whom he called "Sacharissa" (*Charlotte* 87n2). He fell into obscurity after death, though he was praised by Dryden and known for "the perfection of the 'heroic couplet'" (*All Poetry* website). In his first poem "At Penshurst," Waller cites "Orpheus' lyre" and "Amphion [who] made stones and timber leap" (12, 17),

spoke about history as the "difference between now and then."

suggesting that these mythical figures who created order out of chaos are like the poet, but also like his lady. The latter makes the Penshurst garden a veritable Eden. Smith shows in Sonnet XLVI that Waller's power over the scene is gone; now the woods are "deep sighing to the hollow blast" (2) and the heron is "discordant" (8). Waller, in his second poem "At Penshurst," says "the listening deer" attend him on the grounds (1) while he sings; we are meant to be mindful of this line when we read in Smith's poem about the "timid deer" (5) who fear the speaker's approach. Roberts observes that there is a "male literary tradition and a model for it through the settings and subjects of [Smith's] sonnets, whereby the literary associations of place and aspects of the natural world facilitate intertextual relations" (*Charlotte Smith* 5). The ideal of poetic inheritance in the poem does seem to accord with a male model, but Smith makes it clear that Waller's day is past. The octave ends with discord, that of the heron, emphasizing a clear contrast between what was heard then and what is heard now.

In the sestet, Smith demonstrates that it is melancholic poetry that heals the divide between past and present, a healing that involves the revivification of Waller. Smith's melancholy not only allows her "an imagined relation with other poets" (Pinch 66), but also a means to access the past. We learn about "Sydney's [or Sidney's] keen look and Sacharissa's grace" (11), the shorthand for which is "fame and beauty" (13). Algernon Sidney (1623-83) was a parliamentary hero of the English Commonwealth who was later executed after the Restoration (*Charlotte* 87n1). We can see here Smith's revolutionary tendencies in that she idealizes him. The speaker of the poem, now more obviously Smith herself, insists at the close of the sonnet that the "fame and beauty" of Sidney and Sacharissa are "[s]aved by the historic page—the poet's tender lay!" (14). This is a remarkable claim because history is here equated with poetry;

the latter is shown to be a kind of historiography. The power of poetry is opposed to the “[s]poiling hand of Time” (9) at the beginning of the sestet. Time is the entity that may ruin

These lofty battlements, and quite deface

The fading canvass whence we love to learn

Sydney’s keen look, and Sacharissa’s grace. (10-12).

While the “fading canvass” has been interpreted as Waller’s poetry, I believe that it is the place itself and its historical associations that time may spoil. In Smith’s note, she informs her reader that in “the park at Penshurst is an heronry. The house is at present uninhabited, and the windows of the galleries and other rooms, in which there are many invaluable pictures, are never opened but when strangers visit it” (86n4). Backscheider comments about Smith’s numerous notes that she claims to be a “poetic, cultural, and even scientific authority.” Her notes assert the ground for “her often biting judgments, arcane historical allusions, and natural description” (323). The note quoted above may seem to be innocuous, but in it Smith presents herself as the authority on the “fading canvass” (11) that is Penshurst. In a series of enjambments from lines 9-12, Smith conveys the probable dissolution of the scene were it not for poetry. It is up to the poet to save the estate and its history by “the historic page—the poet’s tender lay” (14). This phrase is ambiguous, applying both to Waller and to Smith his inheritor, but it is she who makes him present through an act of Smithian sympathy, so that both he and she together are conservators of the scene and its literary associations. By the end of the sonnet, the rift between now and then has been resolved; poetry as history has won the day.

“Written at Penshurst, in Autumn , 1788” was first published in the *Fourth Edition* of *Elegiac Sonnets* in 1786. Smith’s patron was William Hayley, Esq., to whom she had dedicated the *First Edition*, in thanks for his careful editing and championing of her work (*Charlotte* 51n1).

Interestingly, he was well-known at the time for literary-historical works such as *An Essay on History, in Three Epistles to Edward Gibbon* (1781) and *Essay on Epic Poetry* (1782). Phillips describes these works as being in “an old tradition of verse chronicles of the history of letters” (*Society* 269-70). He identifies Thomas Warton’s great *History of English Poetry* (1774-81) as helping to define the genre of literary history for the time, without inspiring any immediate successors to that broad kind of historical-literary scholarship (*Society* 269).

The reader approaching Robinson’s “Elegy to the Memory of Werter” (1791) or Smith’s series of sonnets in the persona of Werther would benefit by apprehending some of the literary history of Goethe’s masterpiece. Robyn L. Schiffman traces the phenomenon that is *Werther* in her 2010 article “A Concert of Werthers.” She notes that “[t]hirty separate British and American editions and translations of Werther appeared in 1779, when it was first translated into English, until 1886; there were over fifty in French” (208). Schiffman also recognizes the cultural hegemony of Werther; “[p]erfumes were sold and scenes from the novel were depicted in wax museums, and on playing cards and tea sets” (208). Using a contagion metaphor that resonates with Hume’s theory of sympathy, Schiffman demonstrates how by end-century “Werther had ceased to be German in the minds of the reading and publishing public; instead, he became an English sentimental and Romantic character” who was congenial to the British and to its epistolary tradition (211). So popular did *Werther* become in Britain that the spelling of the hero’s name was now spelled in accord with its English pronunciation, so that “Werther” became “Werter” (Schiffman 211). The contagion metaphor does not apply only to enthusiasm for Goethe’s novel, but also to concerns about its romantic representation of suicide (Schiffman 214). Doctor and professor Benjamin Rush, quoted above, stated in a speech given in July 1787 that female novel-reading, especially of Goethe’s *Werther*, was dangerous for the morals of

American women. Instead, they should be reading “ ‘history—travels—poetry—and moral essays’ ” (qtd in Schiffman 216).

Robinson in her “To the Memory of Werter” catches the wave, as it were, of the most popular literary trend of her era, while Smith in her five Werther sonnets positions herself as an author in relation to Goethe’s authorship. This is especially the case in Sonnet XXIV, which was probably first published in *Elegiac Sonnets. The Third Edition. With Twenty Additional Sonnets* (1786). Given the similarities between Robinson’s poem and Smith’s sonnet, it seems likely that Robinson read the latter before she published her own poem in 1791. Both poems “can be seen as part of the “ ‘Werther Fever’ that swept Europe” after translations appeared in France and then England in 1779 (Roberts, *Charlotte Smith* 37). As Robinson did, Smith by empathizing with Werther takes advantage of the emotional register of Goethe’s tragic hero in order to express her own, similar emotions. Roberts points out that each of Smith’s Werther sonnets relies for meaning on a setting from the novel (*Charlotte Smith* 37). In Sonnet XXIV, another variation on the English sonnet, Smith like Robinson focuses upon the place where Werther will be buried: “beneath the lime-tree’s shade” (Smith 1). Like Robinson, Smith here makes the ethical appeal that no one will judge him for his action; he wants “no memorial” to “point to common eyes the lover’s grave” (3-4). Only the sympathetic heart, specifically that of Werther’s Charlotte, should know where his remains are laid. Significantly, like the speaker in Robinson’s poem whose “mournful song / Glides in slow numbers the dank woods among” (7-8), Smith’s “faithful friend with falt’ring step shall glide” (6). The verb “to glide” had appeal to both poets as perhaps the expression of an unobtrusive approach to a delicate situation like the burial of a suicide. Smith’s “faithful friend” (6), like Robinson’s “village MAID” and “lorn TRAV’LER” (17, 25), is a sympathetic visitor to Werther’s grave, but she knows that her “[t]ributes of fond regret” must be

paid “by stealth” (7) because of those who, like Robinson’s “Churlish Priest,” (33) condemn suicide. The identity of Smith’s “faithful friend” is unclear, but she recalls Gray’s line in the epitaph from his *Elegy* that the dead man “gain’d from Heav’n (‘twas all he wish’d) a friend” (124). Smith’s “faithful friend” is distinct from Charlotte, Werther’s love, who in the third quatrain sheds “[d]ear, precious drops” that shall “embalm the dead” (12). This response resembles the reaction of Robinson’s Charlotte, who on Werther’s “lone grave the sacred drop bestows” (34). The main difference between these two poems, besides their formal aspects, is that while Robinson’s speaker sings *to* Werther, Smith actually *becomes* Werther, and fantasizes about his final resting place and the kind of visitors he desires. Labbe suggests that “[i]t seems that Smith means to anchor the sensibility of her sonnets by speaking with the voice of the ‘paragon of feeling,’ and yet ‘his’ sentiments are markedly similar to those expressed in the sonnets as a whole” (107). Smith and her Werther are almost one and the same, and it is by adopting the melancholy of Goethe’s character that she gains an understanding of him.

Roberts argues that while Smith’s “translations from Petrarch overtly engage with the literary past and sonnet tradition, the Werther sonnets do not.” While I do not deny that Smith draws on *Werther* for its “immediacy and sublimity” (Roberts, *Charlotte Smith* 38), I conclude that Smith is also interested in her place in relation to the novel. By taking on the identity of Werther and expressing it in the form of English sonnets, Smith anglicizes Goethe’s *Werther*, a novel which initiated the tradition of the German epistolary novel (Schiffman 209). She also shortens the distance between herself as an English poet who first published from prison and the celebrated author of the arguably most popular European novel of the late eighteenth century. She inducts Werther into British literature, as Schiffman says about the British generally (211). More importantly, she inducts herself into the history of the European novel. This tradition is

meaningful for her, because in the same year that Sonnet XXIV was published, she also published an English translation of *Manon Lescaut* by Abbe Prevost, and the following year, she would publish another translation, *The Romance of Real Life* (1787) (Fletcher 82-4). It matters to Smith whether she will rank in the history of the novel, whether she will have status in literary history. That is part of the reason she is concerned with who will visit her grave. Because she is Charlotte Smith, she identifies with Charlotte, Werther's lost love; she even capitalizes on their shared name. In the sonnet's final quatrain, when Smith's Werther imagines Charlotte weeping over his grave, he is implicitly envisioning Charlotte the poet weeping, too. Yet because Smith *is* Werther, she is at once the suicide and the one she imagines weeping over the grave. Here she sees in her mind's eye posterity weeping over her grave, which she hopes will be a pilgrimage site for sympathetic readers. Perhaps, like her Werther, she hopes to be at the gravesite in some form to watch her visitors.

Like Smith, the historian Mackintosh had a keen sense of literary history. Phillips records in *Society and Sentiment* that

Mackintosh's journals contain many expressions of his love of "literary history." In 1812 he expressed his pleasure in reading Scott's life of Dryden, "as I have a passion for literary history, and the highest admiration for Dryden" (*Memoirs*, 2: 196-97). Earlier, on reading Laharpe's letters, he remarked: "You know my passion for literary history and anecdotes; the book, therefore, pleases me. He gives the Grand Duke an account of new publications and representations, much as I do here of what I read, but with not such careless honesty, still with much good nature." (2: 238-39)

Here the historian appears as reader, one who appreciates the chance to *know* former ages through the personalities who helped to fashion them. Phillips describes reading history through personalities as “a meeting of minds or hearts that would ultimately make differences of genre—those separating history from autobiography or even history from fiction—seem much less important” (*Society* 202-3). Phillips in *Society and Sentiment* evokes the change in historiographical distance that occurred when the reading habits of sentimental fiction were incorporated into the reading of history. He affirms that in the latter half of the eighteenth century, “there is evidence that many writers reconceived the reader’s engagement with the historical narrative in more inward and sentimental terms” (*Society* 103). By end-century, the historian interpreted history in such a way that it appealed to the reader’s interiority and that, together with the new genres associated with history, occasioned a change in historical distance. Phillips avers that “some of the most familiar pronouncements of ‘romantic historiography’ concern the abbreviation of distance, and that the definition of this new norm depends upon a dramatized sense of contrasts with the preceding era” (*Society* 346). Thus, although Mackintosh reviews Hume and Gibbon positively for flexibility of style, he clearly has a more intimate reading experience in mind (*Society* 202n22). “Behind the difference of purpose” between Hume and Mackintosh, concludes Phillips, “stands a new literary politics shaped by the intensification of national feeling that came with the French Revolution and the wars that ensued” (*Society* 210). Smith, “a Girondin” (Fletcher 192-3), probably seemed to her contemporaries to lack national feeling, especially in her novels. Though “Smith’s radical sympathies” with the first ideals of the Revolution “still made certain conservative critics uneasy,...because most of her poetry was so explicitly linked to personal rather than overtly political concerns, very few of them felt able to criticize legitimately her claims to normative femininity” (Knowles 68). Not only does Smith

present a relatable experience of history in her novels and poems, she also seems to offer intimacy with herself as a genteel woman. The personal history that appears like a shattered mirror in her sonnets, prefaces, and other poems encourages her readers to pursue her, especially through her sonnets that are set in particular places and moments from her life. We are also meant to see Smith the woman in relation to the many poets who grace her pages; as their reader, she also becomes their historiographer, the one who *knows* them on an intimate level.

If “Written at Penshurst, in Autumn 1788” conveys Smith’s relationship with the poet Waller, Sonnet LXVII in Volume II of the *Elegiac Sonnets* (1797) shows her assessment of herself, especially because the sonnet initially appeared in her 1795 novel *Montalbert*. Smith may be regarded as achieving a cross-genre act of self-expression. The novel appeared in the same year as the death of Smith’s favourite daughter, Anna Augusta, a devastating event when Smith’s “better life died with her, and she never fully recovered” (Fletcher 239). Smith’s biographer Fletcher confirms that in *Montalbert* “the whole focus is on sexual politics, the confinement of the heroines and nervous illness” (241). The novel also offers subtle criticism of marriage and even subtler promotion of divorce (Fletcher 245). The eponymous antihero, Harry Montalbert (there are two Montalberts and two Rosalies in the novel) is an ambiguous character, and treats the younger Rosalie with “injustice and violence” (Fletcher 242, 244). Smith had personal reasons for portraying young heroines at the mercy of bad men; she had separated from her wastrel husband in 1787. Sonnet LXVII is set near a ruined gothic chapel, in which a correspondingly ruined and pregnant Rosalie looks for succour to the brother of Ormsby, who has ruined her (Fletcher 243). The lines spoken by Rosalie could certainly be voiced by Smith following the loss of her daughter, for they depict a sympathetic setting in which the speaker is “passing over a dreary tract of country, and near the ruins of a deserted chapel during a tempest.”

Voller observes that these “gloomy ruins” are for the speaker “not the site of psychological disruption but of connection and sympathy” (Note on Sonnet LXVII 221). It appears, however, that though the speaker finds comfort in the setting, she also discovers an unsettling kinship; she identifies with the ruined chapel.

As Fletcher claims, Smith’s landscapes are typically clear and detailed, “though suffused also with the feelings of the solitary observer” (187). The creatures in Sonnet LXVII, “the agents of fear and spookiness” (Voller, “Note on Sonnet LXVII”), like the speaker lack agency, for they are prevented by the turbulent weather from accomplishing their habitual scavenging; “[t]he ravenous Owl forgoes his evening flight,” and, deep in the woods, “[t]he Fox eludes the tempest of the night” (6, 8). Yet, despite the animals’ passivity, the speaker’s “I” is prominent in the first quatrain:

SWIFT fleet the billowy clouds along the sky,
Earth seems to shudder at the storm aghast;
While only beings as forlorn as I,
Court the chill horrors of the howling blast. (1-4).

We are meant to see this Burkean sublime in light of the “forlorn” (3) speaker who witnesses it. She “courts” the storm (4), showing that, because of her misery, it is appropriate that she engage with the tempest. To this same “I,” “congenial is the gloom” which “hides [her] from a World [she wishes] to shun” (9-10). Interestingly, the speaker’s “I” is primarily passive, for hers is “the sadness of a wretch undone” (12); she wishes to be hidden and she acknowledges that someone *did* her wrong. Most revealingly, she has an affinity for “[t]he scene where Ruin saps / The mouldering tomb” (11). Unlike in “Written at Penshurst,” in which the poet actively conserves the literary past with “the historic page—the poet’s tender lay” (14), here the speaker allies

herself with desolation and passively becomes a victim of the wasting historical process. In the final couplet she laments: “Nor is the deepest shade, the keenest air, / Black as my fate, or cold as my despair” (13-14). This is a speaker whom poetry has failed to save; her poem has not given her comfort through memories. The distance that Smith attempts to bridge in the poem is between her old, relatively happy self and the self that has just watched a beloved daughter die. She fails. It is easy to imagine that after that tragedy, Smith similarly felt like the passive victim of time and spoliation.

The Smith before the death of Anna Augusta was a fighter; in Sonnet XLIV, her most anthologized and critiqued sonnet, the persona she assumes allies itself with the sea rather than become its victim. The speaker arrives at self-knowledge through a melancholy meditation. Most critics interpret the poem—subtitled “Written in the Church Yard at Middleton in Sussex”—as Smith’s challenge to Gray’s “rude Forefathers of the hamlet” (16) in their peaceful sleep, seeing her sonnet as undermining the patriarchy implicit in his *Elegy*. Schor argues that “Smith does not simply offer an ironic critique of Gray’s idealized community centred on the grave. She also authorizes her poem by invoking a feminine goddess hostile to the sanctity of Gray’s “unhonoured” dead” (66). Schor refers to Smith’s “Moon, mute arbitress of tides” (1). Though Pinch does not mention Gray explicitly in her analysis, she suggests that Sonnet XLIV “dramatically revises the topos of the tranquil country churchyard” (59). Roberts contends that as Smith’s “sea ‘tears from the grassy tombs the village dead,’ Gray, ‘forefather’ of the sonnet as such, is uprooted by the literary forces of Smith’s sonnet” (*Charlotte Smith* 83). The reference here is not only to Gray’s *Elegy*, but also to his only sonnet, “On the Death of Mr. Richard West,” which was “widely read and hugely influential” (Roberts, *Charlotte Smith* 20). For Roberts, Smith engages with Gray’s graveyard but even more with his famous sonnet; she

“disrupts Gray formally” via a “less ‘elegiac’ version (as such) of the English form” of the sonnet (*Charlotte Smith* 84). Metcalf, following Schor, affirms that “Smith uses Gray’s influence but crucially transfers her allegiance away from the ‘rude forefathers’ of his ‘Elegy’ by unearthing their reality as deracinated bones on the shore” (64). Metcalf agrees with Schor that “the bones in Smith’s coastal churchyard suffer the same watery fate as John Milton’s Lycidas—another (masculine) elegiac ancestor of the ‘graveyard school’ ” (64). My reading of Sonnet XLIV differs from the above interpretations by making the speaker and the sea parallel characters and by adopting part of Curran’s reading of the poem. In “The I Altered,” Curran proposes that in Smith’s *Elegiac Sonnets*, “[p]ermanence is situated in the external phenomena of nature; even the most impermanent objects—the moon, storm clouds, the ocean, a shipwrecked denizen of a desert island—have an integrity that recoils on the speaker’s sense of emptiness” (200). His argument regarding Sonnet XLIV is that the speaker’s interiority is first compared to the whitening bones on the shore and is then contrasted with them because the speaker cannot achieve “their gloomy rest” (14; Curran 200). In light of textual evidence, I argue that these bones represent the history of Middleton, but even more the personal history of the speaker, suggested by Curran’s use of “interior” (200). In this poem she identifies with the ocean.

The sea with which the speaker identifies is as powerless against the dispersal of her past as is she herself. Metcalf points out that the poem begins with a passive verb but he then states that the personified sea “quickly reverses implied passivity by breaking the confinement of its ‘swelling surge’ and imposing upon ‘the shrinking land,’ over which it ‘sublimely rides.’ ” This is true, but in the next quatrain, the action is limited to “[t]he wild blast” which

Rising from the Western cave,
Drives the huge billows from their heaving bed;

Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead,

And breaks the silent Sabbath of the grave! (5-8)

It is “[t]he wild blast,” not the sea, that “[d]rives,” “[t]ears,” and “breaks.” The subject cannot be “billows” because the verbs are singular. Significantly, Smith’s careful rhyme scheme matches “cave” with “grave” and “bed” with “dead,” showing that it is the ocean’s source that is particularly dangerous to humanity. The speaker in fact aligns herself with the sea, because just as it is “PRESS’D by the Moon” (1), she is “by life’s long storm oppress” (13). As Schor recognized, the Moon represents “a feminine goddess,” Diana (66), but Schor does not venture into the significance of woman’s relationship with the moon and the tides. The speaker is implicitly saying that she is “oppress” simply by being a woman, just as the ocean is the lackey of the moon (1); both entities in the poem lack self-determination. Here the parallel between ocean and speaker ceases, however; the sea is whipped into madness by the moon and the wind while the speaker is lost in passive melancholy. She has no motivation to retrieve the “bones” of her past. The bones on shore are completely passive; they constitute in part the speaker’s own “exilic” (Hart 306) history, representing to some extent the fragments of her past from which she is at present disconnected. Curran proposes that the ocean’s permanence “recoil[s] on the speaker’s sense of emptiness” (200), as in, it draws back from her self-dispersal on the shore. In the line, “But vain to them the winds and waters rave” (11), the ocean acts upon a past which seems beyond redemption: “*They* hear the warring elements no more” (12), says the speaker. Yet, the ocean’s presence to the dead together with the speaker’s envious gaze on their “gloomy rest” (14) rehabilitates the dead because they are acknowledged.

Smith as poet is even more invested in treating with dignity the relics of the past. This sonnet was originally published in the same edition as “Written at Penshurst,” *Elegiac Sonnets*.

The Fifth Edition, with Additional Sonnets and Other Poems (1789). In “Written at Penshurst,” the poet’s dedication to historic conservation is undeniable, but what she conserves by “the historic page—the poet’s tender lay” (14), are really the ghosts of Penshurst: “Sydney’s keen look, and Sacharissa’s grace” (12), seen in the facade of the building. In Sonnet XLIV, Smith fails to address the spectres of her personal history, but she moves towards restoring the history of Middleton. In one of her long notes in which she claims expertise, Smith writes:

Middleton is a village on the margin of the sea, in Sussex, containing only two or three houses. There were formerly several acres of ground between its small church and the sea, which now, by its continual encroachments, approaches within a few feet of this half-ruined and humble edifice. The wall, which once surrounded the church-yard, is entirely swept away, many of the graves broken up, and the remains of bodies interred washed into the sea; whence human bones are found among the sand and shingles on the shore. (*Charlotte* 85n1).

Smith demonstrates that she is not only a poet, but is also the historian of the tiny community called Middleton. She connects the “now” and “then” of its remains through “painting,” both poetically and prosaically. Mackintosh’s definition of “painting” was the kind of “minute narrative” that he felt to be lacking in Gibbon (Phillips, *Society* 202). Phillips describes “painting” as “a historiographical equivalent of the picturesque, an aestheticization of narrative experience that transforms reading into a kind of historical spectatorship.” The term was meant to distinguish Romantic standards for history writing from Neoclassical prescriptions (*Society* 202). In Sonnet XLIV, “Written in the Church Yard,” including its note, and Sonnet XLVI, “Written at Penshurst,” Smith accomplishes historical painting through detailed images of external scenes, which are also representations of her own interiority. In her Werther and Rosalie

sonnets analyzed above, however, Smith shows that melancholic musing has its limits; these characters cannot heal their current misery with memories of their more promising past.

In her long poem *The Emigrants* (1793), Smith allies her exilic self with refugees from France and compassionately gives their representatives a unitive history, a before and an after, as she did similarly for the remains from Middleton. The truncation of the émigrés' lives and the melancholy of Smith's poem are the reasons the poem may be considered as an elegy. The poem may also be regarded as a history. Fritzsche explains that history "is written on the open road, along which fugitives and refugees travel and take stock of their displacement as they survey scenes of terrible destruction and imagine the homes they once possessed" (121). It is exactly people like the émigrés Smith describes who are "witnesses to history," according to Fritzsche (121). As a persona within the poem as well as a meta-textual commentator, Smith arrives at the truth about the émigrés through her melancholic perspective. Part of this "truth" about them, however, is the "unwelcome" one (1.246) that, because all are equal, many of these émigrés required humbling while they were yet in France. Yet Smith fills in the space between their present and past with meaning, for she, too, has experienced a disconnect between weaving the wreath "with aquatic flowers" in childhood and awakening "to never-ending toil, / To terror and to tears" as an adult (2.343, 350-1). Melancholy is mentioned in three places in the two-part poem: the ocean "melancholy rolls its refluent tides" (1.159); the mother of the "gay unconscious children" (1.204) playing with stones and shells on shore is "lost in melancholy thought" (1.213); and finally, the tale the exiles tell the speaker is a "melancholy" one (2.239). The progression of these references suggests that the ocean is the primary source of melancholy, for it separates the miserable exiles from everything that contributed to their identity in France. The speaker of the poem is determined to join their sad present with their longed-for past in order to give them a

history that she at one point desired for herself. She had been an exile in France and had wistfully looked across the Channel from the opposite shore:

I mourn your sorrows; for I too have known
Involuntary exile; and while yet
England had charms for me, have felt how sad
It is to look across the dim cold sea,
That melancholy rolls its refluxing tides
Between us and the dear regretted land
We call our own. (1.155-61)

After confessing her own exilic experience, the speaker acknowledges that the émigrés in gazing across the waves from the English shore seem to hear upon the wind “the deep groans / Of martyr’d Saints and suffering Royalty” (165-6). Their suffering has travelled with them though they are cut off from the context that gave them meaning. Garnai comments that Smith’s “preoccupation with exile and displacement” provides “signifiers of her response to the failure of revolutionary ideals” (Revolutionary 12). Her verbal portraits of the émigrés are meant to inculcate the revolutionary ideal of equality, a lesson, she shows, that many of these refugees have yet to learn.

Though most of the émigrés Smith describes are members of the French clergy, who, except for the “Parochial Priests” (1.180) are accustomed to adulation and luxury, a notable portrait is that of the military man whose “high consciousness of noble blood” makes him think he is exalted “o’er the race of common men” (1.235, 237). Not only does the speaker use the opportunity to express “the unwelcome truth” that “worth alone is true Nobility” (1.246, 240), as mentioned above, but she sabotages the heraldry that was the pride of this aristocrat. She at the

same time provides him with a history—signified by heraldry—and undermines its basis, by adducing the nightmarish aspect of the heraldic symbol “(that with fantastic hand

Mingles, like images in feverish dreams,

“Gorgons and Hydras, and Chimeras dire,”

With painted puns, and visionary shapes). (1.255-57)

Susan J. Wolfson points out that these lines refer to “Milton’s phrase (echoing Virgil) for the fabled horrors of Pagan mythology (*Paradise Lost* 2.628)” (528-9). This simile “sets the stage for a trope on the most famous (at least in Romantic-era imagination) epic simile in *Paradise Lost*, the one limning Satan’s enchantment in Eden” (529). It is possible to see in this simile both a compromise of the military man’s flaunted heraldry but also the concession that he is as miserable as Milton’s Satan, who has been ejected from paradise and is only briefly captivated by the beauty of Eve. The military man is portrayed as a sympathetic character in spite of his pride and we are meant to empathize with his loss, which is all the more poignant because of his fall from an eminence.

Smith’s poem invites an ethical response to the émigrés through “paintings,” as discussed by Mackintosh via Phillips. In terms of distance, Smith brings the émigrés near, so that our reaction will be compassion for the refugees’ abject misery. Phillips makes clear in his work that what Mackintosh calls “painting” was anticipated long before by Lord Kames’s “ideal presence,” which means a vivacity of representation that “results in a loss of critical distance, turning the reader’s experience into a kind of ‘waking dream.’ ” Quoting Kames, Phillips states that “ ‘ideal presence’ allows the lessons of experience to be prepared for or repeated in ways that account for ‘that extensive influence which language hath over the heart’ ” (“Historical Distance” 444). Smith is counting on the fact that her words will move us, bringing together aesthetics, ethics,

and affect. Her chosen form, iambic pentameter, with its regular, soothing rhythm, unites with her appeals to our moral responsibility and emotions. I would argue that this confluence shows that Smith is cognitively closer to her subject than were Barbauld and Wheatley in the 1770s. That she “painted” is even pointed out as a negative quality by one reviewer in the *European Magazine* 24 (July 1793), who claimed that we can discover the poet “almost at the bottom of every page, as we may the portrait of some of the most renowned painters in the corner of their most favourite pictures” (qtd. on *Charlotte* 254). One of Smith’s most effective portraits is that of the dejected mother, a character who in the 1797 *Elegiac Sonnets, and Other Poems* was featured in a poem of her own as well as in an engraving, both called “The Female Exile.” Evoking the mother’s “waking dreams,” in which she seems to see the glories of Versailles again, Smith says with compassion, “Ah! too soon

From the gay visionary pageant rous’d,
See the sad mourner start!—and, drooping, look
With tearful eyes and heaving bosom round
On drear reality—where dark’ning waves,
Urg’d by the rising wind, unheeded foam
Near her cold rugged seat. (1.221, 226-32)

It is interesting that both the mother’s reverie and Lord Kames’s notion of “ideal presence” are called “waking dreams.” Smith draws vivid pictures of characters such as the sorrowing mother with the intention that her ethical and affective appeal will bear fruit. This is not a case of idle preaching, for Smith at the time of writing *The Emigrants* was sheltering émigrés within her own home.

Smith's letters from this time and reviews of her poem serve to clarify the ethical and affective appeals she makes in *The Emigrants*. Though she had probably been offering shelter to refugees since the preceding November (Chen 387), she wrote on 20 February 1793 to her friend Joseph Cooper Walker that she "must write in company as the Emigrants who are yet here, some of whom are very agreeable Men, find some consolation in the society [her] small book room affords them of an evening." Smith adds that the "confusion of tongue" around her prevents her from writing more (*Collected Letters* 62). She had written to Joel Barlow on 3 November 1792 that the "magnitude of the Revolution is such as ought to make it embrace every great principle of Morals, and even in a Political light (with which I am afraid Morals have but little to do), it seems to me wrong for the Nation entirely to exile and abandon these unhappy Men" (*Collected Letters* 48). It is notable that Smith separates morals from politics in this ethical appeal. Her reviewers realized that the poem was meant to appeal to the compassion of Smith's readers. The reviewer from the *European Magazine*, however, complained that it was possible "to reduce and diminish compassion to an almost insensible point, by multiplying objects with equal claims upon the feelings; for the sense of pity itself becomes obtuse and dull by too frequent use or too much dilation" (qtd. on *Charlotte* 256). Smith claimed for herself the ability to have compassion for all, saying in her Dedication to William Cowper that these "interesting objects...excite[d] [her] attention, and...even pressed upon an heart, that has learned, perhaps from its own sufferings, to feel with acute, though unavailing compassion, the calamity of others" (*Charlotte* 127). Saying that the conduct of the émigrés has been such as to do them honour, Smith continues that she hopes "that this painful exile may finally lead to the extirpation of that reciprocal hatred so unworthy of great and enlightened nations" (*Charlotte* 128). Smith hoped

that the dissemination of compassion would lead to peace between England and France, suggesting in her thought the contagious sympathy of Hume.

Like Barbauld and Robinson, Smith was against the war between England and France, and also like them, she appealed to her readers' humanity to take an ethical stance against the mutual hostilities. It will prove helpful to contrast their approaches. Andrew Lincoln argues that Smith was conflicted about the war, hating the conflict as such but finding "the militarized British state and its imperial operations an important source of opportunity" for her own children (128). Lincoln reports that Smith "helped three of her younger sons into careers in the army—a profession that carried a kind of social respectability suitable to the ideas of family status Smith tried to retain" (128). On 7 December 1793, Robinson published in the *Oracle* a "Sonnet to Mrs. Charlotte Smith, on Hearing that Her Son Was Wounded at the Siege of Dunkirk" (*Charlotte* 9). Charles Dyer Smith's loss of a leg was devastating for his mother (Fletcher 201). Yet, whatever ambivalence Smith felt about the war, in *The Emigrants* she paints a similar picture to that of the Dissenter Barbauld—who did not see the war as an opportunity (Lincoln 128)—in her poems *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* and "The Caterpillar."

Lincoln has already dealt with similarities between *The Emigrants* and Barbauld's 1793 essay *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation*; he regards both authors as promoting a "necessary acquiescence in what they condemn," that is, war with France (119). I argue, however, that both Barbauld and Smith, even as they recommend moral responsibility for the nation, always return to urging an ethical response for the individual. Lincoln notes that Barbauld's "anonymous Fast Day Sermon...gave particular attention to the divergence between private and public morality" (123). There is indeed a twofold focus in *Sins of Government*, which offers a personal examination of conscience while showing that the individual conscience is related to that of the

community which “stand[s] this day before the Lord” in penitence (*Anna Letitia* 318). In *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, Barbauld predicts future desolation for England should it carry on with this “ruinous” war (317), and emphasizes the effect that war has on families, such as that of the matron, “[f]ruitful in vain,” whose “fallen blossoms strew a foreign strand” (23, 26). Smith bravely warns the nobility of England that they must change in order to evade France’s fate (330 ff.), and she ends Book I by telling them, “the God thou worshippest, delights / In acts of pure humanity!” She adds, “May thine / Be still such bloodless laurels!” (367-69). She was herself engaged in “acts of pure humanity” (1.368) by harbouring “[p]oor wand’ring wretches” who, “hopeless, houseless, friendless, travel wide” (1.296-7).

Barbauld focuses upon individual humane action in her poem “The Caterpillar”: she compares saving one insect out of “tribes and embryo nations” (16) to having mercy upon a “single sufferer from the field escaped / Panting and pale, and bleeding” (6-7). The victor has “grown human” by showing mercy, she says (39). Barbauld and Smith—who both happened to be friends of Erasmus Darwin and adherents to his physiological theory of sympathy—are in these texts showing that a moral nation begins with a moral individual. Lincoln comments that for both Smith and Barbauld, “[s]entiment and pathos provide a way of reclaiming an instinctive virtue, and so of recovering a natural moral authority that seems almost inevitably undermined by living in a nation dominated by a modern system of war” (135). Phillips’s theories support the idea that it is the abbreviation of cognitive distance on the part of these writers that allows them, though “painting,” to make strong ethical and affective appeals to their audiences.

There are also similarities between Smith’s and Robinson’s ideas of historical representation and the futility of opting out of history. Both poets, interestingly considering their

political stance, are sympathetic with Marie Antoinette. In her “Monody,” Robinson refers to the tyrants

Who, dead to all the feelings NATURE owns,
Mock’d at thy HUSBAND’S pangs, thy INFANT’S groans;
Tore the pale darlings from thy panting breast,
And made MATERNAL woes the rabble’s jest. (49-52)

Robinson regards Antoinette mainly as a bereaved mother and relates to her at that level. Smith also focuses upon Antoinette as a mother when she compassionates her little son Louis: “thy wretched Mother, petrified with grief, / Views thee with stony eyes, and cannot weep!” (2.152-53). Not only do Smith and Robinson relate to the Queen primarily as a domestic figure, but they also know that her sad story has much value in terms of eliciting sensibility, as Edmund Burke knew in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Fletcher describes Smith’s ongoing engagement with this text, mainly in her novels; for the most part, according to Fletcher, Smith challenges Burke through her symbolic use of castles to denote patriarchal oppression (133). Both Smith and Robinson see the Queen as a victim of history and of historical representation. Smith avers that “[p]rosperity / Betray’d [her] when it plac’d [her] on a throne” (2.156-57), and she hopes that Antoinette’s errors will be “no more remember’d,” despite the partisan rage that stifles compassion for the unfortunate Queen (2.160-64). Robinson asks Antoinette, “Who can reflect, nor drop the tenderest tear / On the dread progress of thy fate severe!” (43-4). As has been discussed above, Robinson has personal reasons for worrying about Antoinette’s posthumous reputation, urging, “SHUNN’D be the FIEND, who, in these dreadful times, / Would brand HER memr’y with INFERNAL CRIMES! (177-78). Both poets show through their depictions of Antoinette that the renowned are prey to negative historical representation, a fate

they fear will be their own. They also demonstrate that not even the lowly may escape the doom of nations; both Robinson and Smith portray the failure of the pastoral ideal. Robinson gives us “the mountain PEASANT” who now “[b]raves the dread front of WAR, and pants for blood” (399, 414) and Smith depicts the labourer whom “the bright Sun of Spring” beholds as an “emaciate wretch,” attempting, “with feeble effort, to resume / Some heavy task, above his wasted strength” because his lord has “gone to gayer scenes” (194-201). Though the first instance is the result of war and the second is the consequence of a noble’s abdication of responsibility towards a tenant, each indicates the poet’s skepticism about the fate of the pastoral in aspects of her modern world.

In keeping with Smith’s detachment from the male-authored pastoral elegy, in *The Emigrants* we can see her branching off from male literary history. She refers to canonical male texts not only to illustrate her key points, but also to make a place for a female literary history outside the patrimony that determined literary history in the late eighteenth century. The importance of women in histories of manners was just starting to be appreciated, for instance, in William Alexander’s 1779 *History of Women* (Phillips, *Society* 163). It would have been difficult for Smith, a woman, to publish at all without the patronage of William Hayley, who, “in contrast to Warton and his male pupils...supported women writers and exchanged poems and sonnets with them, including Anna Seward and, of course, Smith herself, who dedicates *Elegiac Sonnets* to him” (Roberts, *Charlotte* 25). In her sonnet cycle, Smith takes on the male personae of Petrarch and Werther and invokes many other authors such as Edmund Waller to formulate her place within literary history (Roberts, *Charlotte* 2). In *The Emigrants*, in which Smith poses as an exile relating to exiles, she reaches for a national literary heritage to grasp in the face of constant political flux but she also insinuates a new literary dynasty. She alludes to the texts of the Bible

(1.29), Edward Young (1.93), Joseph Warton (1.172-73), James Thomson (1.241-44), John Milton (1.256, 2.5 and 2.368), Edmund Waller (2.22), William Shakespeare (1.296-97 and 2.94), and Thomas Gray (2.386). Smith thereby composes her own national literary history, employing five of the poets featured in Samuel Johnson's *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets* (1779-81). In terms of national spirit, Smith worried English nationalists by her pro-revolutionary stance, but *The Emigrants* champions "English hearts" which

Of just compassion ever own the sway

As truly as our element, the deep,

Obeys the mild dominion of the Moon. (1.360-63)

Here Smith subtly aligns English compassion with the moon, which, as she reminds her readers in Sonnet XLIV, "Written in the Church Yard at Middleton in Sussex," is associated with the goddess Diana (Schor 66). Smith implies that it is especially women who show compassion to the émigrés and who therefore uphold the honour of the nation. The new members of the literary roster are poetesses who delight in "acts of pure humanity" (1.368). Celeste M. Schenck contends that "the female elegy is a poem of connectedness" and that "women inheritors seem to achieve poetic identity in relation to ancestresses, in connection to the dead, whereas male initiates need to eliminate the competition to come into their own" (15). This absence of competition was evident in Robinson's "A Pastoral Elegy." Smith does not refer to ancestresses in *The Emigrants*, but through relating her own abjection as a woman and commiserating with the plight of female exiles, she endeavours to graft a new branch onto literary history.

Smith is also unusual among the women poets of her era in desiring an epitaph. Vincent claims that, "[w]omen poets, as we see in Charlotte Smith, distrust the epitaph" (201). Yet Smith often refers to her death, even saying that a "mournful truth" is that our grave "ends the chase"

(1.93). She is also concerned with her posthumous reputation, and cites Thomas Gray by urging, “be it yours

To vindicate my humble fame; to say

That, not in selfish sufferings absorb’d

I gave to misery all I had, my tears. (2.384-86)

This reference to Gray may seem inconsequential, especially because just a few lines earlier she seemed to have stipulated for no memorial:

A few short months, and all the various pain

I now endure shall be forgotten there,

And no memorial shall remain of me,

Save in your bosoms; while even *your* regret

Shall lose its poignancy, as ye reflect

What complicated woes that grave conceals! (2.374-79)

Smith’s self-pity makes us think she wants no memorial; however, the fact that she alludes to Gray seven lines later indicates a hope for a more permanent remembrance. The line she refers to is from the “The Epitaph” of *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, the same line which Robinson may have referred to in her “Elegy on the Death of Lady Middleton”: “*He gave to Mis’ry all he had, a tear*” (123-24). Smith’s use of line 123 of Gray’s “Epitaph” suggests that, rather than desiring to live, she considers herself already among the dead. Schor observes that in reading Gray’s *Elegy* we “become literally ‘mindful’ of the dead, we imaginatively fuse with the sympathetic teller of their artless tale, and, in so doing, find that we have joined the dead” (44). Smith’s positioning of herself among the dead through sympathy means that all her works, but especially her subsequent works, are epitaphic. To quote Parisot again on composition and

memorialisation, in Gray's *Elegy*, epitaphs "of the churchyard and the 'Elegy' itself both function as artefacts of the past, of what has been lost" (122). What Parisot says about Gray is also true of Smith: that "to defy the divine providence that has bestowed this fate upon [her], the poet must inscribe [herself] into collective memory through [her] poetry; only in death can [she] aspire to what [she] could not attain and achieve in life" (124). The last part of this is not entirely true, as Smith's *Elegiac Sonnets* met with great success; among her finished works were "ten ever-expanding editions" within her lifetime (Knowles and Horrocks 19). Yet Smith did "inscribe herself into collective memory" (Parisot 124), and that was even though, from a certain point in her suffering, she counted herself among the dead.

Whereas for Wheatley the ocean was associated with suffering and death, for Smith it was a sympathetic entity, though a perplexing one. As has been discussed, Wheatley made references to "bodies of water that must be crossed" in "eight out of fourteen elegies" (Bly 226 ff.). For instance, in "On the Death of a Young Lady of Five Years of Age," Wheatley refers to the little girl "having sail'd through life's tempestuous sea" and to being "from its rocks, and boist'rous billows free" (33-34). Yet it is not only the trials of life that Wheatley compares to the sea, but also the afterlife itself; for example, in her elegy, "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD, 1770," she imagines the famous preacher sailing "to Zion through vast seas of day" (15). Surprisingly, there is a connection between Wheatley's enslavement and the situation of Smith's emigrants. Jeffrey E. Jackson compares the situation of Smith's émigrés to the plight of those Black people longing for home while caught up in the trade system that Paul Gilroy terms "the Black Atlantic" (228). It is no wonder that the sea had negative connotations for Wheatley; yet, on her way return from England, after she had received her manumission, she penned a poem called "Ocean," which brought mythology to bear on "the

wat'ry reign" (5). In this poem, the sea is no longer a symbol of Wheatley's trials, but is rather a mighty force for anyone to reckon with:

The King of Tempests thunders o'er the plain,
And scorns the azure monarch of the main,
He sweeps the surface, makes the billows rore [sic],
And furious, lash the loud resounding shore. (19-22)

Though it is the "King of Tempests" that troubles the sea, the latter is still a primal force, and resembles the sea in Smith's Sonnet XLIV, "Written in the Church Yard at Middleton in Sussex," in which "[p]ressed by the Moon," the sea "o'er the shrinking land sublimely rides" (1, 4). In each case, the sea is activated by a higher power, but is still forceful in itself. This relative passivity of the sea occurs in Book I of *The Emigrants*; Smith employs many passive verbs such as "baffled" and "repuls'd" (1.71-72) to evoke the sea's activity. She relates the sea's state to the passive despair of the émigrés, describing the melancholy mother as "[l]ulled for a moment by the murmurs low / Of sullen billows" (1.213). Smith seems conflicted between describing the sea as empathetic and the sea as a significant barrier between the emigrants and their homeland. Angela Keane notes that the "oscillations, consciously designed movements between images of the sea as a gloomy portent and a benign force of natural or divine beauty, and a revolutionary tempest, are also erratic and at times contradictory" (50). It is possible to regard the sea in Book I as the "sullen" obstacle to Smith's happiness and that of the émigrés, but by the end of the book, she calls the ocean "our element, the deep" (1.362), indicating that the deep has human sympathies. Finally, at the conclusion of Book II, the sea is a sign of ultimate goodness; the speaker, in a Wordsworthian tone, says that she made her prayer

In unison with murmuring waves that now

Swell with dark tempests, now are mild and blue,

As the bright arch above, for all to me

Declare omniscient goodness. (2.402-05)

These lines convey that the ocean itself has contradictory moods, like a human being. For Smith, if not for Wheatley, the sea is friendly, though not in a consistent way.

I concur with Roberts that whereas Smith's River Arun sonnets display the idea of "a successive, patrilineal progression," the sea in her later poetry "constitutes a nonlinear, nonhierachical space" ("Literary" 664). She associates the former with a male literary tradition and the latter with the feminine, seeing the ocean as a "womb-like," "more female space" ("Literary" 664). According to Roberts, in the course of her career, Smith turned from the river sonnet to that of the ocean, a trajectory that suggests a move from reliance on male poetic models to the establishment of a more feminine poetics ("Literary" 664). Mary Robinson may also be considered as an innovator in women's elegiac poetry. Both poets approach a better understanding of themselves and of their subjects through melancholy, a viewpoint that is partly a reflection of their tumultuous times.



FIGURE 4. *Mrs. Robinson*, 1758 – 1800,
from an engraving by John Raphael Smith after a painting by George Romney, 1781,
Birmingham Museum of Art.



FIGURE 5. *Charlotte Smith*, 1749 - 1806, by George Romney, 1792, Abbot Hall Gallery and Museum, Kendal, Cumbria.

Chapter 3

“Deep in your record of that hour”: the Romantic Woman’s Elegiac Imagination and the Monument

Just as there was a shift in history writing around 1800, there was also a cognitive shift in women’s elegies, meaning that, imaginatively, they were closer to their elegiac subjects than their poetic elegiac forebears had been. Mark Phillips outlines how Romantic historiography changes the distantiation of Hume, for whom “the reader’s affective identification with the past remains quite separate from the conceptual framework that gives history its intelligibility” (*On Historical* 16). Rather, for the Romantic historian, understanding of history is more proximate and unites with the imagination to know historical subjects more intimately. Phillips argues in *On Historical Distance* that for Romantic historians, the “new commitment to historical imagination means that the historian, like his reader, comes to know history itself through a process of participatory engagement” (16). As Phillips shows in *Society and Sentiment*, this new way of writing and reading about history dovetails with an increasingly interior sense of history such as that provided by the personal memoir (320). The new historiography also frequently involves the desire to visit particular places as “sites of memory” as William Godwin expresses in his *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809). Godwin’s text as well as texts of Associationalism, Phillips proposes, “joined with other aspects of the culture of sensibility” to “promote an essentially inward response to the scenes of history” (*Society* 323). Interestingly, Phillips cites Godwin in another essay, “On History and Romance,” in which he says the philosopher argues “for a view of history and fiction that not only brings them very close to each other, but for some purposes elevates the claims of fiction over those of history” (*Society* 118). In this chapter I demonstrate

that Helen Maria Williams, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Elizabeth Landon write histories, that is, elegies, by relating imaginatively to their subjects, whether these are actual or fictional. They are more often fictional. I also illustrate that each of these women poets relates to her dead through the sign, whether this is a tombstone, a monument, or an artwork. My title refers to just such a monument, Countess Pillar, in Hemans's "The Memorial Pillar." To support my argument, I adduce (Henry Home) Lord Kames, Sir Walter Scott, and William Godwin as they are discussed and/or quoted by Phillips. I will also invoke Wordsworth's theories on epitaphs insofar as they appear in his *Essays on Epitaphs* (1810-76).

Before discussing the women's elegies, I will summarize the salient points of the male authors' works. In *Necromanticism: Traveling to Meet the Dead, 1750-1860* (2012), Paul Westover engages with the same theorists as those proposed by Phillips, with the addition of Wordsworth. I will therefore look at Kames, Godwin, and Scott as they are represented by Phillips, but sometimes as they are examined by Westover. Kames posits that the imagination when reading (either history or fiction) allows an "ideal presence," a vivid image of a real or fictional person, attainable because of "that extensive influence which language hath over the heart" (qtd. in Phillips, "Relocating" 444). Language permits the reader to be "transported into the very place and time of the important action," which the writer evokes through "clear and lively images" (qtd. in Phillips, *Society* 109). In *Society and Sentiment*, Phillips emphasizes how "this idea of transporting the reader to 'the very place and time'...carries with it, in fact, an implication of the transformation of historical distance that becomes pervasive in historiographical criticism in succeeding generations" (109). In other words, there was then no cognitive barrier between the past and the present for those thinking historically. Godwin, like Kames, focuses on imagination's role in discovering the dead; in his essay "Of History and

Romance” and his *Essay on Sepulchres*, Godwin “insists on the need to see the individual in his full particularity, which means exploring his private self as well as his public role” (Phillips, *Society* 118-19). As with Kames, the boundary between history and fiction is blurred. In *Essay on Sepulchres*, Godwin implies Kamesian “ideal presence” in that the simple grave marker is supposed to aid the imagination to conjure up the great figure of the past. Godwin writes, “the object is to mark the place where the great and the excellent of the earth repose, and to leave the rest to the mind of the spectator” (qtd. by Phillips, *Society* 225).

Similarly for Scott, the pioneer of historical fiction, the imagination can invoke past times. In his review of George Ellis’s account of private life in the Middle Ages, Scott asserts that “romances give us an ‘intimate knowledge’ of past times; they tell us what ‘our ancestors’ thought, the language they used, ‘their sentiments, manners, and habits.’ ” Scott goes on to say “[f]rom the romance we learn what they were; from history, what they did; and were we to be deprived of one of these two kinds of information, it might well be made a question, which is more useful or interesting?” (qtd. in Phillips, *Society* 280). As for Kames and Godwin, for Scott the difference between good history and good fiction is almost irrelevant, as both stimulate the imagination. In his *Essays on Epitaphs*, Wordsworth also elicits the imagination in reading epitaphs so that the deceased appears in the mind’s eye as “a tree through a tender haze or luminous mist” (58). For Westover, Wordsworth’s “pseudo-Burkean appeal to continuity through the churchyard, like Godwin’s *Essay [on Sepulchres]* reveals an understanding of the grave as at once private and public, the place where the individual, as representative of the nation, lives” (70). Wordsworth’s dead in these essays lack the particularity of Kames’s and Godwin’s dead, but are yet meant to live in the mind through a reading of the sign.

For Williams, Hemans, and Landon, as for the male theorists, the elegy is intimately connected to the grave or monument. This is possible because of shifting borders among the various art forms. The putative likeness between poetry and painting had been considered as early as Horace's *Ars Poetica* (20 B.C.E.), in which he proposed "Ut Pictura Poesis" ("As is the picture, so is the poem") a doctrine that was subjected to intense analysis by G.E. Lessing in his 1766 essay *Laokoon*. "The relationship between the two 'sister arts' is usually said to lie in their imitation of nature" (Oxford Reference). In *Living Forms: Romantics and the Monumental Figure* (2003), Bruce Haley discusses other kinships among the arts. For him, the apprehension of living form means the cognizance of "the living picture" that "makes an impression on the imagination which can never be effaced" (8). It may be immediately seen that this process resembles Kames's theory of "ideal presence." Haley explains that "it was left to A.W. Schlegel to demonstrate the cultural unity of historical periods" through the "inter-art analogies that have always been essential to concepts of cultural periodization." Schlegel, therefore, "made sculpture a figure (in two senses of that word) for Greek drama, and painting for Romantic (post-classical) drama" (Haley 28). Haley not only presents these inter-art analogies, but as I do, quotes Eric Smith from *By Mourning Tongues* (1977). Smith persuasively argues that a finished elegy is a textual monument, which "is essentially an object, a unity, and it is the paradox of art, and the core of personal elegy, that a sequence of communicating words produced by self-expression and able to influence the reader by example, may become a monument, a symbol which, although it is read as a sequence, is nevertheless more than a sequence" (Smith 21). An elegy read in sequence over time may be compared not only to the reading of an epitaph, but also to that of the monument. Haley remarks about elegy that "[a]s form it is a conspicuous achievement and memorializes the subject's own form-making achievement" (189). As we shall see, these

Romantic women memorialize themselves in their own elegies. Isobel Armstrong takes the analogy even further, saying that in Hemans's "Queen of Prussia's Tomb" and "The Memorial Pillar," the "empty tomb and the work of art are closely associated, so much so that the work of art may actually be a tomb, or what is close to it, a temple or shrine, favourite synonyms for the work of art: 'For there [in Rome] has art survived an empire's doom / And rear'd her throne o'er Latium's trophied tomb' " (222). Art in its assumption of the role of the dead is discussed at length by Esther Schor in the Epilogue of *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (1994). In this chapter, I will focus on the elegy's relationship with the tomb, monument, or artwork. Though Haley asserts that living forms do not belong to "memorials associated with death either originally (tomb sculptures, cinerary urns, grave markers), or ultimately (the ruins of cities or civilizations)" (10), I will emphasize that most of my women poets' tangible signs are among the former category, though sometimes also in the latter category. Hemans is unique in often crossing the boundary between elegy and ekphrasis.

Williams produced an elegy focused on a funerary monument, but she is famous for her *Letters Written in France, in the Summer of 1790, to a Friend in England*, a work which straddles the boundary between history and the epistolary novel (FIGURE 6). It also points to relevant developments in historiography. Phillips affirms that the *Letters* "stands a remarkable illustration of the affective possibilities that [Adam] Smith had described in connection with indirect narrative" (*Society* 93). Eleanor Ty summarizes Williams' eight volumes of letters from 1790-96, but also her other activities such as that of "poet, translator, novelist, as well as a literary salonniere in London and Paris" (293). Williams' biographer Deborah Kennedy notes that Williams' chosen format of the epistle with its sensibility justifies her seemingly unpatriotic

interest in the events in France: “Williams had to show her readers that the heart-felt responses that had made her poems of sensibility acceptable would also enable her to write about the Revolution without sacrificing her femininity” (63). In her capacity as a woman poet of sensibility, Williams’ interest in history-making is expressed in those terms. Phillips concludes that the access given in the *Letters* to private thought is the sign of similar developments in historiography; he suggests that “epistolary and journal fictions overcome the problem of insight into other minds by means that in crucial respects parallel the procedures used by historians” (*Society* 93). Williams’ Smithian imaginative sympathy with actors in the Revolution allows her firsthand experience to be transmitted by sensibility to her readers in a way that resonated with contemporary historiographers. Phillips shows that Williams deploys “the epistolary form, eyewitness reportage, and an embedded memoir...that mediate the responses of the reader through the eyes of local witnesses.” The memoir, crucially, relates the tale of Mon. du F, shown to be a victim of the old Regime, which is symbolized by his tyrannical father. Williams is, Phillips continues, “neither an active participant in events, nor a detached narrator, as conventionally required, she is an ideal spectator, universal rather than impartial in her sympathies” (*Society* 93-4). According to Adriana Craciun, Williams is a “Citizen of the World,” whom several recent scholars have seen as focusing on “the Revolution’s female victims and heroines” (99). Thus Williams is regarded as writing a kind of ongoing sentimental novel. For Craciun, Williams depicts herself as the true disciple of Rousseau, that paragon of feeling, unlike Robespierre who is “the embodiment of Terror” (105, 101). Like Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith before her, Williams remained faithful to the original ideals of the Revolution. Kennedy observes that Williams offers through her *Letters* unrivalled access to “an international event of immeasurable historical importance” (122). Distance in the *Letters* is reconfigured through the

intimate format of the letter, authorized by sensibility, and involves a personal understanding of events, including their ethical import.

Williams in her *Letters* has a sense of historical distance resembling that of Anna Barbauld in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (1812). Each woman imagines a future time for her own or adopted country; Barbauld engages with a pessimistic fantasy of future pilgrims from the New World touring the ruins of Britain, while Williams indulges in the idea that future strangers visiting France will exult in the historical associations of place in locations where she herself witnessed history being made. Williams and Barbauld were friends (Ty 293) and both were Dissenters. Like Barbauld in her 1790 tract *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts*, Williams supported “the repeal of the Corporation Act (1661) and the Test Act (1673), both of which restricted holders of public office to Anglicans.” Williams was closely allied with other Dissenters such as William Godwin (Suzuki 408). Both she and Barbauld project what will happen if current events are permitted to take their course. Barbauld in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* imagines a native of Britain pointing out pilgrimage highlights to visitors from the New World:

Perhaps some Briton, in whose musing mind
Those ages live which Time has cast behind,
To every spot shall lead his wondering guests
On whose known site the beam of glory rests;
Here Chatham’s eloquence in thunder broke,
Here Fox persuaded, or here Garrick spoke. (187-92)

Barbauld associates certain places with “glory,” using the word “here” three times. Like Godwin in his *Essay on Sepulchres*, she implies that history lives in certain spots. Williams, on the other hand, imagines a more positive future for revolutionary France, supposing that future strangers

will hasten with impatience to the Champs de Mars, filled with that enthusiasm which is awakened by the view of a place where any great scene has been acted. I think I hear them exclaim, ‘here the Federation was held!...’ I see them pointing out the spot on which the altar of the country stood. I see them eagerly searching for the place where they have heard it recorded, that the National Assembly were seated! I think of these things, and then repeat to myself with transport, ‘I was a spectator of the Federation’.” (qtd in Phillips, *Society* 322)

Both Williams and Barbauld look to the future of their respective countries. Barbauld leaves a prophecy of the ruin of Britain if war continues to be pursued; she warns, “but, Britain, know / Thou who hast shared the guilt must share the woe” (45-6). This wreckage will ostensibly take place when Barbauld has been long dead and will justify the concern expressed in her poem. Similarly, the putative future holiness of the sites Williams names will prove how fortunate she was to be in France while the Revolution was underway. Each woman projects a future contingent on her present, and associates sympathy and ethical significance with certain sites.

Williams’ poem “Lines Written on the Pillar Erecting to the Memory of Mr. Barlow, Minister of the United States at Paris, Who Died at Narowitch in Poland, on His Return from Wilna, Dec. 26, 1812” also focuses on a particular place, that presumably of the memorial to diplomat Joel Barlow. The poem appeared for the first time in Williams’ *Poems on various subjects with introductory remarks on the present state of science and literature in France* (1823). An occasional poem, its heroic couplets are suitable to the celebration of a man who was

American diplomat, but also poet and hero. The couplets have the Romantic signature of enjambments, such as the opening “Where o’er the Polish desert’s trackless way / Relentless Winter rules with savage sway” (1-2). Barlow had been involved in high profile cases requiring delicate diplomacy, such as the freeing of 145 American hostages from the grasp of Algiers dey Hassan Bashaw in 1795. William Sommers, who recorded an account of Barlow’s diplomatic activity on the site *American Diplomacy*, comments that Barlow through this heroism showed “a skeptical Europe that American diplomats could hold their own.” Barlow had the friendship, but also the trust of, “Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe” (Sommers). The case that led to his death by pneumonia was when “Barlow, in forlorn pursuit of a treaty with France, followed Napoleon to Vilna, during the bitter winter of 1812.” En route to Paris via a frozen route, Barlow took sick and died, and was “hastily buried in the cold ground of Zarnowiec” (Sommers). It would be a mystery to understand Williams’ investment in an American diplomat if he had not been a noted poet as well; in Williams’ words, “Far from his native soil the patriot fell, / Far from that Western World he sung so well!” (11-12). According to Sommers, Barlow “was the first American poet to be taken seriously in England and Europe, with such lengthy, turgid but wholly American works as ‘The Vision of Columbus,’ ‘The Columbiad,’ ‘Anarchiad,’ and best of the lot, ‘Hasty Pudding.’ ”

Perhaps Williams focuses on Barlow’s memorial so that she is not overtly lionizing an American hero. Through the monument, she imagines Ruth, Joel Barlow’s wife, and through Ruth she perceives Barlow himself. Williams’ poem gives the impression that the memorial is a towering obelisk seen from afar: “Far o’er the cheerless waste, the traveller’s eye / Shall this recording pillar long descry” (5-6). The memorial was actually of a size that fit within the church Nativity of Our Lady in Zarnowiec and, as Williams knew, was commissioned by Ruth herself

(Sommers). In Williams' elegy, the pillar is conflated with Barlow's grave. Williams appeals to sensibility to understand Ruth's deep sorrow over her loss. Kennedy underlines Williams' notable Dissenter sensibility, which emphasizes an "emotional response to injustice or suffering of any kind," but one that "overflowed into political action, which for Williams and many others was guided by religious conscience" (" 'Storms' " 77-8). Williams sympathizes with Ruth as a moral gesture, and invites the reader to do the same. What Phillips says of Kames is here apposite: "ideal presence" not only "results in a loss of critical distance," but also "has a profoundly important role in the moral education of humankind" ("Relocating" 444). Williams imagines Ruth Barlow in her grief, and demonstrates that for the sympathetic reader, distance is abridged. She exclaims, "nor she was nigh, / To catch the dying look, the parting sigh!" (13-14). This kind of sympathy was evident in Barbauld's "On the Death of Mrs. Martineau," though Barbauld knew rather than imagined the dead. The poet encourages the grieving relatives: "You raised her languid head, caught her last breath, / And cheered with looks of love the couch of death" (11-12). Williams is saying that Ruth Barlow *cannot* perform these acts of kindness to the dying, but that she expressed loving grief in having a memorial raised. Through Ruth, Williams relates to Joel Barlow as well, for she sees through "Sad fancy" (20) the desolate winter landscape that he would have seen before he died, and in which he was buried. Williams sets the scene in her first lines, alluding to "[w]here the shrill Polar winds, as wild they blow, / Seem to repeat some plaint of mortal woe" (3-4). Williams through her elegy is repeating "some plaint of mortal woe," that of the Barlows.

Joel Barlow's tomb, "amid the frozen wastes" (10) also signifies Williams' poem itself. Appearing exactly halfway through the elegy, the phrase "the tomb" suggests a synecdoche for the poem as whole. The poem, like the tomb, is more durable than the ephemera associated with

the dying. As the creator of this durability, Williams is present in the elegy and its invocation of the memorial stone. As Haley explains, “[t]he Romantic elegist is not solely an immanent spiritual presence in the work as a whole. A diminished *version* of him or her can be located somewhere within the work, beside the viewed object, like the auxiliary figures in memorials of the time, a part of the displayed monument” (189). Williams’ presence is most evident in the final lines, in which she progresses from the “widow’d bosom on Columbia’s shore” who will “mourn the moments that return no more” (17-18) to an unclear subject “bending o’er the broad Atlantic wave” while “[s]ad fancy hovers on the distant grave” (19-20). The intended subject appears to be Ruth Barlow, but the “[s]ad fancy” is difficult to attribute, and could be Williams’ own. The poet’s fancy allows her a scope that is not permitted to the simple mourner, for the poet in imagination may fly to the “cheerless waste” (5). It is interesting that, instead of alluding to the inscription on the monument, Williams provides the bleak setting of Joel Barlow’s tomb and memorial. Distance is abbreviated through her imagination of the memorial, but even more through her sympathy with Ruth. This is the case even though the poem’s form is traditional heroic couplets.

Williams’ “Lines Written on the Pillar” may be profitably compared to Hemans’s elegy “The Memorial Pillar” in her 1828 volume *Records of Woman*. Williams was a “citizen of the world” (Craciun) through her sojourn in France and immersion in its culture, and for “the last thirty years of her life, Williams kept on working, in spite of having antagonized Napoleon Bonaparte because she was critical of his ostentation.” Ty goes on to say that Williams “published a number of sketches and narratives of manners and life in France, and translated works by Alexander von Humboldt” (Ty 294-5). Hemans was a “citizen of the world” in another sense, mainly through her wide and voracious reading in multiple languages. Gary Kelly remarks

that this reading, which began under her mother's tutelage in Wales, gave Hemans "a cosmopolitan, internationalist outlook...which prepared her for a lifelong engagement with European liberalism and Romanticism" ("Introduction" 18). By the time *Records of Woman* was published, Kelly observes, Hemans was already "an established poet and public figure on both sides of the Atlantic, as shown by reviews of her work, by the high fees paid her by editors and publishers, by remarks of those who knew her, and strikingly by published poetic tributes to her" ("Introduction" 44). The perceived nationalism of her work led to Hemans's appeal to the German literati; Frauke Lenckos argues that in Germany her "success served as an example of how to evaluate a woman poet who...through the sheer force of her genius, had obtained the privilege to adapt the medium of her male peers." In other words, Hemans was an inspiring example for German women poets who were following in the footsteps of the great German Romantics (137). Other contributors to the 2001 collection *Felicia Hemans: Reimagining Poetry in the Nineteenth Century* include Kelly and Michael T. Williamson, both of whom speak about Hemans and death. The former discusses Hemans "as the major British poet of Romantic death, [who] represented post-Revolutionary death as meaningful death, repeatedly opposing it to the meaninglessness of mass death by war or natural disaster" (Sweet and Melnyk 10). Similarly, Williamson comments that Hemans's "elegiac poems...lament the waste of women's psychic and imaginative energy on a world tainted by male death [and] deplore the absence of any commemorative interest in the histories of dead women" (Sweet and Melnyk 19). He considers "the difficulties involved in representing feminine affections against a tradition of monumentalizing 'trophyed marble' which has insistently excluded women's lives from the historical records engraved on tombstones and sepulchres" (Williamson 25). Like Grant F. Scott in the same essay collection, later critics have addressed Hemans's predilection for ekphrasis.

Noah Comet suggests that Hemans in *Modern Greece* (1817) “replaces an introspective and retrospective classicism, fixated on Greece-as-it-was or might-have-been, with one that is outward- and forward-looking, concerned with the Greek past insofar as it sustains England’s future” (96). She approved of England possessing the Elgin Marbles. Brian P. Elliott contends that for Hemans the putative “liminality” of the art object “creates a pervading sense of loss that allows the poem to hover somewhere between the traditions of ekphrasis and elegy, and it is this intermingling of genres that [she] adopts and adapts for even greater uses in her own poetry” (25). I will draw upon Scott, Comet, and Elliott to discuss Hemans’s ekphrastic poems insofar as they are also elegies, and I will compare “The Festal Hour,” “The Image in Lava,” “The Tombs of Plataea,” and tangentially, *Modern Greece*.

There are signs that Hemans knew about “Countess Pillar,” as it is called, through a reference and a note in Samuel Rogers’s *Pleasures of Memory* (1792). Her poetic account, like his, is a sentimentalizing of history; Hemans adopts his version—which she includes as her epigraph—and through imagination makes the scene an exemplum of the sensibility between mother and child. The note in Rogers relates:

On the road-side between Penrith and Appleby, stands a small pillar, with this inscription:—‘This pillar was erected in the year 1656, by Ann, Countess Dowager of Pembroke, for a memorial of her last parting, in this place, with her good and pious mother, Margaret, Countess Dowager of Cumberland, on the 2d April, 1616.’ (Notes to the *Pleasures of Memory*)

Rogers’ poetic account of the incident refers to a

modest stone, by pious Pembroke rear’d

Which still records, beyond the pencil’s power,

The silent sorrows of a parting hour. (*Pleasures of Memory*).

Haley illustrates how, as in other poems in *Records of Woman*, Hemans “paraphrases a man’s account of a woman’s record.” Haley compares Rogers’s lines, cited above, to Hemans’s response: “Oh, ye have shrin’d a spell of power, / Deep in your record of that hour!” (qtd. in Haley 187). The “woman’s record” upon which Hemans elaborates in her poem is that impressed by the “power” (5) of sensibility, which has the capacity to endure through time. Yet, Hemans diverges from the biographical record, which she was unlikely to have read. The “high-hearted daughter” (19) whom Hemans addresses in the middle of the poem was in life “[d]etermined and abrasive,” especially in pursuing the lands and titles she considered her right. She was small in stature—less than five feet—“but she had a formidable presence, and the strength of will which was a frequently remarked facet of her complex personality.” She even ejected “tenants in a manner which tarnishes her image” (Spence, “Anne”). There is no doubt that Anne and her mother Margaret were both pious; the latter was “exceedingly pious lady, a zealous puritan” (Spence, “Margaret”) while her daughter “defiantly continued to use the proscribed *Book of Common Prayer* through the 1640s and 1650s” during the Interregnum (Spence, “Anne”). Thus it is not surprising that Hemans concludes her elegy with an appeal to Christian belief, urging “[a] loftier faith we need below / Life’s farewell words to bear” (57-8). Anne was raised by a single mother because Margaret separated from George Clifford in 1600 (Spence, “Anne”). It is no wonder, then, if mother and child had strong ties of affection and dependence on each other. In “The Memorial Pillar” Hemans warns against learning a mother’s love “[f]irst with the sound of ‘Earth to earth’ ” (18). Countess Pillar, however, had a more pragmatic purpose than appears in the poems of Rogers and Hemans. Because Anne pursued her rights like a Pit Bull, Countess

Pillar was not only a marker of sensibility, but was also “[h]er most public demonstration” of the “shields and inscription” for which she fought (Spence, “Anne”).

Hemans’s poem is one of sensibility, not cynicism, as Armstrong opines in her article “Natural and National Monuments—Felicia Hemans’s ‘The Image in Lava’: A Note.” Though Hemans would have been justified in expressing cynicism about Anne Clifford, she did not, but rather exalted her as a figure for sensibility. The “blending tears” in the first line of “The Memorial Pillar” are a theme in the poem, as it is often difficult to detect who is crying, mother or child. Hemans uses these titles in the first and penultimate lines of her elegy, emphasizing that she is celebrating types of “Mother and child” more than particular individuals. Haley remarks that the “tokens on the work [pillar and poem] are read as tokens of general truths, true symbols (the universal seen through the particular) arising from the superscripted emblematic” (188). In Hemans’s “reinscription” of what has been written before (Haley 187), she creates a scenario of sensibility, in which tears are the main currency. Her injunction to appreciate one’s mother while she yet lives speaks to Hemans’s loss of her own mother at the time of writing *Records* (Haley 187). She commends Anne Clifford because she had “not, by wrong or pride, / Poison’d the free and healthful tide” of tears (29-30). These lines are reminiscent of Barbauld’s “On the Death of Mrs. Martineau,” in which she encourages the survivors to weep, but also to recognize that “[n]o bitter drop, ‘midst Nature’s kind relief, / Sheds gall into the fountain of [their] grief” (15-16). In “The Memorial Pillar” Hemans similarly addresses the “high-hearted daughter” to indicate that, similarly, there has been no lack of sensibility in Anne’s relationship with Margaret (19). We as readers may infer that, though Anne had a partly practical purpose in raising Countess Pillar, she still deplored the loss of her mother.

Like the memorial raised by Ruth Barlow for her husband, the stone which Rogers calls “modest” is a particular monument in a particular place and is a marker of history. Rogers’s affirmation that the stone “still records, beyond the pencil’s power, / The silent sorrows of a parting hour,” indicates that Countess Pillar has a permanence beyond poetry or art. Pencils were used for both purposes at the time Rogers wrote *The Pleasures of Memory*; in fact, George Dance did a fine pencil portrait of Rogers, in 1795 (FIGURE 7). As indicated above, Rogers’s phrase that the stone “still records” is important for Hemans, and becomes in her poem “record of that hour” (6). Hemans also focuses on the tangible, indelible memorial, which for her marks the conclusion of Anne’s relationship with her mother, but also a truncation of Anne’s personal history:

But didst thou meet the face no more
Which thy young heart first knew?
And all was all in this world o’er,
With ties that close and true?
It was! On earth no other eye
Could give thee back thine infancy. (31-6)

In these lines there is a hint of a lost pastoral, as in Barbauld’s poem “On the Death of the Princess Charlotte”; however, in Barbauld’s poem there is no memorial stone. Countess Pillar is not only a sign of weeping and lost history, but it also presents history. Like Hemans’s poem itself, the stone is both a sign of lack and a sign of presence. The permanence of the stone, as the poet demonstrates in the final lines, invites thoughts of the permanence of heaven. In the first of his *Essays on Epitaphs*, Wordsworth insists that without the intimation of immortality which even children infer, “[m]an could never have had awakened in him the desire to live in the

remembrance of his fellows” through tombstones (l. 50). Yet in spite of the stone being a potential sign of immortality, it could be cause for greater grief because the memorial stone is adamant that the grieved person is gone; otherwise, the memorial stone would not exist. In “The Memorial Pillar,” the poet’s turn to hope may be seen in an elision of the last three stanzas: “Yet, while thy place of weeping still / Its lone memorial keeps...Can I...[t]hink of the love embodied there / As of a vision fled?...Not so!...Mother and child! Your tears are past; / Surely your hearts have met at last” (43-60). Bruce Haley observes that “[w]hen Hemans asks, ‘Can I...?’ she begins to include herself in the scene as a viewer impressed with the tokens of the dead” (187). Like Williams in “Lines Written on the Pillar,” Hemans is both within and outside “The Memorial Pillar.” Both poets fly to the location of their monument and have a birds-eye-view of what transpired.

Like Scott’s eponymous character Old Mortality (novel 1816), Hemans reverently renews the identities of the dead designated by the memorial pillar, though unlike him she reveals their names only in a note borrowed from Samuel Rogers. The narrator of *Old Mortality* reports of this odd character that in his circuit he would “visit the graves of the unfortunate Covenanters, who suffered by the sword, or by the executioner, during the reigns of the two last monarchs of the Stewart line” (30). Peter Pattieson goes on to say that “the moor-fowl shooter has been often surprised to find [Old Mortality] busied in cleaning the moss from the grey stones, renewing with his chisel the half-defaced inscriptions and repairing the emblems of death with which these simple monuments are usually adorned...He considered himself as fulfilling a sacred duty,” so that the descendants of the Covenanters would be inspired “to defend their religion even unto blood” (30-31). Ian Dennis asserts that here “[t]he cult of the nation...is a cult of the dead: dead heroes, martyrs, and implicitly, of vengeful remembrance” (93). Hemans’s memory, however, is

elegiac. The “epochal divide” that Phillips quotes from Scott’s *Waverley* (1814) is here apposite: for Old Mortality, too, “the present people of Scotland [are] a class of beings as different from their grandfathers as the existing English are from those of Queen Elizabeth’s time” (qtd. in *Society* 76). Hemans looks back to a parting between mother and daughter in the time of James I. In *Records of Woman* as a whole Hemans takes a metaphorical chisel to the forgotten stories of women so that the holiness of their affections and endurance will be recollected. Like the graves cleaned by Old Mortality, Hemans’s poems in this volume preserve the embattled lives of the women whose stories she recounts. Hemans wants future women to remember and be inspired by their female ancestors; even though most of the women she invokes in *Records* are fictional, they yet represent true types. Godwin claims that “romance is a ‘bolder’ species of composition than history” because “the romance writer can call upon the widest range of sources and experience, which the author generalizes and selects to have the greatest impact on the reader’s heart and mind” (qtd. in Phillips, *Society* 119). Hemans exemplifies the romance writer in “The Memorial Pillar” and other poems in *Records*. In the former poem, she reveals the story of Margaret and Anne by illuminating their monument. Hemans not only reinscribes “what has been written before” (Haley 187), but she appears in the “quiet sunshine” which “touches...each graven line” and is “[o]f reverential thought a sign” (46-8). Hemans’s reverent presence in the poem is indicated through her “shining a light” on the story of Anne and Margaret, even though in the poem they are more types than individuals.

Hemans and Scott were friends, and doubtless she related to him partly because of his stories embedded in oral culture. On a pivotal visit to Abbotsford in 1829, she was “enthralled by the history and images of aristocratic grandeur encountered there, ‘the rich baronial-looking hall,’ the ‘old rich patrician trees,’ and the ‘many storied spots’ containing histories of chivalry

and clan violence vividly retold by Scott himself” (Chorley qtd. by Rothstein 52). Though Scott showed her many swords, “the flash of glittering steel,” she was most inspired by “the ‘high legends and solemn scenes’ that Scott recounted for her during their daily walks.” She reported “‘taking long walks over moor and woodland, and listening to song and legend of other times, until [her] mind quite forgot itself, and [was] carried wholly back to the days of the slogan and fiery cross, and the wild gatherings of border chivalry’ ” (Chorley qtd. by Rothstein 52). From Hemans’s elegy “The Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott,” published in 1832, one may deduce that she associated him with oral stories of chivalry in light of how these were enmeshed with aspects of his property. Both Hemans and Scott published books that reflected their interest in oral culture. In Scott’s *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, published in three volumes in 1802-3, “[w]hat began as a modest proposal to collect and edit a small volume of a handful of Borders ‘riding’ (or raiding) ballads grew into a finished collection of no fewer than seventy-seven ballads, forty-three of which had never appeared in print before—surrounded by a vast scholarly apparatus of footnotes, headnotes, prefatory material, and appendices” (McNeil 22). Kenneth McNeil describes how this kind of antiquarianism—which Scott later gently mocked in *The Antiquary* (1816)—“both reflected and promulgated a shift in thinking about orality and oral sources in the late eighteenth century” (24). “Orality,” McNeil affirms, at end-century “became the authenticating imprimatur of antiquarian material deemed uniquely Scottish” (25). He goes on to illustrate how orality bolstered Scottish nationalism, a movement of which Scott was acutely aware. Much like Scott’s *Minstrelsy*, Hemans’s *A Selection of Welsh Melodies* (1822) drew upon a “tradition of patriotic song,” appropriating “the liberal Romantic and nationalist discourse of folksong” while remaking the author as “a Welsh Corinne” (Kelly, “Introduction” 33). This was in spite of the fact that Hemans was born in Liverpool and moved to Wales when

she was six (Kelly, “Introduction” 86). Nonetheless, it was no wonder she sympathized with Scott’s love of his country’s own oral culture.

Hemans’s “On the Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott” reflects Scott’s interest in orality, especially as it appears in the polyglossia of a novel like *Old Mortality*. The elegy was first published in *Blackwood’s* as “The Burial of the Mighty” in November 1832, the month after Scott’s death (Westover 79). While Westover reads the elegy primarily as an example of “literary pilgrimage” (79), I regard it more as Hemans’s exercise in addressing Scott’s orality. Dennis avers that “the much-maligned ‘standard English’ of Scott’s heroes is spoken in dialogue with, often in opposition to, other kinds of speech, and that this opposition—nowhere more clearly than in *Old Mortality*—can be a kind of heroism in itself” (92). *Old Mortality* himself speaks in a broad Scotch, and his narrator Pattieson, according to *his* narrator, has the voice of a preacher “who delighted in the collection of olden tales and legends and in garnishing them with the flowers of poesy, whereof he was a vain and frivolous professor” (9). The reader can deduce that this is Scott poking fun at himself. Regarding Hemans’s elegy, Westover makes the point, “Who gets to speak when a writer ‘reads’ the dead?” (79). Throughout the elegy there is an emphasis on sound; for instance, in the first line, a “GLORIOUS voice hath ceased,” and in response, “the funeral chant” must be “[b]reath[ed] reverently” (1-3). The “dying year” has a “hollow murmur,” and it is a “more Aeolian melancholy tone / Than ever wail’d o’er bright things perishing” (4-7). The mystery of who utters the Aeolian melody is germane to the mystery of all the sound in this poem. Scott is notably silent, and yet the offspring of his lips make noise:

And he is silent!—he, whose flexile lips
Were but unseal’d, and lo! A thousand forms,
From every pastoral glen and fern-clad height,

In glowing life upsprang:--Vassal and chief,
Rider and steed, with shout and bugle-peal,
Fast rushing through the brightly troubled air,
Like the wild huntsman's band. And still they live,
To those scenes imperishably bound. (22-9)

These lines suggest that when Hemans pictures Scott, she thinks of his voice narrating stories, especially as these are "imperishably bound" to particular scenes at Abbotsford. 'Picturing voice' is an oxymoron, but so is her statement that "the wanderer who hath listen'd there" is startled by the forms that reveal "the seer's voice: phantoms of colour'd thought, / Surviving him who raised" (31-3). One would expect Hemans to allude to the seer's imagination, but instead she refers to his *voice*. She indicates that Scott was cognizant of all the "accents" of "humanity" (47, 44), that he had a polyglossic knowledge. Who voices these phantoms now that Scott is dead? Now not only is he silent, but his "last abode" is "voiceless" (51-2). The voiceless tomb recalls another elegy Hemans wrote, the "Dirge of the Highland Chief in 'Waverley,' " about Scott's memorable tragic hero, Fergus MacIvor. The main difference is that his murdered body is far from his Highland hold, which yet grows sympathetically silent:

On thy blue hills no bugle-sound
Is mingling with the torrent's roar,
Unmarked the wild deer sport around—
Thou lead'st the chace no more!
Thy gates are closed, thy halls are still,
Those halls where pealed the choral strain,
They hear the wind's deep murmuring thrill—

And all is hushed again. (25-32)

Because Fergus MacIvor was brutally executed, his body cannot yield relics to his faithful Highland followers, but Scott's may do so to his adherents. As Fergus was to his clan, Hemans imagines Scott to be to those he inspired; for her, he is a knight, "laid lonely with his sword / Beneath his head" (57-8).

In "On the Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott," Hemans, who first knew Scott through his voice, must come to know him through his relics, those of his mind and those of his body. Through the poem she may be seen as deliberately undergoing a grieving process, trying to reconcile herself to the loss of his voice. Westover asserts that in the poem, "Hemans steps into the role of guide. She arranges her poem in terms of walks and views, of glances and sweeps of the eye" (80). I concur that "[m]ovement, then, opposed to death, structures the poem" (Westover 80); however, I believe that this movement involves a slowly-growing acceptance that Scott is dead. "Breath" is key in the poem and refers to a person's life force, one that Hemans tries to communicate to the silent Scott. She cites breath twice at the start of the poem, "the funeral chant / Breathe reverently" (2-3, 10-11). That Hemans says "breathe" rather than "sing" indicates she wishes to push breath into Scott's lifeless body. "Singing" (39) appears only when she finally acknowledges that his "power" (34) to make "the genii" come (39)—that is, his faculty of creating "ideal presence"—is dead. He used to be "lord of the buried past" (35), he "whose breathings could wake the dead" (34). Scott's former "breathings" contrast with his current lack of breath; he is now "to those dim nations join'd" (36). This is a puzzling sentiment, considering that Hemans has said of Scott's characters: "And still they live" (28). Westover claims that with her "refrain, 'And he is silent!,' the poem emphasizes that only readers and writers (like Hemans) can give Scott voice now" (81).

In the last part of the poem, Hemans comes to accept Scott's death through his tomb and his relics. Not only is the title of the elegy quotidian in that it reflects the everyday, but the tomb itself is comfortingly familiar. Westover comments on the phrase "[a] still majestic spot," saying that "still" could be either an adjective or an adverb (80). For him, the "imploring beauty of decay" is reminiscent of Thomas Gray's statement in his *Elegy* that the grave "[i]mplores the passing tribute of a sigh" (qtd. in Westover 80). Perhaps Hemans is saying she relates to the dead Scott through this most popular of elegies that attempts to make peace with death. When she calls Scott's grave a future "shrine" and "alter [sic]" (60), she is imagining a future time, much as Williams imagines a time when tourists will come to Champs de Mars, or Barbauld pictures future Americans coming to the ruin of London. Each of these three women imagines herself as part of the future view she is projecting. At the site of Scott's tomb, Hemans relates to him as relic. Instead of lamenting his voice, she shows it is now the tomb itself that draws her, for it emanates Scott's gift: "every weed / Shall have its portion of the inspiring gift / From buried glory breathed" (64-66). Now Scott himself has breath, in a mysterious way, and can communicate his gift. He seems to hover between life and death in the way evoked by Godwin: "Portraits may be imaginary; the scenes where great events have occurred are the scenes of the events no longer; but the dust that is covered by the tomb, is simply and literally *the great man himself*" (qtd. in Phillips, *Society* 325). Hemans seems to adopt a view similar to Godwin's about the dust of the dead, but in the poem's final lyric, it is as though she contradicts her previous position.

Hemans's closing hymn in "On the Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott" is an address to the Deity and appears to be a reconsideration of what has gone before. Whereas the poem proper depicts Scott as a matchless genius whose gift permeates even the vegetation above his body, the

hymn takes a suppliant position and imagines Scott's soul, like that of everyone else, 'naked' before the Creator. Here Hemans makes a religious appeal through the lyric. She had promised a "victorious melody" to close her poem, but instead she embraces "[a] lowly, lowly song" (71), "[o]wning that life and death / Alike are [God's]" (76-7). Scott, "the lord / Of each deep bosom chord" (90-1), that is, the master of sympathetic storytelling, has, "[u]nmantled and alone" (93) gone to meet his God like everyone else:

So, from his harvest home,
Must the tired peasant come;
So, in one trust,
Leader and king must yield
The naked soul, reveal'd
To Thee, All Just! (96-101)

Like the "tired peasant," Scott must stand, a "naked soul," before his Creator. Hemans makes clear that our gifts, physical or intellectual, are on loan to us, just as the "radiance" that is Scott was "[t]o earth but lent" (82-3). She suggests that even our breath is borrowed, for in the fourth line of the first and last stanzas of the song she references our "suppliant breath" (75, 123). These instances of "breath" recall the first part of the poem, but there it appeared to be a purely human power. Hemans here implies that without God we are literally breathless, and she sees Scott's mourners "[w]atching in breathless awe, / The bright head bow'd...Beneath [God's] hand" (84-6). She sees her Knight giving up the accoutrements of his knighthood at the time when "spear, and shield, and crown, / In faintness are cast down" (111-12). One wonders about Hemans's position on the lasting nature of genius, whether it exists in the dust of the great, as for Godwin, or in the hereafter. I believe that, for Hemans, the answer often lies between these two poles:

genius resides in relics such as books, which contain traces of the departed soul, but it also lingers in the dust.

While Hemans's closing lyric may seem to embody a typically feminine sentiment about death, her poem as a whole baffles any attempt to place it in the annals of the woman's elegy. As quoted above, Anne K. Mellor reports: "By far the greatest number of female-authored elegies that suggest that consolation is possible locate that solace in heaven, in the Christian faith in an afterlife that promises reunion with the lost beloved" ('Anguish' 449). Hemans grants no solace in the lyrical part of the poem, but rather a sobering warning about the death we will each face. There is actually more promise of meeting Scott again in the 'secular' part of the poem, either through his characters or through his relics. Similarly, "The Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott" may be regarded as the record of a community event, thus emphasizing the "community" which Celeste M. Schenck says is typical of female elegies (15); however, though Hemans does employ plural pronouns, there is no indication that she joins this community, even in imagination. There is no personal 'I,' but instead an overarching perspective on the event which sympathizes with Scott and the progeny of his mind. We are to understand that, as Westover claims, without a reader like Hemans, these characters would not live. Finally, though the idea of poetic inheritance is not usually stressed in female elegies, Hemans shows herself to be intensely concerned with her fame. Westover observes that "[t]he ambiguity of a living poet's significance becomes an important concern for Hemans: in memorializing poets, she also imagines her own death and posthumous reception" (82). It speaks to her modesty, though, that immediately before her death, Hemans predicted that her "poetry, except some half-dozen pieces, may be consigned to oblivion" (Chawton House).

Hemans subverts our expectation of her as a female poet in other poems such as “The Festal Hour,” which seems like ‘classical’ historiography contrasting with the more ‘female’ historiography in a related poem, “The Image in Lava.” These were published, respectively, in 1823 and 1827, and in the first poem she establishes the context for the second. In “The Festal Hour,” Hemans contrasts historical tragedies with the celebrations that preceded them. This is why the poem may be examined as an elegy. She fabricates these parties for a didactic purpose, a purpose made clear in the first line: “When are the lessons given / That shake the startled earth?” (1-2). Not only does Hemans adopt the critical distance of classical historians, but she traces “causes and consequences” (Phillips, *Society* 41) in the history she discusses, a practice that stems from her stated moral. Hemans appears to be conforming to the age-old expectation that history should be morally instructive, an expectation to which Hugh Blair gives voice in 1783: “As it is the office of an Orator to persuade, it is that of an Historian to record truth for the instruction of mankind” (qtd. in Phillips, *Society* 14). Hemans’s lesson is twice told, in the second and second-last stanzas, and is simply, “Fear ye the festal hour!” (8, 93). This warning is against pride or hedonism because of the death we all face; she closes with “Oh! far too daring seems the joy of earth, / So darkly press’d and girdled in by death!” (104-5). She is saying that revelry tempts fate, as in such a scenario in Athens, 514 B.C.E.:

The marble shrines were crown’d:
 Young voices, through the blue Athenian sky,
 And Dorian reeds, made summer-melody,
 And censers waved around;
 And lyres were strung, and bright libations pour’d,
 When, through the streets, flash’d out th’ avenging sword,

Fearless and free, the sword with myrtles bound. (15-21)

This is one of six historical vignettes that Hemans offers in order to contrast a celebration with the devastation that follows. Notably, her perspective is detached and somewhat “impartial” (Phillips, *Society* 38), like that of classical historians; however, her method involves the presentation of vivid pictures, called by Blair and followers “Historical Painting” (qtd in Phillips, *Society* 42).

Interestingly, not only does Hemans invent the celebrations she paints, but she also provides some misleading details about the history itself. For instance, in the above example, what actually happened was the intended assassination of the ruling tyrant Hippias and his brother Hipparchus, after the latter showed interest in Aristogeiton’s friend Harmodius. Both would-be assassins were killed in 514 B.C.E. (Britannica). Babylon, whose fall is pictured in the first vignette, fell almost without a struggle to Cyrus II of Persia in 539 B.C.E. (Britannica). Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus, described in the third example, did indeed lead his enemy Perseus in chains after a victory over Macedon in 167 B.C.E., the same year in which Lucius’s two young sons died (Britannica). This example, and the fifth, the destruction of Herculaneum in 79 C.E. by volcanic ash, are the only two historical illustrations in the poem that are natural tragedies. They are also truly represented, for the most part. There is no historical record that Mark Antony heard “[s]ounds, by no mortal made” (46), the night before his suicide in 30 C.E. Finally, the last vignette, Hemans’s first reference to Britain, implies that the Saxons invaded a Druid feast at which mead abounded, whereas in fact the Druids were suppressed by Tiberius in the first century C.E. and the Saxons spread along the British coast in the fifth century C.E. (Britannica). While Hemans does not always align her verses with historical fact, her history

does possess the “linearity and perspicuity” which Phillips describes as “classical” historical ideals (*Society* 8).

In “The Festal Hour” Hemans draws on attributes associated with classical historiography, but she also makes clear that she is a woman telling these stories. Phillips refers to the generic expectations of history in the late-eighteenth century, when “[h]istory was defined by its appropriateness to an active, adult male reader, whose interests and capacities were contrasted to the youthful, female, and private readership ascribed to the novel (and to some extent, the biography as well)” (*Society* 103). Though she is writing many years later, Hemans’s selection of historical exempla seems to conform to this classical prescription. The historical actors she adduces are mostly famous men who have public and political roles; for example, Hemans does not mention that a woman’s suicide, that of Cleopatra, followed that of Antony (*Britannica*). As in “The Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott,” Hemans offers no heavenly consolation for the bereaved; she depicts a history of violence and retribution, such as that in *Old Mortality*. Her focus on violence by or towards major male figures may reflect a classical aesthetic. One might apply Armstrong’s statement that Shelley’s “Ozymandias” is “a fierce meditation on the continuity of violence” (216). Yet, the way in which Hemans portrays the celebrations is reminiscent of the novel; for example, the theme of grape wine (or mead, in the last vignette) flowing like water runs through the poem and summons the theme of life force, or blood spilt like wine. This celebratory motif could be found in a novel. That Hemans gives us insights into the pleasurable activities of famous men suggests the interior revelation of the novel, though she does not give direct access to anyone’s thoughts. She ensures that we readers understand that it is a woman telling this history; she speaks of bridal myrtles twice (21, 96) and

of “the bridal rose” in the second-last stanza (94). Even more compellingly, Hemans gives a hint of the provenance of her history through her discussion of Lucius Macedonius:

And many a Dryad’s bower
Had lent the laurels, which, in waving play,
Stirr’d the warm air, and glisten’d round his way,
As a quick-flashing shower. (29-32)

It is as though Hemans were saying this may seem like a classical history, but it is women who “lent the laurels” (30), that is, it is women who facilitate men’s public actions and decorate the victor. Hemans’s poem as a whole is a “sword with myrtles bound” (21), a masculine story told from a woman’s point of view.

In her much more famous poem “The Image in Lava,” Hemans’s subject is a relic, something which oddly has no place in “The Festal Hour,” not even in the section on Herculaneum. Her relic invites a sympathetic response through the imagination. In “The Festal Hour,” the poet seems to distrust the relic as an object of greed or even violence. Armstrong, again in reference to “Ozymandias,” asserts that “the ruin and the material remains are the means by which violence is perpetuated and monumentalized, even when that embodiment takes the form of critical representation” (217). In “The Festal Hour,” Hemans avoids that particular type of violence; she also, by not naming the locations of relics, is able to remain vague in her historical accounts. “The Image in Lava,” however, addresses a very distinctive relic, the imprint of a mother shielding her infant from the ashes covering the city of Herculaneum in 79 C.E. Hemans provides a footnote to this effect in the *New Monthly Magazine*, September 1827, the first venue in which her poem was published (Armstrong 218). The year after, she republished the poem in *Records of Woman*. Haley argues regarding this collection that it

deals with various original memorials, none of them adequate by themselves either to memorialize the subject or to objectify the viewer / poet's own personal feelings. To gain these ends, her poems seek to remonumentalize the record....I would argue, the stone forms that dominate the significant landscape of *Records of Woman* are ideographic signatures of the poet's public self. (184)

The poem which Hemans produces on this relic is yet another imprint on the lava, another monument. It manifests her erasure of distance between herself and the relic, because she sympathizes at the most visceral level with this mother and child. Hemans had lost her own beloved mother in the same year that "The Image in Lava" was published (Armstrong 218). Armstrong observes that this loss was "a devastating blow for her, and the obvious personal context for the poem" (218). Rather than narcissistically imposing her own impression on the relic, Hemans becomes one with it and invites us to do the same. She is at once the protective mother and the sheltered child who feels safe in its mother's arms.

Various critics have noted that Hemans leaves open the mould of mother and child so that the hollow may be filled. Armstrong compares "Ozymandias" to "The Image in Lava" and argues that Hemans "leave[s] an open, indeterminate meaning, a 'mould' for the reader to 'fill' with significance" (218). Similarly, Grant F. Scott argues that the poem "sets an absence of space, a hollow, though it is charged with the magnetic energy of maternal love" (50). More recently, Brian P. Elliott asserts that the meaning of the poem comes from Hemans's projected emotion. Her "reimagining" of the "ekphrastic object as monument....replaces the disregarded historical record" and, "along with the powerful affective dimension added by the speaker's desire, instills an air of mourning that shifts the poem into the delicate space of elegy" (38). Rather than arguing with Elliott that Hemans replaces the "original historical figure" with her

own “projected emotional contexts” (33), I contend that Hemans invites us to relate to the mother and child sympathetically via a Kamesean “ideal presence.” While I maintain that Hemans fills the hollow with sensibility—which is like affective projection—I suggest that she does so with the intent of reaching through time to an embodied woman and her child. She does so through ekphrasis, a tradition which, for Elliott, “hover[s]” near that of elegy (25).

Elliott acknowledges that Hemans “presents a paradoxical collapse of distance” (27), like that argued above regarding Hemans’s distance from the mother and child; he also discusses the “effacement of those originals...under the pressures of time and distance” (34). Instead, I propose that Hemans attempts to reach those originals with her reader through sympathy, though now the onus is on the reader. Phillips observes that Kames’s effect of “ideal presence” “requires a reader who is wholly receptive...[who] loses all sense of the separation of art and life and enters the pages as if in a dream.” Phillips proceeds to quote Kames’s *Elements of Criticism* (1762):

The reader’s passions are never sensibly moved, till he be thrown into a kind of reverie, in which state, losing the consciousness of self, and of reading, his present occupation, he conceives every incident as passing in his presence, precisely as if he were an eye-witness. (qtd. in *Society* 108)

Phillips continues that for Kames, “[n]arration and description should aim to present clear and lively images. Unnecessary detail should be suppressed, but whenever particularity is needed to carry the sense of actuality, description must be as minute as possible” (*Society* 109). This enabling of the imagination has moral significance. Phillips insists that “Kames regarded ideal presence in relation to more traditional notions of the didactic power of history and other literatures” (*Society* 110). In Hemans’s “The Image in Lava” we can see both evocative description and its moral import. For instance, Hemans invokes images such as “the mournful

seal” (3), the “trace” left by a “woman’s heart” (7), “childhood’s fragile image” (9), the moment when “suddenly the fiery tomb / Shut round each gentle guest” (15-16), the child “[o]n ashes here impressed” (22), the nothing “[b]ut thorns on which to lean” (28), the mother’s “impassion’d grasp” (32), and this entire stanza:

Oh! I could pass all relics
Left by the pomps of old,
To gaze on this rude monument,
Cast in affection’s mould. (33-6)

Phrases such as these allow the reader to enter into Hemans’s thoughtful, imaginative viewing of the ancient artifact. Moreover, the reader is made aware of the necessity of responding with the ethical intent of feeling, but also promulgating, sympathy for “trace[s]” of a “woman’s heart” (7).

The reader is encouraged to relate imaginatively to the relic through sensibility, which is portrayed as a primal force. We must relate imaginatively, for we do not see the relic anymore than Hemans herself did and must rely on ekphrastic description. As Armstrong points out, “Hemans does not seem to have known that two small girls ran beside her, holding on to her garments” (214). Hemans’s relic invites a sympathetic response that must exceed the domineering gaze. Hemans’s relic is encountered primarily through sensibility, for it could be appreciated even by a blind person who could trace the contours with her finger and sense the magnetic energy. The poem concerns feelings more than the “image” of the title. Sensibility is the source of the relic’s significance, as is made clear in the first stanza:

Thou thing of years departed!
What ages have gone by,

Since here the mournful seal was set

By love and agony!. (1-4)

The love between mother and child was so strong that it was an active force, setting a “mournful seal” on the burning ashes. Without this love, if the mother had dropped her infant and run, we would not remember her as an affective example, and Hemans would not have “enshrin’d” (10) her child in an elegy. Whereas in “The Festal Hour” there are no relics, in “The Image in Lava,” there is recorded a burst of affect sufficiently potent that it endured not only on ashes but also in spiritual and textual form down the ages. Hemans and potentially, her readers, tap into this power and the relic endures in them.

The history that Hemans conveys through “The Image in Lava” is a different kind of historiography than in “The Festal Hour.” The latter, with its detachment, linearity, and public matter, to some extent conforms to the standards of classical historiography. “The Image in Lava,” on the other hand, reflects the kind of historiography associated with feminine reading habits in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Phillips describes the private, inward turn of history at this time, which was associated with the novel (*Society* 103). In our reading of “The Image in Lava,” as mentioned above, we are meant to respond with sympathy, as to a sentimental novel, and ours is a private response after an intimate reading experience.

Paradoxically, Hemans brings the relic into the public realm so that it can re-enter that of the private (Haley 190-91). There is a foreshortening of distance and an emphasis on affect; additionally, as stated, there is an ethical appeal to respond to the relic with affective respect. Such resistance to distantiation is typical of the *Records*, and contrasts with the expectations regarding classical historiography. In “The Festal Hour,” the point of view is distant and didactic, unlike the affective perspective shown in “The Image in Lava.” Hemans dramatizes the

“agony” (4) of this woman leaving her mark on history, and observes that “woman’s heart hath left a trace / Those glories to outlast” (7-8), expressing an approach to history that diverges from classical historiography and its monuments. Haley remarks that men’s wit and knowledge, “according to Bacon, may be monumentalized in their works. Hemans shows how difficult that is for women, whose ‘records’ are ignored by the world at large” (184). In “The Image in Lava” and the “Festal Hour,” Hemans gestures towards classical historiography with nearly the same phrase; in the latter poem, she refers to the “towers / And temples gleaming through dark olive-bowers” (51-2) and in the former she alludes to the “[t]emple and tower” which have “moulder’d” (5). In “The Festal Hour,” the male power structures are clearly identified as belonging to Herculaneum, whereas in “The Image in Lava,” they are generic structures belonging to all times. Haley concludes that Hemans’s “distinction is between male pride, which builds forms to record achievement, and female ‘affection,’ which impresses its own form as a record” (183-4). Each of those two modes is characteristic of a certain type of historiography.

The accounts of the tragedy in Herculaneum in “The Festal Hour” and “The Image in Lava” differ according to their purposes. In the first poem, Hemans offers a dramatized telling of the history in order to make a point about moral seriousness. The second poem, by contrast, is a universal plea for a suitably affective response to the “trace” left by a “woman’s heart” (7). “The Festal Hour” indicates that the eruption of Vesuvius followed logically from the Campanians’ “revelry”:

Joy was around it as the glowing sky,
And crowds had fill’d its halls of revelry,
And all the sunny air was music’s way.
A cloud came o’er the face

Of Italy's rich heaven!—its crystal blue
Was changed, and deepen'd to a wrathful hue
Of night, o'ershadowing space,
As with the wings of death!—in all his power
Vesuvius woke, and hurl'd the burning shower,
And who could tell the buried city's place? (54-63)

Vesuvius is here personified as an avenging force. Not only did the Campanians die, but there are no relics, no traces of them remaining. The poet's question—"And who could tell the buried city's place?" (63)—eschews any sign of hope. This is an historical exemplum, meant to inspire rectitude in Hemans's readers. She observes, "[t]he ground is hollow in the path of mirth" (103). While this warning seems bleak, it also relates to the "hollow" which Grant F. Scott says Hemans gives us in "The Image in Lava" (50). This elegy gives an affective account of a relic from that same natural disaster. Instead of focusing on the tragedy, Hemans "enshrines" (10) the imprint of the mother and child in order to celebrate love, and especially maternal love.

Grant F. Scott comments on the universality of Hemans's message in "The Image in Lava": "In the end, a feminist salute to the constancy of maternal love broadens into a more encompassing meditation on the durability of 'human love,' and an overt critique of war memorials becomes an elegy for the evanescence of all human monuments" (50). The poet portrays the relic of mother and child as enduring beyond the traditional monument:

Love, human love! What art thou?
Thy print upon the dust
Outlives the cities of renown
Wherein the mighty trust! (37-40)

She again contrasts the markers of classical history with love's "print upon the dust" (38), which "[o]ut lives the cities of renown / Wherein the mighty trust!" (39-40). Yet in her final lines about the immortality of the love communicated by the relic, Hemans seems to be persuading herself of its existence with the utterance, "It must, it must be so!" (44). Whatever her doubts, however, this poem possesses the hope that is lacking in "The Festal Hour." The child itself is the sign of hope, even though it was cut down in infancy, because it inspires sensibility in the hearts of those who read or hear the story. Hemans tells the child, in what Armstrong terms a "lullaby" (225), that to its mother, "Thou wert the only treasure, child / Whereon a hope might rest" (23-4). The child was her hope, but it is ours, too, in the imitable love relationship it helps to embody. Though it is a relic from ages past, "this rude monument" (37) invites us to grow more human through our affective responses to it. Hemans presents the monument as a far better teacher than "the proud memorials rear'd / By conquerors of mankind" (11-12).

In Hemans's ekphrastic poem "The Tombs of Plataea," there is a similar nod to classic historiography, even though her focus is the viewer's affective response. The poem first appeared in her 1823 collection called *The Siege of Valencia*. The work she describes is a painting by Hugh William Williams, known as "Grecian Williams" because of his Greek subjects after his tour abroad with his friend, William Douglas (Caw and Campbell). It is possible that Hemans saw the painting of "The Tombs of Plataea from Mount Cithaeron" in the artist's illustrated publication, his *Select Views in Greece*, which appeared between 1823 and 1829 (FIGURE 8). It is also possible that she confused the painting with the painting of "Delphi," which features the lone tree like the one in the end of her poem. In any case, her poem "The Tombs of Plataea" commemorates the decisive battle that occurred in Plataea in the summer of 479 B.C.E., when "an allied Greek army utterly crushed the remnants of the 100,000-

strong Persian invasion force and scattered its turncoat Greek allies, ending the threat of absorption posed by the behemoth empire to the east.” Mathew Gonzales concludes that “it was this battle, not the naval victories off Artemisium and Salamis, nor the legendary doomed stand of the 300 at Thermopylae, that finally brought King Xerxes to his knees.” We do not know how much Hemans was aware of this critical victory for the Greeks, but she certainly engaged with the remnants of Greece, like those cited in her early long poem *Modern Greece* (1817). The latter poem shows extensive knowledge of Greece, and especially of the Parthenon sculptures which Lord Elgin had shipped to England between 1802 and 1812. This is the case even though Hemans did armchair research. The “Elgin Marbles,” as they came to be called, sparked controversy because while Elgin’s removal of the marbles meant their safety from the ruling Turks, it also meant that the marbles were de-contextualized and far from home. Noah Comet points out that Lord Byron hated *Modern Greece* because Hemans “endorses the pro-Elgin view in a way that undercuts both sides of this controversy. She defends the removal of the marbles while at the same time casting doubts on their perfection and on the narrative of historical progress favored by most of the Elgin lobby” (Comet 97-8). Her poem, however, is not primarily about the marbles, but, as said above, it is rather

a theory of Hellenism that, in the main, relegates Greece firmly to the past while granting it enduring, transferable, cultural value. In so doing, she replaces an introspective and retrospective classicism, fixated on Greece-as-it-was or might-have-been, with one that is outward- and forward-looking, concerned with the Greek past insofar as it sustains England’s future. (Comet 96).

My analysis of “The Tombs of Plataea” will demonstrate that, in contrast to Comet’s argument, Hemans does sometimes indulge in a “retrospective classicism” and bring ancient Greece to the

present with instances of “ideal presence.” On the other hand, I agree with Comet that Hemans rejected Johann Winckelmann, “the father of European Hellenism, especially his implicitly (if unintentionally) anti-English assertion that a great culture can thrive only in a warm, sunny climate” (96). Her main emphasis regarding the art object was its “affective dimensions” rather than Winckelmann’s “purely aesthetic grounds and larger abstractions...a move that separates her from her contemporaries and strengthens the connection between elegy and ekphrasis in much of her work” (Elliott).

As in *Modern Greece*, Hemans shows in “The Tombs of Plataea” that all that is left of ancient Grecian glory is dust, but, as we will see, she does not leave us with dust, but rather animates the dust in her imagination. In *Modern Greece*, Hemans employs several words or phrases that recall the dust in “The Image in Lava,” phrases such as “[t]he print of Glory’s parting step” (4); “blended with the dust” (245); “rude grey cliffs” (251); “records of his power” (583); Athens, “every stone, with but a vestige fraught” (799); “[a]s traces left on earth’s forsaken plains” (813); “[a]s aught by thee imprest with beauty’s plastic seal” (819-20). The last phrase recalls Haley’s observation regarding Hemans’s ekphrastic poems: “female ‘affection’...impresses its own form as a record” (183-4). In this passage of *Modern Greece*, form is impressed upon the dust from the outside, but Armstrong suggests that in Hemans’s “peculiar variant on Enlightenment aesthetics” the “artist’s vital energy comes from inside matter rather than being imposed on it” (224). Similarly in *Modern Greece*, “E’en thus, th’ essential energy of art / There in each wreck imperishably glows!” (907-8). While in her sections actually on Williams’ painting Hemans points toward a plain of dust and desolation, she also breathes glowing life into the dust at the beginning and end of her poem. This must be form that is impressed from the outside, rather than a classical landscape painting with its own energy

coming from within. The “traces” of Grecian greatness and the “traces” of a “woman’s heart” (“The Image in Lava” 7) unite in “The Tombs of Plataea,” and both reflect what Elliott terms the “affective dimension” of the work of art (28). Tracing affect in a relationship to the ancient past is possible, because nostalgia for former greatness involves affect.

To speak metaphorically, Hemans is “within” the frame of Williams’ painting only for a small portion of the poem; for the greater part of it, she lets her imagination wander without. In the first stanza, she imagines the battle in Plataea in 479 B.C.E. through an act of “ideal presence.” She explains that these heroes “sleep,”

the men who stood

In arms before th’ exulting sun,

And bathed their spears in Persian blood,

And taught the earth how freedom might be won. (1-4)

She qualifies her image of the Greek soldiers by using the euphemisms that they “sleep” (1, 4), “[s]lumber” (8), and “[r]est” (41). Not only do they sleep, but they are dust, according to Hemans: “man’s departed steps are traced / But by his dust, amidst the solitude” (27-8). No longer do the heroes fight in company, but in death they are alone. As in the main part of Hemans’s poem “The Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott,” here there is offered no hope of heaven. As in *Modern Greece*, “all is silence round, and solitude, and death” (320).

When an afterlife is tenuous, the need to remember through art becomes all the more crucial. Elliott suggests, “[t]he conspicuous sense of loss and absence in [Hemans’s ekphrastic] poems displays the anxiety surrounding an afterlife dependent on material representation” (26). Through her poem, like Williams in his painting, she is contributing to that afterlife. Her sensibility combined with imagination does not leave these soldiers as dust, but rather brings

them to life in the first and concluding stanzas. In the latter, she refers to them and their opponents:

Here where the Persian clarion rung,
And where the Spartan sword flash'd high,
And where the Paeon strains were sung,
From year to year swell'd on by liberty. (33-6)

Modern Greece illustrates that such an image comes through the imagination, for in the earlier poem, for the Wanderer, “scenes of old renown possess / Romantic charms, all veil'd from other eyes” (35-6). In his gloss on the word “Romantic” in this era, Kelly makes clear that it connotes “literature of medieval and renaissance romances, i.e., fantastical, extravagant, imaginary, or idealized” (Hemans, *Selected Poems* 126n2). The Wanderer’s fancies about historic settings are idiosyncratic, and would belong to him alone without the poet to reveal them. In “The Tombs of Plataea,” Hemans’s imaginings are also personal, but she reveals them and makes them universal. She imagines the dead having a material afterlife. As stated above, she appears to agree with Godwin that dust of a famous man “is simply and literally *the great man himself*” (qtd. in Phillips, *Society* 325). Phillips explains that “in Godwin’s vision,”

everything would be left to the power of association and to the sense of place. In consequence, unlike the monuments that found official favor and changed the urban landscapes of London or Birmingham, Godwin’s speculative program of commemoration finds its home in the private life of the individual mind. (*Society* 325)

Godwin’s “program” involved “raising a subscription to mark in the simplest possible manner the burial places of notable men” and asking for “the markers to fix the place of burial” (Phillips, *Society* 322, 325). Phillips goes on to clarify that this vision comes from the doctrine of

Associationalism, a way of thought in which “the association of ideas becomes an immensely flexible conductor of emotional currents” (*Society* 328). Another proponent of this doctrine, Phillips shows, is the poet Samuel Rogers. For him as for others of this school, “[t]he fusion of place and past times seems to have come most easily when the scene was classical” (*Society* 333). The “passive and dreamy mental state” involved in associating places with ideas is “much like Kames’s ‘ideal presence’ ” (Phillips, *Society* 328). The meandering structure of Hemans’s “Tombs of Plataea” suggests that the poet let her imagination run wild with associations after viewing Williams’ classical scene.

Hemans’s response to Williams’ classical painting has formal and cognitive similarities to her other classical poem “The Festal Hour.” Formally, she uses phrases that are almost repeated in “The Festal Hour”; for example, in “The Tombs of Plataea,” “midst its vines” (22) and “[n]o temple gleaming from the steep” (23) become, in “The Festal Hour,” “midst its vineyards” (50) and “temples gleaming” (52). In addition, both poems feature the classical Naiads or Dryads ensconced in laurel groves. The main difference between these two poetical scenarios is that, in “The Tombs of Plataea,” the vines and temples are even within the poem contingent upon Hemans’s imagination, for she spends two stanzas explaining their nonexistence to the moon, “pale night-queen” (17). In “The Festal Hour,” on the other hand, the vineyards and temples putatively existed, but they were turned to ash by Vesuvius. In the former poem, part of the poetic method is negation; Hemans takes a pastoral detour, and pretends it did not happen. It is difficult to make clear connections among Hemans’s wandering thoughts, just as it is almost impossible to trace connections between historical vignettes in “The Festal Hour.” Hemans unites all the vignettes under the ill-fitting moral “Fear ye the festal hour!” (8, 92). In “The Tombs of Plataea,” her subject is purportedly ancient tombs, to which she keeps returning. Elliot

argues that, as in “The Tombs of Plataea,” “Hemans’s poems muse on the negative, on spaces or topics whose existence is unprovable or mitigated by unbridgeable expanses” (26). The gap between Williams and the tombs of Plataea is an “unbridgeable expanse,” but so is the gap between Hemans and the painting. In both poems discussed, Hemans adopts cognitive distance even while she provides vivid images.

In “The Tombs of Plataea,” Hemans gives us degrees of encroaching darkness to illustrate how Greece has fallen since the time of its heroes. The beginning of the poem is sunny, with “men who stood / In arms before th’ exulting sun” (1-2). Soon after, however, “[t]he heavens are loaded with a breathless gloom” (12) and the stars are “dimly seen through mist and cloud” (14). Now the gathering darkness is associated with the soldier’s graves: “still and solemn is the light / Which folds the plain, as with a glimmering shroud” (15-16). The nadir of the poem is when the moon’s rays “o’er a dim and boundless waste /...e’en like a tomb-lamp’s brood” (25-6). The filtered moonlight comes to be such that it is no more than a light burning on a grave. The apposite quote from *Modern Greece* refers to “the deepening glooms, / As dark and lone ascends the cypress midst the tombs” (349-50). Hemans seems to have thought that there was a lone cypress in Williams’ painting, for near the end of the poem she intones, “No vines festoon your lonely tree!” (42) and then glosses her statement with the note “A single tree appears in Mr. Williams’ impressive picture” (Hemans, *Selected* 213n2). In her meandering way, Hemans gives us the 360-degree picture and consecutive stages of the scene painted by Williams.

“The Tombs of Plataea” does have what Phillips calls an ideological thrust, an ethical call to action. This summons relates to the aesthetic of the poem itself because Hemans, either intentionally or not, puts her own poem into question. In the second stanza, she depicts the Greek soldiers as dead, but also the arts used to honour them. She laments: “[t]h’ Athenian lyres are

hush'd and gone; / The Dorian voice of song is fled" (6-7). This implicitly relates to her song, because in the penultimate stanza she insists:

Here should no voice, no sound, be heard,
Until the bonds of Greece be riven,
Save of the leader's charging word,
Or the shrill trumpet, pealing up through heaven! (37-40)

Joyous sound is banned from the scene painted by Williams until Greece attains its liberty from the ruling Turks. There is a suggestion here that the dead will come to fight the final war, for they "taught the earth how freedom might be won" (4) and, following the logic of the final stanza, they will rest "in [their] silent homes...Till rushing winds proclaim—the land is free!" (41-44). Hemans is both within and outside the painting, so what of her song? Perhaps we are meant to see her poem itself as a painting, for it is ekphrastic. She appears not to count this poem as "a voice" or "sound" (37), but rather promotes depiction of Greece in the non-vocal arts to prolong its life and to animate its dead. For instance, she embraces paintings of Greece, like the one she addresses in her poem. William St. Clair reports that specific to the 1820s "was the marriage of literary text and engraved image" and that, in the 1830s, the explosion in plate production meant that the engravings designed for the romances of Scott, Byron, and Moore were used instead for women's romances (231).

Landon's poem "The Tombs of the Kings of Golconda" is also ekphrastic and similarly has an ethical thrust, but in this case her emphasis is not an incitement to bravery but is rather a reminder that our purpose should be to strive for heaven. The poem and its accompanying illustration of the Qutb Shahi tombs, originally by W. Purser and engraved by T. Higham, appeared in the 1838 edition of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap Book* (FIGURE 9), perhaps even

after Landon's mysterious death on the Gold Coast in that same year. In "The Tombs of the Kings of Golconda," one of her last ekphrastic pieces, Landon gives a nod to historiography, but here it is more Romantic Orientalism than classical history. Edward Said famously defined "Orientalism" as a "systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post Enlightenment period" (qtd. by Shehla Burney 23). While constructing her own version of the East in her "Tombs of the Kings of Golconda," Landon does not craft "an iconic image that stood outside history and time, with no semblance to lived reality" (24). This is how Shehla Burney expresses Said's conviction of the mythic nature of Orientalism. Landon instead paints an actual place and its textured history even as she makes that place mythic. She knew about the real tombs, which were in the sixteenth century "built during the Qutb Shahi dynasty (1518-1687)...Historically, the Golconda region was renowned for its diamonds, derived from the conglomerate rocks of the nearby hills, including the world-famous Koh-i-noor and Great Mogul diamond" (Britannica). "By the 1880s, 'Golconda' was being used generically by English speakers to refer to any particularly rich mine, and later, to any source of great wealth" (Merriam Webster). Landon would not have known these derivatives, but she does stress the diamond riches of the Kings of Golconda and show how ultimately futile such riches are. She provides this footnote to her poem: "Thevenot gives a splendid description of these tombs. In addition to their architectural decoration, they were hung with embroidered satin" (Landon, *Selected* 254n). Landon clearly did her research from Thevenot (1633-67), who was a "French explorer and author of the five-volume *Voyages de M. de Thevenot tant en Europe qu'en Asia et en Afrique* (Paris, 1689)" (Landon, *Selected* 289n150). In Landon's accompanying painting, the tombs, with onion-shaped domes like the Taj Mahal, are prominent in the

background while people and horses are small in the foreground. The sky has a washed-out aspect, which with the departed majesty of the tombs, contributes to a melancholic effect.

Landon effectively conveys this melancholy in her poem.

Like Hemans's "Tombs of Plataea," "Tombs of the Kings of Golconda" is not a narrative of historical progress but is rather a paean to former glory and an elegy for a vanished civilization. In both poems, what is left is dust and some historical monuments. Landon facilitates the "ideal presence" of Kames through an appeal to each of our senses. As quoted above, Phillips recounts Kames's conviction that the "force of writing lies in 'raising complete images; which cannot be done till the reader, forgetting himself, be transported as by magic into the very place and time of the important action, and be converted, as it were, into a real spectator, beholding every thing that passes' " (Kames qtd. by Phillips, *Society* 109). In Landon's elegy to Golconda's past, she makes us spectators of a royal funeral, even though the first two and a half stanzas lead us to think we are witnessing a fairy tale. She asks:

Is some royal bride brought hither
With this festival array,
To the city's mountain-hold
Of the kings of old Golconda,
Of Golconda's ancient kings. (20-24)

The last two lines are repeated with a slight variation at the end of each twelve-line stanza, with "fair Golconda" used five times and "old Golconda" used twice. In her first two stanzas, Landon appeals first to our sense of sight and then to that of touch. Her appeal to our inner sight in the first stanza is made through her evocation of the setting; we are immersed in the scene in a Kamesian way through the initial word "Morning" (1) and subsequent phrases "shining palace"

(1), “[m]irror’d on the tide” (2), the lily’s “chalice / With its gold inside” (3-4), and the “glittering ranks” of slaves” (7). All of these words connote a brilliant spectacle in our readerly present. We are taken further into the seemingly joyful scene in the second stanza through an appeal to our sense of touch: the red “banners” are “spread” (14), the pearls are “wrought on each silk fold” (17), the “summer flowers” are “flung to wither / On the common way” (18-19). We may be excused for thinking this is a celebration, for the poet refers to “this festival array” (21) so we expect “some royal bride” to be “brought hither” (20).

The third stanza continues to allow us an experience of the “ideal presence” of joyful celebration, but as in Hemans’s “The Festal Hour,” the joy is cut short. Landon’s appeal to our sense of smell takes a dark turn: first “[m]usk and sandal-wood and amber / Fling around their breath” (30-31) but then they “fill the murky chamber / Where the bride is death” (32-3). Suddenly, we are catapulted into a tragedy, where the King, not a bride, takes “possession / Of an ancient home— / One he never leaves again” (27-9). The scent of affluence becomes the smell of corruption because “the worm hath sole domain” (34). We are thrown into a scene of death and loss, which are imagined as vividly as the prior celebration. Landon invites us to identify with the corruption through a continuation of “ideal presence.” We hear an intimation of Hemans’s desolate address to the moon:

But o’er a dim and boundless waste,
Thy rays, e’en like a tomb-lamp’s, brood,
Where man’s departed steps are traced
But by his dust, amidst the solitude. (25-8).

Hemans’s transition to desolation is more gradual than that of Landon, who deliberately jolts us. Even though the fourth stanza emphasizes the sense of hearing, we are irretrievably with the

dead, who cannot hear: “Music on the air is swelling, / ‘Tis the funeral song” (42-3). Everything that comes now reeks of death; the sixth stanza begins:

Glorious is their place of sleeping,
Gold with azure wrought,
And embroidered silk is sweeping
Silk from Persia brought,
Round the carved marble walls. (61-5)

Landon employs words that appeal to our senses of sight and touch, but she then evokes the harbingers of death:

Not the less the night owl’s pinion
Stirs the dusky air,
Not the less is the dominion
Of the earth-worm there. (66-9)

Landon dwells on mortal corruption more than the other female poets discussed, and in this way her methods are reminiscent of the Graveyard School’s tactic of deploying tropes of death in order to encourage a moral life.

Landon focuses upon what she calls “the mockeries of splendour” (39) so as to prompt us to place our hope in heaven. Affluence here below only mocks our mortality. Like Hemans in her closing lyric to “The Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott,” Landon reminds us that we all die—“life’s common doom” in “Tombs of the Kings of Golconda” (46)—but unlike Hemans, Landon makes heaven attractive. Landon’s fifth stanza resembles an Anglo-Saxon lament that segues into the need to hope for heaven. She inquires:

What are now the chiefs that gather?

What their diamond mines?

What the heron's snowy feather

On their crest that shines? (49-52)

Then she laments "For another is their glory, / And their state, and gold" (54-5). With this memento mori Landon urges her readers to have death in mind, but only so they will place their hopes in heaven in rather than in possessions: the "human heart...must know its part"

In the glorious hopes that wait

The bright openings of the portal,

Far beyond the sky—

Faith whose promise is immortal,

Life, that cannot die. (74-81)

Here, instead of insisting that at death we stand "naked [and] reveal'd" before the "All Just" (100-101) as Hemans does in her elegy for Walter Scott, Landon promises "glorious hopes" (74) and a bright future of everlasting life, a life

stronger than the state

Of the kings of fair Golconda,

Of Golconda's ancient kings. (82-4)

This is not an afterlife that depends on representation in art as in so many of Hemans's ekphrastic poems. As we have already heard from Elliott, "[t]he conspicuous sense of loss and absence in [Hemans's ekphrastic] poems displays the anxiety surrounding an afterlife dependent on material representation" (26). Landon by contrast in her elegy to the kings of Golconda questions the value of "material representation" as a source of afterlife, even to the point of questioning the value of her poem itself.

In Landon's fifth stanza, in her Anglo-Saxon-like lament, she utters this defeat of her artistic venture to vivify the dead:

They are a forgotten story,
Faint and feebly told—
Breaking not the still repose
Of the kings of fair Golconda. (56-9)

Landon admits that the story she tells is "forgotten" (56), whereas Hemans simply says of Plataea, "Here should no voice, no sound, be heard / Until the bonds of Greece be riven" (37-8). While Hemans attempts to breathe life into the dead Greek soldiers at the beginning and end of "The Tombs of Plataea," Landon dramatizes her process of not being able to resuscitate the dead kings. Hemans hints that her soldiers will return to battle the Turks, but Landon's kings may not be recalled from among the dead. Her poem itself suggests futility, for it "break[s] not the still repose / Of the kings of fair Golconda" (58-9). What Landon animates is the setting of the king's funeral, with its "glittering ranks" (7), not the king himself. In spite of this futility, however, like Hemans, Landon regards her poem and its accompanying painting as monuments to the dead. Both may enable the imagination to connect with people from the past, although Landon does question this power. Perhaps she would find more evocative what Haley calls the "fixed shapes" related to "the ruins of cities or civilizations" (10), but she would never have been able to travel to the site of "old Golconda."

Like Hemans in "The Tombs of Plataea," Landon provides us with a 360-degree perspective on the scene suggested by a painting. Looking at her rhymes—which are often divided by several lines—we hear her whole story, the one but "[f]aint and feebly told" (57). For example, in the first stanza, "the tide" is "gold inside" (2, 4) with the morning, and despite their

“glittering ranks,” “the slaves” (7, 10) putatively came to Golconda on “the waves” (5), a rhyme which suggests the darker side of servitude. Adorning the dead king’s bier, each “silk fold” heads to “the city’s mountain-hold” (17, 22), contributing to a “procession” whose point is the king’s eternal “possession” of the grave (25, 27). That he “never leaves again” rhymes with the worm’s “sole domain” (29, 34), a pairing that implies the repetitive nature of “life’s common doom” leading to “the tomb” (46, 41). Though this monarch’s tomb is more glorious than most, he is as prey to corruption as the meanest slave. According to Landon, “the human heart...must know its part” is in heaven (74, 76). Landon has admitted us to the world suggested by Purser’s painting, but she demonstrates that sometimes it is nearly impossible to achieve an “ideal presence” of the dead, even with the inspiration of a painting like Purser’s.

Landon’s eponymous elegy to Walter Scott demonstrates that she sees names as allied with power, especially a name as famous as Scott’s or her own “L.E.L.” As shown by Lucasta Miller in her biography *L.E.L.: The Lost Life and Mysterious Death of “the Female Byron,”* Landon was packaged by the literary establishment as an ingénue who yet wrote suggestive poetry and who was known by “the three magical letters of L.E.L.” (Bulwer qtd. by Miller 13). The idea to keep her identity a mystery came from her publisher, William Jerdan, who saw the value of Scott’s hidden name (Julie Watt). Landon felt a bond with Scott though she, unlike Hemans, never met him. She confessed, “Were I to be asked the writer who has exercised the greatest influence in forming my style, I should say—Walter Scott” (qtd. in Watt). Both women writers regarded Scott as at once Knight and Bard (Hemans 52, 58 and Landon 54). In her elegy to her icon, Landon differentiates between glory and sympathy, saying, “But there was something in thy name, / Which touched us with a dearer claim” (11-12). Then she concludes, “Immutable as Nature’s claim, / The ground is hallowed by thy name” (71-2). For her, Scott’s

name is inseparable from the benign effect of his sympathy and of his union with nature, qualities more important to her than his ability to conjure up memorable characters. Landon's elegy to Scott is more sentimental than Hemans's poem and focuses on Landon's cherished memories of reading Scott rather than on his funeral day. Whereas Hemans's poem is a bugle call in honour of Scott, Landon's is poignantly thoughtful. Additionally, Landon consistently employs the second-person voice to address Scott, whereas Hemans addresses him only in lines 33-37 of her poem. Landon even uses the first-person voice to express her treasured memories of reading Scott in a natural setting. In her elegy, she regards him exclusively as a poet rather than a novelist. In her childhood, Landon had memorized Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (1810; Miller 250), and as an adult she composed "The Lay of the Scottish Minstrel" as a part of her collection *The Golden Violet* (1827), an obvious homage to Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), published twenty-two years earlier (Watt). She also wrote a footnote regarding her medieval minstrel in *The Troubadour* (1825): "[t]he foundation of this tale was taken from the exquisite and wild legend in the *Bride of Lammermuir* [sic]. It is venturing on hallowed ground; but I have the common excuse for most human errors—I was tempted by beauty" (qtd. in Watt). Landon's memoirist Katherine Thomson wrote of Landon's early reading habits, "Happily for her, the pure high toned works of Walter Scott were the reading of the day," unlike the pernicious books of Shelley and Byron. "That beggars belief," protests Miller, "given the numerous allusions to Shelley and Byron in the poetry Letitia published before she was twenty" (54-5). Yet Scott remained a favourite for Landon, even after she moved with her Scottish husband George Maclean to Cape Coast Castle in Africa, where he was Governor. From there Landon wrote to Samuel Blanchard, her biographer, "explaining that she had already completed a series of essays

on the female characters in Walter Scott for Fisher, as well as the first volume of a new novel” (Miller 267). This would be Robert Fisher, founder of *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrapbook*.

Even though Landon never met Scott as Hemans did, Landon similarly emphasizes the oral qualities of his poems. She relates her private reading experience, but she also remembers how she and her family “talked of [Scott’s stories] beside the hearth,

Till every story blends

With some remembered intercourse

Of near and dearest friends,

Friends that in early youth were ours.

Connected with life’s happiest hours. (19-24)

For Landon, Scott’s poems shape memory and bring about community; the voice reading his poems is meant to be taken up by other voices and ultimately brought into community. Scott’s poems are intrinsically involved with her memories of this reading community. As in Hemans’s elegy, Landon relates Scott’s death to the wider community of those who loved him; however, while Hemans makes Scott’s characters live again, Landon *remembers* making them live. Like Hemans, Landon employs phrases that suggest hearing and noise. The first instances are: “a thunderbolt / To hear that he was dead” and the “words of fear” that “[ca]me from his dying bed” (1-4). Thus initially hearing is allied with the fact that Scott can speak no more; his very absence becomes a source of noise. In Landon’s memories, the brook was once sympathetically noisy: “[a]nd sang a little brook along, / As if it heard and caught thy song” (29-30). It seems that Landon remembers reading aloud in her “sequestered nook” (38) of the garden. Just as Scott’s tales “[w]ent back to other days” (44), her putative reading aloud recalled and animated the past in the company of Scott:

I peopled all the walks and shades
With images of thine;
The lime-tree was a lady's bower,
The yew-tree was a shrine:
Almost I deemed each sunbeam shone
O'er banner, spear, and morion. (31-6)

Yet this brook makes noise in her memories only; it is no more: "The very course is turned aside / Of that melodious brook" (39-40). She appears to question whether as an adult she possesses her childhood ability to give Scott and his characters voice. Her secret childhood reading place abolished, Landon may only recall his fame, which "rang throughout his native land" (49) and resembled "the merle's hymn at matin sweet, / And...the trumpet strong" (51-2). Scott's name, Landon implies, like her own, is celebrated. Unlike Hemans, Landon seems dubious that she can give Scott a voice in her present, but she acknowledges that places in Scotland are inextricably bound up with his stories:

Who now could stand upon the banks
Of thine own 'silver Tweed'?
Nor deem they heard thy 'warrior's horn,'
Or heard thy 'shepherd's reed'? (67-70)

Landon here imagines the sounds that readers of Scott would hear in his vicinity even after his death. Devin M. Garofalo argues that for Landon, a poetic voice like that in *The Golden Violet* "bears the capacity to inaugurate human collectives that locate commonality not in nation, but rather in the human physiological engagement with verse" (254). In "Sir Walter Scott," Landon

describes her “physiological engagement” with Scott’s narrative voice but does not overlook the specificity of his birthplace.

Landon demonstrates that not only did Scott draw families together and shape their communal memory, but he also drew a nation together through his “associate sympathy, / The tender and the true” (57-8). This is why she avers that there was “something in [h]is name / Which touched them with a dearer claim” (11-12) and why she thinks “[t]he ground is hallowed by [his] name” (72). Just like the “three magical letters of L.E.L.” (Bulwer qtd. by Miller 13), Scott’s name, once it was known, evoked magical worlds to which readers belonged through sympathy. These same readers formed a reading community based on the same principle. St. Clair reports that

[t]he author whose verse works were sold in the largest numbers during the romantic period was, by far, Walter Scott. By 1836, four years after Scott’s death, at least 180,000 copies of his long romantic poems had been printed, more than 200,000 counting the less famous works, and they were still being reprinted in ever larger print runs. (216)

These record sales of Scott’s poems were possible partly because of his compelling combination of history and romance, a marriage that was itself possible, Phillips shows, because of the mid-eighteenth-century revisions of “the historical narrative in more inward and sentimental terms” (*Society* 103). As we have seen above, Phillips records that in Godwin’s essay “Of History and Romance,” he prioritizes the romance over the history on the grounds that “the romance writer can call upon the widest range of sources and experience, which the author generalizes and selects to have the greatest impact on the reader’s heart and mind” (*Society* 119). Scott needed to reach and unite hearts in order to sell his books; Dennis argues that Scott’s new genre creates “a new desire, which the narrative then satisfies—an excellent technique for achieving literary

popularity” (70). In her appreciation of Scott, Landon moves from the Humean family spectacle to the nation at large, principally that of Scotland, what Godwin calls “the large stratified nation” (qtd. in Todd 140); her beloved Scott, she illustrates, belongs first and foremost to his people. It was his “filial feeling” (45) for his nation that “closer drew the ties which bind / Man with his country and his kind” (47-8). Landon is concerned with the “large stratified nation” of Scotland as well as her own England. She portrays her educational process through the trajectory of her imagination in this elegy, for she shows that one must move from the magical individual reading experience to that of the insular family to that of the nation—even a country not her own. The “then” and the “now” of her poem indicates that this is Landon’s personal history of reading Scott, one that is not “transnational and transhistorical,” as Garofalo claims of *The Golden Violet* (255)

The main theme of Landon’s “Sir Walter Scott” is memory, not only of her reading of Scott, but of a time when sensibility was idealized. Even though sensibility was discredited by the time Landon was born in 1802, in this elegy she fondly recalls sentimental family gatherings in which Scott was read and discussed. Janet Todd suggests that in the literature of sensibility, “emotions are expressed through tableaux and usually draw on the notion of the family unit” (4-5). Landon draws on the family tableaux in order to recall a past typified by sensibility. The fact that all of Scott’s narrative poems are set in the distant past would have aided her project. Todd relates that “[b]y the last decades of the eighteenth century sensibility was felt to have done its work and to have moved manners from coarseness towards gentility; in the process it was judged to have softened or undermined morals as well” (137). Writers as varied as Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Mary Wollstonecraft commented on this latter effect. Landon would have been well aware of this widespread reaction against sensibility, but in her elegy she seems to have just

left the Age of Sensibility behind concurrently with Scott's death. She demonstrates that his poems were a source of family cohesion:

The earnest feeling borne to thee
Was like a household tie,
A sunshine on our common life,
And from our daily sky. (13-16)

Landon's family's feeling for Scott was so enveloping that it was like the sky or the sunshine. She almost deifies him as the source of family goodness: "The ground is hallowed by thy name" (72). Yet Landon shows that this "small, loving, nuclear family" (Todd 16) exists in memory only, and that the "[f]riends that in early youth were [theirs]" are now no more (23). She conveys a melancholy that this family cohesion departed with sensibility itself. Landon also indicates that her first magical individual reading of Scott was allied with her sensitivity to nature. Like Godwin, she associates her reading with a specific place, not the place of Scott's dust, but the place where she made Scott's acquaintance through a book. Phillips says of Godwin, as we have seen, "in [his] vision, everything would be left to the power of association and to the sense of place" (*Society* 325). This "association of ideas" as a "conductor of emotional currents" was popular with Associationalists like Archibald Alison (*Society* 328). Phillips claims this state of mind resembles Kames's "ideal presence," a "passive and dreamy state" (*Society* 328). The association of the mind with nature that Landon describes was analyzed by John Locke, for one, who spoke of "ideas originating in sensation and connecting through association" (Todd 24). Landon in her elegy speaks of "a lonely mountain glade" (55) living in Scott's verse through "associate sympathy, / The tender and the true" (57-8). Yet it is more likely that she is here channelling Rousseau, who by the end of the eighteenth century "became the dominant name in

sentimental thought” and who theorized that in nature, “the mind harmonized with natural beauty and nature displayed human moods” (Todd 14). Todd avers that at that time, it was thought that gardens should be affective, “in a stimulating fashion that varied the moods of the observer and taught emotional reaction” (15). The natural reading context described by Landon is inextricably associated with her first reading of Scott, but now that context exists in her memories only.

Landon bids goodbye to Scott and the Age of Sensibility with regret.

As in Hemans’s elegy to Scott, in Landon’s elegy she must progress from longing for Scott’s authorial presence to appreciating his relics. Unlike for Hemans, however, for Landon, Scott is not apotheosized; he does not enter the next life. In addition, for Landon there is little sense of her as reader animating him again. Whereas in Hemans’s poem, “only readers and writers (like Hemans) can give Scott voice now” (Westover 81), in Landon’s elegy, “[w]e can but weep above [his] grave” (90). This is the concluding line of her poem, indicating finality. Both Hemans and Landon suggest that Scott’s characters outlive him; Hemans insists that “still they live, / To those fair scenes imperishably bound” (28-9), and Landon associates the “ ‘Silver Tweed’ ” with the “ ‘warrior’s horn’ ” and “ ‘shepherd’s reed’ ” (67-70). Landon’s focus, however, is the bookshelf where she seems to locate Scott’s essence:

I cannot bear to see the shelf
Where ranged thy volumes stand,
And think that mute is now thy lip,
And cold is now thy hand. (73-6)

Landon links her collection of Scott’s texts with signs of death, the mute lip and cold hand. He will never speak or write a line of poetry again. Landon’s bookshelf is her equivalent to Hemans’s “voiceless dwelling of the bard” (52), a final resting place for the relics of a great man.

Whereas Hemans imagines Scott's buried remains imparting a gift to "every weed" (64), Landon sees his essence as resting in the books she cannot bear to open. Like Hemans's gravesite for Scott, Landon's bookshelf is the fulcrum by which she understands the deceased and tries to accept his death; her bookshelf is for her Scott's monument. Implicitly throughout the poem, she draws on this bookshelf for individual, familial, and national reading. Scott may be animated for Landon just for the time it takes to say her poem aloud; she does not revivify him or try to position her poetic vocation in terms of his own. She represents Scott's body as utterly depleted because of his poetic gift:

For thou didst die before thy time,
The tenement o'erwrought,
The heart consumed by its desire,
The body worn by thought;
Thyself the victim of thy shrine,
A glorious sacrifice was thine. (79-84).

For Landon, Scott sacrificed his very self for the sake of sharing his gift with others. Yes, his consumed body rests in his grave, she seems to say, but his real relics are in his volumes. There is sadness here, though Landon alludes to "[t]he future for [his] fame" (86). Scott has for Landon a "father's cherished claim" (87); she mourns him as a father and as a "writer she seems to have regarded as her mentor" (Watt).

In her lyric "The Nameless Grave," Landon similarly gives no hint of life beyond the grave, and she shows us that, ironically, it may be better to have an obscure final resting place. She draws on Gray's *Elegy* to express a preference for a humble life and grave instead of a decorated one. The plight of being "NAMELESS" in death is addressed in the first line. Though

the poet says “there is no stone / To sanctify the dead” (1-2), she later promises to “moralise / This lowly stone beside” (19-20). It seems that it is an epitaph that “sanctif[ies] the dead,” but according to Wordsworth, “if the unction of a devout heart be wanting [in an epitaph], everything else is of no avail” (III. 82). This statement, and his opinion that epitaphic language must “uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet” (III. 85), suggest that for Wordsworth, having no epitaph is preferable to having one lacking affective appeal. Perhaps it was the same for Landon; the namelessness of the grave allows her to imagine freely who its occupant might *not* have been. She has an interlocutor, a fabricated opponent, who dismisses the value of a nameless grave with the words

I will not pause beside a tomb

Where nothing calls to mind

Aught that can brighten mortal gloom,

Or elevate mankind. (9-12)

Landon spends the second half of the poem persuading this obstructor that even the nameless dead are worthy of attention. The “lowly stone” (20) is reminiscent of the peasants’ “lowly bed” in Gray’s *Elegy*, and like Gray, Landon contrasts lowly namelessness with assumed glory. The interlocutor’s complaint that here “[n]o glorious memory...efface[s] / The stain of meaner clay” (13-14) recalls the focus on lasting memory and imparted glory in Landon’s “Sir Walter Scott.” The nameless one here does not have the prestige of a celebrated name like Scott, or even that of a warrior or poet, evoked in the second half of the poem. The poet described may even be Scott, with his “waving banner” and “sculptured crest” (27), a close resemblance to Hemans’s “proud drooping of the crested head” (50) in her elegy to Scott. The negative occupant of the nameless

grave resemble the negative qualities of Gray's "rude Forefathers of the hamlet" (16). He names the great only to undermine the associations these names have for us:

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little Tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. (57-60)

In this graveyard, only the un-acclaimed find their rest. They may, however, possess in embryo, qualities of the famed that in their case will never come to birth. Gray emphasizes that their lot "nor circumscrib'd alone / Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd" (65-6). Landon similarly reveals that her nameless dead was kept from extremes, whether that of the "blood" and the "tear" (29-30) of the warrior or the broken heart and "feverish tale" of the poet (36, 38). Just as Gray intones, "Let not Ambition mock their useful toil" (29), Landon reproves "youth's ambitious pride" (18). The main difference between the unlikely dead of Landon and the memorialized dead of Gray is that the possibilities for his "Forefathers" (16) have ended with death, whereas the possibilities of Landon's warrior and poet exist somewhere, somehow.

Landon illustrates that the alternative dead she describes suffer for their glory, which is why she recommends humble obscurity. For the warrior, "[t]hat laurel must have had its blood, / That blood have caused its tear;—" (29-30), and for the poet, his

restless heart first wakes
Its life-pulse into melody,
Then o'er it pines and breaks. (34-6)

We have here two broken hearts, one in consequence of shedding the blood of his foes, and the other through his perception of beauty. Landon deploys the exclamation "What!" (32, 33),

disrupting her metre twice so that we focus on the unsuitability of these geniuses for the secluded spot of her nameless grave. Why would we idolize these tortured souls, is the question. Landon's interlocutor wants the dust and name of the great, as does Godwin. This person complains that here is "[n]o intellect whose heavenly trace / Redeem'd our earth:—away!" (15-16). Gray also speaks of this spark of genius as a former possibility for his dead: "Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid / Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire" (45-6). Gray insists that we allow this chance for his dead and that we not dismiss them summarily as Landon's opponent does for the nameless dead. Landon and Gray both demand respect for their dead.

Notably, the nameless grave is isolated, calling to mind the communion between the dead and the living in Wordsworth and Scott. Wordsworth suggests that "the churchyard is not without its tendency to keep families together" (qtd. in Westover 69). Westover claims that for Wordsworth, "the churchyard is a place that reveals the reciprocity of generations." Westover continues that "Wordsworth worries aloud that modern dislocations, by separating people from their kindred dead, will dissolve social ties, since local attachment is 'the tap-root of the tree of patriotism' " (70). Landon's nameless grave is, if anything, isolated from other graves, which would have provided this community among the living and dead. She notes that "O'er it the willow droops alone, / With only wild flowers spread" (3-4). The key word here is "alone," which is echoed in Landon's injunction to "[l]ook on the lovely solitude,— / What! wish for warfare here!" (31-2). The very solitude that makes this scene affective also makes it lonely. If a warrior or poet were buried here, perhaps his tomb would attract others and would contribute to the "tap-root of patriotism" (qtd. in Westover 70). It is understood that a knight and a bard can be loyal to the state, like Scott.

The isolation of Landon's nameless grave also resembles the ironic isolation of Scott's character Old Mortality, for even as he works to restore Covenanters' graves and thus the community of the dead, he is a solitary himself and at death will lack even a stone (20). Ina Ferris says of his isolation that, "[a]bandoning the temporal signifiers of family and community, he has left his own village to wander alone, restoring the marks of the Covenanter past, to him the only real time and so in a sense not memory at all" (67-8). He is remembered within Scott's fictional world because of oral history, especially Pattieson's account of him. What Landon does in "The Nameless Grave" is give the dead a context and a story of what he / she is not. Ferris affirms of Scott's *Old Mortality* that the narration moves from the past as memory to the past as history (167). Landon follows the model of the past as history, which enables her to interpret the nameless grave. Its most compelling appeal is the meditation it invites on mortality. In *Old Mortality*, Pattieson reflects on a "deserted burial ground" in which the monuments are "half-sunk in the earth:"

Death has indeed been here, and its traces are before us; but they are softened and deprived of their horror by the distance from the period when they have been first impressed. Those who sleep beneath are only connected with us by the reflection, that they have once been what we now are, and that, as their relics are now identified with their mother earth, ours shall, at some future period, undergo the same transformation.

(27)

The nameless grave affords Landon—and therefore us—the opportunity for a similar reflection on "the way of all flesh," without the intrusion of possibly distracting details such as ornaments or verses on the stone. The solitude of the place allows for thoughtfulness and deep peace, as well as union with the dead. As Esther Schor remarks of Gray's *Elegy*, "[h]aving become

literally ‘mindful’ of the dead, we imaginatively fuse with the sympathetic teller of their artless tale, and, in so doing, find that we have joined the dead” (44).

Landon is not alone in “joining the dead.” Williams and Hemans also imaginatively relate to the dead, whether that is a person like Joel Barlow or a civilization like Plataea. All three women sympathize with the dead and the grieving through the sign of the monument, which may take the form of a memorial pillar or relic, or even, as in Landon’s case, a shelf of books. Yet whereas Williams and Hemans indicate their faith that they really do connect with the dead, Landon evinces some doubts about the possibility of giving voice to her dead, such as Walter Scott. She and Hemans remember how they loved his poems spoken, but while Hemans plans to visit his “shrine” (60) and hopes for her “portion of the inspiring gift” (65), Landon “can but weep above [his] grave” (90). Landon’s poems convey a melancholy that is lacking in Williams and Hemans. Despite her professed belief in heaven, she seems to be caught up among the relics of those she elegizes, as is apparent in “The Tombs of the Kings of Golconda.” These women’s elegies illustrate a change in cognitive distance paralleling that which occurred in historiography during the Romantic era. Through instances of “ideal presence,” defined by Kames, these women evoke the dead, and they respect their dust as Godwin does. Scott and Wordsworth invite similar respect for graves. What these women elegists have as their very own is their affective “print upon the dust” (“Image in Lava” 38), a potent impression of their very selves upon the material at hand. Haley acknowledges the same when he distinguishes between “male pride, which builds forms to record achievement, and female ‘affection,’ which impresses its own form as a record” (183-4). As quoted above, Haley comments on how difficult it is for women of Hemans’s time to leave “records,” for their “‘records’ are ignored by the world at large” (184). He demonstrates how Hemans’s *Records of Woman* “seek to remonumentalize the record” (184). The elegies of

all three women, not just those of Hemans, may be regarded as monuments themselves, monuments not only to the subjects they elegize, but also to the women's selves. Relating imaginatively to the dead, these poets plan for their own eventual demise, and to quote Horace, "leave a monument more lasting than bronze."



FIGURE 6. *Helen Maria Williams*, 1759 – 1827, National Portrait Gallery, London, 1816.

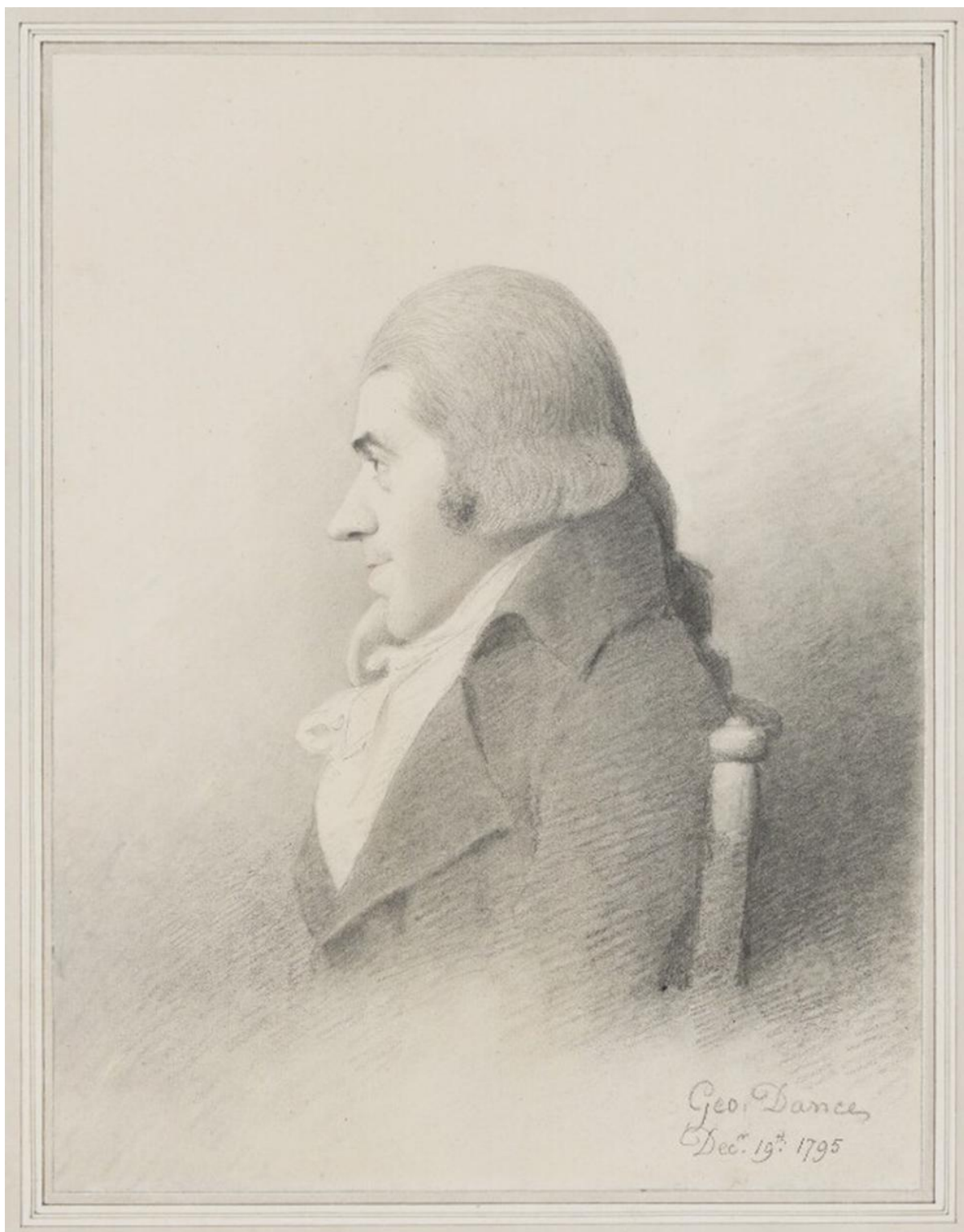


FIGURE 7. *Samuel Rogers*, 1763 – 1855, Pencil Portrait by George Dance,
National Portrait Gallery, London, 1795.



Drawn by H. W. Williams.

Engraved by W. Miller.

PLAIN OF PLATAEA.
FROM MOUNT CITHERON.

FIGURE 8. Painting by Hugh William Williams, engraved by W. Miller.

It is possible that Felicia Hemans saw this image in the artist's illustrated publication *Select Views in Greece* in 1829.



FIGURE 9. Painting by W. Purser, engraving by T. Higham.

The engraving appeared in the 1838 edition of *Fisher's Drawing Room Scrap-Book* to illustrate

Letitia Landon's poem, "The Tombs of the Kings of Golconda."

Chapter 4

“And she is gone—the royal and the young”: Women Elegists Respond to the Death of Princess

Charlotte Augusta

This chapter will address three women poets’ contrasting responses to the shocking event of the death of Princess Charlotte and her stillborn son in childbirth, respectively on November 6 and 5, 1817. My title quotes from “Stanzas on the Late National Calamity, the Death of the Princess Charlotte” by Felicia Hemans (31). The Princess had been admired on both a personal and a national level. Women especially had related to the Princess’s experiences of marriage for love and hopeful pregnancy, seeing in these happenings “a splendid edition of the universal facts of life that they themselves were likely to experience” (Colley 272). Men, too, had admired Charlotte for her spirit in standing up to her father, the hated Prince Regent; for instance, Lord Byron had addressed to her a poem called “To a Lady Weeping” after her father had betrayed his and her Whig principles at a dinner party (Chambers 41-2). Byron had expressed to the Princess this wish: “Ah! happy if each tear of thine / Could wash a father’s fault away!” (3-4). Nationally, Charlotte and her husband, Leopold, the Prince of Saxe-Coburg, had been lionized as the hope of England, especially when it was discovered that they were expecting an heir. Princess Charlotte’s most noted biographer, Thea Holme, affirms that the “nation waited eagerly for news, and bets for enormous sums were made on the sex of the expected child” (237).

It was then, at the moment of greatest promise, that the axe-blade fell, and great was the devastation across the kingdom. “It really was,” said a Whig politician, “as if every household throughout Great Britain had lost a favourite child” (qtd. in Holme 240). The Duke of Wellington purportedly said, “She would have behaved well” (qtd. in Chambers 7), while Byron

is rumored to have thrown “open the windows of his apartment in Venice and let out an anguished scream that was heard echoing down the Grand Canal” (Chambers 160). The expression of grief in the nation was unprecedented in Britain’s history. In the morning of November 6, 1817, the tragic news was rapidly conveyed to all levels of the public, especially through the black borders used by newspaper publishers for the occasion. These borders “became the standard practice for subsequent royal casualties, adding drama to reportage and instantly communicating the fact of national loss to those who could only look at print, not read it” (Colley 220). Esther Schor recounts how “[b]onfires stacked to celebrate the birth of a presumptive heir to the throne were dismantled, [how] shops and theatres were closed, and official business suspended” (197). Not only buildings, but people were outfitted in black, while “the most destitute unemployed labourers were wearing ragged black arm-bands” (Chambers 160). Even the poorest of the poor had seen in the Princess “their deliverer from the grievous injustices of the Regency, the mother of future kings—in short, England’s hope” (Holme 220). As on the day of the double tragedy, the funeral on 19 November 1817 meant that life ground to a halt. Schor discusses the funeral in terms of a Burkean tragedy in which all took part; she avers that “the nation spontaneously channeled its sorrows into a nationwide observance of funeral services for the Princess” (209). On the funeral day, ministers of all denominations gave sermons on recent unhappy events (Schor 209). Over the succeeding days and weeks, a flood of elegies appeared by poets noted and unnoted; memorialist Robert Huish commented at the time that the tragedy “called into action all the poetical talent of the country” (qtd. in Schor 197). Though Robert Southey was the Poet Laureate, his “Funeral Song, for the Princess Charlotte of Wales” was not published until 1829 in the *Amulet* (romantic-circles.org), mainly because his

“deliberation and caution” had by 1817 “become second nature” (Behrendt 80). He penned the poem in November, 1817 (romantic-circles.org).

It will be helpful to keep Southey’s “Funeral Song” in mind while discussing the distantiation employed by Anna Barbauld, Felicia Hemans, and Letitia Landon in their poems about Charlotte’s death. In *Royal Mourning and Regency Culture: Elegies and Memorials of Princess Charlotte*, Stephen C. Behrendt distinguishes between “oratorical” commemorative poems and “highly sentimental, emotional” poems about the Princess. Southey’s “Funeral Song” belongs to the first category, while, according to Behrendt, Hemans’s elegy belongs more in the second because of its emphasis on the “domestic affections” (88, 153). Behrendt explains: “In other words, where the more oratorical poems present the dead princess in terms of her national, state, and therefore necessarily symbolic (or emblematic) status, which inevitably distances her personally from her subjects, these [sentimental] poems bring her proportionately nearer to them” (89). Because Behrendt’s definitions involve distance, I contend that it would be valuable to look at all three women’s poems in terms of their use of what Phillips calls “distantiation.” Moreover, because their elegies are more complex than would usefully be accommodated by this relatively simple binary, I argue that each writer negotiates distance in four ways—in terms of “making, feeling, acting, and understanding” (Phillips, *On Historical* 6)—notably by having at the same time more than one understanding of the tragedy. Phillips calls “cognition” the “work’s fundamental assumptions regarding explanation and understanding” (*On Historical* 6). In his chapter on “Contrastive Narratives in the Romantic Age,” Phillips claims that “every one of [Thomas] Carlyle’s histories entailed writing ‘two books at once’ ” (*On Historical* 122). This statement implies that one could also write two poems at the same time by having at once two understandings of the topic at hand. The resulting hybrid work would not “juxtapose past and

present” as does Carlyle’s *Past and Present* (1843) (Phillips, *On Historical* 126), but would hold in tension closer and farther views of the Princess Charlotte tragedy, often corresponding with private and public perspectives on her life and death. Barbauld as a Dissenter encourages a personal response to the raw facts of the royal family’s plight, especially to the humbling truth of the old king’s madness (as was thought).⁴ In other words, without prettifying events she invites private sympathy for what had become common knowledge. Hemans, on the other hand, favours a grand approach that idealizes the Princess and her death, seeing her domestic romance in light of her royalty. The hints in Hemans’s elegy of the failure of the domestic romance are made explicit in two poems by Landon, which portray Charlotte as the dead beautiful woman whose memory is finally betrayed by her husband. Chronologically, it makes sense to begin with Barbauld.

Barbauld’s “On the Death of the Princess Charlotte” “appeared first in the *Annual Register* for 1818 (which actually appeared in 1819) under the simple title of ‘Elegy’ ” (Behrendt 146). This is one of the rare occasions she published after being excoriated by the reviewer John Wilson Croker for *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven, a Poem*. Barbauld invokes George III’s illness on the day of the funeral as both a public and domestic tragedy. Behrendt argues that among commemorative poems about the Princess, Barbauld’s is distinctive in its “deliberate resistance to the process of mythmaking and its clear-sighted explication of how that process may be seen to have been proceeding in Barbauld’s country” (150). Barbauld refuses to make Charlotte into a “romantic heroine” (Colley 270) and instead uses the opportunity to evoke the supposed madness of the King, whose tragedy “had been swept from public discourse by the more recent and more visible royal disaster” (Behrendt 150). The beginning of the poem seems to solicit “grief

⁴ “In the summer of 1811, George III suffered the final, permanent onset of his lifelong illness, thought by contemporaries to be insanity but now diagnosed as porphyria, a blood disorder. He had also become totally blind” (McCarthy and Kraft, Note to “On the King’s Illness” 158).

spontaneous” for the Princess, “[f]or youth, for love, for happiness destroyed” (4, 2). Yet Barbauld shows that the Princess’s tragedy exhibits mainly the universal fact that even the most celebrated must die. Like Mary Robinson and Charlotte Smith before her, Barbauld suggests that sensibility, like death, has the effect of levelling the classes:

And rough unpolished natures learn to feel
For those they envied, humbled in the dust
By fate’s impartial hand. (5-7).

Schor demonstrates that the view of Charlotte’s death as “common” followed the example of Percy Shelley’s volatile pamphlet called *Address to the People on the Death of the Princess Charlotte*, which “maneuvers the ‘commonness’ of the Princess’s death to gain attention and sympathy for the lowest ranks of society; for those who return unmourned and even uncoffined to the earth” (226). Shelley argues that the brutal execution of three labourers for alleged treason at the time of the tragedy is of equal or greater importance than Charlotte’s death. Rather than regarding Charlotte’s death as common, Barbauld subscribes to Rev. Thomas Chalmers’ “trope of universality” (Schor 226) for Charlotte’s death. She suggests that while everyone dies, even a young princess full of life and vitality as well as maternal hopes, only the most afflicted by heaven lose their wits and therefore their dignity. Barbauld pleads, “Oh forbear

Nor deem him hard of heart, for, awful, struck
By heaven’s severest visitation, sad,
Like a scathed oak amidst the forest trees
Lonely he stands. (23-27)

Barbauld not only reminds the British people about *this* tragedy, but indicates that it should also elicit their sympathy. The King in his illness deserves the sympathy of his people, just as he

deserves the pity of his family, the family that is represented in the poem by “leaves [which] sprout, and fade, and fall” (27). Charlotte achieves celebrity even in death, but her grandfather lives on in a kind of death-in-life. Barbauld reveals his exemption from history, for he is not even roused by “hearse, and blazoned arms, and long array / Of sad funereal rites” (14-15). Barbauld therefore urges her readers at the close of her poem, “From the full tide of sorrow spare one tear / For him who does not weep” (34-5). She indicates that the real national tragedy is that of the King and invites each individual’s tears. Barbauld’s elegy is one of Schor’s mourning documents, reviving as it does “the sentimental precept that private affections are constitutive of public morality and national character” (199). If I weep, so must the nation.

Barbauld thus demonstrates two points of view on the royal tragedy, a remote one that takes in the people’s “grief spontaneous” (4), and a proximate one that provides genuine insight into the King’s tragedy. As is evident, both perspectives involve affect: both the encouragement of the crowd’s Humean, contagious grief, and the appeal to the individual’s Smithian, imaginative sympathy for George III, invite feeling. Both kinds of affect involve ethics, because personal sympathy for royalty, according to Schor, is here indicative of public ethics. In Barbauld’s poem the moral appeal is not only for the King, but is also directed towards the purity of the royal line. Barbauld addresses in a unique way the monarchical crisis that resulted from the Princess’s death. Instead of casting about for a foreign heir presumptive, Barbauld shows that, somehow, the Brunswick strain will continue to flourish. Without mentioning the Prince Regent as the interim generation, she implies that the royal lineage passed from the King to Charlotte and will continue to pass to future generations. Looking back in history, Barbauld sees George III as “[t]he very stem on which this blossom grew,” while

at his knees she fondled, in the charm

And grace spontaneous, which alone belongs

To untaught infancy. (20-23)

It was a common metaphor at the time to compare the dead Princess to a broken flower, but here she is a “blossom” which grew on “[t]he very stem” who is the King, he who lives an extended life “[l]ike a scathed oak” (26). Barbauld with these images gestures towards the pastoral. It is odd, though significant, that she ignores the Regent; instead, she affirms that the King is “near in blood” to the Princess (19). She is not alone in tracing this lineage; Huish, mentioned above, represents the Princess as a pure spirit who visits her grandfather, who “in the darkness of his state...may hear the whispers of consolation from those lips, which to us on earth are henceforth closed for ever” (qtd. in Schor 220). This supposed interlineal family tree is less surprising when we consider the Regent’s reception by the people, who on former occasions did “not cheer the Prince Regent or the Queen” but instead “sometimes spat at them.” James Chambers observes that the people “were still incensed at the ostracizing of the Princess of Wales,” Charlotte’s mother (76). Caught in a loveless marriage, the Prince had tried to convict his estranged wife of adultery—without success. The populace had also been up in arms about his repression of his daughter, whom he had “wished to keep...as a child, tucked away safely at Warwick House or the Lower Lodge, Windsor; he did not...relish the idea of his daughter appearing in public and stealing his thunder” (Holme 73). Holme refers to Charlotte’s denied wish to hear her father’s speech in the House of Lords, yet this scenario is also typical of his similar narcissistic responses to her, her mother, and anyone who dared cross him.

Another link between the Princess and her grandfather may be seen in the Dissenters’ responses to the tragedy, which of course include Barbauld’s. Barbauld falls into the category which Anne K. Mellor calls the “Poet,” a woman’s self-chosen role that emphasizes divine,

dissenting authority rather than poetic genius as such (“The Female Poet” 263). Schor demonstrates that in mourning literature such as that of Huish, an “essentially *British* religiosity” is emphasized that encompasses all the various denominations participating in mourning Charlotte. In such literature, the participation of the Dissenters is particularly stressed (Schor 211). This would be to highlight their conformity to the state, especially because there was a long tradition “of regarding Dissenters collectively as threats to the state because some of their sectarian ancestors in the mid-seventeenth century had led a revolution against Church and King” (McCarthy and Kraft, “Introduction” 15-16). The Dissenters also *wanted* to join in the general grief because they had seen in Charlotte’s future reign more rights for themselves. Later, the “Reverend John Pye Smith, another London Dissenter, recalled that ‘With regard to the Protestant Dissenters, [the Princess] declared...that she felt the respect and would shew the honourable treatment which her august grandfather and his two predecessors of the house of Brunswick, had uniformly demonstrated’ ” (qtd. in Schor 211). Barbauld had likely invested emotionally in the Princess, and she certainly had affection for George III. In her 1811 poem “On the King’s Illness,” she feelingly honours George III, known as “Farmer George” because of his kindness to the common people (*Barbauld* 158n1). She attributes to him true piety and assures him of the prayers of both Anglicans and Dissenters:

Affectionate, for thee, the orisons
And mingled prayers, alike from vaulted domes
Whence the loud organ peals, and rafters roofs
Of humbler worship. (19-22)

Barbauld expresses her wish that George III had “closed the wounds of war!” (27). She speaks about the span of history his reign has covered: “Thy name has chronicled a long bright page / Of

England's story" (30-31). We have already examined Barbauld's two discourses of the 1790s, *An Address to the Opposers of the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* and *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation, or, a Discourse for the Fast, Appointed on April 19, 1793. By a Volunteer*. In the first, Barbauld censures those opposing a reconsideration of the offices available to Dissenters, and in the second she excoriates the war with France, aligning the guilt of the nation with that of the individual. In both discourses, she evinces a form of patriotism that "is allegiance to community rather than to the nation state" (Clery 175). Yet, she has allegiance to her King, whom in her elegy she shows to be outside the mourning community: "Yet one there is

Who midst this general burst of grief remains

In strange tranquillity. (9-11)

Barbauld's biographer William McCarthy states that Barbauld's "On the King's Illness" counts him among men rather than rulers, whom she represents as a despicable bunch who are mostly in hell (464). Barbauld similarly focuses on the King's humanity in her poem "On the Death of the Princess Charlotte," though, as has been said, she gestures towards a desirable royal line.

Barbauld's achievement of both a near view and a far view of the royal tragedy in her elegy is accomplished by her use of form. Her frequent use of caesuras and enjambments convey the urgency of her appeal. According to Phillips, form is the first aspect to consider in a history: "[f]irst, we must examine the genres, media, and conventions that give a history its formal structures of representation, including its aesthetic qualities and rhetorical address" (*On Historical* 6). Behrendt indicates that Barbauld's elegy has such impact because she does *not* follow the conventions commonly used for elegies on the Princess Charlotte (150). An example of a hackneyed effort is that of I.F. Neville, who penned "A Monody" and dedicated it to "the Rt.

Hon. Robert Peel, Chief Secretary of State” (1817). Neville, like Barbauld, addresses George III, but suggests that it is Charlotte’s death which has caused the King’s mental decline:

On thy grey head the stream of sadness flows
So chill, it has congeal’d thy aged brain,
And bound in chains of apathy thy pain. (26-8)

Neville may often be seen as sacrificing meaning for a good rhyme, as is especially the case when in Stanza VII he links the Princess’s death with “wailing hearts that weep a nation’s fall, / In tears of blood, as for their King they call” (39-40). In light of the actual mourning and funeral for Charlotte, such lines do not reflect the event. Neville stretches over two stanzas the aforementioned trope of the flower and its stem, affirming that the “parent stem” is “stript of each blooming leaf” (17), a line that must refer to the Regent’s loss of his daughter and her stillborn child. Barbauld evades the temptation of easy rhymes by writing her poem in blank verse, a form that in its caesuras and enjambments especially conveys the breathlessness of an eyewitness at the scene of the funeral. At the beginning and end of the poem, however, Barbauld takes a bird’s eye view of the situation. She begins with the lines, “Yes Britain mourns, as with electric shock / For youth, for love, for happiness destroyed” (1-2). After offering this lightning strike, Barbauld goes on to speak of the nation’s sympathy and to record how “pulpits sound / With vanity and woe to earthly goods” (7-8). Each enjambment creates a sense of tension, so that we wonder what will follow the verbs “mourns” (1) and “sound” (7). A similar tension is created by the contrast between Barbauld’s detached account of the funeral and her sympathetic perspective on the old King. The effect she achieves is that of binoculars swept in one direction and then in the other. Barbauld reassumes distantiation at the end of her poem with an appeal to her reader:

Then, in this hour,
While pensive thought is busy with the woes
And restless cares of poor humanity,
Oh think of him, and set apart one sigh,
From the full tide of sorrow spare one tear
For him who does not weep. (30-35)

Even though these lines end with an individual affective appeal, it is still in reference to the “restless cares of poor humanity” (31). This phrase resembles Wordsworth’s “still, sad music of humanity” (92) in “Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey” (1798). Wordsworth similarly mediates distance in his poem through contrasting cognitive approaches and, like Barbauld, he differentiates himself from the common crowd. Though the two realms interpenetrate, he distinguishes between what “eye and ear...half-create, / And what perceive” (107-8). He illustrates that what is simply perceived without Nature’s benign influence includes “all / The dreary intercourse of daily life” (131-2). As Barbauld stands out from the crowd as an observer, Wordsworth is distinctive as “[a] worshipper of Nature” (153).

In contrast to Barbauld’s more complex scheme, Southey’s “Funeral Song for the Princess Charlotte of Wales” does conform to Behrendt’s oratorical category. Southey’s form is informally approachable, and his portrayal of the event is remote. Behrendt cites a letter to Grosvenor Bedford in which Southey affirms that he wants to use the tragic event to talk about other matters (81). He can be seen as doing so in his pageant of dead royals meant to culminate in the Prince Regent. Southey addresses these deceased royals, among them Charles I, whose newly-discovered body was reportedly found in almost pristine condition after the Regent ordered his exhumation (Holme 108). Southey also calls up other sympathetic royals, including

Elizabeth Woodville, “[f]atal daughter, fatal mother” (71), and Jane Seymour, who “[b]y a like lamented doom, / Hurried to an early tomb” (88-9). Woodville was the mother of the two boys murdered in the tower, and Seymour died twelve days after childbirth. It is easy to see why Southey would think that these bereaved women would make suitable ancestors for Charlotte. Not all of Charlotte’s line are included, however; Southey rejects Henry VIII and speaks of him as “Hateful Henry,” who possessed a “tyrannic spirit” (108, 99). Yet, even though Southey seems, like Barbauld, to be crafting a desirable royal line for Charlotte, it culminates in the Prince Regent, not his daughter, whom Southey imagines informing the dead of her father’s battle prowess:

Us she leaves in grief and tears;
But to you will she reveal
Tidings of old England’s weal;
Of a righteous war pursued
Long, through evil and through good,
With unshaken fortitude;
Of peace, in battle twice achieved;
Of her fiercest foe subdued,
And Europe from the yoke reliev’d,
Upon that Brabantine plain!
Such the great, the endless glory
Of her father’s splendid reign! (130-42)

Perhaps it was natural for the Poet Laureate to compliment the Regent, seeing as how the latter was his employer. In his “Dedication” to *Don Juan*, Byron mocks Southey for wishing “[t]o

supersede all warblers here below, / And be the only Blackbird in the dish,” a dish, Byron maintains, which is “ ‘[a] dainty dish to set before the King,’ / Or Regent, who admires such kind of food” (st. 3, 2).

Like Barbauld, Southey discusses Charlotte’s death at the beginning of his poem and then circles back to it at the poem’s conclusion. He similarly employs the oft-used trope of “Death [who] hath levell’d root and flower” (5), which may refer either to dead Charlotte and her child or to the truncated royal line (Behrendt 83). At the end of the poem, Southey, in Behrendt’s words, “self-servingly” draws attention to the *Carmen Nuptiale* that he had written the year before upon Charlotte’s wedding (85). With eerie foreboding, he had ended that *Wedding Song* with an ill-suited warning, “My name is DEATH: THE LAST BEST FRIEND AM I!” (Stanza 87). As though in self-fulfilled prophecy, the “Funeral Song” concludes with the poet’s two celebrations of Charlotte within the year:

One who reverently, for thee,
Raised the strain of bridal verse,
Flower of Brunswick! mournfully
Lays a garland on thy hearse. (146-9)

Even though Southey’s “Funeral Song” begins and ends with the Princess, for him the occasion of the Princess’s death was an opportunity to glorify the Regent and promote himself.

Hemans (FIGURE 10), like Southey and Barbauld, paints a desirable lineage for the Princess, but her focal point is the domestic romance that was cut short. Through this romance, given significance through the characters’ royalty, Hemans appeals to the sensibility of every British woman. Linda Colley discusses how Princess Charlotte, like queens of her era,

supplied British women with a focus for their patriotism that was particularly their own...monarchy as soap opera made (and arguably still makes) the wrongs and rites of passage of ordinary women's lives seem important and valuable in a way that no other aspect of British political life could or can do, run exclusively by men as it was then, and as it still largely is today. (272)

The monarchy of today is a matter for another discussion, but it is evident that, as Colley affirms, in death the Princess Charlotte became to British women "a female hero, and something more than a hero" (Colley 271). She became a figure resembling a Protestant version of the Virgin Mary (Colley 272). This idealization may be observed in Matthew Wyatt's poignant monument to the Princess in St. George's Chapel at Windsor; Colley informs us that the "subscription to build a monument to the dead princess" was "initially confined to women" and that "no one was allowed to donate more than a guinea" (271). Hemans's "Stanzas on the National Calamity, the Death of the Princess Charlotte" is another monument that similarly appeals to women because of its elevation of the domestic romance. The fact that the "romantic heroine" (Colley 270) died strangely ennobles the romance that Hemans relates, just as Charlotte's royal status and that of her husband lend gravitas to Hemans's account of their domestic harmony. Hemans's poem can therefore be seen as combining two understandings of the Princess Charlotte's death: one imminent focusing upon her domestic romance, and the other remote dwelling upon her royal status. It is the latter that gives meaning to the former.

In Hemans's elegy, the personal must be seen in light of the royal. Behrendt states that though Hemans's poem is dated "Brownwhyffa, 23rd Dec. 1817," it "appeared in *Blackwood's Magazine* in April 1818, so in terms of both composition and publication it comes a bit after the actual event, although in terms of completion and actual publication it predates Barbauld's by

many months” (151). Behrendt argues that Hemans increasingly regarded the Princess’s death as a domestic tragedy, as was demonstrated when she excised the words “National Calamity” from her poem’s title (151, 153). For Behrendt this change indicates a process of mythmaking out of the particular stuff of the day-to-day (153-4). Yet what would we know of the particulars had Charlotte not been royal? To Hemans, Charlotte’s royal status was crucial to understanding her. Yes, she made herself into one of the people; Huish recounts that upon her death, “the mother looked as if she had lost her child—the husband as if he had lost his wife,—the brother as if he had lost a sister,—and all looked as if they had lost a friend” (qtd. in Schor 218). Hemans makes clear that Charlotte is remembered so fondly and so universally because she was human as well as illustrious. After a series of questions about expected general rejoicing in the royal birth, Hemans employs the trope of “England’s royal flower...broken by the blast!” (10). Hemans insists this was no ordinary death, because “the spoiler [has] left so dark a void” (17). Charlotte possesses a sterling lineage, for she is “from a race of kings and heroes sprung” and she “[g]low’d with a spirit lofty as her line” (33-4). She is no commoner, as is demonstrated by Hemans ranking her above “heroes in their noon of pride” (45) and “soaring genius” (47). She is different from these because in her their “hopes were centred” (49). Hemans acknowledges that “one moment” has “changed the track of ages yet to be” (61-2) because of the rank and lineage of the Princess. Her queenly potential makes her, right from childhood, an object of interest to the general populace. Hemans illustrates how Charlotte’s royal status meant that she was a public figure from babyhood, for “[f]rom every word and look [we] blest omens caught” (52). Her biographers have provided countless proofs that what would have been a cherished domestic time for another child, was for Charlotte instead a time constantly encroached upon by royal and public expectations.⁵

⁵ See Thea Holme, *Prinny’s Daughter, A Life of Princess Charlotte of Wales*, 52ff.

Charlotte's biographers and Hemans herself also look at Charlotte's marriage to Leopold as the ideal *royal* couple. In spite of this distantiation, Hemans through her portrayal of Leopold's love for the dead Charlotte still makes an affective appeal. Phillips says this of the affective aspect of a history: "[s]econd, we should give attention to the work's affective character—whether (for instance) historical conditions are made accessible to us through cool appraisal or lively emotions" (*On Historical* 6). Hemans's conveys Leopold's broken heart through an act of Smithian sympathy; she imagines his feelings at the time of the funeral. She paints Leopold's all too human response to his tragedy of losing at once wife and son in light of the royal funeral:

There pall, and canopy, and sacred strain,
And all around the stamp of woe may bear;
But Grief, to whose full heart those forms are vain,
Grief unexpress'd, unsoothed by them—is there.
No darker hour hath Fate for him who mourns,
Than when all he loved, as dust, to dust returns. (135-40)

Through Hemans's extended meditation on Leopold in his sorrow, we also relate to him with a Smithian "imaginative act" (Schor 34), even though we understand that he is regal. Hemans in her poem assumes that we *all* want to know intimate details about royals. Without the publication of royal feelings, we would not know what Baron Stockmar said of the royal couple's brief married life: "In this house reign harmony, peace and love—in short, everything that can promote domestic happiness. My master is the best of all husbands in all the four quarters of the globe, and his wife bears him an amount of love, the greatness of which can only be compared with the English national debt" (qtd. in Holme 228). With her comparable artist's

impression of Leopold's emotions on the death of his bride, Hemans shows that she understands our desire to know intimate details about the great.

Schor argues that the mourning documents about Charlotte have a predominating sentimental strain "that conflates the public and private realms" (218). Hemans's elegy does this to some extent; reflecting on the empty streets, she mourns, "All deeply, strangely, fearfully serene, / As in each ravaged home the avenging one had been" (119-20). I suggest that Hemans does not conflate the public with the private, but rather holds the two realms simultaneously in tension, just as she balances at once the regal and the common. The metaphors she employs for the Princess reveal her adulation of the public figure of Charlotte; for although Hemans has general words to denote the British people, she has specific synonyms for light to represent the Princess. Hemans begins by addressing "ye multitudes" (8) and refers to the people as "throngs" (115) and "countless thousands" (117). She, has, however, thirteen ways of equating Charlotte with light; these include "morning star" (19), "dayspring" (58), "light of distant days" (60), "fleeting ray" (77), and "Child of propitious stars" (187). No one reading Hemans's elegy would conclude that she regarded the Princess like any other mother, wife, sister, or friend, to paraphrase Huish. Charlotte mattered to Hemans *because* she was royal and different from ordinary people, and this is the case even though Hemans makes her sympathetic to us. Shelley, by contrast, renders the Princess's death like everyone else's, not more meaningful even than that of the labourers who were executed. Formally, Hemans draws a fairytale with a real princess, and she employs the Spenserian stanzas that in a few years John Keats would use to craft his neo-medieval romance, "The Eve of St. Agnes."

Although Hemans's elegy is primarily a fairytale, she does make some ethical pleas as well. For Phillips, the third way of approaching a history is "to scrutinize the history's

implications for action, whether the summons it issues is primarily political, religious, or ethical in nature” (*On Historical* 6). One may see in Hemans’s poem both a political and a religious appeal. She makes use of the opportunity to warn Britain, even though it has been preeminent among nations, nations in which “War hath raged o’er many a distant plain / Trampling the vine and olive in his path” (95-6). Barbauld in *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven*, six years before, connects such woes with England itself, not other nations; as quoted above, Barbauld presents nature as acting “in vain” (e.g. 11), clothing “[t]he hills with olives” and “with corn the vale” (14). Though her fears of devastation are not actualized, as an anti-war Dissenter Barbauld emphasizes to Britain, “Thou who hast shared the guilt must share the woe” (46). Similarly, Hemans ends this section of her poem with the stern admonition: “Away, vain dreams of glory!—in the dust / Be humbled, ocean-queen! And own thy sentence just” (109-10). Both women see Britain as in need of moral recuperation, and both see the monarchy in jeopardy; in 1811 Barbauld saw a beloved king permanently retire because of illness, and in 1817 Hemans, presumably disgusted at the excess and moral emptiness of the Regency, experienced the vacancy left by Charlotte and her son. Both poets are advocating for moral reform.

Hemans, like Barbauld in “On the Death of the Princess Charlotte,” makes a religious appeal in her “Stanzas.” Barbauld pleads with the individual to pity the King; her poem is suitable for a Dissenter because she offers a small sermon that is unconventional in its approach to the tragedy. As Behrendt claims, Barbauld resists mythmaking (150). Hemans, on the other hand, a “high Anglican conservative” (Armstrong 226), is an establishment poet who likely wrote according to expectations, namely, to mourn the Princess publicly and represent her in a Christian heaven:

But thou—thine hour of agony is o’er,

And thy brief race in brilliance hath been run;
While Faith, that bids fond nature grieve no more,
Tells that thy crown—though not on earth—is won. (181-84)

Hemans not only indicates that Charlotte has won heaven, but also that the happiness she experienced with Leopold was not meant to last: “Not long such bliss to mortal could be given, / It is enough for earth to catch one glimpse of heaven” (189-90). In other words, the Princess benefitted by her early death, partly because her name is “left to love and grief alone” instead of becoming tarnished by a “ruder tone” (199-200). This sentiment is like that of the reviewer of Mary Robinson’s “Monody on the Late Queen of France;” he acknowledges that Antoinette’s “memory, like that of Mary of Scotland, will probably be defended by future biographers, who, if she had ended her days upon a throne, would, perhaps, have represented her as loaded with the curses of the people” (305). Like Antoinette and Mary of Scotland, Charlotte is portrayed by Hemans as doing well by dying. Phillis Wheatley offers similar sentiments within her elegies on the attractions of heaven; for example, in “On the Death of a young Lady of Five Years of Age,” Wheatley pens these lines:

Why then, fond parents, why these fruitless groans?
Restrain your tears, and cease your plaintive moans.
Freed from a world of sin, and snares, and pain,
Why would you wish your daughter back again?
No—bow resign’d. (21-7)

Hemans also conveys the sentiment that the Princess is better where she is: “Soothe, though unseen, the hearts that mourn in vain” (207). Hemans’s religious appeal is not only that we regard Charlotte as having won heaven, but, implicitly, that we see heaven as our own homeland.

There is a similar message in Robert Hall's sermon on the death of the Princess; like the women who elegize the Princess, he holds the public and the private in tension. It was true at the time that, according to Barbauld's elegy, "pulpits sound / With vanity and woe to earthly goods, / And urge, and dry the tear" (7-9). The newspaper the *Courier* anticipated "nationwide mourning," saying, "There is no doubt that on Wednesday next, the day of the funeral, all business will be suspended; and that the empire will afford the awful and appropriate spectacle of the whole people, spontaneously engaged in religious exercise and devotion" (qtd. in Colley 221). The onus was on preachers to unite their congregations in sympathy for the royal family. Behrendt cites Hall's Leicester sermon, which "implied that England had not really learned from the experiences of the past quarter-century, and that in the aftermath of Waterloo domestic discord and decay have visibly replaced war, with the people having endured so much slaughter that violent death has lost its force for horror" (165). No doubt thinking of this "war" during peacetime, Hemans cautions her nation as well as her individual reader, "the Chastener's hand is on us" (91) and "Be humbled, ocean-queen! and own thy sentence just" (110). Hall's sermon likewise urges, "That [the death of the Princess and her son] ought to be considered as a signal rebuke and chastisement, designed to bring our sin to remembrance, there is no doubt" (56). Hall concludes with the "house of mourning," where his readers / hearers learn "in the sudden extinction of the heiress of the monarchy, the vanity of all but what relates to eternity, and the absolute necessity of having our 'loins girt, our lamps burning, and ourselves as those who are looking for the coming of the Bridegroom'" (62). To convey this stern message to his readers and nation, Hall, like the female elegists of Princess Charlotte, looks simultaneously at the private and public realms. He confirms that "[t]o descend to the details and occurrences of private life, would seldom consist with the dignified decorum suited to religious assemblies" (Hall 3-4). In

other words, the publicized death of the Princess is an appropriate and exemplary subject on which to preach. Hall's affective appeal eschews "generalities," offering instead "individual objects and particular events" (10). While he exalts the Princess in her public role, he privileges her private actions, affirming that she "employed her hours in visiting, with her illustrious consort, the cottages of the poor, in improving her virtues, in perfecting her reason, and acquiring the knowledge best adapted to qualify her for the possession of power, and the cares of empire" (Hall 24). With this Smithian sympathy, Hall brings Charlotte closer to us. There is likely some wishful thinking, though, in this affective and ethical appeal, much as in Mary Robinson's "Monody" to Marie Antoinette, which pictures the late Queen of France "[t]here, bending o'er the aged widow's form [;] With smiles celestial, [she would] chase the wint'ry storm!" (171-2). Robinson and Hall aim to ennoble a royal figure by providing details about her "saintly" private life, which is in turn elevated in her / his eyes by her royalty.

Just as Hall makes a monument with words for the dead princess, Hemans similarly makes clear that her words constitute a lasting monument. We have already looked at Eric Smith's definition of the elegy as "a sequence of communicating words [which] may become a monument, a symbol which, though it is read as a sequence, is nevertheless more than a sequence" (21). As the author of *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy: A Poem* (1816), Hemans was certainly familiar with classical monuments and how these might relate to the elegies available to her as a multilingual poet. Even in the second stanza of her elegy, Hemans indicates the purpose of her poem by affirming that "[o]ur morning-star hath vanish'd, and the tomb / Throws its deep lengthen'd shade o'er distant years to come" (19-20). This ominous reference to Charlotte's tomb "[t]hrows its...shade o'er" the rest of Hemans's poem. Hemans's elegy is a kind of tomb because in it she evokes Charlotte's burial and also addresses her as a

departed one. Dark allusions follow, such as that to the “Angel of Death,” and the poet asks, “did no presaging sign / Announce thy coming, and thy way prepare?” (21-2). When Hemans describes the Princess’s funeral, she asks “What slow procession moves, with measured tread?” She then answers her query: “A solemn train—the mourners and the dead!” (126-8). Her description of the crypt is reminiscent of the Graveyard School, for Hemans portrays to us the “other light...in that holy pile,

Where, in the house of silence, kings repose;
There, through the dim arcade, and pillar’d aisle,
The funeral torch its deep-red radiance throws.
There pall, and canopy, and sacred strain,
And all around the stamp of woe may bear. (131-6)

There is no question that Hemans stands within this poem as one of Charlotte’s mourners. A high Anglican, Hemans imagines herself witnessing the Anglican rites of interment with “pall, and canopy, and sacred strain” (135).

Bruce Haley notes that Lord Byron is similarly present as a mourner in his tribute to Princess Charlotte; in Canto IV of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, he imagines that the Princess “[s]eems royal still, though with her head discrown’d, / And pale, but lovely, with maternal grief / She clasps a babe, to whom her breast yields no relief” (Stanza 167). Haley concludes that with this pietistic image Byron merges the human with the monumental, so that “ ‘grief’ becomes ‘beauty’ and the mourned and mourning become monumentalized” (182). “Byron himself is the monumental mourner,” affirms Haley (182). There are two kinds of distance at play in these passages from Byron and Hemans: affective proximity brings us closer to the mourning and the mourned, while formal characteristics distantiate us from the implied sculpture. Phillips

highlights Nietzsche's term "monumental history" as "the kind of history that is built on the conviction that the 'past must be described as something worthy of imitation' " (qtd. in *On Historical* 235). We can see that both Hemans and Byron regard Princess Charlotte as someone deserving imitation and that they convey this sentiment through ekphrastic language.

We have already considered Southey's "Funeral Song" in its establishment of a lineage for the Regent, and here we will look at the significance given to Windsor as a resting place for royal relics and spirits. Southey does not idealize the dead Princess as though she were an artwork, but in linking her to her forebears, he does emphasize the location of her remains and theirs. This mode is reminiscent of Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), concerning which Phillips argues that Godwin's "evocation of the historical associations of place aims to intensify the sense of inward engagement with historical experience as much as to mark a public space" (*Society* 323-4). In other words, our knowledge that a great man or woman was buried in *that* spot contributes to our personal sense of history and our attention to the site itself. The main difference between Godwin's perspective and Southey's is that Southey believes in an afterlife, and so has the double vision at once of the material and spiritual realms. Southey immediately draws attention to Princess Charlotte's tomb in Windsor, saying "Windsor, in thy sacred shade / Is the Flower of Brunswick laid!" (9-10). He then addresses her ancestors who were similarly buried there:

Ye whose relics rest around,
Tenants of this funeral ground!
Know ye, Spirits, who is come,
By immitigable doom
Summon'd to the untimely tomb? (11-15)

In these lines it is obvious that Southey connects the “relics” of that particular place with the “Spirits” who haunt it. The first royal that he invokes is a worthy progenitor, Henry VI, to whom “Windsor gave / Nativity, and name, and grave” (22-3) and who is “in this hallowed earth / Cradled for the immortal birth” (24-5). Henry, meritorious because he “[p]atiently his crown resigned, / And fix’d on heaven his heavenly mind” (30-1), is entirely associated with the particular place of Windsor; its “hallowed earth” cradles his body as would a mother (24). Southey contrasts earthly place with “realms of bliss” (34). This double vision is also true of his portrayal of Elizabeth Woodville, who similarly won heaven; Southey implores, “Lightly let this ground be press’d; / A broken heart is here at rest” (81-2). Notably, he focuses on the site of burial only with the royals he approves; he gives no quarter to war-loving Edward IV or tyrant Henry VIII. The penultimate dead sympathetic royal is Henry’s bride, Jane Seymour, whose “earthly relics rest” (91) with those of Charlotte; they are “sisters” through dying in childbirth (84). Finally, we meet Charles I, who has been so cherished by the ground that holds him that “[h]is comely face and waking eye / There, thrice fifty years, it lay, / Exempt from natural decay” (115-17). Purportedly Charles was almost intact; even one of his eyes was present until exposed to the air. Holme quotes Sir Henry Halford’s account of the exhumation (108). It is no wonder that Charles is the final figure in this procession, for in his preserved state, he combines the place of burial with persistent life thereafter, as though he were half in heaven and half on earth. Southey implicitly proposes that his “Funeral Song” is like the soil of Windsor, enshrining many regal dead.

Resembling Southey’s and Hemans’s “tombs” for the dead, Letitia Elizabeth Landon’s “Lines on the Mausoleum of the Princess Charlotte, at Claremont” is presented as an actual epitaph. Landon’s poem is distant from the tragedy by several years, appearing in *Forget Me*

Not: a Christmas and New Year's Present for 1824 by R. Ackermann. This was a women's gift book of poetry, selected by an editor. Sometimes Landon herself edited such gift books—with no significant emolument (St. Clair 229-30). By 1824, Landon was distanced not only temporally from the Princess's death, but also cognitively and ideologically. Living during the reign of George IV, who had inspired disdain as much as when he was Prince Regent, poets like Landon did not face the monarchical uncertainty dealt with by poets writing in 1817. It seemed at the time that Charlotte's death "would alter the whole future of the dynasty" (Holme 241). With the tragedy, "the press turned to speculation. Who would inherit the throne of England when all the King's children were dead? The brothers and sisters could follow each other in succession for a while, but when the last of them was gone, who would succeed?" (Chambers 163). Because of Charlotte's death, "and George IV's inability to tolerate Caroline or to sire legitimate heirs without her...a teenage girl called Victoria succeeded to the British throne in 1837" (Colley 271). There is no ideological thrust to Landon's poem, though there is definitely an affective appeal, partly through her formal choice of tetrameter quatrains. The other contribution to her formal accomplishment is the accompanying illustrations in *Forget Me Not* of the Princess's monument at Claremont (FIGURE 11). Above Landon's poem, the publisher remarks: "Our own delightful minstrel, L.E.L., has been kind enough to enrich this annual gift with two voluntary offerings, to which the publisher has paid the merited compliment of having plates engraved from their subjects" ("Note" to "Lines on the Mausoleum of the Princess Charlotte"). The first image renders the exterior of the mausoleum with its gothic arches, while the second image shows an arched, moonlit hall with the bust of a woman in the background. While Landon's verse is meant to please the ear with its singsong rhythm, her illustrations are calculated to please the eye.

The informality of Landon's choice of verse is belied by the ominous nature of her metaphors, which indicate the undoing of the pastoral. Like her fellow women poets who elegize the Princess, Landon has two understandings of her subject, one of them, an imitable love story and the other, that love memorialized. The poem is an epitaph right from its title, "Lines on the Mausoleum of the Princess Charlotte, at Claremont." Like Hemans poem, Landon's is a tomb for the departed one, in the sense given by Smith, that "a sequence of communicating words...may become a monument" (21). This is especially evident in these closing lines:

Look on yon grove, where a white fane
Grows whiter as the moonbeams fall;
There is a bust upon its shrine,
Wearing a white rose coronal:
It is the monument where Hope
And youthful Love sleep side by side,
Raised by the mourner to the name
Of her—his lost, but worshipp'd Bride. (21-8)

The nod to ekphrasis here suggests that this bust also falls under the aegis of Landon's poem. Charlotte's "white rose coronal" (24) is rhymed with "fall" (22), which suggests a pre- and a post-lapsarian state for the Princess: her happy love story and her memorialisation after death. Significantly, while we know that Charlotte wore a rose coronal in life, here we "watch the blight steal o'er the rose" (17). The transition between these states evokes the pastoral elegy, suggested by the "[y]ews" which "spring where myrtles wont to be" and "the bridal wreath" which wears "[o]ne gathered from the cypress-tree" (17-20). Landon begins by invoking the blasted flowers of Barbauld and Hemans, rhetorically questioning, "How many flowers die as they bloom! / How

many more before they blow!” (3-4). Yet Landon takes the analogy farther by referencing the yew and the cypress trees, which spring up even as the “blight steal[s] o’er the rose” (17). Celeste M. Schenck observes that “[b]y means of resistant counter-imagery, women poets pointedly refuse, revise, and reconstruct the elegy” (20). Landon makes use of the standard tropes of “death trees” to highlight the destruction of “Young Love” (9). It is love that Landon elegizes in this poem, more than the Princess, and she calls it “[o]f all earth’s joys most pure and dear” (8). Describing the mausoleum as “[r]aised by the mourner to the name / Of her—his lost, but worshipp’d Bride” (27-8), Landon celebrates a love so ardent that it is memorialized in stone.

Both Hemans and Landon invest emotionally in Princess Charlotte as the beautiful dead woman, yet Landon’s second poem on the dead princess bitterly portrays love and beauty as rewarded with betrayal. “The Princess Charlotte” was published in *Fisher’s Drawing Room Scrap-Book* in 1833, at the height of Landon’s fame (Behrendt 91). In her “Lines on the Mausoleum,” quoted above, Landon invites associations with Charlotte and Leopold’s happy home at Claremont. According to all accounts, they did have a blissful marriage that was built on respect for one another. Many years after Charlotte’s death, Leopold wrote to his niece Queen Victoria, “I know that you have been told that she ordered everything in the house and liked to show that she was mistress. It was not so. On the contrary, her pride was to make me appear to my best advantage and even to display respect and obedience when I least wanted it from her” (qtd. in Chambers 145). Landon knew enough about the royal union to depict Claremont as a monument to “Young Love” (9) in “Lines on the Mausoleum” and as a symbol of betrayal to “Young Love” in “The Princess Charlotte.” In the latter poem, Landon assumes ironic distance from her subject, beginning with a retrospective of Charlotte’s death when “[t]he tears of a nation were shed for her doom” because “the young hope of England in dust was laid low” (1, 8).

What initially seems to be a recounting of that double tragedy sixteen years before is actually a deliberately deceiving preamble to a poem that is about Leopold's faithlessness. Landon seems to empathize with him, only to dismiss him disdainfully. All the lines about his grief are inevitably seen in light of the final stanza:

For he, the heart-broken, hath joy at his side,
And again at the altar he stands with his bride.
Oh! dark shades of Claremont, find brightness and bloom,
For the widower desolate returns a bridegroom. (21-4)

Like Leopold himself, Claremont brightens and blooms after many years of desolation; Claremont participates in his betrayal of his first love. When as readers we return to the first part of the poem, we cannot help but see Landon's ironic stance in a couplet like this one: "Alas, for her husband, though others may weep, / Ah, what is their sorrow, to what he must keep!" (9-10). Her cynicism appears openly in line 17, when she says with asperity, "Oh! folly of deeming aught earthly can last, / Life never knew sorrow whose reign has not past" (17-18). Behrendt points out that this text is, like "Lines on the Mausoleum," accompanied by meaningful illustration, this time an illumined letter "T" with a tomb and an effigy of a woman. The poem was also published with a full-page engraving of the Princess after the portrait begun by Thomas Lawrence (Behrendt 92). Whereas "Lines on the Mausoleum" is an epitaph to love, "The Princess Charlotte" is a monument to betrayed love. It did not seem to matter to Landon that Leopold waited fifteen years to remarry, and that he did so as the King of Belgium, wanting to maintain peace with France by marrying a French princess (Behrendt 91). Apparently, on his wedding night he wept (Behrendt 93). Chambers relates that, after the tragedy, the Prince "was so dejected that he was a dour host, and such a dull companion at other people's tables that

hostesses despaired of him. It was as much of a relief to them as to him when he went back to Claremont” (168). Baron Stockmar, quoted above, wrote as an old man, “November saw the ruin of this happy home, and the destruction at one blow of every hope and happiness of Prince Leopold. He has never recovered the feeling of happiness which had blessed his short married life” (qtd. in Holme 241).

Landon illustrates the ultimate failure of true love, and Hemans may have been hinting at the same in her “Stanzas” when she declares “[t]he flower, the leaf, o’erwhelm’d by winter snow, / Shall spring again, when beams and showers return” (175-6). She proceeds to assert that “[t]he faded cheek again with health may glow, / And the dim eye with life’s warm radiance burn” (177-8). We may ask rhetorically if Hemans is here optimistic or cynical. She does not distance herself from her subject as Landon does in both her poems on Charlotte and as Barbauld does in her representation of the masses, so it seems to me that Hemans is expressing hope for the royal family. She makes an emotional appeal in her poem to the Princess, though she does not offer the passionate affective appeal achieved by Barbauld regarding King George. Barbauld deploys distantiation from Charlotte’s death in order to gain dissenting authority to speak on the affective issue of sympathy for the King. Hemans solicits our sympathy for Leopold through a verse form associated with romance, the Spenserian stanza, so that we are aware of the fated fairytale of Charlotte and Leopold. Hemans upholds the royal status quo. Landon, finally, is distanced from the “Young Love” (9) she celebrates but also buries in “Lines on the Mausoleum.” In her companion poem, “The Princess Charlotte,” she portrays this love as betrayed by the lover and his home. No love story lasts, she implicitly reminds us.

The outpouring of grief at Charlotte's death is reminiscent of a similar phenomenon following the death of a princess in our own time, and indeed, a reviewer of Behrendt's book remarks:

Published in 1997, the book eerily anticipates the mourning frenzy that would shortly mark the sudden death of Princess Diana (Behrendt in fact repeatedly invokes contemporary perspectives of Windsor scandals and violent deaths in high places); the "Queen of Hearts" now, the "Hope [or "Rose"] of England then." (Bernhardt-Kabisch 206)

Historian Tracy Borman reflects that "[f]ew events in British history have prompted the scale of national dismay that followed the death of Princess Diana...An estimated 1.3 million floral tributes were placed at the gates of Buckingham and Kensington palaces" ("Charlotte and Diana: the parallel lives of two Princesses of Wales whose deaths sent the nation into mourning"). We may see in this national expression of grief an analogue to a nation dressed in black when Charlotte and her son died. Borman delineates four similarities between Princess Charlotte and Princess Diana, which are: 1) their warring parents led to years of misery; 2) their popularity soared above the other royals; 3) their deaths sparked intense public mourning that boiled over into outrage; 4) their deaths prompted predictions that the monarchy would fall. It is eerie that the death of one Princess of Wales would anticipate the death of the other, and that Diana's death would invite comparisons with Charlotte's death 180 years earlier.



FIGURE 10. *Felicia Hemans*, 1793 – 1835,
c. 1820 engraving by W. Holl after W.E. West, *National Portrait Gallery* Vol. 1.



FIGURE 11. Princess Charlotte's Mausoleum at Claremont. Commissioned by her husband, Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg (engraving from the 1824 *Forget Me Not*).

Chapter 5

“Thy name was lovely and thy song was dear”: Women Elegists Respond to the Deaths of Other Women Elegists

The trajectory of this thesis may be found in miniature through comparing the elegies that Romantic women wrote to each other. Because Barbauld, Hemans, and Landon have been discussed previously, their backgrounds will not be reiterated. It will become evident through this analysis that Mark Phillips’s theories apply here in a slightly different way, because while the distantiation is similar to that in other elegies, there is an increased affective response to the death of a fellow poet and also, in later elegies, a heightened ethical plea for the sympathy the elegiac subject did not receive in her life. As Phillips remarks in his *Society and Sentiment*, in the late-eighteenth century, women’s experience fell under the purview of historiography, because of the “deepening interest in the domain of the social that rendered the assumed opposition between public and private matters more problematic (131). In addition, in histories such as that of Hume, there was a discernible appeal to women’s sensibility, emblemized by Mrs. Mure, who was meant to shed a tear for “poor King Charles” (Phillips, *Society* 103-4). In the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, there was pressure on historians to portray “worlds of social experience and inward feeling that were hard to translate into traditional narrative conventions” (Phillips, *Society* 342-3). Women poets of this time found it appropriate to record their experience in a form and manner that appealed to other women poets. As I endeavor to show in this chapter, women elegists found the conventions of elegy apposite for recording their experience, and they related to other women elegists via their personal knowledge of what it meant to be a female poet.

Anna Letitia Barbauld's "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" demonstrates an increased affective response to the death of another woman poet, which is interesting because she never actually met Elizabeth Singer Rowe. In fact, none of these elegists met each other. Barbauld's elegy showcases the eighteenth-century focus upon manners, in which women were supposed to have a special interest as well as investment, because they were often the marginalized group represented (cf. Phillips, *Society* 19). "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" combines a meticulous attention to biographical detail with a gesture towards imaginative freedom, which is increasingly evident in women's elegies after this time. Felicia Hemans achieves this imaginative autonomy in her elegy "The Grave of a Poetess" and in her two other elegies for Mary Tighe, author of *Psyche* (1805). Although she focuses upon the grave as an enabler of the imagination in two of the poems, her perceived link to her predecessor seems more tenuous than Barbauld's. She did not visit the grave in person until four years after the publication of *Records of Woman* (1828); Paul Westover calls this imaginative flight her "imaginary pilgrimage" (77), and significantly, Hemans was disillusioned when she visited the grave and learned about Tighe's life. As in Barbauld's poem, empiricism provides a check on the imagination. I will adduce Brandy Ryan's discussion of Hemans's elegy on Tighe and Letitia Landon's elegies on Hemans to emphasize that these women's elegies to each other "use the elegiac genre as a space to evaluate women poets and their poetry: sorrow, sympathy and suffering open up a dialogue of mourning for these poets that extends beyond the recent death of a poetic peer" (249). While Hemans's poems to Tighe end in Christian consolation for the poet and affirmation of her own poetic vocation, Landon's two poems to Hemans, 1835 and 1838, respectively, first express identification with the dead and then cynicism about the ultimate loneliness of the female poet. I concur with Celeste Schenck that the female elegy is a "poem of connectedness" (15), but I will also show

that these Romantic women elegists promote community in increasingly distantiated and complicated ways. I will demonstrate this by comparing Hemans's three elegies for Tighe with Landon's two elegies for Hemans. While these poets propose a horizontal line of community, this line and the vertical one of confidence in the afterlife are increasingly challenged by the poet.

In Barbauld's "Verses on Mrs. Rowe," there are strong horizontal and vertical thrusts both regarding religious faith and community-building. The poem was first published in Barbauld's 1773 *Poems*, and in it she offers a paean of praise to a sister poet who died in 1737. Though Barbauld could draw on "The Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe," published by Rowe's brother-in-law Theophilus Rowe in her posthumous (1739) *Miscellaneous Works in Prose and Verse* (McCarthy and Kraft, Editorial Note 96), Barbauld's elegy to Rowe required an imaginative assessment of the "manners" contained in that limited biography; without imaginative treatment, these facts about Rowe would form only an obituary. Barbauld portrays her predecessor as both her spiritual and poetic exemplar, and indicates that the former attribute is more important to herself as a Christian poet. She illustrates that these two qualities are difficult to separate, as they were perfectly integrated in Rowe's life. To Rowe she attributes "[t]he Christian's meekness and the Poet's fire" (6), and commends her for withdrawing from the world after her husband's untimely death, saying she "[w]ithout one fond reserve the world disclaims, / And gives up all her soul to heavenly flames" (25-6). Barbauld sometimes employs the present tense, making it clear that she is imagining Rowe. For her, Rowe's faith was not only an upward-reaching flame but also a fire of self-forgetful charity that "the poor, the mourner blessed" (29). Not only did her faith inspire her religious writings, but it blessed those who were part of her community:

Her image liv'd in every kindred breast.

THYNNE, CATERET, BLACKMORE, ORRERY approv'd,

And PRIOR prais'd, and noble HERTFORD lov'd;

Seraphic KENN, and tuneful WATTS were thine,

And virtue's noblest champions fill'd the line. (30-34)

Barbauld found these names in Theophilus' "Life," and she suggests that the friendship of the great, of poets and aristocrats, is due to the virtue that informs Rowe's writings. The statement "And virtue's noblest champions fill'd the line" (34) suggests a "line" of community enabled by Rowe's virtue, but also her gifted "lines" of poetry. This usage contrasts with that in the aforementioned "On the Death of Mrs. Martineau" (composed in 1801), in which Barbauld addressed "[t]he treasured birthright of the spreading line" (30). In that poem, the "line" was mainly genealogical, whereas here, "line," used three times, suggests both community and literature. Rowe hoped for the Christian afterlife, and Barbauld portrays her soul going upward, "exhal'd in praise" (38). William McCarthy, Barbauld's biographer, confirms that this stance of devotional praise was how Rowe died (109).

Another example of a "line" in "Verses on Mrs. Rowe" is that of the poetic gift, which may not be inherited but which may be encouraged by likeminded friends and exemplars. Barbauld subtly delineates Rowe's literary genealogy, but it is primarily a horizontal line, because most of the poets named are Rowe's contemporaries. For instance, Barbauld begins with an epigraph from Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, even though this work was not published until five years after Rowe's death: "How from the summit of the grove she fell, / And left it unharmonious." Almost thirty years later, Barbauld associates Rowe's poetry with the melancholy of the Graveyard School, and indeed, among Rowe's best-known works is the

elegiac *Friendship in Death: In Twenty Letters, from the Dead to the Living* (1728), a work that remembers the early death of Rowe's husband, Thomas Rowe, called "ALEXIS" by Barbauld (Pritchard). Another gesture towards melancholy in her elegy is the appellation of "sad PHILOMELA" (23) for Rowe, a title she had used in publishing her first book of poems, *Poems on Several Occasions: Written by Philomela* (1696) (Pritchard). Barbauld describes the mourning poet as the nightingale:

Now in the leafy shade, and widow'd grove,
Sad PHILOMELA mourns her absent love.
Now deep retir'd in FROME'S enchanting vale,
She pours her tuneful sorrows on the gale. (21-24)

Barbauld embroiders the fact of Rowe's retirement from the world in Frome by describing her as a broken-hearted nightingale in retirement, like that in Milton's *Paradise Lost* (Tyrrell 33). She also points to another literary model for Rowe's avocation by referring to Alexander Pope in the first two lines of her elegy (*Anna Letitia* 96n3). Pope was also Rowe's contemporary. In his "Epistle to Robert Earl of Oxford," he begins by observing that "[s]uch were the Notes, thy once-lov'd Poet sung, / Till Death untimely stop'd his tuneful tongue" (1-2). Barbauld alters this to emphasize the poetic precursor Sappho: "[s]uch were the notes our chaster SAPPHO sung, / And every muse dropt honey on her tongue" (1-2). McCarthy and Kraft gloss Sappho as an ancient writer "known both as the archetype of a woman poet and also as the author of sexually frank verse" (*Anna Letitia* 96n2). She is the only poet named in the elegy who could be said to be Rowe's precursor. While Barbauld carefully qualifies her designation of Sappho by making Rowe "chaster" (1), she is likely also alluding to Rowe's fame for "the passionate rhetoric of her devotional verse and prose," a passion that "led some to charge Rowe with 'enthusiasm,' the too

zealous piety that might lead one to claim private revelation” (McCarthy 110). In Barbauld’s essay “Thoughts on the Devotional Taste, On Sects, and on Establishments” (1775), she counters the frequent criticism of warm devotional language by suggesting “that Love borrows the language of Devotion” rather than the reverse (qtd. by McCarthy 157).

The contemporaries of Rowe named by Barbauld are mostly poets, though they are titled: Frances Thynne (whom Barbauld apparently thought different from Lady Hertford) was too reserved to publish her many poems, but she patronized many poets (Sambrook); Sir Richard Blackmore, a physician and poet, wrote works including *Prince Arthur: an Heroick Poem in Ten Books* (1695) (Gregori); Charles Boyle, 4th Earl of Orrery, produced “works of literary scholarship, as well as satirical poems and a play, *As You Find It* (1703), on the then popular theme of marital discord and reconciliation” (Lawrence B. Smith); Matthew Prior was a well-known poet who attempted to win Rowe’s hand before her marriage (Pritchard); Dr. Thomas Ken was a non-juring bishop and a leading hymnodist, writing the *Manual of Prayers for the Use of Winchester Scholars* (1674) (Marshall); finally, Isaac Watts, Rowe’s friend, was a dissenting minister and a leading hymnodist (Pritchard). This impressive list of contemporary aristocrats and exemplars suggests that Barbauld is legitimizing her forerunner by showing that she is a devotional poet, married to a poet, supported by poets, and allied with the great.

It is particularly important to Barbauld that Rowe is ratified by recognized names because she adopts Rowe as a model. This means that there is a new instance of distantiation between Barbauld and Rowe’s influencers. After asking Rowe to be her muse, Barbauld utters this aspiration:

Let me thy palm, tho’ not thy laurel share,
And copy thee in charity and prayer.

Tho' for the bard my lines are far too faint,

Yet in my life let me transcribe the saint. (41-4).

Again Barbauld underlines Rowe's twofold vocation of poet and saint, and insists it is the latter role that appeals to her most. Yet, it is questionable that Barbauld would *want* to imitate the saint if she were not also a gifted poet. By invoking these authors in her elegy to Rowe, Barbauld is claiming the same poetic genealogy, but with the difference that in 1773 she has distance from them and can arguably see them more objectively than could Rowe. Phillips in *On Historical Distance* praises Barbauld's "self-conscious understanding of distance" (154) in that, as editor of Addison, she "examines these [literary] revolutions of taste for their wider significance—and, like Hume, Johnson, or Drake—finds her answer in the close connections between literature, manners, and opinion" (153). By 1773, most of the titled names in her elegy to Rowe were probably little more than names to Barbauld, but she must have recognized them as crucial to Rowe's poetic and spiritual development and thus also as formative for herself via a sort of adoption. McCarthy observes that "[t]o claim Rowe as a model was to claim a high-minded and ecumenical heritage, not a stuffy or a 'rigid' one" (110). He also comments that, in her "Verses on Mrs. Rowe," Barbauld "was not merely making a bid for legitimation; her devotional poems drew on Rowe's treasury" (156). The poetic genealogy that Barbauld draws is vertical for herself but horizontal for Rowe. McCarthy (110) and Thomas R. Tyrrell (cf. 31) discuss the Christian poetic line as proceeding from Rowe to Elizabeth Carter and finally to Barbauld. Tyrrell credits all three women with literary interstellar navigations in the act of revising Milton, even though Carter's father was originally against her reading such sensuous religious verse as Rowe's (40). McCarthy says in reference to Barbauld that "[t]o claim Rowe as a model was to imitate Carter claiming Rowe as a model and thus to lay claim to Carter's mantle as well as to Rowe's." He

continues, “[t]hat Miss Aikin did indeed inherit the mantle of Rowe is suggested by a writer in the *Ladies’ Monthly Museum* in 1799, who called Barbauld ‘England’s present Philomel’ ” (110). In Hemans’s elegies to Mary Tighe, we see a similar vertical poetic legacy, but it is compromised by the author’s doubt that she can reach Tighe. This is a paradox because she can relate to the dead imaginatively in a way that Barbauld could not in 1773. Barbauld relates to Rowe through a literary catalogue of her qualities and experiences, and the poem exudes Barbauld’s confidence that she addresses the “[b]lest shade” who is her elegiac subject. In the later elegists, there is mournfulness about relating to a dead precursor that may reflect the uncertainties of the 1820s and 1830s.

Because of this next jump from Barbauld in 1773 to Hemans in 1827 and Landon in 1835, respectively, it is necessary first to describe the historical and literary contexts of the two latter poets. Linda Colley reports of this time that when “Waterloo finally slew the dragon...the immediate reaction among many Britons was less complacency than disorientation. How was Britishness to be defined now that it could no longer rely so absolutely on a sense of beleaguered Protestantism and on regular conflict with the Other in the shape of Catholic France?” Colley proceeds to remark that “[b]etween the outbreak of peace in 1815 and the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, this profound but generalized uncertainty was given focus by three specific issues”: the problem of Ireland’s incorporation into the Kingdom; the movement toward parliamentary reform; and the matter of how the colonies should be treated (322-3). Anticipating this period was a general depression when the war with France finally ended, a triumph that “precipitated a severe slump in agriculture, trade and manufacturing, which persisted until the early 1820s.” This time also witnessed “resulting high levels of unemployment and social unrest...made very much worse by the demobilisation of more than a third of a million men”

(Colley 321). Unfortunately, women's subordinated status during this period did not change for the better, but rather, as Colley demonstrates, was reinstated; "in 1832, women's exclusion from the franchise—hitherto taken tacitly for granted—would be formalized by the Reform Act specifically limiting the vote to suitably qualified 'adult males' " (249-50). Unsurprisingly, poets such as Hemans and Landon expressed anxiety not only over their social status, but also over their position as poets. In his monograph *The Form of Poetry in the 1820s and 1830s* (2018), David Stewart argues:

[p]oets and readers during this period worried constantly about the status of the art in a way that transmits itself to the form their poems took. They worried in particular about their relation with the market: with the novel an increasingly respectable genre and the periodical press expanding confidently, poets could no longer assume the central place in culture they had long taken for granted. (1).

Stewart advises against regarding this interim period between the death of Byron (1824) and the accession of Victoria (1837) as a "Dark Age" for poetry. He sees in poems of this period a self-consciousness about even the possibility of ephemerality. He shows that two of the most famous poets of this era, Hemans and Landon, compounded this sense of transience through the forms in which they published, which included "the enormous publishing success of the beautifully produced, elegantly bound annuals" (3).

In Hemans's elegies to Mary Tighe, considered together as one poem, we see the ephemerality of the female poet's life and potentially, even of her remembrance. Unlike Barbauld in her "Verses on Mrs. Rowe," Hemans seems to doubt her ability to reach or relate to her predecessor. Hemans's best-known elegy to Tighe, "The Grave of a Poetess," was published

in July 1827 by the *New Monthly Magazine* before it was republished in *Records of Woman* the following year. The only reason we know this is a poem to Tighe is through Hemans's note:

Extrinsic interest has lately attached to the fine scenery of Woodstock, near Kilkenny, on account of its having been the last residence of the author of *Psyche*. Her grave is one of many in the church-yard of the village. The river runs smoothly by. The ruins of an ancient abbey that have been partially converted into a church, reverently throw their mantle of tender shadow over it. (*Felicia* 332n1)

This note anticipates the melancholy of the poem, particularly its “[f]resh leaves...on the ivy-bough / That fring’d the ruins near” (9-10). Ruins imply transience by their very nature. The poem’s epigraph from Germaine de Stael’s *Corinne; ou, l’Italie* also conveys melancholy: “Don’t feel sorry for me—if only you knew how much this tomb has saved me!” (*Felicia* 332n2). Both Westover and Ryan discuss the many “voices” in this poem, perhaps the most poignant of which is Hemans’s prevailing voice, wondering about the permanence of her own poetic legacy (cf. Westover 82-3).

There are different instantiations of distance in the first and second part of “The Grave of a Poetess.” Even more noticeable, though, is Hemans’s overarching distance from her elegiac subject, since she is seeing herself imagining her confrontation with Tighe’s tomb. Thus the grave is an enabler of Hemans’s imagination, but one that exists only in the poet’s mind. Westover remarks that what he means by “imaginary pilgrimages” is “something more specific than armchair travel in the abstract: namely, poems in which writers take readers to literarily and historically charged locations, especially to the places of the dead” (77). Westover also avers that this genre “had frequent recourse to the language of ideal presence” (78). I would argue that in the first section of Hemans’s poem, there is no identifiable instance of ideal presence, but rather,

a cognitive distance between Hemans and her dead subject. She is conscious of failure in her attempt to revivify the dead Tighe through poetic language. Notably, instead of being a precursor ‘above’ as is Rowe for Barbauld, Tighe is ‘below’: her grave is “lowly” (1) and she is “slumbering low” (17). The poet strives to reach her in her humble location in the earth, but she shows that Tighe is separated from the realm of the living and unresponsive to stimuli. The contrast Hemans draws between the realms of the living and the dead is stark; nature hums above Tighe, but she is unaffected by it. Hemans personifies nature’s spring forces in the first two stanzas: “spring-odours breath’d around” (2); music “[p]ass’d with a lulling sound” (4); “[a]ll happy things that love the sun / In the bright air glanc’d by” (5-6); “a glad murmur seem’d to run / Thro’ the soft azure sky” (7-8). Hemans evokes nature in a manner that appeals to our senses; the activity in this “vernal” world (20) renders us more sensitive to Tighe’s unresponsiveness. Hemans voices this hopeless utterance: “Young voices were abroad—but thou / Their sweetness couldst not hear” (11-12).

Hemans’s acknowledged failure to address Tighe contrasts with Barbauld’s confidence that she is speaking to and about her model. Hemans sums up her despair:

Mournful, that thou wert slumbering low,
With a dread curtain drawn
Between thee and the golden glow
Of this world’s vernal dawn. (17-20)

It is as though Hemans were saying that this “vernal dawn” is for Tighe a forgotten spring, just as the “sunshine round [her] tomb / Was but a broken spell” (23-4) for her. Westover comments that Hemans’s imaginary pilgrimages “foreground one of its potentially troubling effects: identification so strong between the living and the dead that it threatens to collapse the distance

altogether” (79). This is certainly a possibility, and I believe there is also in the first half of the poem a failure to connect with the dead. Esther Schor similarly says that we “imaginatively” “take up our place...in the grave” of those we mourn (35). Hemans may not at first revivify the dead, but she may imagine in a Smithian way what it is like to be dead. Adam Smith adumbrates the inability of the dead to respond to stimuli:

We sympathize even with the dead, and overlooking what is of real importance in their situation, that awful futurity which awaits them, we are chiefly affected by those circumstances which strike our senses, but can have no influence upon their happiness. It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated, in a little time, from the affections, and almost from the memory of their dearest friends and relations. Surely, we imagine, we can never feel too much for those who have suffered so dreadful a calamity. (qtd. by Schor 34-5)

In imaging what it is like to be dead, Hemans’s sympathy would, according to Schor, rebound upon Hemans because the dead cannot benefit from it.

In the second half of her poem, Hemans achieves to some extent an “ideal presence” of her dead that implies two registers of life for Tighe, one in heaven and the second in our thoughts. As was discussed above, Phillips and Westover address the phenomenon of “ideal presence.” The former interprets Kames:

[t]his vivacity [of a scene] results in a loss of critical distance, turning the reader’s experience into a kind of ‘waking dream.’ Kames called this crucial effect ‘ideal presence,’ and he claimed for it a profoundly important role in the moral education of

humankind. Though literary representation will always have an impact that is weaker than the force of experience itself, 'ideal presence' allows the lessons of experience to be prepared for or repeated in ways that account for 'that extensive influence which language hath over the heart.' ” (“Relocating” 444)

Hemans, so to speak, shakes off the depression of the first half of her poem, and strives to convey the moral lesson that in heaven, beauty on an elevated level awaits us when we die. She speaks with hope regarding Tighe's attainment of a beautiful afterlife:

But then, ev'n then, a nobler thought
O'er my vain sadness came;
Th' immortal spirit woke, and wrought
Within my thrilling frame.

Surely on lovelier things, I said,
Thou must have look'd ere now,
Than all that round our pathway shed
Odours and hues below. (29-36)

Westover observes in terms of Kames, “[i]t seems likely that....Hemans intentionally evacuates the present” in this poem, “or rather, that she so saturates it with other times that it takes on the uncanny character of a reverie: ‘in a complete idea of memory there is no past nor future,’ says Kames” (83). Hemans sees all at once her precursor and her own fame: “[o]ne can hardly avoid reading this poem, perhaps the most famous of its genre, as Hemans's meditation on her own death and legacy” (Westover 82). Her main message seems to be an implicit request for fame and the happiness Tighe did not experience in life, but she also points to heaven as our

destination. She seems to struggle to attain this perspective. From two removes, Hemans imagines the afterlife as possessing beauty more exquisite than earth's and as not shadowed by death: "[t]here love and death must part" (44). She implies that here, when we experience beauty, it is always threatened by its own dissolution. In this life, love and death are inextricably joined; she addresses Tighe: "[t]he glorious bowers of earth among, / How often didst thou weep!" (47-8). Now Tighe's joy, she suggests, is untainted by sorrow.

Through "ideal presence," Tighe also has a shadowy existence in verse. That Hemans enables her precursor to live also in our thoughts is confirmed by another poem she wrote years later for Tighe called "Lines Written for the Album at Rosanna." Nature is again associated with the pastoral, and in the first of two stanzas, Hemans uses the imperative voice in a manner reminiscent of her elegy "The Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott." There, her order to "the funeral chant / Breathe reverently!" (2-3) resembles her command here: "Oh! lightly tread through these deep chestnut bowers, / Where a sweet spirit once in beauty mov'd!" (1-2). This is followed by another directive. Just as she regarded Scott's remains as holy and as sanctifying the very ground and floral life, Hemans sees Tighe's relics as worthy of respect:

And touch with reverent hand these leaves and flowers,

Fair things, which well a gentle heart hath lov'd!

A gentle heart, of love and grief th' abode,

Whence the bright stream of song in tear-drops flow'd. (3-6).

Tighe's ability in life to transfigure her surroundings through love is shown to be the particular province of the woman poet, who sanctifies nature through affect. The second stanza is subjunctive, petitioning an unknown interlocutor to allow the memory of the "sweet spirit" to transform his experience of the place:

And bid its memory sanctify the scene!
And let th' ideal presence of the dead
Float round and touch the woods with softer green,
And o'er the streams a charm, like moonlight, shed;
Through the soul's depths in holy silence felt—
A spell to raise, to chasten, and to melt! (7-12)

It would not be surprising if Hemans recalled the phrase “ideal presence” from her reading of Kames. Her use of the word “spell” to associate with “ideal presence” is significant, because in “The Grave of a Poetess,” she says to Tighe, “To thee the sunshine round thy tomb / Was but a broken spell” (23-4). In other words, the sun, like Hemans’s imaginings, is ineffectual for the dead poet. One may wonder if Hemans would claim that we live in a sort of “spell” on earth, or at least, that spells help us through the vicissitudes of life.

Westover reveals that Hemans’s “spell” cast by invoking Tighe was compromised by her actual visit to Tighe’s monument. He reports, “In a letter to John Lodge, she lamented the ‘Titania-like’ appearance of the statue of Psyche on Tighe’s monument, opining that it ruined ‘the singleness of effect which the tomb would have produced’ ” (85). He goes on to say that the “singleness of effect” perceived by Hemans recalls Godwin’s directive for simple grave markers for the famous. Phillips comments: “Godwin’s plan asks only for the simplest of markers to fix the place of burial. Though he does not say so, this plainness suited contemporary psychological doctrines, which argued that the power of association would be greatest where the linkages between ideas were least subject to distracting interruption.” As stated above, Phillips proceeds to confirm that “unlike the monuments that found official favor and changed the urban landscapes of London or Birmingham, Godwin’s speculative program of commemoration finds

its home in the private life of the individual mind” (*Society* 325). Hemans, for whom Tighe had hitherto existed only in her “private life of the individual mind,” now had pressed upon her senses a memorial that lacked aesthetic unity. In addition, Hemans was deflated regarding Tighe’s biography. She wrote to Clara Graves in July 1831:

I was sorry to find that I must give up my beau ideal of Mrs. Tighe’s Character, at least in a great measure; much of her domestic sorrow I learned, was caused by her excessive passion for shining in Society, which quite carried her away from all Home-enjoyments, until her health gave way, and she was compelled to relinquish this career of dissipation.—How one is obliged to resign one’s fair visions of excellence, my dear Clara, when the strong daylight of truth is thrown upon them; and how painful is the feeling with which we see them melt away!—I thought several times of Lord Byron’s “*Implora pace*” [loosely translated “Let me rest in peace!”], while listening to these details, which were given me *at the tomb itself*. (*Felicia* 334n1)

Westover reflects, “How strange this passage is, especially given that Hemans’s description of Tighe’s life so closely resembles her own biography” (86). Regarding Lord Byron’s “*Implora pace*,” Susan J. Wolfson relates that Hemans “had already incorporated it into her poetry” from Byron’s letters. Her early biographer notes that “[s]he frequently referred to that touching epitaph ‘*Implora pace!*’...as the words she would wish to be inscribed on her own monument” (Chorley qtd. by Wolfson, 179n35). Clearly, Hemans had in mind for herself an epitaph that conveyed “singleness of effect” (qtd. by Westover 85). Westover opines that “[a]pparently, Hemans prefers her imaginary versions of Tighe and her grave to the distracting realities she now sees before her” (86).

As Ryan has indicated, Hemans's "The Grave of a Poetess" may be compared to a male-authored pastoral elegy, with the major difference that in Hemans's elegy there is no sense of competition with her precursor. I rely here on Peter Sacks for his standard account of the conventions of the male pastoral elegy. Ryan sees in the poem a departure "from the classical world of nature's song and pastoral brotherhood to a contemporary world of neglect and destruction" (252). She makes the point that "[f]or mourning to follow natural description imitates the path of most pastoral elegies, but it leads Hemans to the 'woman's mind' instead of her dead body and inverts the century's emphasis on masculine mentality and feminine corporeality" (253). This is true, but first we have the implied dead body, whose dissolution Hemans cannot originally move past; though she refers to "the woman's mind," she speaks of it in the past tense (14). In contrast to the convention in male pastoral elegies, she not only does not dwell on Tighe's name, but does not name her at all, except in a note. For Sacks, the "survivor leans upon the name, which takes on, by dint of repetition, a kind of substantiality, allowing it not only to refer to, but almost to replace the dead" (26). Hemans cloaks Tighe's privacy by not naming her, and also refuses the act of possession that naming can entail. As Ryan points out, she refers instead to the "woman's mind" (14) and the "woman's heart" (52), showing that it is Tighe's spirit that she ultimately addresses (cf. 253). Sacks explains the "catalogued offering of flowers":

These offerings, apart from their figurative meanings and the function of obeisance, also add to the temporal or spatial respite within the rites, or within the poem itself, and the flowers, like the poetic language to which they are so often compared, serve not only as offerings or as gestures of respite but also as demarcations separating the living from the dead. (19)

In the first half of the poem, flowers do mark the separation between the living and the dead, and rather than offering respite in a relatively short elegy, they are first employed to emphasize Tighe's inability to sense them; she is "[p]arted from all the song and bloom / [She] would have lov'd so well" (21-2). On earth, flowers "round our pathway shed / Odours and hues below" (35-6), and Hemans suggests these qualities are unavailable to Tighe. Hemans associates flowers with what is "passing" and "vain," telling Tighe, "Here a vain love to passing flowers / Thou gav'st" (41-2). Flowers are here the symbol of the transience of this world, and possibly refer to the perceived ephemerality of women's poetry; women's poems of the time were sometimes seen as transient as flowers (cf. Ryan 256).

Then, in the second half of the poem, we see the flowers apotheosized like Tighe; Hemans affirms, "Surely on lovelier things, I said, / Thou must have look'd ere now" (33-4). She finishes with the comforting conclusion, "Now peace the woman's heart hath found / And joy the poet's eye" (51-2). The flowers attain heaven just as Tighe does, allowing her to enjoy them there. Sacks speaks about the Christian apotheosis in Milton's *Lycidas*, in which the soul enters "into a spiritually raised rather than physically renewed, natural world, a world now of streams and groves...The pastoral world is reinscribed [sic] in heaven" (114). Hemans imagines for Tighe a "vernal dawn" (20), but one raised to a new level. There is no sense of competition between Hemans and her precursor. For Sacks, ancient funeral games "take on the aspects of a contest for inheritance; we see this especially clearly in the elegiac eclogues where, beneath an apparently innocent singing match, a poet asserts his position as true heir to a poetic legacy" (36). In male elegies, there is often this idea of inheriting the poetic role of the dead, something that Hemans avoids. She attains sympathy with the "woman's mind" (14) and "woman's heart" (51), and through an instance of "ideal presence," relates to the woman in question.

Quite fittingly, the last poem that Hemans wrote for Tighe after visiting her tomb has no instance of “ideal presence” but rather a kind of ekphrasis of the grave and a focus upon the complex symbol of the butterfly, which fortuitously appeared on the scene while Hemans was present. Everything in the poem suggests the existence of the grave as a prompt to trace the butterfly in its giddy flight. “Written after Visiting a Tomb near Woodstock, in the Country of Kilkenny” begins with an epigraph from Tighe’s “Poem on the Lily”:

Yes, hide beneath the mouldering heap,
The undelighted, slighted thing;
There in the cold earth, buried deep,
In silence let it wait for spring. (13-16)

There is at least in this epigraph the hopeful thought that Tighe awaits a heavenly spring. Hemans’s poem proper begins in the same way as “The Grave of a Poetess,” except in this case she actually *was* there rather than *imagined* she was there. She begins, “I STOOD” (1), a phrase which also begins “The Grave.” Ryan says that this phrase “allows Hemans to retain the power of the first-person voice as she speaks directly to the dead Tighe, and that she stands, rather than sits or kneels, demands recognition of the woman as poetic authority” (253). As in that poem but more explicitly, the poet faces her confrontation with Tighe’s dead body:

I STOOD where the lip of song lay low,
Where the dust had gathered on Beauty’s brow
Where stillness hung on the heart of Love,
And a marble weeper kept watch above. (1-4)

Again, the dead poet is “low” (1) rather than a forebear ‘above,’ and the words convey the finality of death. Not only is she “low,” but she seems inaccessible to the imagination. The

“marble weeper” keeping “watch above” (4) seems more alive than she. Godwin would likely say that it is the elaborate tomb impeding “the power of association” in Hemans’s mind (Phillips, *Society* 325). Throughout the poem, the active mind of the poet and the exuberant life of the butterfly contrast with the earthly irretrievability of Tighe. Immediately after the verse quoted above, Hemans speaks of herself at the graveside:

I stood in the silence of lonely thought,
Of deep affections that inly wrought,
Troubled, and dreamy, and dim with fear,—
They knew themselves exiled spirits here! (5-8)

How strange it is that the non-being in the first four lines would suggest a spiritual escape from exile! The “bright butterfly” is similarly perplexing. Its brightness recalls that of the “The Grave,” where brightness typifies the air (6), woman’s “light of song” (16), and the “reckless play” of birds and insects (26). Brightness is there associated with the pastoral world—the one on earth, not in heaven. Here, somehow the “bright butterfly” is meant to image the human soul in transit from the tomb.

The “bright butterfly” (10) that flits onto the scene is paradoxically both symbol of the soul, as in, consciousness, and symbol of the unconscious natural world. Hemans repeatedly contrasts her far-reaching thoughts and acute feelings with the joys of the unconscious butterfly, and hence, with the unconscious Tighe. The butterfly has “[n]o burden of mortal sufferings” (12); its existence is limited to the present, and it cannot think or move to the past or future in thought. It also has no intellectual ability to reach for infinity through those “quick thoughts wandering o’er earth and sky / With voices to question eternity” (19-20). “The Grave” suggests this capacity for Tighe, “in whose woman’s mind / The ray that brightens earth and sea, / The

light of song was shrined” (14-16). As I pointed out above, however, Hemans uses the past tense “was shrined” to speak about Tighe’s poetic gift; her dead body no longer possesses this faculty. Her remains are relics because they once held the sought-after poetic gift, in a way similar to Scott’s remains in Hemans’s “The Funeral Day of Sir Walter Scott.” As in that poem, Hemans appears to intuit something of value lasting in the poet’s remains, for instance, “[r]ound the dark chamber where Genius lies” (“Written” 44). Contrasting with Tighe’s lifeless body in her “solemn tomb” (13) is the vivid butterfly, though it makes no sound. Hemans addresses it:

Thine, in its reckless and joyous way,
Like an embodied breeze at play!
Child of the sunlight! thou winged and free! (21-3)

The poet admits that for “[o]ne moment, one moment” she envied the butterfly (24) for its very lack of consciousness. She draws attention to the brevity of its being, while referring to her own powers of thought:

In thy brief being no strife of mind,
No boundless passion, is deeply shrined;
While I, as I gazed on thy swift flight by,
One hour of my soul seemed infinity! (29-32)

Even while she is tempted to envy the butterfly’s exemption from all suffering, Hemans shakes herself, as she does in the second half of “The Grave of a Poetess,” and references the eternal gifts of “Love and Song” (35). She implies that these abilities exceed human frailty and are bestowed on fortunate persons. Interestingly, the interjection to “Love and Song” interrupts Hemans’s speech to the butterfly, somehow associating it with eternal qualities. She proceeds from Tighe to “Love and Song” and then back to the butterfly:

And she, that voiceless below me slept,
Flowed not her song from a heart that wept?
O Love and Song! though of heaven your powers,
Dark is your fate in this world of ours.
Yet, ere I turned from that silent place,
Or ceased from watching thy sunny race,
Thou, even thou, on those glancing wings,
Didst waft me visions of brighter things! (35-40)

Hemans conflates three entities: Tighe, the eternal gifts, and the butterfly. This is a fitting conclusion for a poem in which a butterfly “waft[s]” “visions of brighter things” (40)—intimations of immortality as in Wordsworth—while at the same time being the most transient and fragile of creatures. Hemans seems to imply we are like the butterfly in that we are precarious creatures and also signs of eternity; she says to it,

Thou that dost image the freed soul’s birth,
And its flight away o’er the mists of earth,
O, fitly thy path is through flowers that rise
Round the dark chamber where Genius lies! (41-44)

Here again we have flowers rising around the tomb; they, too, in their brief lives, suggest the transience of life in general. The “image” of the “freed soul,” the “flowers,” and “Genius” are all allied, complicating ideas of transience and permanence. That all creatures are united is an idea reflected in these two lines from Hemans to the butterfly: “And strangely I felt, as I saw thee shine, / The all that severed thy life and mine” (15-16). This statement implies the utter contrast between her life and that of the butterfly, but it also denotes the gossamer threads of each

precious life that can be “severed” in a heartbeat. Fluttering life and the finality of the tomb together somehow point to the next life.

For Hemans and Landon (FIGURE 12), sorrow not only unites them to each other and to other women poets, but it legitimizes their poetic calling. Ryan comments, “[b]oth Hemans’ and Landon’s elegies argue that suffering is not the unfortunate and unforeseeable consequence of a particular situation; it is the destiny and the value of the woman poet” (262). Women’s sorrow appears frequently in Hemans’s lyrics. In “The Grave of a Poetess,” Hemans addresses Tighe regarding her legacy of sorrow:

Thou hast left sorrow in thy song,
A voice not loud, but deep!
The glorious bowers of earth among,
How often didst thou weep! (45-8)

Tighe’s sadness while on earth equipped her for writing sorrowful poetry, inspiring her to leave a dower of sorrow. In “Lines Written for the Album at Rosanna,” Hemans attributes to Tighe “[a] gentle heart, of love and grief th’ abode, / Whence the bright stream of song in tear-drops flow’d” (5-6). Both in this poem and in “Written After Visiting a Tomb near Woodstock, in the Country of Kilkenny,” a combination of love and grief is the spring of poetic song. Landon, in her 1835 essay “On the Character of Mrs. Hemans’s Writings,” written concurrently with “Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans,” alludes to women’s suffering, which “discourses eloquent music, and it believes that such music will find an echo and reply where the music only is known, and the maker loved for its sake” (173). The woman poet must be loved for the sake of her poetry; suffering alone will not suffice, but nor will song without suffering. Landon also opines that poetry’s “haunted words will be to us even as our own. Solitude and sorrow reveal to

us its secrets, even as they first revealed themselves to those ‘Who learnt in suffering what they taught in song’ (P.B. Shelley’s “Julian and Maddalo, A Conversation,” qtd. by Landon, “On the Character” 175). Ryan comments that “the record and celebration of women’s sorrow in an elegy raises this emotion from expected poetic mode to something higher; because of the value invested in elegizing, feminine sorrow now transcends its earthly realm” (256). In a sense, women elegists’ sorrow, rather than their subjects, is apotheosized.

In Landon’s first elegy to Hemans, “Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Hemans,” she attributes to Hemans a sorrowful song more lasting than the ubiquitous elegiac flowers but one that comes at a great cost to the female poet. Through an instance of “ideal presence,” we are privileged to see Hemans both from her public’s perspective and from Landon’s. When Landon says, “And yet thy song is sorrowful, / Its beauty is not bloom” (41-2), she recalls Hemans’s words in “The Grave of a Poetess,” in which she tells Tighe that she is “[p]arted from all the song and bloom / [She] would have lov’d so well” (21-2). Whereas the first half of this elegy groups poetry and flowers together, suggesting both are transient, Landon takes care to indicate that the sorrow inherent in Hemans’s poetry is not passing like earthly “bloom”: “[t]he hopes of which it breathes are hopes / That look beyond the tomb” (43-4). Hemans’s song is indeed sorrowful, but that very sorrow points to the next life. Landon immediately reverts to sorrow:

Thy song is sorrowful as winds
That wander o’er the plain,
And ask for summer’s vanished flowers,
And ask for them in vain. (45-8).

Mellor observes that in this elegy, “Landon summed up [Hemans’s and Landon’s] shared understanding of the world as a place in which women were born to grieve” (‘Anguish’ 453).

Flowers are a vexed symbol in Romantic women's elegies, as Ryan makes clear: "flowers in women's elegies reinforce the sorrow they already suffer: the evanescent beauty offers only a cruel mockery of their own fate" (261). "For Landon, the world does not let women free themselves from an association with fleeting, ornamental beauty" (Ryan 260). If Landon were herself "asking in vain" for flowers, it would be easy to interpret flowers as adulation; she was, after all, "feted as the female Byron during the 1820s" (Miller xi). But since Hemans "shunned" "public fame" (Mellor, 'Anguish' 253), the "flowers" she seeks are more likely expressions of love: a woman's heart "never meets the love it paints, / The love for which it pines" (Landon, "Stanzas" 65-6). Landon in her essay exclaims, "Imagine a girl, lovely and gifted as Mrs. Hemans was, beginning life—conscious, for genius must be conscious of itself—full of hope and belief; gradually, the hope darkens into fear, and the belief into doubt; one illusion perishes after another, 'and love grown too sorrowful, / Asks for its youth again' " (Hemans, "Come Home" qtd. by Landon 177).

That Landon speaks of herself as well as Hemans is indicated by the pause in the middle of "Stanzas," in which the poet employs no identifying names or pronouns but adumbrates the burden on the female poet, and opposes this unnamed female poet to the crowd. She sadly acknowledges:

Wound to a pitch too exquisite,
The soul's fine chords are wrung;
With misery and melody
They are too highly strung.
The heart is made too sensitive
Life's daily pain to bear;

It beats in music, but it beats

Beneath a deep despair. (57-64)

Landon's speech indicates that an over-sensitive heart is her difficulty as well as Hemans's in the world of literary publishing and acclaim. As in Hemans's elegies to Tighe, the very susceptibility that makes Hemans a good poet also makes her unfit for this earth. The acknowledgement that the "heart [is] made too sensitive / Life's daily pain to bear" suggests that the challenges of day-to-day living are less bearable for a mind shaped by poetic sensitivity.

Comparing "Stanzas" to Landon's "Sir Walter Scott" reveals formal similarities but also contrasting emphases suggested by the gender of each poet. "Sir Walter Scott" lacks Landon's insistence that the poetic gift makes the poet unfit for this world. Hemans and Landon closely associate this quality with the women they are elegizing, whereas they align Scott with the poetic authority of the male minstrel. Landon says to him, "But there was something in thy name, / Which touched us with a dearer claim" (11-12). She means the claim of literary glory, but she gives Hemans a kind of disembodied, otherworldly origin:

How many loved and honoured thee

Who only knew thy name;

Which o'er the weary working world

Like starry music came! (89-92)

She seems to come from above, while on earth often only her name is recognized. Though Scott receives glory, we are meant to see his appeal as quotidian rather than as ethereal. Having grown up fed on the tales of Scott, Landon remembers that the familial feeling for him "[w]as like a household tie:

A sunshine on our common life,

And from our daily sky.

Thy works are those familiar things

From which so much of memory springs. (13-18)

Scott's works elicit a sympathy which resembles "sunshine" and "daily sky" and which shaped her family's memories. Hemans, on the other hand, is like a heavenly flower exuding scent:

So pure, so sweet thy life has been,

So filling earth and air

With odours and with loveliness,

Till common scenes grew fair. (14-17)

Landon conveys that Hemans's very goodness and otherworldly purity communicates itself to her world, but those qualities appear to be as delicate as a flower's scent. Regarding Scott, Landon shows that his works transfigure nature: "[f]or nature has fresh beauty brought, / When animate with life from thought" (59-60). Scott's sympathetic thoughts effect a kind of recreation: "How many a lonely mountain glade / Lives in his verse anew" (55-6).

For Landon, Hemans does not only transfigure earth with her words, but she brings her native element, heaven, down to earth; she has:

Flung beauty born of dreams

That shadows on the actual world

The spirit's sunny gleams. (18-20)

Landon proceeds to describe Hemans's song: "Mysterious influence, that to earth / Brings down the heaven above" (21-2). Even though Scott has "pour[ed] forth the poet's soul" (66), has given totally of himself, he appears to be fully rooted in this earth, whereas Hemans is not from here:

Oh! Flower brought from Paradise

To this cold world of ours,
Shadows of beauty such as thine
Recall thy native bowers. (78-81)

Hemans's poetry "shadows" eternal beauty, like the shapes projected in the exemplum of Plato's cave. Landon, in her essay on Hemans, suggests that "[t]he most intense sunshine casts the deepest shadow. Such mirth [as just quoted] does not disprove the melancholy which belonged to Mrs. Hemans's character" (176).

Landon depicts both Scott and Hemans as dead before their time and as the victims of their own shrines. Here is "Sir Walter Scott":

For thou didst die before thy time,
The tenement o'erwrought,
The heart consumed by its desire,
The body worn by thought;
Thyself the victim of thy shrine,
A glorious sacrifice was thine. (79-84)

In this description, even though Scott suffered physical deterioration from his devotion to his art, his was a "glorious sacrifice." Hemans's "sacrifice" was a sacrifice only (75-6). She is physically worn in a way that hints at a loss of beauty, and, according to Landon, she is generally misinterpreted:

A fated doom is hers who stands
The priestess of the shrine.
The crowd—they only see the crown,
They only hear the hymn;—

They mark not that the cheek is pale,

And that the eye is dim. (51-56)

Landon implicitly suggests that poets like herself and Hemans, in trying to align themselves with the beautiful, even compromise their physical beauty. Mellor remarks that, “[b]y revealing the hollowness at the core of the Burkean category of the Beautiful, Landon undermined the very construction of femininity upon which her poetry was grounded” (*Romanticism* 120). Landon shows that the female poet, unlike the authoritative male poet, is constantly being misinterpreted, or at least, is constantly seen only as a poet, a name, rather than as a woman who suffers. It is unlikely that Scott experienced comparable misinterpretation, nor is it likely that he possessed a gift that prompted him to be interpreted as a denizen more of heaven than of earth. Significantly, the angel whom Landon invokes as a being like Hemans is male; he “sings of earth / Whose cares are at his feet” (39-40).

The idea of the woman poet’s self-sacrifice as part of her poetic identity is clear in both of Landon’s elegies to Hemans. Ryan observes:

Landon illuminates the tomb of the woman poet to reveal that her death-in-life comes ironically from everything that she creates. This move aligns Landon with Charlotte Smith’s first poem of *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784), where Smith, calling on her ‘partial Muse’ (1), presupposes painful division as both condition for and consequence of woman’s poetic talent. (263)

In her essay on Hemans, Landon expresses the hope that the sufferings of this world prepare the woman poet for a better one: “Did we not know this world to be but a place of trial—our bitter probation for another and for a better—how strange in its severity would seem the lot of genius in a woman” (179). She then emotes,

The keen feeling—the generous enthusiasm—the lofty aspiration—and the delicate perception—are given but to make the possessor unfitted for her actual possession. It is well such gifts, in their very contrast to the selfishness and the evil with which they are surrounded, inform us of another world—they breathe of their home, which is Heaven; the spiritual and the inspired in this life but fit us to believe in that which is to come.

(179-80)

There is a definite vertical drive here and also in Landon's "Stanzas"; throughout the poem, Landon gestures towards heaven, which she claims is Hemans's native element.

Landon reaches out to her surrounding community in "Stanzas" and also acknowledges the "crowd" that is like an anti-community for herself and Hemans. In the first two stanzas, the community is called upon to "[b]ring flowers" six times, four of which concern increasingly dark situations:

Bring flowers to crown the cup and lute,—
Bring flowers,—the bride is near;
Bring flowers to soothe the captive's cell,
Bring flowers to strew the bier! (1-4)

As in Landon's "Tombs of the Kings of Golconda," we think we are invited to rejoice over a wedding, only to realize that we are witnessing a funeral. Ryan points out that the beginning of "Stanzas" echoes Hemans's own poem "Bring Flowers." She demonstrates that "four of the situations are drawn directly from Hemans's poem, but 'lute' is not; the addition of 'lute' to the imperative whereby the 'cup' is crowned with 'flowers' resonates with the memory of another woman's famous lyre and a crowning of flowers" (460). In a footnote, Ryan explains that this

reference is to Madame de Stael's *Corinne; ou l'Italie* (1807), in which the heroine is crowned with "myrtle and laurel" (qtd. by Ryan 275n22). The first stanza "quietly connects the genius of a woman poet with the stanza's ending, death" (Ryan 260). This parallel may imply that it is her public that causes Hemans's death; however, her readers who appear later in the poem seem different from those who misunderstand her, who "only see the crown...only hear the hymn" (53-4). Hemans's true admirers hunger for her words:

Let others thank thee—'twas for them
Thy soft leaves thou didst wreath;
The red rose wastes itself in sighs
Whose sweetness others breathe!
And they have thanked thee—many a lip
Has asked of thine for words,
When thoughts, life's finer thoughts, have touched
The spirit's inmost chords. (82-8)

This group feels itself to be touched at the deepest level by Hemans's words; Landon indicates that this effect comes from Hemans's otherworldly aesthetic. Yet, even this section of Hemans's public knows her but superficially: "How many loved and honoured thee / Who only knew thy name," avers Landon.

Landon implicitly presents herself as someone who, unlike the general community, *does* understand what Hemans's vocation and avocation entail for her. Landon distinguishes herself from Hemans's average devotee:

The charm that dwelt in songs of thine
My inmost spirit moved;

And yet I feel as thou hast been

Not half enough beloved. (97-100)

In the first part of the poem, Landon allies herself with the crowd, but almost exactly halfway through the elegy, she refers to a distant “They” (53, 54, 55) from whom she differs. In stanza 11, the readers are represented as “others” (82), “they” (86), and “many a lip” (86). Finally, she is again part of the community: “Thy heart is left within our hearts” (109). Landon seems ambivalent about associating herself with Hemans’s readers, who love her poetry and yet fail to see that she is wasting away from the demands of her poetic vocation. Landon’s “favorite topic was thwarted romantic love” (Miller 5), so Landon’s account of Hemans can be seen as a fated love story between her and her public. Despite any tension between the two poets, Landon in “Stanzas” is self-styled as the person who relates to Hemans on a significant level and who assesses her own work and reception in terms of Hemans’s. Mellor opines that Landon “insists on the poetess’ uniquely refined sensibility, her ability to feel more intensely the suffering of her own and others’ hearts, an ability which is both troped and experienced as the performance of ‘music’ or art” (‘Anguish’ 453). Sorrow allows Landon to empathize with Hemans’s sorrow.

Landon’s second elegy for Hemans, published three years after “Stanzas” and “On the Character of Mrs. Hemans’s Writings” (1835), possesses many of the same ideas as in those earlier works but also a greater formal distance in tone and a cognitive distance in perspective. Whereas in “Stanzas” Hemans is associated with the friendly locale of heaven, in the 1838 elegy, simply called “Felicia Hemans,” she is likened to “planets [who] from afar look down on ocean, / And give their own sweet image to the wave” (15-16). She is also symbolized by “[t]he heart’s sweet empire over land and sea” (26). In spite of using these exalted metaphors, however,

Landon is not distanced from her topic of Hemans. As in “Stanzas,” she considers what it means to record the experience of a woman poet while grieving for her and for herself simultaneously.

That “Felicia Hemans” is more cynical than “Stanzas” is suggested by a likely reference to Byron’s *Manfred* (1817). Landon addresses Hemans in the first stanza:

Thou hast been round us like a viewless spirit,
Known only by the music in the air;
The leaf or flowers which thou hast named inherit
A beauty known but from thy breathing there. (9-12).

Again there is the adapted male elegiac convention of flowers for the dead, here made beautiful by Hemans “breathing” into them her essence as a woman poet. Landon also adapts the phrase “viewless spirit” (9), which is strongly redolent of the male Romantics, especially Wordsworth, who coined the phrase, and Byron, who used it in *Manfred*. In the latter, “[The Shepherd’s pipe in the distance is heard.]”:

The natural music of the mountain reed—
For here the patriarchal days are not
A pastoral fable—pipes in the liberal air,
Mixed with the sweet bells of the sauntering herd,
My soul would drink those echoes. Oh, that I were
The viewless spirit of a lovely sound,
A living voice, a breathing harmony
A bodiless enjoyment—born and dying
With the best tone which made me! (1.2. 49-57)

Landon implies that for her also, the pastoral is not a “fable” but is instantiated by Hemans, who was really a “viewless spirit / Known only” (9-10) to many by her poetic song rather than in the flesh. Hemans and Landon, according to the latter, make the pastoral their own, giving it the feminine signature of music and flowers that are beautified by the female soul. To avoid insinuating any comparisons between Hemans and Manfred, Landon immediately allies her with the feminine attributes of “strong emotion” and a “fond heart” (13, 14). Landon’s allusion to Byron is ironic, but also suggestive of herself and Hemans adapting the pastoral for their purposes. McGann and Riess observe that “Byronic tags and phrases recur throughout [Landon’s] work because Byron’s writing is well-known; as such, its signs may be effectively deployed as second-order signs of the presence of a poetical discourse of personal disillusionment” (23).

“Felicia Hemans” is more detached than “Stanzas” about the woman poet’s relationship with her public. Landon’s affective bond with Hemans is not compromised, but the two women poets are both putatively alienated from their devotees. In Hemans’s name, Landon deploys the Romantic posturing of the victim writer who suffers for the sake of her art and whose art is guaranteed by her suffering. In “Stanzas,” Hemans is different from the crowd because she was more a native of the heavens; she was a “[f]lower brought from Paradise / To this cold world of ours” (77-8). In this poem, however, she is united with Landon on the periphery viewing those who misunderstand them. To the crowd Hemans was like the distant “planets” (15) or “the tumultuous billow” (39), forces in nature that are potent but distant. Landon first gives the impression that she is as uncomprehending as the crowd; she asks:

What do we know of the unquiet pillow,
By the worn cheek and tearful eyelid prest,

When thoughts chase thoughts, like the tumultuous billow,
Whose very light and foam reveals unrest?
We say, the song is sorrowful, but know not
What may have left that sorrow on the song;
However mournful words may be, they show not
The whole extent of wretchedness and wrong. (37-48)

Landon is one of the many who cannot fully relate to Hemans's sorrow, suggesting that she knows little or nothing about Hemans's private sufferings. Suddenly, Landon's tone changes and she is with Hemans and against the crowd:

They cannot paint the long sad hours, passed only
In vain regrets o'er what we feel we are.
Alas! the kingdom of the lute is lonely—
Cold is the worship coming from afar. (45-8)

Notable is the word "afar" to point to the distance between Hemans and Landon and their joint public, a cross-section of the population who enjoys their words without appreciating their sufferings. As in "Stanzas," Landon deploys the word "lute" to designate the particular artistry of the female poet, but here the "kingdom of the lute is lonely" rather than a force that creates community. Landon proceeds to link herself and Hemans through their "quicker fancies and a keener feeling, / Than those around, the cold and careless, know" (51-2). Not only are they separate from the reading community, but their personal aesthetics demand such isolation. Landon implies they are united in vain regret over their calling as women poets.

Landon contrasts the ideal poetic community—which exists in her imagination—with the community faced by herself and Hemans—also coloured by her imagination. Unlike Hemans,

Landon cultivated her public image; Miller remarks of Landon's early fame that she was a "skillful improviser of her own image" and "soon became a celebrity, her portrait exhibited at the Royal Academy, her presence a fixture on the London social scene" (5). Hemans, who experienced a different kind of fame, is portrayed in "Felicia Hemans" as a poet similarly betrayed by her admirers. The ideal reading community is outlined in the second stanza. Landon paints the foreign poetic treasures made available by Hemans's verse, and commends the generic poet as a "general bond of union":

By its immortal verse is language known,
And for the sake of song do others know it—
One glorious poet makes the world his own. (21-4)

This is the perfect situation in which the poet—gendered here as male—not only unites the peoples but also teaches them language and song. Landon returns to discussing Hemans by saying,

And thou—how far thy gentle sway extended!
The heart's sweet empire over land and sea;
Many a stranger and far flower was blended
In the soft wreath that glory bound for thee.
The echoes of the Susquehanna's waters
Paused in the pine-woods words of thine to hear;
And to the wide Atlantic's younger daughters
Thy name was lovely and thy song was dear. (25-32)

Landon attributes Hemans with far-reaching poetic power, implying literary colonialism, but also with the appealing "sweet empire" of the heart. While the generic male poet has the capacity to

teach and even to command the nations, the female poet unites them with bonds of sensibility and thereby wears “the soft wreath that glory bound for [her]” (28). Throughout this poem, except for the middle stanza about the alienation of the poetess, the woman poet is characterized by her heart: she has a “fond heart” (14); she has the “heart’s sweet empire” (26); she has “the poet’s and the woman’s heart” (56); and finally, she has “a warm and loving heart” (69). In “Stanzas” there is a similar focus on the heart without saying it is woman’s. This focus is probably a tribute to Hemans, whose *Records of Woman* emphasizes that “woman’s heart hath left a trace” (“The Image in Lava” 7).

Landon opposes this ideal community bound by sensibility to the community that metaphorically consumes its women poets:

The fable of Prometheus and the vulture,
Reveals the poet’s and the woman’s heart.
Unkindly are they judged—unkindly treated—
By careless tongues and by ungenerous words;
While cruel sneer, and hard reproach, repeated,
Jar the fine music of the spirit’s chords. (55-60)

This is the so-called “female Byron” speaking, who compares her literary reception and its detraction to a heart being slowly and daily eaten. (It appears that she thought that, in the myth, the heart, not the liver, was eaten every day.) She possibly projects this feeling onto Hemans, as though Hemans had courted her public in the same way. Just as in “Stanzas,” in the middle stanzas of “Felicia Hemans,” there are no attributing names or pronouns which indicate it is Hemans’s or Landon’s suffering that is discussed. Landon seems to speak mainly for herself, but also for all those other women poets whose art comes at the price of emotional and intellectual

alienation and physical depletion. Landon says of Hemans in particular, “[i]ts best affections [are] wronged, betrayed, and slighted— / Such is the doom of those who love too well” (71-2). Ryan observes that “Landon’s dialogue with Hemans allows her to expose their shared sympathy; both elegies [“The Grave of a Poetess” and “Stanzas”] create records of dead women poets to preserve knowledge, but Landon moves beyond Hemans to focus more intensely on the conditions that cause the woman poet’s suffering” (264).

While all the women poets in this study create historical accounts of other women, partly “to preserve knowledge,” the poets in this chapter are especially notable for relating to the sorrows of their peers through the elegiac form. Barbauld appeals to her precursor Elizabeth Singer Rowe during the heyday of her culture’s desire to know “manners,” and thus her poem consists of manners conveyed in a literary style. Hemans and Landon, appearing on the literary scene in the 1820s, do not represent manners in their elegies so much as their own musings about women and poetry. Hemans’s “reverie” (Westover 83), “The Grave of a Poetess” seems to be enabled by a tombstone; however, in this poem and “Lines Written for the Album at Rosanna,” the grave is imagined in what Westover calls “imaginary pilgrimage” (77). Of the three elegies to Mary Tighe, only “Written After Visiting a Tomb near Woodstock, in the Country of Kilkenny” engages with the actual grave. Landon’s two elegies to Hemans contain acute perceptions about what it means to be a female poet in a harsh world. Phillips’s theory of distantiation illuminates the greater affect in these elegies, but also the increasing distance between the woman poets and their audiences. His theories allow for close affective, ethical, and formal distance but also remote critical distance, a tension which allows Landon to plead for posthumous fame for herself and Hemans without having any faith in their audience. What I have referred to as horizontal and vertical thrusts in these elegies diminish with each successive poet, so that there is less credence

in the divine and less belief in the reading community, culminating with the loss of both in the main part of Landon's elegy "Felicia Hemans." Yet despite this cynicism on Landon's part, she still expresses the desire for posthumous acclaim, saying to the deceased Hemans, "[f]ame's troubled hour has cleared, and now replying, / A thousand hearts their music ask of thine" (77-8). Since for all these women poets "[f]ame's troubled hour has cleared" with their rediscovery at the end of the last century, we, too, are asking for their music.



FIGURE 12. Detail of *Letitia Elizabeth Landon*, 1802 -1838,
by Daniel Maclise, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Conclusion

It is my hope that the preceding pages assist in the recovery and appreciation of the Romantic woman's elegy without rendering it, in that process, derivative from the male pastoral tradition. The poets I discuss deal with elegiac conventions in varied ways, from Robinson's reinterpretation of the very pastoral conventions she invokes to Hemans's offering of a "trace" of a "woman's heart" (7) as the basis for a book of elegies, *Records of Woman*. Rather than imitating the artifice of the classical pastoral elegy, Romantic women poets deliberately immerse themselves in history, especially the history of departed loved ones and vanished cultures. They create a literary tradition that is their own.

I have applied the theories of Mark S. Phillips to show that Romantic women's elegies have an historical character that is usually absent in male pastoral elegies, partly because, paradoxically, the women—often out of necessity—were immersed in the quotidian. Their elegies reward close reading because of this very involvement in the everyday. Phillips's methods facilitate an historical approach to their works, and illuminate them with a model of historiographical tensions comprised of form, affect, ethics, and perspective. These women poets focus upon affect and ethics without justifying the stereotype, again in Anne K. Mellor's words, that grieving is "what women do" ("Anguish" 450). Rather, they demonstrate that while grief is universal, its expression is gendered.

Romantic women poets approached personal histories imaginatively, just at the time when male authors such as James Mackintosh and William Godwin advocated for imaginatively conceived history. Imagination was thought to aid sympathy with the dead. The women poets' addresses to the dead possess a sensitive awareness of those whom they elegize and also of those

left behind; this awareness illuminates even literary characters, civilizations, and the remnants *they* leave behind. Women elegists are not usually competitive, yet they find the elegy an apt vehicle for voicing, not only their own moral imperatives, but also their personal hope for remembrance. They do not supplant their precursors, but rather depict them as muses, sisters, friends. My last chapter is arranged to clarify this observation. Throughout this thesis, I have been guided by Celeste M. Schenck's insight that "the female elegy is a poem of connectedness" rather than of competition (15). Romantic women poets often postulate a Christian heaven for those whom they mourn, thus suggesting a community renewed in the next life.

Future studies of women's elegies could seek further connections between the male pastoral tradition and the relatively more modern women's elegiac tradition. The ways in which women throughout this time adapt and subvert the conventions of the male elegy is a topic that has yet to be considered in a holistic examination. The work begun by Ann Messenger in this field could be extended through the Romantic Era and up to modern times, to times and poets even more current than those considered in Melissa Zeiger's book. Perhaps tracing this long span would result in a women's elegiac history that would compete, perhaps not in duration but rather in achievement, with the male elegiac tradition. In the meantime, it is enlightening to follow a newer tradition that is replete with rich elegiac and literary tropes without sacrificing historicity and particularity to formal interests.

My project leaves me with the question whether, in the history of women's literature, only the elegy is a historiographic genre, or if many other genres might benefit from a historiographic approach. Are women more invested in the quotidian than men, and so more easily read in terms of the march of time? What seems clear is that women elegists are more given than men to expressing interest in the details of the people and artifacts they value. Their

attention to otherness, even when they are writing for their sustenance and that of those for whom they are responsible, results in detailed accounts of the individuals they describe or mourn. The era of the Romantic woman poet coincides perfectly with a significant change in historiography, so that her focus on biographical details and spiritual insights dovetails with a new approach to historical writing, described by Phillips as the evocation of the past through sympathetic and imaginative narration. Thus one of woman's main assets of character came to be formalized in historiography's new purpose and role, and it is more than conjecture to see this union of female talent and academic trend as the advent of a new dawn for women writers.

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