# RESISTANCE AND REPRODUCTION:
# THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND PERCY SHELLEY


By

MINHO MAENG

Bachelor of Arts in English
Handong Global University
Pohang, South Korea
2012

Master of Arts in English
Seoul National University
Seoul, South Korea
2014


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Dissertation Approved

Dr. Cailey Hall
Dissertation Advisor

Dr. Lindsay Wilhelm

Dr. Martin Wallen

Dr. Jason Lavery

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Name: MINHO MAENG

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Abstract: "Resistance and Reproduction: The Poetry of William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley" examines how Wordsworth and Shelley responded to the epistemological transition from intrinsic to nominal in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Michel Foucault argued that social institutions deviated from people's intuitive understanding and established arbitrary systems that alienated human community and subjectivity. While Wordsworth and Shelley focused on imagination and sympathy as the means by which to resist the tendency towards nominalization, I argue that these attempts at resistance could reproduce these nominal institutions instead.

In Wordsworth's case, his recognition of this epistemological shift was evidenced by his anxiety about losing contact with readers in the mass print market. In the Lucy Poems and *The Prelude*, he attempted to deliver a universal message that could secure his readership by providing aesthetic experiences through his poetry. However, in doing so, Wordsworth assumes readers are biopolitical subjects who are driven by bodily impulses and external stimuli. In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth investigates the viability of his poetry in the mass print market. While reflecting on the absence of commonality or consensus between readers, within the dramatic confines of the poem, the Wanderer's authority as the primary speaker is often challenged by other characters, such as The Solitary. This challenge extends to a critique of Wordsworth's poetic language, which affirms the power of imagination and sympathy.

For Shelley, the shift to nominalism was represented by the advent of the paper money system. Paper money was originally introduced to promote convenient economic transactions, but this institution was subject to the influence of speculative and highly unstable financial markets. In *A Philosophical View of Reform*, Shelley accused the British government of arbitrarily manipulating the market by issuing excessive volumes of paper notes. In *The Cenci*, Shelley criticizes the British government's abuse of the paper money system through the character of Count Cenci, who reifies his patriarchal authority to satisfy his sadistic pleasure. Shelley explores the potential for sympathy as an alternative medium of communication. However, he affirms that even sympathy can degenerate into an instrument of exploitation when it is circulated in society. By contrast, in *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley attempts to discover the potential for liberation in the arbitrary language of contemporary financial institutions. By dismantling the narrative linearity of the drama, Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* resists the indexical nature of paper money and the credit system. "Resistance and Reproduction" thus investigates the dynamic relationship between Wordsworth and Shelley's poetry and its institutionalization in the Romantic era.

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# Chapter I

# Introduction

## I.1: Nominal Epistemology and Romantic Poets' Responses: Resistance and Reproduction

In *The Order of Things,* Michel Foucault characterized the epistemic turn of the seventeenth century Europe as the change from intrinsic value to nominal value.[1] Until the sixteenth-century, European people largely believed that language could inherently contain the attributes of what it signified, and that language could mysteriously "hide and manifest" knowledge of the world.[2] However, from the seventeenth century onward, people began to believe that the relationship between language and the world was not intrinsic but arbitrary, so they constructed taxonomical systems—such as encyclopedias—that were not intrinsically connected with the world but only presented commentary on it. In the following excerpt, Foucault further explains this changed relationship between language and things:

> Knowledge therefore consisted in relating one form of language to another form of

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (Vintage Books, 1994), 167.

[2] Foucault, 36.

> language; in restoring the great, unbroken plain of words and things; in making everything speak. That is, in bringing into being, at a level above all marks, the secondary discourse of commentary. The function proper to knowledge is not seeing or demonstrating; it is interpreting.[3]

In this excerpt, Foucault argues that language is no longer an intrinsic embodiment of external reality but could only interpret or comment on things. And individuals could indirectly access external reality through this interpretation. In this case, language constitutes its inner system of meaning independent of what it signifies.

This dissertation draws on Foucault's theorization of this paradigm change from intrinsic to nominal value to consider a more pervasive phenomenon that characterizes the relationship between individuals and society in 18th-century Britain: the institutionalization of social entities. As discussed above, under a nominal epistemology, language constructs its system of meaning by presenting secondary commentary on things. Likewise, after the 17th century, as human community expanded and became more complicated in urban areas of Western Europe, communication systems operated by their own arbitrary principles beyond individuals' intuitive understanding. For instance, referring to Jürgen Habermas' concept of a public sphere, Charles Taylor observes that in eighteenth century Western Europe, people could no longer maintain direct and personal relationship with everyone due to enlarged society. They thus constructed an imaginative, single discussion space in which they could share opinions with each other.[4] This imaginative space was made possible by printed media that delivered individual's arguments to each other. However, as Habermas himself points out, this media did not merely deliver

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[3] Foucault, 42.

[4] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 84.

individual opinions but “d[rew] the eyes and ears of the public under their spell” and encouraged most readers to consume print media rather than enabling them to develop and share their own opinions.[5] Raymond Williams also observed that until the mid-16th century, the word “society” usually signified an intimate relationship between individuals. However, since the nineteenth century, this word has indicated an “institution and relationship in which a larger number of people maintain their livelihood.”[6] As this changing meaning of “society” implies, as society enlarged and became more complicated, individuals no longer had an intuitive understanding of the community in which they lived. Instead, due to social phenomena such as urbanization, as individuals lost an intuitive knowledge of community, they became more likely to recognize themselves as isolated beings among multiple anonymous individuals with whom they could not directly interact, as William Wordsworth describes in Book VII of *The Prelude*: “how men lived, / Even next-door neighbors, as we say, yet still / Strangers, and knowing not each other’s names.”[7] Isolated in the midst of the growing mass public, individuals attempted to construct a nominal epistemology to understand others. Rather than using intuition to get to know each other personally, they came to rely on general principles or attributes of humans as a species to communicate with others. As Foucault observed, from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries, political power came to operate under a scientific and statistical understanding about humans, such as “births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity.”[8] This type of

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[5] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society.* trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), 171.
[6] Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, 1976), 443.
[7] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805) ed. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill (New York: Norton, 1979), VII. 118-20.
[8] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books,

knowledge was created by identifying humans as "the species body," and the body as "the mechanics of life" and "the basis of the biological processes."[9] At first glance, this biological epistemology is nothing more than a systematic conversion of our intuitive understanding. However, as Thomas Lemke interprets Foucault, this biological epistemology assumes "the dissociation and abstraction of life from its concrete physical bearers."[10] This epistemological system called biopolitics was initially created to further the understanding of human bodies, but this nominal system began to exist as an independent entity separated from concrete individual experiences.[11] Furthermore, this arbitrary system not only required an independent hermeneutics for individuals to understand it but also regulated and prescribed human attributes.

How did Romantic poets, such as William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley, respond to this social change? Many scholars regard Romanticism as a literary movement opposed to multiple negative influences of the post-Enlightenment era, such as alienation, industrialization,

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1990), 139.

[9] Foucault, 139.

[10] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction,* trans. Eric Frederick Trump, (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 5.

[11] Multiple scholars have discussed the issue of biopolitics, but in this dissertation, I will mainly refer to Foucault's argument about biopolitics. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that historically, sovereigns mainly executed their authority by arbitrating the life and death of slaves and citizens (136). However, from the classical era, in the West, their execution of authority moved towards "ensur[ing], maintain[ing], and develop[ing]" citizens' lives (138). Foucault associates this transition away from an executive mode of sovereignty with the creation of many social institutions, such as schools, barracks, and workplaces, which control human lives based on scientific norms and knowledges. Therefore, controlling lives by utilizing these institutions and knowledges became an articulation of political power. Contextualizing the concept of biopolitics in my arguments, I will regard these norms as a secondary and nominal commentary on human lives. These norms are separated from concrete living beings, arbitrarily converting and reducing life forms into measurable and governable forms; in the process, these norms produce biopolitical subjects. Later in this dissertation, I will investigate how Wordsworth's poetry produces biopolitical subjects in the process of educating about moral sense.

and commercialization. According to this perspective, Wordsworth and Shelley opposed nominalism and endorsed the intrinsic value of sympathy and sincerity. As the title of this dissertation, "Resistance and Reproduction," denotes, one of this dissertation's goals is to examine how Wordsworth and Shelley resisted the trend of nominalization and institutionalization. This perspective is especially in tandem with Marxist critique. In "Ideas of Nature," Raymond Williams argues that 18th-century Europeans no longer regarded nature as a single, personified being but as a neutral, external environment that was fundamentally separate from human activity.[12] By doing so, human beings could scientifically and rationally define the attributes of nature and therefore exploit it. At the same time, as Williams observes, "men come to project on to nature their own unacknowledged activities and consequences."[13] In this process, men created "the real split" in "themselves," becoming "producers and consumers," rather than holistic human beings.[14] Based on this notion, Marxists have imagined a Golden Age, or a utopia where individuals could maintain the fullness of existence: a period when human beings were not yet alienated from nature or the external environment.

Likewise, Wordsworth and Shelley also resisted the social tendency of alienation caused by institutionalization. This dissertation explores how social institutions construct arbitrary systems and how Wordsworth and Shelley criticized these systems as a source of human alienation. As I will argue in more detail in chapters II and III, the institutionalization and commercialization of the print market not only represented readers' demands but also formulated the readership itself. And in this mass print market, writers no longer directly communicated with

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[12] Williams, "Ideas of Nature" in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (Verso, 1980), 69.
[13] Williams, 81.
[14] Williams, 81.

readers. Wordsworth was anxious about losing contact with readers. He also criticized the mass print market for shaping a contemporary readership that he characterized as merely consuming reading materials for sensual pleasure.

In the case of British financial institutions, an important event in the 17-18$^{th}$ centuries was the transition from metal currency to paper money and the credit system. As I will discuss more in chapters IV and V, the paper money system was initially created as a representative medium of metal currency. Still, it began to construct its own circulation system. Shelley critically responded to the negative influences of paper money and the credit system on society. Remarking on the fact that this nominal system was propelled by individual imagination, or interpretation of the value of these notes, Shelley criticized individuals' speculative mode of imagination. Moreover, he also charged that the government abused people's belief in the value of paper notes by arbitrarily controlling the issuance of paper notes and restraining the redemption of these notes into gold.

Nevertheless, as the word "Reproduction," in the title of this dissertation implies, rather than regarding Wordsworth and Shelley's responses as critiques from outside this social trend of institutionalization, I will also consider how their poetry—including its theories regarding imagination and sympathy—was produced within this social context, and how Romantic poetry might have participated in the same institutionalization they criticized. As stated above, Romantic poets emphasized the intrinsic value of sympathy and imagination to resist institutionalization. In the case of sympathy, Wordsworth and Shelley remarked on sympathy's capacity to revive the organic relationship between individuals. Furthermore, they commented on the visceral, intuitive, and universal aspects of emotion and feeling as an alternative to the mechanical reason endorsed by Enlightenment. However, at the same time, these concepts were

undeniably under the influence of nominalized and institutionalized society and language. Romantic ideas about imagination and sympathy were not only a resistance to the coercive domination of institutions but also were, as Terry Eagleton observed, an aesthetic apparatus through which "the human subject introjects the codes which govern it as the very source of its free autonomy."[15] And this "introject[ion] of codes" essentially entails the controlling and refashioning of bodily responses and sensory perceptions. To put it in slightly different terms: in order to make individuals internalize the order of institutions and autonomously abide by a certain level of affection and feeling, introjected codes came to control individual bodies and lives.

This dissertation examines how two Romantic poets, William Wordsworth and Percy Bysshe Shelley, critically responded toward an increasingly institutionalized and nominalized society. More importantly, I will explore how these poets' responses have reproduced the epistemology of contemporary social institutions. I chose these two Romantic poets to contrast their different levels of awareness about this trend of institutionalization and nominalization. Both commonly remarked that the aesthetic experience of literary works could educate readers in the social abilities of sympathy and imagination. However, Wordsworth adhered to a belief in the intrinsic and original value of aesthetic experience and believed that his poetic language could provide the visceral experience necessary to cultivate sympathy and imagination. By contrast, Shelley had an awareness that his poetic language might be subject to the epistemology of institutions and nominalization and attempted to utilize the arbitrary power of nominal language in the service of further liberation.

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[15] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 41.

To develop these claims, I put Wordsworth's poetics in conversation with John Locke and the Third Earl of Shaftesbury's empirical theories. I refer to Locke because Wordsworth's theory regarding individual perceptions and cognition is indebted to Locke's theory of perception, idea, and reflection. More importantly, I associate Wordsworth's egotistical poetics with Locke's determinism and behaviorism. In addition, Shaftesbury's theory of moral sense adamantly affirms the existence of an intrinsic human nature, as Wordsworth establishes his poetics based on the belief in the existence of universal humanism. In contrast, to more clearly examine how Shelley utilizes the arbitrary language of institutions, I contextualize Shelley's poetry in relation to Hume's skepticism and his theory of causality, which disavow any existence of innate, a priori principles.

## I-2. Outline and Philosophical Context of Chapter II and III: Wordsworth, Locke, Shaftesbury, and the Mass Print Market

As stated above, this dissertation examines Wordsworth and Shelley's criticism of financial and commercial institutions. In addition, I discuss how these poets' concepts of imagination and sympathy could be interpreted as a production of the nominal epistemology constructed by contemporary social institutions. Chapters II and III consider how Wordsworth attempted to deliver a universal message to the general public as a way of remedying the loss of direct contact between writers and readers in mass print market. I argue that his attempt could be degenerated into a production of commodification.

Chapter II explores how Wordsworth attempted to realize his poetic ideal while navigating his relationship to readers in the contemporary mass print market. Many scholars have examined how Wordsworth's poetics not only functions as an alternative to the alienating effects

of the nominal principle of the mass print market but also inevitably becomes a product of this trend of nominalization. In this chapter, I build on Jon Klancher's argument that a readership is not discovered but represented and formulated by commercial institutions,[16] and on Lucy Newlyn's analysis of Wordsworth's anxiety toward anonymous readers in the print market.[17] I also comment on Wordsworth's difficulty in directly interacting with readers.

In this chapter, however, I mainly argue that Wordsworth attempts to deliver a universal message as a response to his anxiety about losing contact with readers. Yet, this embodiment of universality results in his unilateral appeal to readers' biological commonalities, especially their

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[16] Jon Klancher meticulously observes that the print market came to have its own arbitrary principles and ironically formulated and controlled its Romantic-era readers. While emphasizing that there was no "single, unified 'reading public'" but multiple demographic groups of readers in 1790-1832, Klancher observes that commercial institutions such as periodicals executed the process of "audience-making" by utilizing specific "interpretive frameworks" and "ideological awareness" (4). Based on these observations, Klancher argues that Wordsworth's poetics also happens to retain nominal and arbitrary quality when targeting middle class audiences. Take example, Wordsworth's prominent statement regarding his poetic language in *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*; in "adopt[ing]" rural peasants' language, Wordsworth targeted a middle-class audience who did not receive much education in classics (138). As a result, Klancher argues that Wordsworth's poetic language can be categorized neither as middle-class nor as rural lower class, but as a third type, which is the subject of commodification (140-3).

[17] Lucy Newlyn examines how Wordsworth realized that an intimate and personal relationship with readers, like his relationship with a coterie audience in the Lake District, was not viable in the contemporary mass print market. In response to this realization, he betrayed his fear of exposing his works to many anonymous readers. There are also scholars who associated Wordsworth's anxiety about loss of contact with readers with his transformation from a humanist to a professional author. See Thomas Pfau, *Wordsworth's Profession: From, Class, and the Logic of Early Romantic Cultural Production*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), Mark Schoenenfield, *The Professional Wordsworth: Law, Labor & The Poet's Contract* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996. In *Authoring the Self: Self-Representation, Authorship, and the Print Market in British Poetry from Pope through Wordsworth* (Routledge, 2005). Scot Hess also argues that to distance himself both from patronage and from the commercial marketplace, Wordsworth portrayed himself as poetic "genius" who retain[ed] "autonomous poetic identity" and was isolated from the public.

sensory perceptions. In other words, Wordsworth's poetics tends to reduce readers to biopolitical subjects.

I want to pause and discuss Locke's empiricism, which was developed and published in 1670-80s, in more detail, because it is crucial to understanding how Wordsworth's attempt to embody general humanity became an appeal to readers' biological commonality—and reduced readers to biopolitical subjects. As I noted above, Locke and other empiricists disavowed any existence of universal, innate, and a priori qualities and values. For Locke, what had been regarded as innate or *a priori* were unfounded concepts, authorized only by customs and authorities. Predicated upon this perspective, Locke argues that only perceptions received through sensory experiences—and reflections of these perceptions—could constitute concepts in the mind.

Locke assumed a concept of self which is distanced and isolated from the external world, while emphasizing individuals' capability for self-awareness. When defining the self, Locke argued that in order for an individual to identically exist in the past and the present, the person should be conscious of themself; as he argues in the following excerpt: "what person stands for;—which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for anyone to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive."[18] For Locke, the condition of self is the self's awareness that they exists. However, this process of self-consciousness could be regarded

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[18] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Samuel Marks, 1825), Book II. XXVII, 11.

as a process of distancing and isolation.

Defining the Lockean self as "punctual self," Charles Taylor argues that Locke portrayed a type of self who maintains a certain distance from external environments.[19] In order for individuals to be aware of themselves thinking, feeling, and experiencing, they need to recognize themselves as the third person to some extent. By doing so, individuals acquire control over themselves—and the outside world—by learning not to be swept away by experiences originating external environments, but to instead interpret the experiences as if they are objects. For example, suppose that you have a toothache. Locke suggests that rather than being immersed in the experience of the pain from a first-person perspective, you could distance yourself from suffering by reinterpreting and objectifying the experience of pain itself. If people can do that, they can also reinterpret and even recreate the meaning of pain as if they were analyzing what happened in the third person. As stated above, this ability to reinterpret the meaning of sensory perceptions and experiences is a crucial in empiricists' cognitive systems. Locke's self retains the power to objectify and recreate all external reality. Yet, this process inevitably entails isolation because by being conscious of themselves who are feeling, thinking, and experiencing, a person distances themselves from external stimuli and influence.

As individuals become distanced from themselves by being aware of their thinking and feeling, they also naturalize their own system of mind. For Locke, an idea is a stable and fixed image or thought that pertains to the external environment. And this idea is constructed by observing "external sensible objects" and "internal operations of our minds perceived and

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[19] Charles Taylor, *Sources of Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press, 1989), 160.

reflected on by ourselves," namely reflection.[20] As Taylor observes, Locke frequently utilizes metaphors of mechanical images when describing how ideas are formulated in individual minds.[21] For example, Locke alludes to the brain as a "dark room" with a very small entrance through which internal perceptions enter.[22] When an individual formulates ideas through reflection, an internal perception sheds light on the mind as if the light shines through a small hole in a dark room. As this metaphor suggests, Locke portrays the individual mind as if it is another sensory organ in the human body.

Moreover, he argues that a person's perception of their present is a driving force of the volition for action. He observes that "only the present satisfaction" is "the motive for continuing in the same state or action," and "the motive to change is always some uneasiness."[23] As stated above, Locke argued that an individual's ideas or knowledge about the world are constructed by perceiving and processing external stimuli and by reflecting on the perceived ideas in their mind. If this is true, because all human action is predicated upon knowledge, and this knowledge significantly contributes to how individuals feel about their present status—which is the main motivation of human volition—individuals have no choice but to act according to an idea created by the perception of external stimuli. Therefore, while Locke admits that individuals have freedom to choose their own action, his argument implies that individuals execute their will or volition as a mechanical or impulsive reaction to the external world.

In chapter II, I will examine how Wordsworth inherited Locke's behavioristic and deterministic tendency in analyzing the motivations for individual action. In his *Preface to*

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[20] Locke, Book II. I. 2.
[21] Taylor, 167.
[22] Locke, Book II. XI. 17
[23] Locke, Book II. XXI, 29.

*Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth also meticulously describes the cognitive process of perception as significant for cultivating sympathy and imagination. In its attention to perception, his argument is similar to Locke's emphasis on the perception of external stimuli as the only origin of ideas and knowledge. However, Locke did not pay much attention to the importance of emotion and feeling. Therefore, in order to contextualize Wordsworth's poetry in relation to empiricist philosophy, I need to introduce another empiricist: Shaftesbury. Whereas Locke disavowed the existence of any innate or a priori principles, Shaftesbury emphasized the intrinsic and innate qualities of human beings. Thomas Hobbes argued that all people are selfish, so their actions are also performed because of their calculation for themselves.[24] In contrast to Hobbes, Shaftesbury believed that "all people are virtuous by nature"[25] and that socializing with each other is human beings' natural attribute. Predicated on this belief, in his *Sensus Communis* (1709), he argues that every individual retains moral sense, which enables them to distinguish virtue and vice. According to Shaftesbury, this moral sense can "inform moral beliefs and guide moral volition and action."[26] And this moral sense is universal so that all individuals can agree with each other's moral standards. Moreover, this moral sense is an "inward" one "that all humans naturally possess."[27]

However, like Locke argued, Shaftesbury also regarded perception of external stimuli

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[24] *Oxford Reference*, s. v. "Hobbes, Thomas." 2015, *A Dictionary of World History* ed. Anne Kerr and Edmund Wright.

[25] Christel Fricke, "Moral Sense Theories and Other Sentimentalist Accounts of the Foundation of Morals," in *The Cambridge Companion to The Scottish Enlightenment*. eds. Alexander Broadie and Craig Sith (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019), 133.

[26] Fricke, 132.

[27] Fricke, 132.

and individual conception generated by reflection as sources of ideas, knowledge, and moral sense. Shaftesbury points out the similarity between moral sense and aesthetic taste. He argues that although there are differences between individuals' aesthetic preferences, there is a fixed standard about ideal beauty. And he further contends that "Tis the same case where life and manners are concerned. Virtue has the same fixed standard."[28] According to him, we can intuitively distinguish "harmonious and dissonant" based on this perception. And we can also determine virtue and evil by ourselves.[29] And this is the point where the similarity between morality and taste is generated. Because Shaftesbury argues that moral sense is entirely an individuals' inner quality rather than originating from any external standard, an individuals' subjective taste becomes essential as an ethical standard.[30]

Although Shaftesbury innovatively remarked on the potential of individual feeling, emotion, and aesthetic taste, a problem inherent in Shaftesbury's moral sentiment is that it could degenerate into naturalism or determinism, as Locke's theory also does. Like Locke, Shaftesbury also adheres to the argument that individuals' ideas are formulated only by the perception of external environment and the reflection of perceived thoughts in their mind. Because Shaftesbury follows Locke's perspective, his belief that human beings have an innate ability to demarcate good and evil may be interpreted as saying that human beings do not have much initiative or power of will in making choices; instead their choices are determined by the ideas and notions

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[28] Lord Shaftesbury, *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, ed. Lawrence E. Klein, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 227-8.

[29] J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 303.

[30] Schneewind, 288.

inherent in their mind.

In chapter II, I will discuss how Wordsworth inherited this loophole when he referred to Shaftesbury's theory of sympathy. In Britain's early nineteenth-century mass print market, the readership had been too much diversified to follow a single aesthetic standard, and writers could no longer directly contact readers. Therefore, by drawing on Shaftesbury's theory of sympathy, Wordsworth was attempting to address his anxiety on two fronts. He was worried about losing contact with readers and concerned with providing general readers with a kind of universal ethics through the aesthetic experience of poetry. However, his attempt to deliver a universal message for general readers could only reduce readers to biological bodies. In other words, Wordsworth's poetry tended to rely on behavioristic attributes of Shaftesbury's theory by defining readers as beings who are motivated by their bodily and sensory impulses and stimuli. By referring to Sarah Guyer, who analyzed how Wordsworth's experiment on poetic language resulted in biopolitical subjectification, I will examine how his poetry reduced the human characters in his poetry to biopolitical subjects.[31] Then I will investigate how Wordsworth converts these poetic subjects into contents of his narratives. By doing so, Wordsworth's poetic subjects become mere vehicles to convey humanistic, moral ideologies as commercial goods, ready to be consumed and circulated at any time. I will examine this tendency of commodification by analyzing "A slumber did my spirit seal" and several passages from *The Prelude*.

In chapter III, I analyze "Essay, supplementary" (1815) and *The Excursion* (1814) as texts which reflect Wordsworth's contemplation regarding the effectiveness and validity of his poetry in the mass print market. In doing so, I am in conversation with work by scholars—

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[31] Sara Guyer, *Romanticism After Auschwitz*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 48.

including Lucy Newlyn and Andrew Franta—on Wordsworth's complex relationship to his readers and the contemporary print market.[32] Newlyn notes Wordsworth's heavy reliance on small coterie communities and observes that Wordsworth's fleeting hope for the existence of a small number of audiences who could fully communicate with him, which is mentioned in "Essay, Supplementary," originated from his interaction with the coterie.[33] My analysis of the "Essay, Supplementary" is indebted to Franta's discovery of Wordsworth's changed perspective toward his own poetic vision delineated in these two prose works.[34] Franta points out that, in the *Preface*, Wordsworth imagines "face-to-face encounter[s]" with readers through his famous definition of a poet, "a man speaking to men," and also prompts an unchained expression of feeling.[35] In contrast, in the "Essay," Wordsworth realizes that it is challenging to imagine any common bond between readers in the age of the mass print market.[36] Building on Franta's work, I will argue that in the "Essay," Wordsworth realizes that in the environment of expanded

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[32] For example, Newlyn considers Wordsworth's heavy reliance on small coterie communities and observes that Wordsworth's fleeting hope for the existence of a small number of audiences who could fully communicate with him—which is mentioned in "Essay, Supplementary"—originated from his interaction with his coterie readers. [cite Newlyn] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface." in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 62-107.

[33] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface." in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 62-107.

[34] In *Romanticism and the Rise of the Mass Public*, Franta traces Wordsworth's changed perspective on the relationship between author and readers by contrasting the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads* and "Essay, Supplementary."

[35] Andrew Franta, *Romanticism and the Rise of the Mass Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 60-2.

[36] Franta, 59-60.

readership, there is no common bond between readers, so the concept of general reader is no longer viable. Therefore, it is almost impossible for a single author to appeal to all kinds of readers or educate "general" humanity. Instead, as a professional author, a poet only creates the taste which can satisfy a specific group of readers.

I argue that through the dramatic structure of *The Excursion*, Wordsworth tests the viability of his moral lesson. Sally Bushell and Alice Hickey interpret the narrative structure of *The Excursion* as a discursive vortex where multiple characters' perspectives collide and conflate with each other,[37] in contrast to the lyrical or autobiographical setting in *Lyrical Ballads* or *The Prelude* where a main speaker's voice occupies a central authority. Although these scholars discuss the compromise of poetic authority in the poem, no scholar has attempted to associate the issue of contemporary readership with *The Excursion*, which is regarded as one of Wordsworth's minor works. Furthermore, despite *The Excursion* (1814) and the "Essay," (1815) being published in almost same period, there is no preceding research that connects these two texts. In chapter III, I will examine how Wordsworth's changed view of his readership enables a new reading of *The Excursion*. In *The Excursion*, the Wanderer's interpretations of landscapes and situations are often limited and criticized by other characters, such as The Solitary. This

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[37] Both scholars remark on the fact that multiple characters are presented in The Excursion, demonstrating different political and religious perspectives. Predicated upon this difference, these scholars examine how the speaker's authority is compromised. Hickey discusses how the characters' didactic narrative is frustrated or "tainted" by ideological matters or calls for material changes. In *Re-Reading The Excursion*, focusing on the dramatic elements of this long poem, Sally Bushell argues that in the dramatic setting, multiple characters in *The Excursion* in the poem disperse and compromise each other's authority as speakers. Alison Hickey, *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth's 'Excursion.'* (Stanford University Press, 1997), 14. Sally Bushell, *Re-Reading The Excursion: Narrative, response and the Wordsworthian dramatic voice* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 16.

limitation symptomatically reflects Wordsworth's realization in the "Essay" that presenting a universal standard of beauty or ethics is impossible for a single author in the contemporary print market. Moreover, The Wanderer tends to theorize the mechanism of imagination in the general and objective form of language rather than directly encouraging the readers to participate in meaning-making by intentionally leaving hermeneutic thresholds. I will interpret this narrative tendency as Wordsworth's attempt to seek a linguistic form that could be more effectively circulated in the mass print market.

### I-3 Outline of Chapter IV and V, and Philosophical Context: Percy Shelley, Hume, and Paper Money and the Credit System

In chapters IV and V, I will examine how paper money and the credit system formulated individuals' speculative imagination and how Shelley criticized contemporary financial institutions and explored sympathy as an alternative communication system. This dissertation is not the initial attempt to associate sympathy with Romantic-era economic institutions. Several scholars examined the performativity of language generated by 18-19th century financial institutions. In *Genres of the Credit Economy*, Mary Poovey argues that written discussions about money proliferated in the 18th century, and these discussions contributed to the stabilization of the value of paper money by masking the problem of representation caused by British government's incessant issuance of paper money.[38] Robert Mitchell argues that as many financial institutions, such as credit and paper money systems, are operated by virtual contracts,

[38] Mary Poovey, *Genres of the Credit Economy: Mediating Value in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 15.

individuals could utilize a similar virtuality to sympathize with others.[39] However, Mitchell also argues that the eighteenth-century credit economy could be seen as presenting an oppressive temporality in which future and present were fully subjugated by past.[40] Alexander Dick also argues that Romantic poets contributed to the proliferation of "commercial society" by making the concept of "affect" an independent medium of discourse.[41]

Building on these arguments, in chapters IV and V, I also examine Shelley's conceptions of sympathy, affect, and emotion is closely related to the nominalization of financial institutions. However, unlike Poovey, who focused on the blurring boundary between genres of writing,[42] I will mainly focus on literary texts—primarily Shelley's prose works and poems—to examine how Shelley's opinions noted in his prose works was reflected in his poetry. Moreover, by comparing his two closet dramas, *The Cenci* and *Prometheus Unbound*, I will attempt to delineate Shelley's trajectory of contemplation regarding the correlation between sympathy and state finance.

In chapter IV, I examine how Shelley criticized the problems inherent in the contemporary paper money and credit system in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, published in 1830. While criticizing how the extreme inflation in the 1810s was caused by the government's excessive issuance of paper money, Shelley notably points out that the value of paper money is

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[39] Robert Mitchell. *Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era: Systems, State Finance, and the Shadows of futurity*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 21.

[40] Mitchell, 21.

[41] Alexander Dick, *Romanticism and the Gold Standard: Money, Literature, and Economic Debate in Britain 1790-1830* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 18.

[42] Poovey remarks on the epistemological affinity between "monetary genres," such as "paper money and forms of credit paper," and "writing[s] about the market," such as "shipping lists, prices current, economic theory," and literary writings.

predicated upon people's belief in its value and the government's authority. In addition, I will discuss how his criticism in this prose work is reflected in his closet drama, *The Cenci.* In *The Cenci*, the British government's reification of its public authority is represented by Count Cenci, who utilizes his authority as a patriarch and a feudal lord to satisfy his sadistic desire. Moreover, in this work, Shelley presents the potential of sympathy as an alternative communication medium through the Count's daughter, Beatrice. Nevertheless, after being raped, Beatrice abuses her ability of sympathy to drive her servants to an extreme self-criticism about the murder of Count Cenci. As a result, they could not confess the murder in front of the court. Through this conclusion, the play implies that sympathy as a medium of representation also could be degenerated into instrument of exploitation and domination when this medium is circulated in society.

In chapter V, I argue that Shelley attempts to dismantle the epistemological frame of financial institutions by utilizing the arbitrary quality of language. In other words, Shelley intentionally blurs the boundary between each counterpart of action: Prometheus and Jupiter. By doing so, Shelley attempts to embody contingency and potentiality in his poetic language, which calls into question the legitimacy of contemporary economic and financial institutions based on individuals' restrained imagination and belief. As stated above, my analysis of *Prometheus Unbound* is indebted to Mitchell's argument. As Mitchell did, I will also observe how the drama dismantles the linear causality between the past and current events. However, rather than focusing on temporality, I will remark on the performative and arbitrary qualities of language that Shelley's poetry and theories of state finance share.

Before discussing the contents of chapter V more in detail, I will introduce Hume's theory of skepticism, since it plays a crucial role in my analysis of how Shelley dismantles

hermeneutic linearity in *Prometheus Unbound*. As discussed above, unlike Wordsworth, Shelley had an awareness that his poetic language also might be a product of institutions and nominalization. In the same context, Humean skepticism, which disavows any existence of innate, a priori principles, is also differentiated from Shaftesbury's naïve belief in the existence of an innate human nature. Hume did not agree with Shaftesbury's argument that "moral sense was an intrinsic part of human nature."[43] Instead, applying Locke's negation of any existence of a priori principle, he registered individuals' perception of external stimuli as the sole foundation of moral sentiments. By doing so, he negated any a priori or innate principles and remarked on the relative and subjective attributes of perception and feeling.

Hume developed his empiricism as an alternative to the limitations of reason. He argued that reason cannot contribute to individuals' moral judgement because it can only inform about true and false. For example, if somebody witnessed murder, they could discover the facts regarding affections or action of will. Still, they cannot find moral facts that enable people to judge the murderer's or the victim's moral quality.[44] At least after hearing the story behind the murder, we can recognize the moral facts. And after knowing the moral facts, we can only feel that the murderer is blamable rather than making a moral judgement. Therefore, according to Hume, morality is felt rather than judged. For Hume, our judgement regarding virtue and vice is basically grounded on our emotion, not an a priori, innate, or intrinsic principle.[45] Hume also disintegrates our conventional notion about human will and agency. From his empiricism,

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[43] Fricke, 131.

[44] J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 389.

[45] Schneewind, 402.

affections are created by the belief that something is good or bad, and pleasure or pain, and this belief is solely based on individuals' subjective impressions rather than any intrinsic principles. According to Hume's philosophy, the individual will is no more than a mere impression when individuals access a new perception. Moral sentiments make us respond and act, but that sentiment consists of affections created only by perceiving external stimuli.

In the same vein of skepticism, Hume imposes doubt on causality. According to him, our primary perceptions of stimuli develop into more comprehensive and general principles, enabling us to identify cause and effect. However, this principle is not a discovery of innate principle. Still, it is a mere custom that enables us to associate two different objects as conjoined, or cause-effect.[46]

According to Hume, sympathy "allows us to share the feelings of other people."[47] And this "also makes us care about what other people think about us and how they evaluate our behavior."[48] However, Hume articulates a more realistic view of sympathy and moral sense than does Shaftesbury. Hume points out that if we are well acquainted with some groups of people, we can more profoundly sympathize with them. Moreover, when specific groups of people sympathize with each other through consistent interaction, they usually formulate their standards of pro-social and anti-social.[49]

In chapter V, I will examine how Shelley utilizes Humean skepticism toward stereotypical causality to dismantle the epistemological frame of financial institutions by using

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[46] Fricke, 117.
[47] Fricke, 140.
[48] Fricke, 140.
[49] Fricke, 141.

the arbitrary quality of language. In other words, as Hume defamiliarized the apparently seamless causality between consecutive events, Shelley also intentionally dismantled the coherent and linear agencies of poetic discourse, such as perpetrator and victim, and the one who articulates the verbal speech and the recipient of the address. By doing so, Shelley discovers the potential for liberation from arbitrary language utilized by financial institutions. For example, the ruling class arbitrarily issued paper notes so that the issued amount far exceeded its original reference, the repository of gold. Nevertheless, according to Shelley, the same arbitrary quality of language could be utilized to liberate the mind from this restricting and exploitative epistemological frame.

In sum, this dissertation, "Resistance and Reproduction: The Poetry of William Wordsworth and Percy Shelley," examines Wordsworth and Shelley's sympathy and imagination through both historical and philosophical lenses. Moreover, by contrasting a first-generation and a second-generation Romantic poet, I will also investigate their different modes of awareness regarding the influence of contemporary social institutions. By putting Wordsworth in conversation with Locke and Shaftesbury, and considering his work in the context of the mass print market, I will discuss how Wordsworth's attempt to embody universal humanity could be an expression of anxiety about the mass print market—and how it could produce biopolitical subjects. By examining Shelley's writing with Humean skepticism and Romantic-era financial institutions in mind, I will analyze how Shelley goes against the grain of narrative linearity to concoct an effective resistance to a speculative mode of imagination prescribed by paper money and the credit system. By doing so, this dissertation meticulously investigates the dynamic and liminal relationship between Wordsworth and Shelley's poetry and institutionalization and modernization in Romantic-era Britain, where resistance and reproduction infiltrate each other.

## Chapter II

## Commercial Institutions in the 18th century Print Market and Biopolitical subjects in Wordsworth's Poetry

### II-1: Introduction

Raymond Williams observed that in 18th century Europe, there was a significant change in the relationship between authors and readers. As the number of middle-class readers rose in the 1730s and 40s, "the system of patronage had passed into subscription-publishing, and thence into general commercial publishing of the modern kind."[1] Under the patronage system, a writer had an intimate and direct relationship with a small, familiar audience. By contrast, in the mass publishing market environment that emerged by the later eighteenth century, a writer's works were exposed to multiple anonymous readers.

The changes caused by the mass print market increased the importance of individuals' taste and inner mind. A variety of printed goods were published to satisfy readers tastes, and the expanded supply of reading materials enabled readers to silently read books in private settings,

[1] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 32.

which provided them with more chances to focus on their inner mind. Moreover, many commercial institutions established various reading sociolects. As the literacy rate increased and the reading population expanded, the readership also diversified from traditional elites to professionals, merchants, servants, laborers and women. Because the readership diversified and the number of reading materials grew, many commercial institutions created to cater to these growing and various tastes prospered, such as circulating libraries and reviews in periodicals. These institutions assisted readers in accessing print goods, but at the same time, shaped reader tastes—and utilized this taste-shaping power to maximize sales volume. As a result, they accelerated demands for print goods for sensual pleasure. For example, William Wordsworth criticized the success of "frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse," which he argued produced "degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation."[2] While printed goods became affordable to many different sociolects, this trend also divided readers to multiple isolated readerships which did not share much commonality with each other.

Romantic poets displayed anxiety about these changes, especially the burgeoning of reading materials for pleasure and the loss of direct contact between individuals in society. The loss of a common bond between writers and readers—and among readers—was not only a print market phenomenon; the tendency was pervasively affecting the whole society. In later 18th century Britain, individuals could no longer intuitively understand each other as members of whole community but rather experienced alienation and atomization in society.[3] One intellectual

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[2] William Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, In *Lyrical Ballads.* eds. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 249.

[3] Raymond Williams argued that Romantic poets, such as William Blake and William

response to these feelings of alienation was the solidifying of a republic of letters:[4] a discursive sphere among intellectuals who attempted to address a fragmenting society by disseminating knowledge for the common good. While they partially relied on the periodical in shaping their discursive sphere, these intellectuals evinced anxiety about the definition of literature shrinking to reading for pleasure; they also worried about writers losing direct contact with the general public.

Originally, the republic of letters was regarded as international but insular and private society among intellectuals and authors. However, as Paul Keen observes, in the later 18th century mass print market, these intellectuals' works no longer remained as a mere private correspondence but became goods that circulated among multiple readers.[5] Therefore, in the mass print market, authors became caught up in an anonymous "network of impersonal exchanges" in which the "spirit of mutuality" of the original republic of letters was no longer

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Wordsworth, described the loss of human relationship from their experiences of the city of London by representing human figures in the city as fragmented images and colors. Williams Raymond, *The Country and The City*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 303.

[4] Originally "the republic of letters" merely signified a vague collection of intellectuals committed to a "shared pursuit of knowledge for the common good," but many other connotations were added as time went on (Whelan 437). In the early seventeenth century, Francis Bacon described the republic of letters as a "vast powerhouse of research" based on collaboration and experiment (Whelan 437). In the later seventeenth century, groups of scholars began to imagine a virtual intellectual community while engaged in international correspondence with each other. For example, in 1684, Pierre Bayle defined the republic of letters as "a fraternity where scholars were to be judged not on their social standing but on learning alone" (Whelan 438). To summarize, members of the republic of letters attempted to formulate an international community in which all kinds of people were reciprocally exchanging their knowledge without discrimination for common good. However, of course, this ideal was not always a reality. See note 9 for the account of how their ideals were compromised.

[5] Paul Keen, *The Crisis of Literature in the 1790s Print Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 424.

viable.[6] In response to the use of print media as a medium of political debate during French Revolution, many intellectuals worried that such a massive circulation of printed goods might have a negative influences. Marcus Wood discovered that in 1780-90s, Thomas Paine's *The Rights of Man* was not circulated in its original, 120-page pamphlet form but as "broadsides, chapbooks, handbills and selections" that were severely abbreviated—and edited—according to specific political groups' cultural and ideological tastes.[7] In the same vein, William Godwin also criticized the way that literature was circulated in large public meetings, such as the LCS (London Corresponding Society). In Godwin's view, individual opinions were obscured in these large public meetings, where literary works basically functioned as an "extraordinary machine" through which only the ideological agenda of the group was unilaterally propagated.[8]

In this chapter, I will examine how Wordsworth attempted to address the issue of atomized individuals and of the representation of writers' works caused by an increasingly institutionalized society and print market. I argue that Wordsworth partially shared the ideals of the republic of letters, and that, inspired by their ideas of cosmopolitanism,[9] he tried to reach a

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[6] Keen, 424.

[7] Marcus Wood, *Radical Satire and Print Culture, 1790-1822* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 94.

[8] William Godwin, *Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr Pitt's Bills concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices,* in *Political and Philosohphical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philip. vol. 7 (London: William Pickering, 1993), 130-2.

[9] As Taylor pointed out, seventeenth- and eighteenth- century European scholars imagined the Republic of letters as an intellectual community constructed outside of political or class boundaries (Taylor, *Modern Social* Imagination, 91-2). By maintaining independence from any political affiliations, members attempted to construct a community in which intellectuals were not discriminated by their national, gender, or class orientations. They also tried to diffuse knowledge that could benefit all types of people. Nevertheless, of course, this ideal was "more formal than real" (Whelan 439). Discussions were centered in cities rather than in provinces, and favored the voices of male elites over women (Whelan 439). Moreover, by the late seventeenth-

general audience by relying on empiricists' theories of imagination and sympathy. According to empiricists such as Adam Smith and the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, imagination was not the ability to make mere illusions but a crucial ethical virtue which sustained society. As Colin Campbell argues, a "self-illusory hedonism"[10] enabled modern consumers to desire new pleasures and products. And this very same imaginative ability was indispensable for sympathy because individuals could sympathize with others by imagining what others would feel. Based on the belief in imagination and sympathy, Shaftesbury especially argued for an intuitive association of aesthetics and ethics, which is strikingly delineated in Wordsworth's poetry. In the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads,* as a man of letters aspires towards a cosmopolitan ideal, Wordsworth portrays his ideal to reach out a general audience and, through his writing, educate them in a desirable way of feeling. While sustaining the belief that the aesthetic value of his work educates moral values, he regarded his writings not as a 'product' that provides a mere sensual pleasure but as a work that contains universal influence[11] and encompasses social and ethical dimensions.

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and early eighteenth-centuries these elites who largely comprised the Republic of letters could no longer maintain their ideals of universalism; Enlightenment, middle class scholars began arguing that they could utilize "knowledge as power" to trigger "political reform in the public sphere" (Keen 419).

[10] Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Blackwell, 1987), 86.

[11] Of course, the concept of universality that 18$^{th}$ century men of letters—including Wordsworth—endorsed was Western-centered, as many scholars point out. For example, as Saree Makdisi discovers, Stuart Mill argued that many non-Western territories, such as India, did not have an authoritative account of their history; thus, Mill proposed that the British Empire should provide them with proper "historical records" as a part of a universal world history. Makdisi diagnoses that Mill is attempting to make non-European histories to "conform and make sense" from the perspective of British people. Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 2-3.

Wordsworth's belief that aesthetic experience could educate moral and social abilities is based on Shaftesbury's theory about moral sense. Like Shaftesbury, Wordsworth also betrays his naïve assumption that individuals innately retain an ability to identify beauty and virtue, and that they all instinctively share this single aesthetic and moral standard. However, as Terry Eagleton points out, Shaftesbury's theory can be problematic when applied as a social system because his theory tends to solely rely on visceral and singular attributes of aesthetic experience. What can be inferred from Eagleton's critique of Shaftesbury, and from Campbell's usage of the word, "hedonism" is that these empiricists basically interpret individuals as those who are driven by affective impulse or desire. Therefore, empiricists' theories to generate and direct these impulses and desires could be interpreted as an attempt to control people's bodies and perceptions. In other words, the empiricists theory regarding aesthetics and ethics could be seen as biopolitical governance, which attempts to contain human beings' lives in its system of sovereignty.

I argue that Wordsworth happened to reduce both readers and poetic subjects to biopolitical subjects in the process of delivering universal message to diversified readers in the Romantic-era mass print market. Like 18th century empiricists, Wordsworth also delicately theorized the cognitive system (regarding imagination) and poetic language in the *Preface*. This analysis of the cognitive system is exemplified in Wordsworth's experiment with poetic language. As Sarah Guyer noted, by demonstrating his deviations from the Neoclassical decorum and his usage of the rustic peasants' ordinary language, Wordsworth embodied the language of flesh and blood, which he believed would directly work on his audience's cognitive system.[12] In Lucy poems and the Boy of Winander in Book V of *The Prelude,* Wordsworth portrays

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[12] Sarah Guyer, *Romanticism After Auschwitz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 47.

individuals who are on the verge of life and death, or naturalized beings. By presenting these dehumanized characters, Wordsworth removes the characters from any social context and appeals to readers' biological and perceptive commonality as a source of imagination and sympathy. However, as Paul de Man argued, in Wordsworth's poetry, by apostrophizing these dehumanized subjects, these dehumanized subjects are converted and represented to humans.[13] And this apostrophizing and humanizing process is where the writer imposes his authority on the literary works and readers. Through this apostrophizing, Wordsworth tends to prescribe only a single way of reading, and ends up reifying his characters as commodities.

II-2: On the Seventeenth- and Eighteenth- century British Print Market, the expansion of literacy and diversification of readership, and the advent of commercial institutions

Until the 1660s, the center of almost all literary and artistic activities was the court, and writers were "under the patronage of the nobility and of political parties."[14] In this system, the British government attempted to control all print media, but were unable to sustain it due to a lack of funds.[15] The fledgling publishing industry suffered from "censorship and legal monopoly," and the British government limited the number of printing companies to twenty.[16] In this period, poetry was mainly circulated through the recitation of manuscripts in private society.

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[13] Paul De Man, "Autobiography as De-facement." *MLN* 94 (1979), 929.

[14] M. H. Abrams, *Doing Things with Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory* (New York: Norton, 1989), 144.

[15] Marilyn Butler, *Romantics, Rebels & Reactionaries: English Literature and Its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 128.

[16] Butler, 128.

There was no review or professional authors, so there was no open print market through which the general public accessed printed goods or literature.[17]

However, after Licensing Act, which mandated all publications to be submitted to a licenser for approval,[18] expired in 1695, publishing businesses in London exponentially prospered. During Charles II's reign (1660-1685), only 200 people worked in publishing, but by the later 18th century, this number grew to 3000, and more than 600 printing workshops were operated.[19] With the expansion of publishing companies, the price of printed goods became affordable. As William St. Clair observed, before the Romantic era, the reading population was considerably concentrated in higher income groups.[20] However, in the Romantic period, "more books were sold in smaller formats in the lower price ranges," such as paperbacks.[21] As a result, in the Romantic period, more members of the public could purchase printed literature. People started to recognize printed items as a form of discourse and as goods for their leisure, something that could be "purchased and possessed."[22]

With this advent of the print market and the reading public, the reading population grew exponentially. In 1750s, "at least 40 percent of women and 60 percent of men could read and write," and the numbers kept rising.[23] In England, 5.6 million people were literate in 1741, and

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[17] Butler, 128.

[18] *A Dictionary of British History*, s. v. "Licensing Act," Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

[19] Butler, 128.

[20] William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 20.

[21] St. Clair, 21.

[22] Butler, 129.

[23] Barbara M. Benedict, "Readers, writers, reviewers, and the professionalization of literature" in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge

the number rose to 13.3 million by 1831.[24] As Barbara Benedict observed, this expanded reading population meant that readers were not only "traditional elite, but also "all classes of professionals, merchants, farmers, tradespeople and skilled artisans, together with many servants and laborers and, of course, women of all ranks."[25]

New commercial institutions helped the public to access goods and formulated a readership itself. In some ways, these institutions also "erased hierarchies between genres and genders."[26] For example, there were several forms of public libraries, such as subscription libraries, religious libraries, and circulating libraries. The members of subscription libraries together made decisions regarding what books to purchase.[27] In provincial areas, religious libraries supplied reading materials. Booksellers operated circulating libraries for profit. They bought libraries from auctions and borrowed the books for a fee. Through these institutions, the lower classes who could not afford to buy books could still access them.[28] And these circulating libraries contributed to the development of new genre: long novels.[29] Because the circulating libraries charged "by the volume," not "by the entire work," multivolume works were more profitable than single volume works.[30] From this lucrative motive, long fictions, which had been regarded as reading materials that are "read merely for the pleasure"[31] or for women only,

University Press, 2004), 4.

[24] Benedict, 4.

[25] Benedict, 4.

[26] Benedict, 18.

[27] Benedict, 16.

[28] Abrams, 145.

[29] Benedict, 18.

[30] Benedict, 18.

[31] Abrams, 145.

garnered respect similar to classical works, as “each individuals' taste” came to be treated less discriminately than before.[32]

Moreover, this vast supply of print goods available through commercial institutions, such as circulating libraries, changed the reading habit of readers. Before this extensive production system for books was introduced, an oral or manuscript version was the prevailing form of circulating literary works. A small number of people in a so-called coterie listened to the recitation or distributed manuscripts in the group. In these events, each member could have a face-to-face relationship, and the language was not separated from an auditory component. Therefore, direct interaction and discussion between members were possible, and they could have some extent of consensus or shared opinion about literary works. However, in the environment of the mass print market, due to the expanded supply of reading materials, readers could retain their own copies, whether they were bought or borrowed. This change in the mode of accessing reading materials facilitated a more private relationship to reading. In the reading environment of coterie groups, writers and readers could directly communicate with each other. By contrast, as individuals read books alone in secluded spaces, such as their rooms and closets, the instant and direct interaction between writers and readers was no longer viable.

Another significant commercial institution that affected the mode of interaction between writers and readers was periodicals and reviews. In 1710, there were 12 newspapers in London.[33] By 1790, the number rose to “thirteen morning, one evening, two bi-weekly, and seven tri-weekly.”[34] In initial years, periodicals covered many different literary genres, such as “fact,

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[32] Benedict, 17.
[33] Benedict, 10.
[34] Benedict, 10.

fiction, literature, and gossip."[35] One of the most prominent periodical journals was Edward Cave's *Gentleman's Magazine*, which was founded in 1731. During its early years, it included "a digest of opinion, essays, poetry and political news,"[36] and it introduced other news, such as prominent people's obituaries and news regarding bonds.[37] But it did not include much literary criticism. Cave was designing a periodical dedicated to literacy criticism, but Ralph Griffiths, Cave's rival, stole Cave's idea and founded the *Monthly Review* (1749-1844), which was dedicated to literary review. Then, after 1765, there was a list of recently released books, with short reviews and summaries in *Gentleman's Magazine.*[38] After the establishment of these prominent journals, the extent of contribution from the aristocracy or courtly sponsorship became negligible.[39]

One of important roles of periodicals was that through regular publication schedules—be it weekly, monthly, or quarterly—they constructed a "continuous relationship between mutually identifiable readers and writers."[40] This was more than merely making writers' works accessible to readers by introducing them. They actually "diversified the larger public by organizing new audiences and introducing them into the widening cultural economy as paying readers."[41] In other words, by making the periodicals accessible in public areas, such as bookstalls and

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[35] Benedict, 10.

[36] Benedict, 10.

[37] Butler, 130.

[38] Butler, 130.

[39] Butler, 130.

[40] Jon P, Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Madison: Wisconsin University Press, 1987), 20.

[41] Klancher, 20.

coffeehouses, and by targeting specific demographics, such as women, periodicals formulated different groups of readers who were loyal to a particular spectrum of readings that those journals targeted. Based on this phenomenon, Jon Klancher observes the "contradictory role" of periodicals: they excavated and formulated many small audiences, but they "subdivided" the public into different sociolects, such as "emerging professions conflicting social spheres, men and women, the cultivated middle-class audience, and less sophisticated readerships."[42] In the same vein, Butler also observes that eighteenth-century society consisted of different groups represented by "unequal incomes, rank, and power," so the magazines would categorize and divide different communities in the nation.[43]

These changes in the print market—including the advent of periodicals, circulation libraries, and the expansion, diversification, and division of reading populations—indicate the extent to which the market and vocation itself became commercialized and professionalized. As stated above, Butler observed that the concept of the consumer developed in the mass print market, and literary works came to be deemed something that could be possessed and consumed. In this process, literary works became reading goods or materials for pleasure, rather than repositories of truth and knowledge. The vocation of writer also became professionalized and institutionalized. In 1774, "the Donaldson vs. Beckett decision cancelled the publishers' copyright-in perpetuity in favour of a fourteen year term."[44] Due to this decision, publishers

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[42] Klancher, 20.

[43] Butler, 133-4.

[44] Jon P. Klancher, "Criticism and the crisis of the republic of letters." In *Romanticism*. vol. 5. *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism.* Ed. Marshall Brown. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 301.

began to amplify the "cheap-reprint market" to exploit copyrights that came to be valid only for a limited period.[45] And "originality" and "genius," the innate qualities of writers, became institutional requirements or "rationales," in other words, legal evidence for writers to protect their right to their works.[46] Moreover, as the reading population diversified into different sociolects, these institutions not only helped readers access books—they also came to represent and even formulate readerships. In the mass print market, a direct and intimate relationship between writers and readers was no longer viable. In this context, Wai Chee Dimock characterizes modern society as "a society of interpretation."[47] This means, as society becomes more complex and is represented by multiple institutions, the identification of reality itself is extremely difficult. Rather, reality is defined and formulated by interpretational frameworks, which are oftentimes presented by social institutions. In the case of the mass print market, in the process of accelerating demands for different sociolects of consumers through curation, review, and summary, these institutions not only assisted in enabling access to more literary works but also formulated, subdivided, and defined different groups of audiences.

### II-3. Imagination as Ethical Ability, Shaftesbury's Association of Aesthetics and Morals, and Wordsworth's *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*

In this section, I want to connect this changed reader-writer relationship due to the advent of the mass print market to empirical philosophy. In the previous section, I argued that as

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[45] Klancher, 301

[46] Klancher, 301

[47] Wai Chee Dimock, "Feminism, New Historicism and the Reader," in *American Literature* 63, no. 4 (1991): 603.

the number of readers increased due to the development of commercial institutions, the print market also enlarged and prospered to meet this expanded demand. I argue that these changes triggered a growth in people's awareness, sense of their own interiority, and belief in the importance of their emotions.

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries empiricists' accentuation of individuals' cognitive and imaginative faculties went hand in hand with the growth of interiority fostered by the mass print market. According to Campbell, in the Medieval era, the words which referred to emotions, such as fear and joy, "did not denote a feeling located within a person but attributes of external events," such as a specific "day or occasion."[48] Therefore, before the seventeenth century, individuals believed that the sources of human action were located in the external world.[49] However, from the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth century onward, as people were seen as having more initiative, their tastes became respected and catered to in the environment of modern consumerism, including in the mass print market. As a result of individuals' expanded consumerism, they learned to control and reinterpret the external world by developing an awareness of their desires and feelings. As Locke's theory attests, humans began to generate a distance from themselves experiencing and feeling by regarding those experiencing selves as if the third person. And by expanding this third-person perspective to external world, they could realize the "object-ness" of the world—the concept that the world is subject to humans' interpretation and control—and the "subject-ness" of self, which enables individuals to gain the power to control and interpret the world. Now individuals could determine the meaning of object

48 Campbell, 72.

49 Campbell, 72.

and their own emotional experience, and they newly recognized that their consciousness and awareness mediated the relationship between their existence and the external world.

However, I also will argue that individual taste or autonomy is also subject to the prescription of social institutions such as the mass print market. As the print market expanded and readership diversified, readers could newly recognize the importance of their taste and right to select literary works to read. Nonetheless, what if these commercial institutions—known for fortifying readers' initiative in pursuing their desire, taste, and preference—could, ironically, control and domesticate the orientations of readers' taste? According to British empirical philosophers, human beings retain the power to reinterpret and control the external environment. But what if their interpretational and perceptive framework for reality was under the control of institutions? I speculate that this is what might actually have happened in the eighteenth-century mass print market. In the process of catering to consumers' demands for reading goods, these commercial institutions tended to generate the demand by introducing limited genres of literature for their targeted readers. Wordsworth's anxiety about the proliferation of Gothic novels, which, in his view, were designed to satisfy the readers' desire for sensual pleasure, is a notable example. I speculate that through curation, introduction, and criticism, these commercial institutions formulated readers' epistemological framework for the relationship between them (readers) and the reading goods.

As the influence of commercial institutions became pervasive, writers were isolated from readers and could no longer directly communicate with them. As writers lost direct contact with readers, their works were introduced and circulated only by commercial institutions—such as the curation of circulating libraries and reviews in periodicals. As Lucy Newlyn observed, English writers "experienced a sense of alienation" when they no longer could rely on patronage

but instead had to depend on “unknown readers, whose numerical power and anonymity were felt to be threatening.”[50] For example, Wordsworth and other Lake District poets continually suffered from low sales, so whether their works could survive this mass print market was a serious matter for them. Francis Jefferey, the founder of the *Edinburgh Review*, was a main antagonist who wrote many harsh reviews of Wordsworth’s works. Moreover, as members of republic of letters, Romantic poets were concerned whether the influence of their works could be shrunk to mere materials for sensual pleasure. Because, in the mass print market, literary works are degraded from repositories of knowledge and truth to mere fictional narratives for sensual pleasure. According to Klancher, Coleridge also expressed his anxiety about the change from the “vernacular republic of letters into its current, review-centered commercial form.”[51] The Romantic poets developed their anxiety into an inquiry: how could their works could promote sincere communication between members of society in an environment where the direct contact with each other became very difficult?

Romantic poets attempted to address the issue of alienation in the print market by adhering to the ideals of the republic of letters—in spite of a few contradictions inherent in this ideal. As discussed above, although there was a discrepancy between men of letters’ cosmopolitan ideal and their actual demographic formation, men of letters tried to share their cosmopolitan ideal by targeting the general public. The man of letters resisted “the coterie or professional languages emerging among the new knowledges and vocations of the eighteenth

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[50] Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.

[51] Klancher “Criticism and the crisis,” 315.

century" and as a means of resistance, they used "a broad, 'common' vocabulary.'"[52] Early periodicals were utilized to embody this general and common language. Samuel Johnson's *Rambler* is a notable example, as were other periodicals such as *Idler, Adventurer, Connoisseur.* In these periodicals, "their appeal is not to any particular kind, type, profession or class of reader;" they were open to everyone.[53] Moreover, in these periodicals, they encompassed many different genres and subjects, not only imaginative literature but also commentaries and essays on social events and occasions. In these periodicals, the word, 'literature' not only signified imaginative literature, fiction or novels, but also included criticisms or opinions about real events or facts.

However, the development of the mass print market also affected the attributes and ideals of the republic of letters. As examined above, new types of periodicals dedicated to the reviews of literary works, such as *Analytical*, the *Edinburgh*, the *Quarterly*, and *Blackwood's*. In the 1810s, these periodicals included reviews and digests of new literary works rather than essays. For example, as Benedict observes, in case of the *Edinburgh Review*, rather than imitating the format of the traditional essays of men of letters, which "welcomed a wide audience, at least nominally," it endorsed "the Scottish specialties of science, philosophy, and political economy, along with political matters and scientifically documented travels."[54] Whereas men of letters aspired to a cosmopolitan and universal ideal, this new type of periodicals targeted

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[52] Klancher, "Criticms and the crisis," 300.

[53] Simon Jarvis, "Criticism, taste, aesthetics" in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature 1740-1830*. ed. Thomas Keymer and John Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 26.

[54] Benedict,12.

"particular social, political, and cultural interest groups."[55] In this type of periodicals, the word 'literature' came to signify only imaginative literature, in other words, fictional writing.[56] Likewise, the writer as vocation became professionalized. Rather than signifying humanists who disseminated knowledge, a writer came to signify a person who wrote imaginative literature to be sold in the print market.

Although the republic of letter's ideal was already encountering limitations, Wordsworth tried to uphold its ideals—and positioned himself as a man of letters, which is epitomized by his belief that poets contribute to the society by discovering and disseminating universal knowledge. Wordsworth carefully selected the language and subject matter to achieve this goal, declaring that the poet's language should be the "language really used by men," which is, the language of "low and rustic life," such as peasants, who uses "a plainer and more emphatic language."[57] As Butler points out, by doing so, he rejected elite customs and attempted to establish a linguistic form that could serve a general public.[58] More importantly, as Klancher argues, by positioning a poet as "a man speaking to men," Wordsworth followed the cosmopolitanism and universal ideals of the republic of letters.[59] By using words such as "common" and "men," Wordsworth implies that the poet's language should universally appeal to the general audience, as was the goal of men of letters.

However, as Klancher also observed, Wordsworth's attempt to concoct a universal

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[55] Jarvis, 26.

[56] Klancher "Criticism and the crisis," 312-3.

[57] William Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads. Lyrical Ballads.* ed. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones (New York: Routledge, 1991), 245.

[58] Butler, 57.

[59] Klancher "Criticism and the crisis," 305.

language—which relied on borrowing, and refining, rural peasants' language—that could represent general humanity could not help but encounter multiple limitations. As stated above, Wordsworth referred to lower-class language to deviate from the decorum of aristocrats and elites. Nevertheless, Wordsworth had a limited understanding of the complex sociolect of the lower classes; his own middle-class sociolect also implicitly influenced his understanding of lower-class language. As a result, as Klancher observes, Wordsworth's attempt to embody the "real language of men" actually resulted in generating "a third language," which is "neither peasant nor middle class."[60] Klancher further observes that this "third language" was not grounded in any established historical and cultural context but "floats free of any material attachment."[61] As Klancher's analysis implies, there was a discrepancy between Wordsworth's ideal and the actual representation of local peasants' language. Wordsworth's experiment in poetic language did not fully reenact or document lower class language as it was.

I argue that Wordsworth's project to borrow and reenact lower-class language resulted in his attempts to produce biopolitical subjects, by developing a poetic language that registered readers as limited in their physical or sensory faculties. As a way of embodying a universal humanity that would appeal to a general audience, Romantic poets emphasized the social role of sympathy and imagination as a means of resisting institutionalized society and redeeming an organic community. However, I argue that Wordsworth's emphasis on imagination and sympathy is predicated upon the premise that his readers could be driven by external stimuli or bodily desire, as Lockean behaviorism and modern consumerism described. In *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Colin Campbell argued that imagination is an affective

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[60] Klancher *The Making of English Reading Audiences,* 140.
[61] Klancher, 138.

driving force for modern consumerism, but this cognitive faculty have served as an instrument of communication as well. Campbell argues that "self-illusory hedonism" is a critical factor that generates pleasure and further desire for consumption.[62] He asserts that modern consumers' pleasures mainly originate not from using or consuming already existing products but from imagining pleasure that they did not experience yet. And because modern consumers constantly imagine new pleasures that do not exist in the real world, this imagination encourages them to pursue newer products and pleasures, and eventually these pursuits generate further consumption.[63]

This mechanism of imagination is a significant theoretical background for Wordsworth's project to educate ethical values through aesthetic experience. Referring to Shaftesbury's theory, Campbell further attests that imagination, which is a driving force of modern consumerism, has been utilized as a crucial ethical and social ability in the eighteenth-century Europe. He observes that Shaftesbury importantly explored the way in which "morality and aesthetics" is converted to "a matter of emotional intuition."[64] As a result, the validation of beauty is applied to the validation of virtue without relating to any traditional knowledge or reason.[65] In Shaftesbury's theory, because individual feeling and emotion is the main principle to validate beauty and virtue, aesthetics and ethics are intuitively associated with each other. For example, we can emotionally feel others' pain as if ours, and out of our sympathy, which enables us to identify with others' circumstances, we can share others' feelings. This emotional ability of sympathy

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[62] Campbell, 86.
[63] Campbell, 170.
[64] Campbell, 151.
[65] Campbell, 151.

precedes any rational judgment or calculation. Based on this understanding, as Eagleton observed, Shaftesbury assumes that good things will be undoubtedly beautiful and evil things will be certainly ugly.[66] Therefore, by relying on their subjective impression and feeling, people could judge good and evil. Moreover, reminiscent of Campbell's association between modern consumerism and sympathy stated above, people also could draw upon their imaginative abilities to sympathize with others' feelings and circumstances. In order to sympathize with others, individuals are inclined to imagine how the other might feel in a certain situation even if they have not experienced that situation directly. Likewise, Wordsworth believed that aesthetic experiences provided by his poetry could generate impulses and desires that could guide—or drive—readers to naturally sympathize with others.

However, Shaftesbury's theory of moral sentiment is subject to the criticism that the theory tends to interpret the motivation of human actions based on determinism or behaviorism. In Campbell's explanation of the origin of imagination, the main driving force is what Campbell defined as "self-illusory hedonism," an impulse that urges consumers to imagine pleasures that they have not actually experienced. However, as Campbell's usage of the word, "hedonism," implies, if the impulse or desire is a driving force of imagination, the motivation itself could degenerate into determinism or behaviorism. In other words, human motivations could be reduced to desire or impulse, which are generated by individuals' sensory reactions to external stimuli. Shaftesbury's association of aesthetics and ethics also shares the analogous perspective. If individuals can pursue ethical virtues by hedonistic modes, such as desire or impulse, this epistemological frame inevitably rules out humans' will or volition from the possible motivations

[66] Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of Aesthetic* (London: Blackwell, 1991), 32.

of human action. Therefore, this direct association of aesthetics and ethics cannot but be highly deterministic, and what Shaftesbury called an innate ability to judge good and evil also could be interpreted as hedonism or behaviorism.

With Shaftesbury's emphasis on imagination and passion in mind, I want to consider the potentials in—and the limitations of—Wordsworth's concept of imagination. In the following excerpt from the *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth explains how the ability which enables individuals to imagine a virtual situation as if it is real could be associated with social virtue. In doing so, Wordsworth discovers that the power of imagination can transcend the actual perception of reality.

> To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than any thing which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves; whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.[67]

In this excerpt, Wordsworth argues that the emotion generated by reflection could supersede the original factual perception of reality—a concept of reflection that differs from Locke's. In

[67] Wordsworth, *Preface*, 256.

Locke's theory, certain perceptions or ideas becomes abstract, general, simplified form when they are processed through reflection and representation. Consider Rousseau's example—which he proposed in opposition to Locke's tendency to generalize—and assume that a primitive human encounters another human for the first time. In this first encounter, the primitive human could be surprised.[68] However, when he/she repeatedly perceives other human beings and comes to have a general concept about human beings' appearances, he/she would no longer be surprised.[69] However, the initial and visceral feeling or images that the human have had no longer exist in his/her mind. The notion of human being is signified by universal but generic language. However, the following statement demonstrates that the passion that poets can recall is "far from being the same as those produced by real events" but "do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events." This means that the images created by reflection and imagination, not the first encounter, could be more emotionally or affectively visceral and nuanced concepts or ideas than the perceptions originated from the real experience. Drawing on Campbell's argument regarding how imaginative abilities can lead to social virtue, I want to argue the Wordsworthian poet's ability to "imagine absent things as if they exist" is analogous to modern consumers' mechanism of generating desire, which is urging consumers to continually seek and imagine newer pleasures. In other words, both modern consumerism and Wordsworth's poet figure encourage individuals to imagine situations that they have not directly experienced. Therefore, in a Shaftesburian move, Wordsworth's poet figure can concoct a medium of experience through which readers experience pleasure. In the process of having pleasure, the

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[68] Jean Jacque Rousseau. *Essay On the Origin of Language*. trans. by John H. Moran and Alexander Gode, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966), 13.

[69] Rousseau, 13.

pleasure educates a desirable way of representing society.

This emphasis on the power of imagination and reflection delineates Romantic poets' changed definition of literature: the creation of an alternative reality rather than an imitation of reality. Based on Empiricists' arguments, if individuals access external reality only through perceived images in their cognitive system, the redefinition, reinterpretation and clarification of perceptions and feelings inherent in individuals become significant in accessing the external reality. In this context, as M. H. Abrams argues, literature, or art begins to deviate from a mere mimesis of reality—as in Aristotle's definition of art—to become a medium through which individuals express what they perceived or felt.[70]

Nevertheless, according to the following excerpt from the *Preface* to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth's poetry exposes a tendency towards determinism and behaviorism. As observed above, Shaftesbury argued that individuals' subjective feelings and impressions ultimately leads them to acquire universal beauty and virtue. Wordsworth also relies on Shaftesbury's idea, as stated in the famous manifesto that "poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[71] Through this statement, Wordsworth stresses that emotional qualities are essential in embodying his poetics. However, in the following statement attached to the manifesto, Wordsworth delineates how generating individual feeling and emotion could be hedonistic and deterministic.

> For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feeling; and as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really

[70] Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford UP, 1971), 89.

[71] Wordsworth, 246.

> important to men, so by the repetition and continuance of this act feelings connected with important subjects will be nourished, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much organic sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced that by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits we shall describe objects and utter sentiments of such a nature and in such connection with each other, that the understanding of the being to whom we address ourselves, if he be in a healthful state of association, must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, his taste exalted, and his affections ameliorated.[72]

The excerpt above implies that Wordsworth's poetry regarding the development of moral sense conclusively tends to reduce human ontology to the existence of sensory organs. In this excerpt, Wordsworth asserts that through repetitive "influxes" of feeling, individuals can recognize "what is really important to men." In this passage, Wordsworth seems to follow Shaftesbury's argument regarding the innate goodness of human beings. Shaftesbury believes that individuals can acknowledge and judge good and evil. Likewise, Wordsworth also implies that there is a predetermined significance about the way of the world, and that individuals could innately recognize those principles by perceiving external stimuli and accumulating the perceived information in their mind. However, as Shaftesbury's and Locke's theories share hedonistic and behavioristic tendencies, Wordsworth's is also subject to the same criticism. Locke argued that individuals' thoughts and notions are established by their sensory perceptions. Likewise, according to the excerpt above, by passively recognizing external stimuli and developing them into more sustainable and meaningful ideas and knowledge, individuals develop principles of

[72] Wordsworth, 246-7.

virtues and beauties. In Wordsworth's statement above, this passive mode of perception is summarized by the phrase, "habit of mind." After equipping this habit, individuals can retain an elevated taste merely by "obeying blindly and mechanically" their impulses. They can develop elevated taste and apply it to verify moral and social virtues. Moreover, as the expression, "blindly and mechanically" denotes, Wordsworth's mechanism of reflection is also subject to the determinism or behaviorism. Like Locke, Wordsworth also tends to assume that the only condition for being an autonomously ethical human being is merely having sensory organs and being receptive to external stimuli. This tendency of biologization inherent in Shaftesbury's and Locke's theory can be problematic because it inevitably simplifies and reduces individual subjectivity to bodily attributes.

II-4. Biopolitical subjects in Wordsworth's poetry

In this section, I will argue that Wordsworth's ideal of the poets' role—and of the relationship between poet and readers—generates biopolitical subjects. As discussed previously, Wordsworth claimed a "rejection of the complexities of advanced society, a reiteration of human values, and an emphasis upon reaching out to an audience which is as wide as mankind itself."[73] And in the "Preface," Wordsworth defines a poet as "a man speaking to men."[74] From this statement, we can observe that Wordsworth is trying to reach out to all kinds of audiences, in the tradition of men of letters. As men of letters retained cosmopolitan ideals, Wordsworth tried to construct an egalitarian relationship between a writer and readers. The usage of the word, "man"

[73] Butler, 57.

[74] Wordsworth, 255

(human) is used for both counterparts, a writer and reader. And the verb "speak," implies a direct communication with readers.

In his poems, Wordsworth realizes this through several rhetorical instruments. Hess argues that a literary invitational mode of Siste Viator (Stop, traveler) is an adequate mode to invite mass readers. More specifically, according to Hess, through this invitational mode, the poet draws readers' attention to epitaphs, an ideal medium for even anonymous readers to become a member of community.[75] When encountering epitaphs, even strangers who did not know anything about the deceased could create an emotional connection to them because death is a solemn but common matter to all human beings. Therefore, as demonstrated in many Wordsworth's poems, such as *The Ruined Cottage*, when the Peddler requests for a stranger, the Poet, to pay attention to his tale, the Peddler becomes "a man speaking to man" who entreats readers to show a respect to the deceased in the name of universal humanity.

However, I argue that this calling for the attention of readers and general humanity is only a call for the unreachable readership in the mass print market. As discussed above, the concept of readership itself had been misrepresented or arbitrarily formulated by commercial institutions. Therefore, I argue that Wordsworth's apostrophe might only be foregrounding this impossibility of access, and instead, his apostrophe is appealing to the biological commonality of readers: the fact that all readers commonly have physical bodies and sensory organs and are receptive to external stimuli. Giorgio Agamben notably associates the rhetoric of apostrophe with the issue of the impossibility of representation from a biopolitical perspective. According to Agamben's theory about testimony, he argues that prosopopoeia is an attempt to represent the

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[75] Scott, Hess, "Wordsworth's Epitaphic Poetics and the Print Market" *Studies in Romanticism* 50, no. 1 (2011): 60.

Gorgon, which is epitomized as the impossibility of seeing.[76] According to Greek mythology, nobody can stare at a Gorgon because she turns everyone who sees her into stones. Agamben associates this nature of the Gorgon, which does not allow any testimony or observation, with the impossibility of testimony in Auschwitz. Agamben argues that it is utterly impossible to represent or testify what happened to the inmates in the concentration camp, whose lives were degraded into mere flesh and blood, and likewise, the two-dimensional image of the Gorgon ironically portrays the impossibility of seeing rather than fully representing the formidable attributes of the Gorgon.[77] Agamben further argues that the frontal nature of this two-dimensional image becomes an unavoidable calling for audiences because the image could never completely represent the real Gorgon but continuously make audience to speculate or imagine the horrendous existence that is behind the image.[78] As the unavoidable calling of the Gorgon performs, Wordsworth's apostrophe betrays its rhetorical desire for direct communication with readers. Nevertheless, if considering that Agamben interpretated the Gorgon's two-dimensional image as an incomplete representation of the impossibility of seeing, Wordsworth's apostrophe betrays the impossibility of communication between writer and readers and entreats the

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[76] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive,* trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Zone Books, 2008), 53.

[77] Agamben, 53. Lemke criticizes Agamben for merely focusing on the extreme environment where oppression and usurpation of lives took place; he argues that Agamben overlooked the fact that biopolitics not only oppresses lives but also reproduces them by generating autonomous subjectivities (Lemke 61). In the same vein, I also examine that whereas Agamben considers an extreme condition of the concentration camp when explaining his concept of testimony and impossibility of seeing, Wordsworth does not assume such space but attempts to produce autonomously ethical individuals. However, I observe that Agamben's theory is still suggestive for analyzing Wordsworth's poetry because Agamben notably remarked on the issue of representing dehumanized beings that are reduced to biological faculties.

[78] Agamben, 53.

biological commonality of readers because Wordsworth's poetry urges the readers to follow his aesthetic prescription by relying on their biological perception only.

I will now examine how Wordsworth's poetry reduces readers to a biological mechanism that consists of sensory organs. In the following passage in *Essays upon Epitaphs*[79], we can witness how Wordsworth's concept of language as an incarnation or embodiment of thought could be interpreted as an appeal toreaders' biological commonality:

> Words are too awful an instrument for good and evil to be trifled with: they hold above all other external powers a dominion over thoughts. If words be not an incarnation of the thought but only a clothing for it, then surely will they prove an ill gift; such a one as those poisoned vestments, read of in the stories of superstitious times, which had power to consume and alienate from his right mind the victim who put them on. Language, if it do not uphold, and feed, and leave in quiet, like the power of gravitation or the air we breathe, is a counter-spirit, unremittingly and noiselessly at work to derange, to subvert, to lay waste, to vitiate, and to dissolve.[80]

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[79] These essays consist of three volumes. All three volumes were written in late 1809 and early 1810, and the first essay was published in Coleridge's journal *The Friend*. John O. Hayden, Introduction to *Essays upon Epitaphs*, *William Wordsworth: Selected Prose* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 322. As Joshua Scodel observed, in the *Essays*, Wordsworth argued that the epitaphic mode could recover the readers' sense of community by "remind[ing] [them] of [their] common nature as mortals." Wordsworth also argued that epitaphs in country churchyard are "the best examples" of epitaphic mode because the formulaic features of these epitaphs, humble and simple language, could perfectly embody the epitaph writer's reverence and respect for the deceased. Joshua Scodel, *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 386. Wordsworth's ideal concept of language—the language that fully embody or reflect thought—is manifested in the except above, but he also evinces his anxiety about the arbitrary nature of language as well.

[80] Wordsworth, *Essays upon Epitaph*, in *21$^{st}$-Century Oxford Authors: Wordsworth.* ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford University Press, 2010), 552.

Wordsworth argues here that words should fully embody thought, as if words become the embodiment (incarnation) of thought itself. Converting this relationship between form and content—and between language and thought—into an issue of private and public, Wordsworth demonstrates that language can intrinsically "mediate between the subjective and private world of the individual and the public world" by presenting language as an incarnation.[81] In other words, individual thoughts are their own private exclusives, and in order for those thoughts to acquire any meaning, those thoughts should be articulated in the sharable form of representation, language. However, as stated in the excerpt above, Wordsworth imagines that thought seamlessly incarnates into language; in other words, if the representation is the embodiment of thought itself, it could be the ideal medium to connect the private and public spheres.

However, proposing language as a medium of representation could become problematic if language remains a mere "clothing" for thought, not an incarnation. In the latter part of the excerpt, Wordsworth betrays his anxiety about the destructive potential of language: what if language is merely external from thought, and arbitrarily deviates from what it is supposed to signify? In this sense, he anticipates deconstructionists like Paul de Man and Jacque Derrida, who have discussed the hermeneutic potential of language. For deconstructionists, a linguistic signification or a speech act itself entails destruction and misrepresentation, but this misinterpretation is the very focal point where the performative potential of language is realized. To illustrate this using Rousseau's theory regarding the origin of language:when a primitive human encounters another human being for the first time, the human's speech act, probably a

[81] Hans Arsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1982), 377.

shout, contains his/her visceral fear and astonishment. Obviously, this cry is a misrepresentation that will be revised and ramified through repetitive encounters. However, this misrepresentation fully contains abundant emotional energy acquired from the first encounter. Likewise, deconstructionists remark that all speech acts contain elements of misrepresentation to some extent, but due to misrepresentation, the speech act can retain more hermeneutic potentiality and performativity.

In the same vein, in "Autobiography as De-facement," de Man evaluates Wordsworth's linguistic experiment to deviate from decorum (personification) as an attempt to address the issue of misrepresentation that originated from rhetorical convention and allow language to embody the thought itself. Nevertheless, at the same time, de Man also analyzes how Wordsworth's poetry is empowered by misrepresentation, the figurative speech that his poetic language performs. First, de Man argues that Wordsworth's autobiographical narrative in *The Prelude* reveals his attempt to "escape from the tropology of the subject."[82] By abstaining from using antithesis, personification or satire, which are mechanical instruments for figurative speech, Wordsworth attempts to make his poetic language an incarnation of thought itself, which is stripped of any redundant rhetoric so that the language directly embodies or becomes what it signifies. Sara Guyer also argues that by avoiding personifications, Wordsworth calls "for a naked, human language."[83] In other words, Guyer argues that Wordsworth's poetry "describes the reader's experience of reading in objective, impersonal terms," so that his poetry directly embodies the physical substance rather than figural meaning. However, despite this attempt, according to de Man, Wordsworth's autobiography is an "inevitable re-inscription of the

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[82] Paul de Man, "Autobiography as De-facement," *MLN* 94, (1979): 923.
[83] Guyer, 49.

necessity" of figurative speech,[84] based on his (De Man's) stance that all speech acts are basically figurative speech; thus, all reading is basically creative misreading. In other words, as Wordsworth recalls an absent subject into presence through prosopopoeia, the basic function of the speech act—the imposing of voice and agency on absent, inexpressible things—inevitably entails (mis)representation, or figurative speech. Therefore, the destructive potential of language stated in *Essays upon Epitaphs* is actually the fundamental nature of language, according to De Man.

I want to consider "A Slumber did my spirit seal" as a notable example of this hermeneutic creativity and the appeal to readers' biological commonality. In this poem, Lucy's two different states of existence are epitomized by the difference between the first and the second stanza: living Lucy and dead Lucy.[85] In this poem, death functions as a threshold that generates the difference between the two stanzas. However, the emotional driving force of the poem lies in the discrepancy between the literal meaning of the poetry and the imagined meaning of the poem by the readers. In the first stanza, the speaker describes Lucy when she was living by using past tense. However, although she was alive, the speaker was not certain about Lucy's identity and did not discover any human qualities from her, as the following lines implies: "She seemed a thing that could not feel / The touch of earthly years."[86] By contrast, the second stanza describes Lucy as a dead, thing-like being, portrayed as follows: "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course, /

[84] De Man, 923.

[85] Wordsworth, "A slumber did my spirit seal," in *Lyrical Ballads.* eds. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. (New York: Routledge, 1991), line 154.

[86] Wordsworth. lines 3-4.

With rocks, and stones, and trees,"[87] However, in the second stanza, even if she is dead, the speaker is confident about his description of Lucy's present status. When the readers recognize this difference in the speaker's tone, from uncertainty to certainty, the poem could demonstrate the speaker's knowledge about Lucy; the poem implies that the speaker still remembers Lucy even after she died and was assimilated into a natural object. As a result, the readers may appreciate the speaker's affection for her.

In the process of imagining the speaker's affection toward Lucy, which is triggered by the discrepancy between the literal meaning of the poem and the readers' actual experience of reading, the poem finally can function as a disseminator of ethical standard, namely sympathy. As Campbell argued that imagination is a crucial driving force of the modern consumerism, the poem encourages readers to imagine beyond its literal meanings. Furthermore, Eagleton interpreted Shaftesbury's ethics as enforcing "a radical decentering of the subject, subduing its self-regard to a community of sensibility with others."[88] In other words, in order for readers to fully sympathize with the girl's circumstance and appreciate the harmony between nature and human, readers are invited to momentarily suspend the immediate sense of the world and assimilate into the epistemology provided by the poem.

More importantly, I argue that this phenomenon is executed by the language of flesh and blood, which is designed to be liberated from the personification used in Neoclassical verses.[89]

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[87] Wordsworth, lines 7-8.

[88] Eagleton, 39.

[89] In the Neoclassical verses, personification was usually employed to incarnate abstract notions to deities, such as goddesses. Norman Mclean, "Personification But Not Poetry," *ELH* 23, no. 2 (1956), 163. By contrast, in Wordsworth's lyrics, mundane human subjects are juxtaposed with natural objects.

Because Lucy tends to be represented as a thing, flesh and blood, rather than being represented by using rhetorical conventions common in the Neoclassical verses, readers are encouraged to focus solely on the formal aspects of the poem, especially its the chiasmic structure. In a similar context, A. Mallory-Kani argues that Wordsworth regarded formalistic elements of poetry, such as meter and rhyme, as a Foucauldian "disciplinary power" of the state which guarantees individuals' security as a part of the state body.[90] In other words, through his poetry, Wordsworth devised an epistemological prescription that directly works on the readers' sensory or bodily perceptions so that if individuals "blindly and mechanically" follow and internalize this literary prescription, their mental and bodily health is secured. And this concept of bodily health is the foundation of the autonomously ethical individuals who internalized an ability of sympathy and moral sense. By doing so, I argue, the poem defines readers as biopolitical subjects. According to this concept, only their sensory faculties are foregrounded to appreciate the poetry and activate imagination to sympathize with others.

However, as Guyer points out, the dilemma of this poem as 'flesh and blood' is that in order to make a sharable meaning, the poem should not remain as 'flesh and blood.'[91] In other words, as the Gorgon cannot be fully represented as it is but takes a two-dimensional, frontal image to be witnessed by people, from some point, the formalistic elements of poetry should be converted to a sharable content. Wordsworth abstained from using personifications, to make his poetic language "the real language of men."[92] However, as deconstructionists argued that all linguistic significations are misrepresentations, Wordsworth's poetic language also relies on the

[90] Amy Mallory-Kani, ""Contagious Air[s]": Wordsworth's Poetics and Politics of Immunity," *European Romantic Review* 26, no. 6 (2015): 706.

[91] Guyer, 50.

[92] Wordsworth, *Preface*, 267.

misrepresentation and figurative speech to make absent, inexpressible things visible and expressible. For example, in the second stanza, Wordsworth describes Lucy as a non-human or a thing. However, the speaker actually recognizes Lucy in the first stanza and Lucy in the second stanza as identical in order to project his affection and knowledge toward her. And he implicitly urges readers to recognize Lucy as an identical human being, not as non-human or flesh and blood. In de Man's perspective, the speaker of the poem humanized Lucy by providing Lucy with human voice and face. By doing so, the rhetorical structure of the poetry predetermines readers' way of reading to affirm Lucy's human quality and the poet figure's authority, although there seems to be some hermeneutic wriggle room for them.

We can also consider the Boy of Winander in *The Prelude* as a notable example of this contradiction, and furthermore, an example of how Wordsworth produces biopolitical subjects in the process of meaning making:

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander! many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him.—And they would shout

Across the watery vale, and shout again,

Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,

And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud

Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild

Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause

Of silence such as baffled his best skill:

Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung

Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise

Has carried far into his heart the voice

Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene

Would enter unawares into his mind

With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,

Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received

Into the bosom of the steady lake.[93]

In this scene, the human voice shouted towards nature returns as a natural sound, an echo, and this echo repeats throughout the natural environment. In this poem, the conflation between perception and vision occurs. It becomes impossible to distinguish between the human voice and the natural sound, so readers are encouraged to conflate the human sound and natural sound, and soon in their imagination, the boy is assimilated into a part of nature. In this process of assimilation, the boy is portrayed as almost an animalistic being. In the state of silence, the boy is described as a passive, static image, "hung" onto nature. And in this static state, as a biological

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[93] Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1805), eds. Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams, and Stephen Gill. (New York: Norton, 1979), V. lines 389-413.

being, he intakes the images of nature, which is characterized with an oxymoron, “a gentle shock of mild surprise.” This oxymoron means that it is actually “shock” or “surprise” because a human being is assimilated into an inherently heterogenous being, natural elements. However, at the same time, this is “gentle” and “mild” because all these processes of conversion from simple perception to more selective and meaningful imagination and reflection are performed in the readers’ mind, rather than entailing any external or physical change. The boy mechanistically perceives the natural scenery and sound and imitates the sound in front of mountains and valleys, without much self-consciousness about his action.

Moreover, by describing the boy’s early death in the following excerpt, Wordsworth uses the boy’s story to convey his universal moral lesson:

> This boy was taken from his mates, and died
> In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old
> Pre-eminent in beauty is the vale
> Where he was born and bred: the churchyard hangs
> Upon a slope above the village-school;
> And through that churchyard when my way has led
> On summer-evenings, I believe that there
> A long half-hour together I have stood
> Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies![94]

According to this passage, the boy died at the young age of twelve, and from this fact of death, the poem smoothly transitions into a description of natural scenery, like many of Wordsworth’s

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[94] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, V. lines 414-422.

poems. The introduction of death generates a solemn respect toward the boy as representative of a universal humanity. By concluding the boy's story with death, the poem recalls some universal meaning or resonance, and invokes a sense of respect toward a deceased one: "I believe that there / A long half-hour together I have stood / Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies."

According to Frances Ferguson, Wordsworth believed that the epitaphic mode could convey universal truth "without exclusivity" by arousing affections beyond utilitarian comparability. Wordsworth thought that "the affections may always justify an epitaph without making all epitaphs equal."[95] For example, individuals think that their mothers are the best not because of comparison between their mothers and others' but because they love their mothers.[96] Ferguson is basing this reading in part on Wordsworth's *Essays Upon Epitaphs* as well. In these essays, Wordsworth explains that "the writers of epitaphs do not need to provide any credentials for the persons whom they mourn, because the very fact they are moved to write an epitaph is the only relevant justification."[97] Like the individuals who regard their mother as best, each writer could have different motivations for writing epitaphs. Still, those motivations are not subject to any criticism or evaluation because their intention to mourn itself justifies what they write. For Wordsworth, the epitaphic mode could potentially retain a universal appeal because, of course, everyone faces death someday.[98]

However, this argument regarding the incorporation of linguistic form and ethics inevitably entails the appropriation of non-human subjects into human figures in the narrative.

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[95] Frances Ferguson, "Wordsworth and the Meaning of Taste," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wordsworth.* ed. Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 105.
[96] Ferguson, 105.
[97] Wordsworth, *Essays upon Epitaphs*, 57.
[98] Ferguson, 106.

Through this appropriation, Wordsworth's poem no longer functions as a receptacle for a visceral experience of sympathy and imagination but degenerates into a mere vehicle for moral ideology. The purpose of Wordsworth's poetics is to formulate autonomous individuals who are equipped with moral sense as part of their bodily or perceptive faculty. However, as de Man observed, in order to prescribe this faculty, Wordsworth utilizes death as an instrument of figurative speech rather than confronting these non-human entities—or these flesh and blood—that remain as an impossibility of seeing. As de Man argued, all speech acts ultimately become figurative speech, so misreading is an inevitable consequence of all readings. However, in Wordsworth's poetry, this misreading, this process of meaning-making tends to reduce the readers' experience of poetry into an acquisition of moral ideology. Due to the boy's death, the boy's existence is entirely converted to a narrative figure in the story. From the readers' perspective, by following the boy's imitation of the natural sound and assimilation into nature, the boy's sensory perceptions substitute the readers' (virtual) sensory perceptions. And this substitution of agency of sensory perception is possible because the boy is purely embodied as formal elements of the poetry, not a human figure. By sympathizing or assimilating with the boy's experience and the formal aspects of the poem, readers can refashion their sensory perceptions. However, when they appreciate the boy's early death, this visceral experience of substitution is utilized to accept a moral lesson about the boy who once lived and died. By portraying the boy's death, the boy's existence acquires full humanity. Readers begin to recognize the boy's story as content, rather than simulating the boy's experience of assimilation by continuing to focus on the formal aspect of the poem.

I associate this transition from the impossibility of seeing to visibility—and from the non-human to a figurative speech of humanity—with David Simpson's observation of

Wordsworth's poetics as a process of commodification. Simpson argues that Wordsworth's spots of time are "a protest against and a formal embodiment of the mechanics of commodity form," but at the same time, he betrays his desire for "frozen time, to what will always stay the same" through spots of time.[99] In other words, by blurring the boundary between the human entity (the boy's shouting) and natural elements (the echo) in the excerpt above, Wordsworth generates opacity and uncertainty which resists commodification as well as any attempt to interpret his poem according to "abstract universality" and homogeneous concepts of time.[100] Because of the opacity inherent in the poem, it deviates from a temporal concept in which every moment or instance is identical with each other so that time is a calculatable resource. However, by portraying the speaker's nostalgic emotion for something that is lost and can never be redeemed again, these dead characters can stay as they are ever after, like a can of preserved fruits which does not lose its quality over the time. And due to the absence of any social context from these characters, the speaker can discuss these characters' death on a purely aesthetic level, so the process of commodification becomes more complete. In the same context, Klancher also argues that Wordsworth attempted to perform "purely symbolic exchange," but instead, his poetic language inevitably became Jean Baudillard's "modern sign."[101] In the process of apostrophizing, these characters in Wordsworth's poems are reduced and abbreviated into modern signs, or readily circulatable and exchangeable commodity forms. As discussed above, Campbell observed that individuals' abilities to imagine and desire new products in modern

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[99] David Simpson, *Wordsworth, Commodification and Social Concern: The Poetics of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 138-9.

[100] Simpson, 139.

[101] Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audience*, 143.

consumerism were utilized to construct sympathy as a central ethical value. And this observation is exemplified in Shaftesbury's association between aesthetics and ethics. Inheriting Shaftesbury's theory, Wordsworth attempted to educate a desirable way of feeling through his poetry. However, we also can observe that when relying on the universality of emotion and feeling, the very quality of universality might serve for the process of homogenization and commodification. In Wordsworth's poems, the commodification occurs when the hermeneutical potentiality of dehumanized, thing-like poetic subjects is reified as a moral ideology by the poet's apostrophe and humanization.

# Chapter III

## *The Excursion*: Wordsworth's Anxiety Toward His Readership and Language as a Sign

### III-1. Introduction

Wordsworth's concept of the relationship between author and readers can be seen to have shifted when we contrast "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*" and "Essay, Supplementary." Wordsworth maintained his poetic vision throughout these two essays, sincerely communicating with readers and cultivating sympathy to generate consensus and harmony in society. However, in "Essay, Supplementary," attached to the preface to *Poems, Two Volumes* (1815), his perspective toward the reading public becomes complex and ambivalent, unlike in the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads.* In this chapter, I argue that he reflected on his perspective change in the reading public and mass print market regarding *The Excursion.* In the "Essay," Wordsworth did not fully abandon his cosmopolitan ideal that his poems can convey universal knowledge. However, he retreated from his rosy picture of the poet's role and readers' potential, seemingly realizing that in an environment of expanded readership, there is no common bond between readers, so the concept of a general reader is no longer viable. Therefore, it is almost impossible

for a single author to appeal to all kinds of readers or educate "general" humanity. Instead, as a professional author, the poet at best creates a taste that satisfies a specific group of readers.

In *The Excursion*, his realization that in an environment of mass readership, readers are too diversified for a single author to establish intimate and direct relationships is reflected in the testing and verification of Wordsworth's poetics in a more public setting than in his previous works, such as *The Prelude*. In *The Excursion*, the poet figure, the Wanderer, is presented in a dramatic, not a lyric setting. By doing so, the Wanderer's interpretations of events and scenes are contrasted with or criticized by other characters, such as The Solitary. In this text, the eloquence of the poet figure, The Wanderer, is limited to fully interpreting the ambivalence inherent in many scenes of *The Excursion*. This betrays the fact that in the environment of a mass public, realizing the ideals of a man of letters— the presentation of a universal standard of beauty or ethics—is impossible for an individual author. Moreover, in "Essay," Wordsworth seems to slightly veer toward the post-Lockean concept of language, the strict separation between signifier and thing, the theoretical foundation of institutionalized society and language, which is a more acceptable form of language in the environment of a mass public. The Solitary's demand for a universal, practical sign that arbitrarily signifies things reflects Wordsworth's change of stance on the linguistic concept stated above. Moreover, the Wanderer's theorization of the mechanism of imagination and poetics also reflects Wordsworth's implied intention to seek a more general and sharable form of language in the mass-print market and diversified readership.

III-2. "Essay, supplementary": Wordsworth's Changed Perspective on Readership and Language

First, I discuss Wordsworth's perspective toward diversified readership in the mass print market. According to "Essay, supplementary," Wordsworth seemed to acknowledge that he

cannot satisfy all kinds of readers in the contemporary environment of expanded and diversified readership, nor can he suggest a general aesthetic standard for all of them. In the "Essay," he argues, "every author, as far as he is great and at the same time original, has had the task of creating the taste by which *he* (my emphasis) is to be enjoyed."[1] This seemingly plain argument retains a significant difference from the statement in "Preface" because in this statement he seems to recognize himself as a professional writer with ingenuity who writes to satisfy his consumers in the print market, not the general public. In "The Preface," Wordsworth argues that there is a universal ethical or aesthetic value that poets can discover and disseminate. However, according to his statement in the "Essay," a literary work is an object that manifests only the writer's originality and personality, rather than a receptacle of universal truth. Similarly, each writer must create a particular taste. Still, according to the excerpt above, a writer's purpose in writing is to satisfy readers by providing more specific literary goods, rather than accommodating a general readership with universal truths.

In the following passage, Wordsworth's recognition of the impossibility of embodying "public taste" is associated with his recognition of a diversifying readership in which the common knowledge or bonds between readers diminish. After he poses the question, "where lies the real difficulty of creating that taste by which a truly original poet is to be relished?," he speculates as follows:

> Is it breaking the bonds of custom, in overcoming the prejudices of false refinement, and displacing the aversions of inexperience? Or, if he labour for an object which here and elsewhere I have proposed to myself, does it consist in divesting the reader of the

[1] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," in *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, eds. W. J. B. Owen and Jane Worthington Smyser, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 80.

> pride that induces him to dwell upon those points wherein men differ from each other, to the exclusion of those in which all men are alike, or the same; and in making him ashamed of the vanity that renders him insensible of the appropriate excellence which civil arrangements, less unjust than might appear, and Nature illimitable in her bounty, have conferred on men who may stand below him in the sale of society?[2]

In this passage, Wordsworth seems to recognize that as "men differ from each other," it is challenging to sincerely communicate with all kinds of readers, who are located in different classes and communities. In other words, Wordsworth seems to realize that there is no general human being who will sincerely appreciate his poetry articulated by a poet as "a man speaking to men," at least in an environment of a mass public. Wordsworth observed that readers can "bear the same general impression, though widely different in value." In such an environment, each anonymous reader subjectively interprets literary works, although there could be some commonality in the impressions they receive. As Andrew Franta observed, Wordsworth recognized the "absence of any common bond in contemporary culture."[3]

Wordsworth's recognition that there was no longer a general reader led him to realize that the diversifying readership weakened the common bonds between readers. As he observed, anonymous readers in the mass print market could have various reactions to—and subjective interpretations of—his work: "the love, the admiration, the indifference," but also "the slight, the aversion, and even the contempt."[4] Therefore, this statement implies that Wordsworth realized

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[2] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 80.

[3] Andrew Franta, *Romanticism and the Rise of the Mass Public* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 69.

[4] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 80.

that embodying Shaftesbury's ideal of conveying universal virtue through the aesthetic dimension of literary works was no longer viable, because there was no guarantee that all readers would unanimously understand and sympathize with the writer's intention. Franta associates this passage with the compromised authority of the writer, for, as he argues, "conferring power on the reading public (as opposed to individual readers or an idealized audience) must also mean investing readers with a form of authority that might compromise that of the poet."[5] In other words, if the writer bestows the authority to interpret a literary work as readers would like, this inevitably becomes a zero-sum game, sacrificing the author's power over the readers. This is a considerably more realistic perspective toward the mass printing market than that of the "Preface." In his "Preface," Wordsworth largely regarded a poet's authority as democratic but at the same time almost as sacred, arguing that "he is rock of defence for human nature; and upholder and preserver."[6] This perspective is based on Shaftesbury's theory that all human beings can innately recognize universal beauty, which is directly related to universal virtue. However, the "Essay" implies that it is very challenging for poets to represent this universal virtue in a sharable form to the readers. The poet's attempts to share this virtue usually become a power game between the poet and the readers. In the following passage, he argues, "he [the reader] is invigorated and inspirited by his leader, in order that he may exert himself; for he cannot proceed in quiescence, he cannot be carried like a dead weight. Therefore, to create taste is to call forth and bestow power, of which knowledge is the effect."[7] In this excerpt, Wordsworth argues that the poet, as a leader, should empower readers to expand their sensibility

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[5] Franta, 74.

[6] Wordsworth, *Preface*, 259.

[7] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 82.

and human nature by themselves. This argument implies that he admitted that the organic and mutual relationship between the author and the reader is difficult to achieve and that the power dynamic between the author and the reader is inevitable.

Wordsworth also associates the absence of a common bond between readers and their diverse opinions with contemporary linguistic theory. In "Essay, Supplementary," Wordsworth argues that readers' responses will "be received as pledges and tokens, bearing the same general impression, though widely different in value."[8] The nebulous part of this statement is Wordsworth's contradictory description of those readers' responses as "general" and at the same time "widely different." To gain a more profound understanding of this statement, I will discuss Wordsworth's anxiety regarding the paradigm change from the Adamic concept of language to the more modernized Lockean concept of language. As noted in the previous chapter, according to Wordsworth, words should fully embody the thought itself, as if words (a form) become the embodiment (incarnation) of thought (form). Nevertheless, at the same time, he betrays his fear or agony over whether a word functions as a mere arbitrary sign of a thing. He fears the possibility that language is a sheer "clothing" of thought, an arbitrary sign of things.

In this context, Wordsworth's perspective on language displayed in "Essay, Supplementary" reflects the post-Lockean concept of language. Before the seventeenth century, European people believed in the Adamic language, the belief that as Adam named all creatures according to the authority bestowed by God, language, the system of nomenclature, intrinsically contained the attributes of its maker, God. By contrast, as an empiricist, Locke argues that language only refers to perceived images or ideas in individuals' minds; as he states, "Words in

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[8] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 80.

their primary or immediate Signification, stand for nothing, but the Ideas in the Mind of him that uses them."[9] And this mediated access to reality occurs through language. However, according to this theory, because language is constructed in each individual's cognitive system, language cannot but be private, and each of them can have a different definition or concept about particular vocabulary. Nevertheless, many scholars complemented Locke's theory that language goes through a social rectification process.[10] By doing so, members of society established a sign that was fully formulated by the consensus between members of society and did not contain any attributes of what it signifies.

Therefore, according to Locke and other philosophers, language is socially and arbitrarily constructed and has no intrinsic relationship with what it signifies. Therefore, the statement in the excerpt quoted above that readers' responses will "be received as pledges and tokens, bearing the same general impression, though widely different in value" can be regarded as his realization that in a mass public, language inevitably becomes an arbitrary and institutionalized sign. Wordsworth was aware of the changes caused by the advent of the mass-printing market and diversified readership, as noted above, such that authors no longer directly communicated with readers and could not find a common bond between readers. Under this understanding, Wordsworth seems to realize that language inevitably represents each individual's

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[9] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (New York: Samuel Marks, 1825), Book III. II, 328.

[10] French and German philosophers, such as Destutt de Tracy, Johann Gottfried, and Wilhelm von Humboldt, inherited Locke's theory and developed it to the theory about language as a result of social rectification. William Keach, "Romanticism and Language." *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism.* ed. Stuart Curran. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 114.

private ideas, as stated, “widely different in value.” In this context, he also realized that language could no longer be a complete embodiment of the author’s thought but was a mere arbitrary sign. Therefore, the only thing that the writer and readers or that each reader can share is generalized meanings that will “be received as pledges and tokens, bearing the same general impression.” This recalls Thomas de Quincy’s criticism that many readers possessed “mere understanding.” In his essay “On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*,” after describing the mysterious sublime that he experienced from the scene where Macbeth succeeds to assassinate Duncan, De Quincy would “exhort the readers” who cannot feel any visceral, inarticulate feeling from literary works but only can extract factual information from the text.[11] Therefore, through the phrase, “pledges and tokens,” Wordsworth seems to imply a similar concept of sign. Like an emperor’s profile on coins, everybody knows and understands these “tokens,” but each “token” cannot really mean something because its hermeneutic potential has already been oversaturated through excessive circulation, repetition, and commodification. Likewise, according to Wordsworth’s realization of his contemporary readership, each reader can response differently to a single literary text. However, because these different responses are greatly diverse and particular, literary works can only establish a very small ground of understanding, which almost means nothing.

Wordsworth associated his recognition of the tastes of diverse readers and the absence of a common bond with contemporary empiricism. In the ensuing passage, while examining the expanded meaning of taste, Wordsworth observes that it has now come to have a more active meaning. First, he argues, the word, imagination, was meant to have the “passive sense of human body” or “impulses,” but now it signifies a more active meaning, “intellectual acts and

[11] Thomas de Quincy, “On the Knocking at the Gate in *Macbeth*,” *Essays*. London: Ward, Lock and co. 1886. *Shakespeare Online*.

operations."[12] Scottish Empiricists argued that individuals no longer directly access external reality but can only access perceived images of reality. However, because of this notion, reality can be interpreted differently and can even change according to individual perceptions. In this context, as Wordsworth observed, the expanded meaning of "imagination" from "passive senses" to active intellectual "operations" reflects Empiricists' notion of individuals' ability to change reality through reinterpretation. He also comments on the expanded meaning of the word "taste," which he held once signified "the prevalence dispositions at once injurious and discreditable, being no other than that selfishness which is the child of apathy."[13] However, now this word signifies a much more active and positive meaning, such as "the refinement of judging," or "habit of self-conceit."[14] By tracing the changed meaning of "taste" from individuals' capricious and temporary preference for trivial subjects to a significant cognitive ability, he acknowledged the presence of expanded readership and the readers' elevated status and initiative.

What then was Wordsworth's opinion of this changed readership? Of course, he did not entirely abandon his mission stated in "the Preface." He argues that the poet should share an "elevated or profound passion" with readers, and to do this, "the exertion of a co-operating *power* in the mind of the reader"[15] is indispensable. Rather than merely consuming works of literature for sensual pleasure, with the realization of their cognitive ability as a stated "power," readers may proactively and sincerely communicate with the writer through his works. However, Wordsworth did not naïvely believe in this rosy picture. When he states the expanded meaning of

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[12] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 81.
[13] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 81.
[14] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 81.
[15] Wordsworth, *Preface*, 263–4.

"imagination," he used the expression, "overstrained,"[16] which implies that the meaning of the word has grown far beyond what it is supposed to signify. Therefore, Wordsworth seemed to have anxiety and expectations toward this expanded readership and readers' strengthened initiatives in the print market.

Wordsworth concludes this essay by imagining ideal readers who may exist in the future. In the very final passage of the Essay, he contrasts an "unthinking" "PUBLIC" with "PEOPLE" who are "philosophically characterized" and retain "the embodied spirit of their knowledge," and for the PEOPLE, the author's "devout respect" and "reverence" "is due."[17] By imagining these ideal readers named "PEOPLE," he confesses that it would be challenging to realize his vision stated in "the Preface" while he is living. Overall, according to "Essay," Wordsworth was well aware of the diversified readership and the absence of a common bond between readers, and the philosophical and social background that facilitated this change, such as empiricist epistemology and the rising number of educated readers who actively pursued their own desire and taste. For this paradigm change, he maintained his vision of sincere communication with readers and education on their universal aesthetic and moral standards. Nonetheless, at the same time he expressed anxiety about this new kind of reader. He also realized that many difficulties and obstacles interfered with his ideal relationship between readers and the poet, such as the inevitable power dynamics between them. He also partially accepted the concept of a professional writer who satisfied consumers' appetites through his ingenuity. Moreover, as Wordsworth observed, readers' expanded initiative in print market was expressed in the change of meaning of the words "imagination" and "taste." However, this expanded initiative had

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[16] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 81.
[17] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary to Preface," 84.

progressed hand in hand with the diversification of readers' tastes and the loss of common bonds. It was assumed that the general readership was no longer valid.

Wordsworth was not probably entirely ignorant of these changes and the related issues before he wrote "Essay," 1815. In "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads,*" he also expresses his anxiety toward the trend of literary works written for readers who merely craved more sensual pleasure in the mass print market, but in "Preface," he seemed to have a firm hope or belief that he could encourage readers to sincerely communicate with authors and that he could educate them both aesthetically and morally. However, as the conclusion of "Essay" implies, Wordsworth seemed to realize that his vision was unlikely to come true in this world, and as a professional writer, he could only develop a taste that could satisfy only a few readers. Moreover, the readership that he imagines as ideal might exist only in the future.

### III-3. *The Excursion* Book II: The Wanderer's Limitation as an Author

In this chapter, I associate this changed attitude toward the contemporary environment regarding authorship and readership with the interpretation of *The Excursion* in which Wordsworth's rhetorical methods of communicating with his readers expose their own limitations. More specifically, I consider Alison Hickey's contrast between *The Prelude* and *The Excursion* suggestive for this argument. Hickey defined *The Prelude* as a text in which "the willingness for privacy" is embodied, and in contrast to *The Prelude*, Hickey characterized *The Excursion* as a text in which Wordsworth's contemplation regarding "genuine publicness"[18] is incorporated. I do not think that Wordsworth assumed that his work would circulate in the

[18] Alison Hickey, *Impure Conceits: Rhetoric and Ideology in Wordsworth's "Excursion."* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 149.

anachronistic coteries under the sponsorship system when writing *The Prelude*. As examined in the previous chapter, Wordsworth designed an epistemic framework in which readers' aesthetic impressions or reactions developed into sympathy toward others by using death as a subject matter.

However, achieving the ideal of a man of letters who delivers universal ethical values that can appeal to all kinds of readers is not possible with Wordsworth's contemporary readership, which is characterized by the absence of a common bond between readers and diversified opinions. In this context, Hickey's argument that *The Excursion* reflects Wordsworth's contemplation of "publicness" is suggestive because in contrast to *The Prelude*, *The Excursion* tests the validity of rhetorical instruments by locating his poetics in the contemporary environment of a mass public readership where every reader retains a different opinion about a given aesthetic subject or matter.

First, I will examine how Wordsworth attempts to differentiate *The Excursion* from his previous works, such as *The Prelude,* and how limitations inherent in his poetics are exposed in *The Excursion* in the process. A significant difference between *The Excursion* and *The Prelude* is that in *The Excursion,* multiple characters are introduced instead of a single authorial voice in *The Prelude*. Since the speakers of *The Excursion* are dramatic characters, we can readily analyze and criticize their past histories, attributes, and limitations. Because of this difference, Wordsworth's long poem deviates from the personal dimension of his private voice. The validity of his poetics is tested in a public setting. Especially in the earlier books of *The Excursion*, the primary author figure is the Wanderer, who uncovers Margaret's story in Book 1, and the Poet plays a listening role. The Solitary, as an antagonist, raises many doubts about Wordsworth's poetics, represented by the Wanderer.

In the earlier books of *The Excursion*, by presenting these characters, the Wanderer and the Solitary, Wordsworth's argument regarding poetic language and subject matter is problematized. As I discussed in the previous chapter, in "The Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," Wordsworth declared that his poetic language and subject matter will be rustic, rural people's simple language and their lives. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Wordsworth's experiment with poetic language resulted in the reduction of human subjects in his poetry into biopolitical subjects, assuming readers as the mechanism of perceptive faculties.

In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth exposes the naturalizing tendencies of his poetics by contrasting two characters and their opinions. Frances Ferguson observes that according to their biographies, the Solitary and Margaret are similar characters because both have memories of frustrated affection (such as the loss of loved ones).[19] The Wanderer and the old man, whose story is narrated by the Solitary in Book 2, are similar in that they are not involved in human society.[20] I argue that the Wanderer's lack of experience of human contact is not merely a problem in the character but symptomatically estranges the premise of naturalization and biologization inherent in Wordsworth's poetics. In other words, due to the lack of any social context for these characters, the poem poses the following questions. By naturalizing human subjects, Wordsworth's poem seems to assume that having sensory organs is the only condition for embodying moral sense as a social consensus. Is this assumption truly viable? In Book I, Wordsworth describes the Wanderer's growth and his younger days at length, such as his deceased father when he was young and his attendance in his stepfather's school. Overall, this narrative characterizes that he has grown up in nature, almost like "the embodiment of natural

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[19] Frances Ferguson. *Language as a Counter-Spirit*, (CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 212.
[20] Ferguson, 212.

wisdom."[21] However, this manifestation of familiarity with nature betrays that throughout the growth, he has been an alienated being from human society, as his return from his step-father's school is stated as follows: "In solitude returning, saw the Hills / Grow larger in the darkness, all alone / Beheld the stars come out above his head."[22]

In this context, the story of *The Ruined Cottage* in Book 1 of *The Excursion* betrays the Wanderer's isolated and solipsistic status, as the following statement manifests.

> The Poets, in their elegies and songs
> Lamenting the departed, call the groves,
> The call upon the hills and streams to mourn,
> And senseless rocks; nor idly; for they speak,
> In these their invocations, with a voice
> Obedient to the strong creative power
> Of human passion. Sympathies there are
> More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,
> That steal upon the meditative mind,
> And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,
> And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel
> One sadness, they and I. For them a bond
> Of brotherhood is broken: time has been
> When, every day, the touch of human hand

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[21] Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry 1787-1814*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964, 305.

[22] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, eds. Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), I. lines 143–5.

Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up

In mortal stillness; and they ministered

To human comfort.[23]

In this passage, the Wanderer argues that his "sympathies there are / more tranquil," in this ruin, the place that had been a human's residence but was now become a place upon which nature encroached. Although the Wanderer argues that nature echoes and mirrors the poets' lamentations, he looks at himself reflected in the water, and like Narcissus, delves into his inward sorrow.

Moreover, in Book II, the Wanderer exposes the limitations of interpreting the controversial and ambivalent meaning of the natural scenery in which the Solitary is located.

All at once, behold!

Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,

A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high

Among the mountains; even as if the spot

Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs

So placed, to be shut out from all the world!

Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn;

With rocks encompassed, save that to the south

Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge

Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close;

A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,

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[23] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, I. lines 475–91.

A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,

And one bare dwelling; one abode, no more!

It seemed the home of poverty and toil,

Though not of want: the little fields, made green

By husbandry of many thrifty years,

Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.

There crows the cock, single in his domain:

The small birds find in spring no thicket there

To shroud them; only from the neighbouring vales

The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,

Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.[24]

This passage contains many ambivalent, double meanings. For example, the physical background of this poem is "a lowly vale," but the meaning of the word "lowly" contradicts another phrase that describes this vale, "uplifted high." From the Wanderer's position, because he is on the summit now, he can describe the vale as "lowly," but comparing the vale to other neighboring vales, it is "uplifted high." These double meanings inherent in the value imply a subtle discrepancy between the vale and the surrounding environment. The vale does not exist as a part of natural scenery with other vales but attracts visitors' attention through its own independent quality. Geoffrey Hartman observes "the verbal lingerings, something rising from the abyss, the reversal of an expected or natural order" in these lines.[25] In other words, from the summit of the mountain, where the Wanderer is located, the value should be recognized as "lowly," but the

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[24] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 327–48.

[25] Hartman, 308.

minute verbal lingerings implied by the repetition of “lowly vale” signifies the vale’s strange and alien quality. The following line, “be shut out from all the world,” also signifies the secluded and unnatural attribute of this vale. In the following lines, several expressions can signify both paradise and death. The word “shroud” means “cover” and “dress for burial.” Therefore, this vale functions as the refuge of small birds, but also implies death. Similarly, the expression “urn-like” could mean secluded or protected, but also inescapable, or it could refer to the funeral urn. These binary oppositions in the potential meanings of the poem—paradise and death—do not reach any point of reconciliation, and readers cannot find a fully satisfying interpretation. Therefore, there are many different interpretations of the ambivalent atmosphere of the Solitary’s hermitage. Regardless of whether one adopts the reading of paradise or death, neither of these interpretations can fully satisfy all readers. Shaftesbury’s connection between aesthetics and ethics requires the assumption of a universal standard of beauty. The description of the Solitary’s hermitage in *The Excursion* undermines the very condition for the connection between aesthetics and ethics. The ambivalence inherent in this passage proves that not all individuals agree with a single interpretative standard, and reality is much more complex and uneven than Shaftesbury’s value system registers.

However, the Wanderer’s allegorical reading betrays his limitations in interpreting this passage by flattening the subtle ambiguity, as the following excerpt shows.

> Ah! What a sweet Recess, thought, I, is here!
> Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease
> Upon a bed of heath;--full many a spot
> Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy
> Among the mountains; never one like this;

So lonesome, and so perfectly secure;

Not melancholy—no, for it is green,

And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself

With the few needful things that life requires.

--in rugged arms how softly does it lie,

How tenderly protected! Far and near

We have an image of the pristine earth,

The planet in its nakedness: were this

Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat

First, last, and single, in the breathing world,

It could not be more quiet: peace is here

Or nowhere; days unruffled by the gale

Of public news or private; years that pass

Forgetfully; uncalled upon to pay

The common penalties of mortal life,

Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.[26]

This commentary on the landscape "entirely leaves out the ambivalence."[27] The Wanderer recognizes this landscape as a perfect haven and pastoral for humans. From his description, we cannot find any dark nuance such as graves or death. According to him, this place is "not melancholy" at all but "green," "bright," and "fertile," and it has only a protective function, with no function at all as a place of death or loss. In addition, his description of the vale, "sole

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[26] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 349–69.

[27] Hickey, 49.

appointed seat, / First, last, and single" utterly flattens the contradictory meaning constructed by the composition of "lowly" and "high." The readers could observe that the Wanderer is utterly beautifying or idealizing the image of death in this passage by obliterating any negative feelings.

I argue that the Wanderer's simplification of the subtle meanings in the landscape problematizes a significant paradox inherent in Wordsworth's poetics, which originates from his use of death as a figure to attain universal resonance. As discussed in the previous chapter, death converts a nonhuman subject into a human story, and through this humanization, the speaker exerts the power of apostrophe, recalling absent objects into presence, or imposing a sharable meaning on non-human objects that are impossible to represent. For example, in the Boy of Winander passage in *The Prelude*, the boy's biological qualities, such as his sensory faculties, are emphasized. Because the boy's ontology is reduced to a non-human one, his full communication with nature can successfully appeal to the readers' biological commonality and sensory faculties. However, by describing the boy's early death, the boy remains human in the speaker's narrative. In doing so, Wordsworth constructed his authority as a poet who could recall and imagine this strange figure as the subject of universal humanity. Similarly, in this scene, the Wanderer attempts to deliver universal and acceptable messages by idealizing the natural scenery surrounding the Solitary's hermitage. However, unlike the Boy of Winander scene, by flattening the sophisticated contradictions inherent in the description of the landscape, the passage betrays the Wanderer's perspective as not an absolute interpretation, but one that must be somewhat limited. Whereas the Wanderer prescribes a single way of reading, there are different ways to interpret the ambivalent atmosphere of the Solitary's hermitage. Regardless of whether paradise or death, neither interpretation can fully satisfy all readers. In his attempt to offer a universalizing interpretation, the Wanderer falls short: his simplistic understanding of the

landscape exposes his ideological perspective. The Wanderer is eager to articulate a universal message, but that universal message remains only an aphorism that is not justified by any profound insight yielding a comprehensive understanding of the way of the world. I thus consider that this symptomatically reflects Wordsworth's anxiety about anonymous readers who lack a common bond, and his ideal of delivering universal resonance may degenerate into the mere propagation of ideology.

Moreover, the Wanderer's interpretation of reality is challenged when he recognizes the funeral of an old man as that of the Solitary. After the Wanderer's interpretation of the landscape surrounding the Solitary's hermitage, the Wanderer and the Poet hear a funeral dirge while heading toward the Solitary's hermitage, and the Wanderer cries, "he is departed, and finds peace at last!"[28] However, he misunderstands the funeral as the Solitary's and continues to misinterpret the objects he witnesses as evidence of the Solitary's death. When he sees a soaked book, Voltaire's *Candide*, he declares again, "It cannot but be his, / And he is gone!"[29] and offers a hasty condolence for the Solitary's death.[30] According to Sally Bushell, "the Wanderer's hasty conclusions and retrospective attempts to enhance his narrative undermined the reader's confidence in him as any kind of absolute guide in the poem."[31] In other words, by showing that the Wanderer's interpretation of external reality is not only controversial but simply false, the Wanderer's authority as the main speaker is threatened.

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[28] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 404.
[29] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 460–1.
[30] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 445–9.
[31] Sally Bushell, *Re-Reading The Excursion: Narrative, Response and the Wordsworthian Dramatic Voice* (Routledge, 2002), 157.

Therefore, by presenting a simplified understanding of the scene and misunderstanding the funeral, the Wanderer fails to maintain his authority as a poet. Wordsworth characterizes the superiority of the poet as one "endued with more lively sensibility" and "who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul."[32] In other words, according to Wordsworth, a poet is supposed to retain keen and unique insight and sensibility in analyzing the things around him and develop those insights into some truth regarding humanity. With this power, in the poem, the Wanderer attempts to cure the Solitary, who has lost faith in other human beings and come to have a pessimistic perspective on society. Nevertheless, at least in this scene, the Wanderer does not demonstrate the excellence that Wordsworth's poet figures are supposed to embody. Rather, because of his limited comprehension of the landscape, the Wanderer's authority as a poet is severely damaged.

In addition, I argue that the Wanderer's idealization of the landscape threatens not only his authority as a poet but also Wordsworth's epitaphic mode. As discussed in the previous chapter, for Wordsworth, the epitaphic mode can communicate moral lessons to audiences of all kinds. However, the Wanderer's limitations in interpreting the landscape betray how the speaker in Wordsworth's poems utilizes death to convert nonhuman entities into once-human characters in his narrative. In other words, as stated above, Wordsworth's speaker usually portrays the characters' deaths to convert the non-human qualities of poetic subjects into non-threatening human figures, a matter of the past, so that it is conveniently convertible to ethical lessons for readers. However, by doing so, Wordsworth's epitaphic mode effaces the formidable and nonrepresentable glimpses that these nonhuman entities retain. When readers witness epitaphs,

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[32] Wordsworth, *Preface*, 254.

they recollect the emotion of respect for another's life and death, which leads to an awareness of their inner dignity and the awareness that they are virtuous ones able to respect other citizens. However, for this mechanism to function, they must maintain a certain distance from these other characters. For example, as discussed in the previous chapter, at the end of Book I, the Wanderer recommends to the Poet (who deeply identifies his feelings with Margaret's tragedy) that the Poet should "no longer read / The forms of things with an unworthy eye."[33] The Wanderer goes on to idealize Margaret's death as a matter of the past, the story of a human being who once dwelt in the scenery they are seeing. Through this process of humanization, the Poet and readers can recollect their own dignity from Margaret's story without confronting Margaret's non-human quality, which her slow and painful death implies. However, in Book II of *The Excursion*, this representation of death faces multiple obstacles. The Wanderer's description of the landscape does not provide a compelling interpretation of it. His use of death to make the Solitary's story a matter of the past also fails. It turns out that The Wanderer misrecognizes the Old Man's funeral as the Solitary's. Therefore, the Wanderer's idealization of the scenery never fully succeeds, and as the soaked *Candide* in the Solitary's hermitage implies, only the ideology of reaction against the French Revolution is nakedly exposed, without a persuasive means of delivery.

### III-4: The Solitary and Language as an Arbitrary Sign

As stated above, *The Excursion* contains dramatic qualities because there are multiple characters whose narratives conflict with each other. In this context, the Solitary is a significant figure because he does not remain silent as a poetic subject of the Wanderer but presents

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[33] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, I. lines 969–70.

compelling rebuttals to the Wanderer's perspective and, more importantly, Wordsworth's usual poetics. For example, like Margaret in Book I, the Solitary experiences severe losses, both private and social. He loses his wife and children, and his ideal of the revolution is also frustrated. He expresses his frustration with his failures as follows:

> Death blasted all. Death suddenly o'erthrew
> Two lovely Children—all that they possessed!
> The Mother followed:--miserably bare
> The one Survivor stood; he wept, he prayed
> For his dismissal, day and night, compelled
> To hold communion with the grave, and face
> With pain the regions of eternity.[34]

Before he loses his children and wife, nature was "an innocent landscape": "See, rooted in the earth, her kindly bed, / The unendangered myrtle, decked with flowers, / Before, the threshold stands to welcome us!"[35] However, after experiencing these losses, he is "compelled / To hold communion with the grave, and face / With pain the regions of eternity." In Book 1, the Wanderer humanizes Margaret, effacing her non-human attributes with a story of a fellow human being that the Wanderer and the Poet can appreciate, recollect, and commodify. By doing so, they can interpret the present landscape where Margaret had lived as beautiful and unchanging scenery of nature. Still, in this passage, the Solitary demonstrates that this process of beautification entails painful losses in the social dimension, as he loses his wife and children.

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[34] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 199–205.

[35] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, III. lines 520–2.

I argue that by applying Wordsworth's epitaphic mode to a character who is in a dramatic setting, not in a lyrical or an autobiographical setting, readers may have a doubt on the legitimacy of a few underlying assumptions inherent in this epitaphic mode that he adopted in his lyrics and autobiography. In *The Prelude*, for instance, the speaker narrated his personal story to the tentative readers who may know him well, so the readers could appreciate the speaker's (Wordsworth himself) momentary despondency and restoration (Book X–XII) with a tacit admission of the speaker's authority in narrating his story. However, in *The Excursion*, the readers do not have this tacit agreement with the speaker/writer. Because of the absence of such an agreement in the dramatic setting of *The Excursion*, readers evaluate the plausibility of both the Wanderer's and the Solitary's narratives without the urge to follow the Wanderer's authority as a poet. Therefore, based on this fair ground of analysis, readers may feel from the passage above that the process of sublimation cannot fully offset the Solitary's family tragedy.

When the Solitary describes his tragedy, his narrative delegitimizes the humanization or idealization of human subjects in Wordsworth's poetry.

> To implements of ordinary use,
>
> But vast in size, in substance glorified;
>
> Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld
>
> In vision—forms uncouth of mightiest power,
>
> For admiration and mysterious awe.
>
> Below me was the earth; this little Vale
>
> Lay low beneath my feet; 'twas visible—
>
> I saw not, but I felt that it was there.
>
> That which I saw was the revealed abode

Of Spirits in beatitude: my heart

Swelled in my breast.—"I have been dead," I cried,

"And now I live! Oh! Wherefore do I live?"[36]

This scene is comparable to the episode of Snowdon in Book XIII of *The Prelude.* Like Wordsworth, who experiences epiphany at the summit of the mountain, the Solitary is located in a similar landscape in this passage. However, instead of witnessing the universal sublimity of nature, as the speaker exclaims, "Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams / Innumerable, roaring with one voice. / The universal spectacle,"[37] the Solitary's vision leads him to "death-dealing."[38] The Solitary seems to encounter a moment of epiphany, as Wordsworth did in the Book XII of *The Prelude*, but that epiphany suddenly changes into despair and death. This scene implies that, like a double-edged sword, Wordsworth's poetics of epiphany can at any time be a place where biopolitical subjects reveal their non-human qualities. Moreover, according to the passage above, the Solitary's death is not mere death or suffering, but repeated deaths in life. At first glance, he seems to confess that he felt so much pain that he wanted to die.

This excerpt could be expanded into a commentary on Wordsworth's poetics in general. Like the Boy of Winander and Margaret, many characters die in Wordsworth's poems. Through their deaths, non-human qualities are replaced by once-human subjects in the poet's narratives, becoming anecdotal material for readers to safely execute and practice their ability of sympathy. However, in this excerpt, this conversion never takes place. As he confesses, "I have been dead," but "now I live," he does not die but questions his survival, exclaiming as follows: "Wherefore

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[36] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 910–1.

[37] Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, XIII. lines 58–60.

[38] Hartman, 310.

do I live?" The Solitary undergoes traumatic events, from which he is living death in a non-human status. Borrowing Agamben's terminology, the Solitary became like the Gorgon, who is in a state of impossibility of being seen. However, unlike Agamben's Gorgon figure, which is represented as a frontal two-dimensional figure, his story is negated, converted to a representable, visible, or humanized form. The Solitary's exclamation foregrounds the impossibility of seeing it as it is rather than converting this non-human entity into a humanized subject.

As a character disappointed in affection, the Solitary tells the story of an old man who has not contacted others in his lifetime. In the narration, he states, "Full seventy winters hath he lived, and mark! / This simple Child will mourn his one short hour,"[39] and also, "he would leave the sight of men, If love were his sole claim upon their care, / Like a ripe date which in the desart falls / Without a hand to gather it."[40] In this passage, the Solitary seems to push the legitimacy of the Wordsworthian speaker's apostrophe to its limit. For instance, in "She dwelt in untrodden way," the speaker describes Lucy's anonymity as follows: "there were non to praise / And very few to love."[41] Almost no other human beings know and remember the old man, but Wordsworthian speakers use the characters' anonymity to emphasize the poet's authority to apostrophize the subjects in his poems. However, the Solitary seems to ask a critical but fundamental question about the poet's authority: If almost no one knows whether the old man has even lived in this world, is his existence significant in this world or society? Alternatively, as

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[39] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 627–8.

[40] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 630–3.

[41] Wordsworth, "She dwelt among the Untrodden Ways," in *Lyrical Ballads.* eds. R. L. Brett and A. R. Jones. (Routledge, 1991), lines 1, 3–4.

Agamben and Guyer remark on the impossibility of representation, if the subject is utterly subjectified so that it becomes impossible to represent or account for the subject, how can the poet's authority to apostrophize be maintained? Or do these non-human subjects exist only to legitimize the poet's authority by being humanized? However, the Wanderer only aggravates these possible suspicions of the Wordsworthian poetic figure's authority by portraying his imagination of the social meaning of the Old Man's life. The Wanderer imagines a burial community in which "Son, Husband, Brothers—Brothers side by side,"[42] and says, "Oh! Blest are those who live and die like these, / Loved with such love, and with such sorrow, mourned!"[43] By emphasizing family bonds, affection, and mourning, the Wanderer selectively describes the figurative meaning of death in human society, rather than focusing on the issue of representation inherent in the Old man, who epitomizes total anonymity. In doing so, the Wanderer's narrative of the rural community obliterates any threatening impressions of nonhuman figures. In this process, The Wanderer's naïve exploitation of communal meaning loses its legitimacy because it is contrasted with the Solitary's realistic remarks on the Old man's total anonymity.

In the following excerpt, the Solitary's criticism of Wordsworth's poetics reaches to the question of the empiricist cognitive model: harmony between vision and perception.

> If this mute earth
>
> Of what it holds could speak, and every grave
>
> Were as a volume, shut, yet capable
>
> Of yielding its contents to eye and ear,
>
> We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame,

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[42] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 607–8.

[43] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, II. lines 618–9.

To see disclosed, by such dead proof, how ill

That which is done accords with what is known

To reason, and by conscience is enjoined;

How idly, how perversely, life's whole course,

To this conclusion, deviates from the line

Or of the end stops short, proposed to all

At her aspiring outset.[44]

In this passage, ear and grave could disclose what they mutely hold, but if they uncover these secrets, the truth will be "dead proof," betraying our expectations or what is promised, as the Solitary's vision regarding his family is shattered. In other words, as Hickey notes, the Solitary points out an inevitable discrepancy between "what is promised and what is disclosed."[45] From the lines, "life's whole course," "deviates from the line / Or of the end stops short" are the usual plot of Wordsworth's tragic narrative, like the Boy of Winander's early death or Margaret's gradual conversion to a non-human. Through these characters' deaths, Wordsworth's poetry encourages readers to willfully conflate vision and perception. The Boy of Winander induces a willful conflation between natural and human sounds, which develops into the imagination of the boy's unrestrained communication and assimilation with nature. However, complete assimilation essentially entails the boy's death. By turning into a thing, the boy can fully become a part of nature and at the same time remain a human being in the story that readers access. In other words, through their deaths, the non-human qualities of these poetic subjects become a representable form, like the two-dimensional portrait of the Gorgon in Agamben's theory.

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[44] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, V. lines 250–61.

[45] Hickey, 80.

Nevertheless, the Solitary's expressions, "idly" and "perversely," expose an artificial quality of the rhetorical technique that Wordsworth's epitaphic mode entails. Through these expressions, the Solitary suggests that the conflation of vision and perception may efface any hidden reality that these characters experienced in the process of subjectification.

The Solitary further expands his criticism of the call for universally recognizable signs in the following excerpt:

> But how begin? And whence?—The Mind is free,
> Resolve—the haughty Moralist would say,
> This single act is all that we demand.
> Alas! Such wisdom bids a Creature fly
> Whose very sorrow is, that time has shorn
> His natural wings!—To friendship let him turn
> For succor; but perhaps he sits alone
> On stormy waters, in a little Boat
> That holds but him, and can contain no more!
> Religion tells of amity sublime
> Which no condition can preclude; of One
> Who sees all suffering, comprehends all wants,
> All weakness fathoms, can supply all needs;
> But is that bounty absolute?—His gifts,
> Are they not still, in some degree, rewards
> For acts of service? Can his Love extend
> To hearts that own not Him? Will showers of grace,

When in the sky no promise may be seen,

Fall to refresh a parched and withered land?

Or shall the groaning Spirit cast her load

At the Redeemer's feet?[46]

In this passage, while quoting what the "Moralist" might say, the Solitary criticizes the mechanism of imagination: "this single act is all that we demand." As the single action of the Boy hooting initiates a conflation of natural and human sounds, a minute step can become a trigger that can significantly change the phenomenal world, as empiricists remarked on individuals' potential to control the external world by reinterpreting it. In the following lines, the Solitary also examines a limitation of Christian doctrine and in so doing criticizes the mechanism of Shaftesbury's association between aesthetics and ethics. In Terry Eagleton's analysis of Shaftesbury, the recognition of beauty itself becomes or guarantees the acquisition of moral standards because individual aesthetic experience provides visceral pleasure and epiphany.[47] In this system, the effect of the aesthetic experience is so powerful that individuals may feel that their aesthetic experience has materialized. However, as Eagleton points out with reference to Richard Price, individual aesthetic experiences are visceral but persist only temporarily in their internal world, and these visceral experiences cannot embody a universally recognizable moral principle or consensus.[48] Likewise, according to Christian doctrine, God's grace works in almost the same way. God provides grace for those who seek Him. Although God's grace does not take a material form, it is both undeniable evidence of God's presence and God's utmost gift.

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[46] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, IV. lines 1077–97.

[47] Eagleton, 40.

[48] Eagleton, 40.

However, according to Christian doctrine, God's existence is too transcendental to be fully represented in this world; therefore, His Grace cannot be fully represented in general language. Moreover, the Scripture also implies that His Grace is universal, but in this context, I contend that the Solitary raises doubts of the belief originating from Shaftesbury's theory that individual aesthetic experience can embody an ethical principle by rigorously demarcating what is being perceived and what material reality is. While suspicious of whether God's "bounty" is "absolute," he doubts whether God's unconditional love is given without requiring any condition, and this suspicion leads to the question whether God's grace can reach even those who do not know God at all—as stated, whether God's grace can "extend / To hearts that own not Him." without condition and reward. I argue that the Solitary is seeking a universally recognizable sign by asking for a clear "promise" to enable all individuals to recognize that Grace as grace from God. This binary opposition significantly damages Shaftesbury's epistemological framework, which regards the appreciation of the sign itself as an embodiment of content, just as Christian doctrine argues that experiencing God's presence itself is an ultimate reward for His believers.

Hartman quotes Hebrews 11:1, "faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see,"[49] in examining the attributes of imagination in *The Excursion*. Imagination can be activated through signs—something we can recognize in this world—but when this visible sign is too strong, there is no place for hope, reality, or reward that has not yet materialized.[50] To maximize the power of imagination, Wordsworth endlessly extends Margaret's miserable state. For example, in Book 1, Margaret's hope that her husband will return depends entirely on minute phenomena or signs. When she sees that "a dog passed by," "she still

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[49] *Holy Bible*, New International Version, Hebrews 11:1.

[50] Hartman, 313.

would quit / The shade, and look abroad."[51] Moreover, her imagination almost materializes what she hopes for, as when it is stated "her eye/ Was busy in the distance, shaping things / That made her heart beat quick."[52] However, this effect of the materialization of what she imagines is too powerful and fascinating, so she masochistically continues residing in the world of imagination that she created rather than hoping that her husband would actually return, as Hartman analyzed, because in her world of imagination, her husband has already returned. However, by residing in the world of imagination, she gradually becomes a nonhuman entity assimilated into part of her house. In conclusion, the power of imagination was amplified at the expense of Margaret's biopolitical subjectification. Therefore, the Solitary's desperate request for a visible sign or promise of God's grace reveals that the influence of imagination is valid only in an individual's inner world and that this private imagination never brings about any material presence of hope.

In addition, I argue that the Solitary's cry for a universally recognizable sign that is totally separated from things, is following Wordsworth's concept of language implied in "Essay, Supplementary." Wordsworth indicated that in a mass public society, language inevitably becomes a utilitarian, institutionalized language that uniformly conveys the same meaning to everyone. Similarly, the Solitary asks for a clear sign whereby everyone can identically perceive whether they have a personal relationship with God. In this context, we can also witness from *The Excursion* that Wordsworth admitted that in this complicated society, in which authors can only access mediated and represented responses from readers, he cannot but accept the assumption of a complete separation between sign and things.

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[51] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, I. lines 914–5.

[52] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, I. lines 915–7.

III-5: Poetics of Interpretation and Theorization

In contrast to Wordsworth's lyrics, which assume personal relationships with speakers, many passages of *The Excursion* reflect the poet's approach to anonymous readers who do not know him. This approach was delineated as an attempt to construct universally recognizable signs. In Wordsworth's lyrics, such as the Lucy poems, the formal elements of the poems immerse the readers in the poetic subjects' experiences by appealing to readers' perceptive commonality. Contrariwise, as the following excerpt shows, in *The Excursion*, the Wanderer encourages readers to distance themselves from the scenes in the poem and identify the mechanism of his poetics through generalized allusions.

> Within the soul a faculty abides,
> That with interpositions, which would hide
> And darken, so can deal that they become
> Contingencies of pomp; and serve to exalt
> Her native brightness. As the ample moon,
> In the deep stillness a thick and lofty grove,
> Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,
> In the green trees; and, kindling on all sides
> Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil
> Into a substance glorious as her own,
> Yea, with her own incorporated, by power
> Capacious and serene. Like power abides

In man's celestial spirit.[53]

This passage theorizes on how Wordsworthian imagination works. In the first five lines, the speaker mentions "interpositions, which would hide / And darken," but consequently "serve to exalt / Her[imagination's] native brightness." According to this passage, there are interferences against the activation of imagination, but ultimately, these interferences ironically only reinforce its power. Likewise, in "A Slumber did my spirit seal," the death as an epistemological threshold interferes with the speaker's representation of Lucy, but by overcoming the obstacle as death, the speaker executes his power of imagination, or apostrophe, to express his affection for and knowledge of Lucy. In the following lines, the descriptions of natural elements further theorize the mechanism of Wordsworthian imagination. There is a contrast between "ample moon" and "a thick and lofty grove." As Wordsworthian imagination always serve the speaker's affirmation of self and his knowledge of poetic subjects, however, this contrast between two natural elements is dismantled by the overwhelming power of the moon, which, as stated, "Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light." Nevertheless, at the same time, this scene is differentiated from many spots of time in *The Prelude* because the description of natural phenomenon theorizes the mechanism of how imagination works. Moonlight functions as an allusion to the power of imagination. The last lines, "Like power abides / In man's celestial spirit," clarifies that a juxtaposition of the bright moon and the dark forest is an allusion to the metaphysical mechanism of individual imagination. In conclusion, in this scene of *The Excursion*, by employing descriptions of natural elements as an allusion to the mechanism of imagination, the narrative allows its readers to distance themselves from the natural phenomenon and decipher or

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[53] Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, IV. lines 1058–71.

understand the theoretical mechanism of imagination, rather than encouraging readers to immerse themselves in the perceptive experience generated by the natural elements in the poem.

In the same vein, in the following excerpt from *The Excursion*, the boy communicates with nature as the Boy of Winander does. However, this scene is more likely to demonstrate the mechanism of harmony between external perception and internal conception, rather than directly urging readers to conflate perception and conception.

I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolution of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;
And central peace, subsisting at the heart

Of endless agitation.[54]

At first glance, this passage shares many similarities with spots of time in *The Prelude*, but there are many differences. In this scene, the young boy tries to listen to the sounds of nature from the shell, which are barely audible. Through this process, the boy is unified with the "native sea," and this experience leads him to access the microscopic universe in the shell. However, the language of this scene targets multiple anonymous audiences, urging them to understand the mechanism of harmony between external perception and human imagination, rather than to experience the harmony. In this passage, the sound of the shell is transmitted to the boy's spirit, his inner voice, and this inner voice is directly converted to the boy's face "brightened with joy," as a visible sign that he is communicating with nature. Then, after a few lines, The Wanderer confirms that the communication between the boy and nature, or harmony between external perception and internal conception was clear and fluent: "the passages / Through which the ear converses with the heart."[55] Because of this statement, this scene is more likely to be characterized as an example or representation of the harmony between external perception and internal conception, not as a conduit of readers' experiences through which they imagine the harmony between nature and humans. I argue that, as exemplified by these excerpts in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth attempted to construct a more modernized and institutionalized language in his poetry. In "Essay, Supplementary," as discussed above, he seemed to realize that in a mass print market, readers only recognized the literal and surface level of meaning of his poems, what he described as "pledges and tokens, bearing the same general impression." In this passage, this realization is reflected by his attempt to construct a theoretical narrative and the allusions to his

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54 Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, IV. lines 1132–47.

55 Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, IV. lines 1054–5.

mechanism of imagination by employing a more stable but pedestrian language.

Overall, the dramatic elements of *The Excursion* reflect Wordsworth's contemplation of the viability of his poetry in the mass print market. As it became impossible for all readers to fully sympathize with Wordsworth's message, in *The Excursion*, the main speaker's authority is often challenged by other characters, such as The Solitary. Furthermore, the Solitary's critique of the Wanderer's message not only subverts the latter's authority in the poem but also dismantles the legitimacy of Wordsworth's poetic language. For example, the Solitary does not agree with the idea that imagined reality could become more rewarding than material reality. This negation severely challenges the mechanism of Wordsworth's poetry that converts aesthetic experiences into moral lessons. Nevertheless, I argue that in *The Excursion*, Wordsworth's contemplation of a means to communicate with readers in the mass print market conforms to the anonymous environment of the market. Referring to the Lockean concept of language, which assumes a strict demarcation between signifier and signified, the Wanderer's poetic language mechanically and fixedly explicates and theorizes things. By doing so, Wordsworth's poetry delivers a fixed and generalized meaning at the expense of the function of poetic language as a medium and catalyst of the imagination.

## Chapter IV

## Shelley's Closet dramas and Contemporary Economics in Britain:
## A Market of Speculative Imagination and the Degeneration of Individual Minds

### IV-1. Introduction

The tremendous paradigm shift caused by British empiricists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is epitomized by David Hume's famous quote: "Beauty is no quality in things themselves; it exists merely in the mind which contemplates them: and each mind perceives a different beauty."[1] As this quote implies, empiricists argued that external reality or existence could not be directly "present" in individuals' minds; people could only recognize these realities as perceived impressions and images. Before the seventeenth century, the dominant belief held that signs contained the intrinsic quality of the things that they signified. However, the empiricists regarded human perception of external reality as nominal signs, which did not directly have intrinsic attributes of reality but only referred to what was signified by the sign.

[1] David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste" (Infomotions, Inc, 2000), 3.

The concept of nominal signs influenced contemporary individuals in two significant ways: liberation and subjugation. First, the advent of nominal signs contributed to the demystification of conventional authority. If people could only access reality through nominal signs rather than directly, all the things that they perceived and felt would be the subject of decryption, analysis, or interrogation. In this process, reality became no longer directly observed or identified. Instead, individuals could define, prescribe, or negotiate reality using their power of imagination or cognitive abilities.

However, this emphasis on individual imagination and perception did not necessarily mean that individuals obtained more political or economic sovereignty. Instead, social institutions, such as the monetary system, also evolved (or mutated) to accommodate, control, and finally degenerate individuals' imagination or way of feeling. In this context, J. G. A. Pocock's connection between the development of commerce and human personality is suggestive. According to Pocock, British empiricists thought, "As the goods produced, and the techniques of producing and distributing them, grew in each phase more complex, human culture, imagination, and personality correspondingly increased in complexity."[2] Moreover, Pocock goes on to argue that the advent of paper currency and the credit system epitomized the increased complexity of economic institutions. With increased production and commerce in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe, people were more likely to rely on these economic sign systems than the intrinsic value of metal currency. In other words, they still believed in the legitimacy of gold as currency because it could fairly "represent" the monetary

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[2] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiaveliian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 498.

value rather than be considered intrinsically valuable. These changes in belief led to increased circulation of paper currency and reliance on the credit system. This complexity was not limited to the economic dimension but expanded to epistemology in general, as Pocock suggested by referencing the growing "complexity" of "human culture, imagination, and personality." The changing characteristics of the above signs progressed hand in hand with the innovation of contemporary financial and economic institutions.

However, Pocock also stated, "From the depiction of the false consciousness of the speculative society, in which men insanely pursue the fairy gold of paper schemes, they move to portray other forms of false honor and false consciousness……in which individuals and their values are not merely subject to the autocrat's power, but exist even in their own eyes simply as defined by him [the monarch] and his courtiers."[3] In this excerpt, Pocock observed that individuals' expanded and complex imaginations and fancies were realized as a form of economic signs, such as paper money, the certificate of national debt, and other promissory notes; however, since these economic signs were entirely controlled by the ruling class, individuals' feelings and imaginations were subject to the manipulation of the ruling class.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was a Romantic poet who radically responded to this problem caused by the new monetary and credit system. In Chapter IV, after examining detailed discussions of the paradigm change and a brief history of paper currency in Britain, I analyze how Shelley diagnosed and criticized this contemporary problem regarding paper money and the credit system in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, published in 1830. Then, I will discuss how Shelley developed his critique of the contemporary monetary system into an issue of the

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[3] Pocock, 474.

representation of labor value. He observed that the use-value of labor was misrepresented in the market by exchange value, a reduced and simplified medium. He related this issue of misrepresentation of labor to the representation of individuals' personalities and subjectivities. Referring to contemporary philosophers, such as David Hume, Earl of Shaftsbury, and Jean Jacques Rousseau, he found sympathy as an alternative medium. Afterward, I will discuss how his criticism in these prose works is reflected in his closet drama, *The Cenci.* In *The Cenci*, Shelley described how individuals' personalities or intrinsic values were reified under the abovementioned new sign system. In the play, Shelley portrayed Count Cenci, who maintained his authority on his family and property by bribing the Roman Catholic Church and not being a respectful father and proprietor. As a result, Count Cenci converted his patrimonial authority into quantifiable value. Moreover, in this drama, through Beatrice's conversion from a saint to a perpetrator, Shelley pushed the potential of sympathy as a medium of representation to its limit while partially presenting sympathy and self-reflection as alternatives to representation.

### IV-2. The Advent of Nominal Sign System: A Short History of Paper Currency in Europe and Britain

First, I will discuss empiricists' understanding of signs and how their concept of nominal sign influenced the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries monetary systems. According to Foucault in *The Order of Things*, before the seventeenth century, Europeans thought signs were a repository of secret knowledge provided and deployed by an external authority, such as God. They also believed that one must identify the "essential implications" of these a priori signs to

acquire knowledge.[4] However, in the seventeenth century, people began to think that signs are "constituted" by the action of perception or recognition.[5] By referring to a prominent empiricist, George Berkeley, Foucault illustrated a concrete example of this new epistemology of signs:

> The connection of ideas does not imply the relation of cause and effect, but only of a mark or sign with the thing signified. The fire which I see is not the cause of the pain I suffer upon my approaching it, but the mark that forewarns me of it.[6]

As this excerpt implies, we can no longer directly extract the essential knowledge from the external environment. When we perceive the existence of things, the only knowledge allowed to us is not the thing itself but the perceived signs of the thing. This example acknowledges that signs do not share essential attributes with their significance but only refer to what they signify.

This new epistemology was obviously reflected in individuals' nominal understanding of the contemporary economy and money. Traditionally, gold has been the material for metal currency throughout world history because people thought that money should be made of something precious and valuable. According to this understanding, "The signs that indicated wealth and measured it were bound to carry the real mark in themselves."[7] However, as Foucault observed, from the sixteenth century, people began to think that the value of things was mainly determined by their evaluation and judgment without the existence of money as value. Therefore, money was a mere sign rather than a repository of value.[8] As such, money no longer

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[4] Foucault, 63.
[5] Foucault, 63.
[6] George Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, quoted in Foucault, 63-4.
[7] Foucault, 181.
[8] Foucault, 189.

had any intrinsic value and merely helped individuals determine and exchange the economic importance of things. The advent of the paper money and credit systems in Shelley's era were also products of this new understanding of money. Since money was no longer the value but merely a sign or reference of value, metal currency, which was believed to be able to function as money thanks to its value, lost its authority. Instead, paper currency was more widely circulated.

In eighteenth-century Europe, paper currency was not like nowadays' paper money. In contrast to current paper money, which retains an immediate effect on the economic transaction, the paper currency in eighteenth-century Europe was more likely to be a sign of credit or a promissory note that could retain its value only under the assumption that it was redeemable as gold or silver in the future. In Europe, metal currency had an absolute and immediate value for the transaction. Still, it had temporal and spatial limits, so the early form of paper currency was created to overcome these limits of metal currency. In Europe, bills of exchange were initiated in 12th-century Italy, and British merchants began to use them in the late 14th century.[9]

Matthew Rowlinson suggestively examined how the bill of exchange, a sign of monetary transaction, established its own circulation system. One of the significant characteristics of a bill of exchange is that it "sets a price" to the abstractions of "money itself."[10] According to Rowlinson, this bill of exchange had mainly been used to transfer debts. Instead of exchanging metal currency and goods directly, merchants used these bills, which were redeemed for cash (metal currency) later. However, the circulation of bills was not limited to the two entities, namely the person who owed the money and the recipient of the bill, because bills could

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[9] Matthew Rowlinson, *Real Money and Romanticism.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 35.

[10] Rowlinson, 35.

be circulated and transferred by the owner's endorsements.[11] Therefore, as stated by Rowlinson, "No longer simply the means of making a payment in a single transaction, the bill eventually became a negotiable instrument that could be repeatedly bought, sold, or exchanged for commodities."[12] In other words, bills were first invented as mere signs of metal currency—real money. However, as soon as these signs became subjects of transactions, they retained their own arbitrary price and market.

As pointed out by Rowlinson, an essential characteristic that the circulations of bills facilitated is their extreme homogeneity. In the case of metal currency, such as English pounds, the consistent and homogenous value could not be maintained according to their "origin, material, and quality"[13] because there was always the possibility of adulteration in metal currencies. However, in every place where the bills were valid, the currency redeemable by the bills was regarded as having the same value. The bill of exchange for the English pound was circulated under this assumption; thus, every English pound is the same pound where the bills are drawn and sold.[14]

In the later eighteenth century, banknotes, a form of paper currency that was even more analogous to modern paper currency than bills, began circulating in many areas in Britain. Like bills, banknotes were first invented and used as a sign or representation of debts. However, unlike the bill of exchange, which was transferable only under the endorsement, banknotes could

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[11] Rowlinson, 36.

[12] Rowlinson, 36.

[13] Rowlinson, 39.

[14] Rowlinson, 37.

be circulated among individuals without endorsements.[15] Moreover, unlike the bill of exchange, whose exchange value could differ from its face value according to its remaining due for redemption or place of transaction, banknotes were “normally payable on demand” and were thus usually circulated according to their face value.[16] More importantly, banknotes were redeemable only by the issuer. In contrast, bills were generally circulated through linear transactional routes because the individuals who redeemed them usually differed from their issuers; hence, banknotes always returned to where they had been issued.[17] Therefore, banknotes were circulated through a highly centralized route.

While summarizing these differences between bills of exchange and banknotes, I observed that banknotes' nominal, convenient, and centralized characteristics expanded the frequency and volume of their circulation. Because they did not require endorsements, banknotes tended to be separated from their original contexts or sources. Moreover, their value was no longer bound by any additional contexts, such as where they had been issued or the time at which the credit was created, since they usually circulated at their face value. Due to such conditions, although they were signs of value and not the value itself, banknotes could be more prevalently circulated as a sign that superseded the value of the metal currency it signified. As discussed above, paper currency was invented as a mere symbol or representation of metal currency. Bills of exchange and banknotes were valid only when they were assumed to be redeemable by gold. Although people believed that gold was a currency that retained intrinsic value and paper currency was a medium or shadow that supported the logistic matters of monetary transactions,

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15 Rowlinson, 46.

16 Rowlinson, 46.

17 Rowlinson, 46.

the characteristics of banknotes, which did not require any endorsement for transfer or due date for redemption, enabled the establishment of their own system of circulation.

This system of nominal signs, constructed and maintained by individuals' perception, feeling, and imagination, is referred to as credit. Pocock observed that in the 1690s in England, the Financial Revolution created the foundations for the Bank of England, the institution that monopolized the right to issue banknotes and national bonds. In addition, the public credit system "whereby individuals and companies could invest money in the stability of government and expect a return"[18] was fully established. Pocock further analyzed that because the government was the main actor (and a debtor) of this credit relationship, these pseudo-monetary signs, such as the certificates of national debts or promissory notes, could be circulated nationwide.[19] The national debt or bond certificate should have been redeemable at the designated future point. However, that specific date did not actually happen because the gold repository of the Bank of England could not meet the face value of the issued bonds. Instead, the token or certificate could be exchanged according to the market value. Therefore, the government was maintained by individuals' speculation or imagination of the future—a future that would never come true (that is, be redeemable). The political discussion and action were swayed by fantasies and passion, by the epistemology of the sudden rise and fall of numbers.[20]

The British government, which monopolized the right to issue paper notes and other credit bills, betrayed the public's belief in the credibility of the government. In 1797, the British

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[18] Pocock, *Vurtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 108.
[19] Pocock, 112.
[20] Pocock, 112.

Parliament passed the Bank Restriction Act that restrained the Bank from paying gold for the paper currency "to support forces arrayed against Napoleon."[21] By passing this act, the government implicitly admitted that the face value of the paper currency it had issued was far greater than the value of the gold that the Bank of England retained and other rich aristocrats lent to the government. As soon as this act was passed, the financial market was in great chaos. Many individuals swarmed into banks to redeem their paper notes for gold or silver, and others hoarded metal currency.[22] While those from the lowest class suffered from the shortage of coins, the government tried to remedy these shortages by issuing more paper bills and declaring that bills under five pounds could have been used as real money (metal currency) to buy goods and services. The public, who contributed to the production and circulation of materials and goods, had no choice but to accept paper currency as a payment method. However, because the government monopolized and controlled the financial medium influencing the value of goods and labor, these citizens' livelihoods were alienated from their production activity and at the mercy of a few personnel in the government.

### IV-3. *A Philosophical View of Reform*: Shelley's Critical Response toward the Market of Imagination

In *A Philosophical View of Reform*, written in 1820, Shelley demonstrates his understanding of this new sign system, paper money, constructed by the public's imagination and speculation, as implied by the following: "All great transactions of personal property in England

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[21] Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 200.

[22] Rowlinson, 52.

are managed by signs and that is by the authority of the possessor expressed upon paper, thus representing in a compendious form his right to so much gold, which represents his right to so much labor."[23] In the passage above, Shelley clearly stated that paper currency was a "sign" that signified "the authority of the possessor" which referred to the actual property retained by the possessor according to the expression "his right to so much gold." In the following passage, Shelley further examines the characteristics of the new sign system by commenting on the infamous money forgery cases.

> A man may write on a piece of paper what he pleases; he may say he is worth a thousand when he is not worth a hundred pounds. If he can make others believe this, he has credit for the sum to which his name is attached…..He can lend two hundred to this man and three to that other, and his bills, among those who believe that he possesses this sum, passes like money.[24]

Hogle interpreted this passage: "The grounding in assumed authority of possession comes less from a knowable truth inherent in the act of writing and more from assumptions in the receiver of the note (the readers of the text), who adopts a 'belief' in the authority and 'actual possession' of the writer."[25] In other words, as money forgery became a prominent phenomenon from 1797 to 1820 in England, forgery cases "recorded by the Bank of England increased from 3000 in 1806 to 29,000 in 1817"—the genuine and forged currency became intermingled.[26] As a result,

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[23] Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform* in *Shelley's Prose: or The Trumpet of a Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark (New Mexico UP, 1954), 244.
[24] Shelley, 244.
[25] Jerrold E. Hogle, "Shelley and the Conditions of Meaning" in *Evaluating Shelley.* ed. Timothy Clark and Jerrold E. Hogle (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), 62.
[26] Hogle 62.

money's value was mainly determined by the receivers of the note, who imposed their own beliefs and desires on the evaluation of the originality of the notes, and not by the inherent value or authority its issuers had originally imposed. As Shelley pointed out, money forgers took advantage of this phenomenon by making others "believe" (without having a real property) that this piece of paper was money.

Shelley provided this insight about money forgery cases but also found that this was a new way for the ruling class to exploit laborers and ordinary citizens: "The rich, no longer being able to rule by force, have invented this scheme that they may rule by fraud."[27] According to Shelley, the "scheme" was that after issuing the paper currency as a sign or substitute for metal currency, just as a "promise to pay a certain sum," the government declared that "these pieces of paper were the legal coin of the country" and not promissory notes.[28] As a result, the amount of issued paper notes far exceeded the actual property of the individuals who issued them; the speculators and issuers of these notes received more profit than the value of their actual property, while the public suffered from inflation.[29] By monopolizing the right to issue and circulate this sign as if it was real money, the ruling class reified the authority and credit of the government to "possess a right to the produce of the labor of others, without dedicating to the common service any labor in return."[30]

Shelley further discussed the different ruling class groups related to this new way of exploiting the citizens. He argued that "the device of public credit," which enabled the ruling

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[27] Shelley, 243.
[28] Shelley, 244.
[29] Shelley, 244.
[30] Shelley, 245.

class to govern by “fraud,” was “a bond to connect those in the possession of property with those who had acceded to power.”[31] According to Paul Stephens, this passage explained different kinds of properties, namely “land and capital,” and different groups of the ruling class, namely an old aristocracy who retained an intrinsic level of property, such as landowners, and a new aristocracy, such as “stock jobbers,” who actively utilized the new system of credit and finance.[32] Shelley criticized that these “new” aristocrats jeopardized the economy of the whole country by privatizing the intrinsic authority of the state into a form of quantifiable value. He associated this phenomenon of reification with the fluctuating value of labor, as pointed out in the following passage.

> Since the institution of this double aristocracy, however, they have often worked not ten but twenty hours a day. Not that the poor have rigidly worked twenty hours, but that the worth of the labour of twenty hours now, in food and [48] clothing, is equivalent to the worth of ten hours then. And because twenty hours cannot, from the nature of the human frame, be exacted from those who before performed ten, the aged and the sickly are compelled either to work or starve.[33]

In this passage, Shelley indicated that since the nominalization of the monetary system caused significant inflation, the labor class’ labor could not be faithfully represented in this market, but its value became at the mercy of fluctuating sign systems.

From the critique of the nominalization of the monetary system, Shelley’s critical insight

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[31] Shelley, 243.

[32] Paul Stephens, “Percy Bysshe Shelley’s Ethics of Debt” in *The Review of English Series* 71, no. 298 (2020): 133.

[33] Shelley, 244.

reached a profound but ambiguous thought regarding the representation system itself, which was not limited to the monetary system. As observed above, in *The Philosophical View of Reform*, Shelley criticized that the new currency system distorts and appropriates the value of labor. Moreover, Shelley followed Adam Smith's argument that "Labour of all kinds is the real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities from products to money."[34] Shelley believed labor should be an absolute standard or reference to an economic value. However, he was also well aware that labor should be represented through any medium of representation because it could be converted into any products or goods. In other words, the value of labor should be converted into other goods through the financial medium, money. However, money's value constantly fluctuates according to the circumstances of the market. The use-value of labor cannot be represented in the market because the monetary medium is affected by the exchange value designated by the market. Moreover, making surplus value depends on the discrepancy between the use-value and the exchange value. To profit in circulation and distribution, the use-value of labor should be represented less than the exchange value designated by the market. Hence, labor should be represented by the circulating medium in the market; however, this process of representation, through which people accumulate private wealth, was imperfect and unequal. This dilemma is notably represented in Shelley's observation that "The precious metals have been employed as the signs of labour," but these metals also became "the titles to an unequal distribution of its produce."[35] While the conservatives, like Lord Bolingbroke or Jonathan Swift, believed that the

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[34] Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, Book 1, ch. 5, quoted in Hogle, "Shelley and the Conditions of Meaning" 62.

[35] Shelley, 243.

old monetary system was a stable system of economic representation, Shelley pointed out that gold was another sign system that entailed inequality. Since the ruling class controlled the majority of gold in the country, this sign system also contributed to the "unequal distribution" of wealth. Therefore, Shelley's dilemma was that when the labor was represented and submitted to the market, it was exposed to "the sheer interplays among signs of signs, to the effects of inflated currency rates, fluctuating wages, [and] taxation to support the national debt."[36]

Shelley's dilemma developed to the contemplation about the relationship between the self and its reference in general. In the essay, "On Love," published in 1828, Shelley wrote:

> I know not the internal constitution of other men, nor even yours whom I now address. I see that in some external attributes they resemble me, but when misled by that appearance I have thought to appeal to something in common and unburden my inmost soul to them, I have found my language misunderstood like one in a distant and savage land. The more opportunities they have afforded me for experience, the wider has appeared the interval between us, and to a greater distance have the points of sympathy had been withdrawn.[37]

To interact with any community, the self should be represented by a conventional system of meaning. However, this process of representation recalls more "interval" and "distance" between the self and others because this conventional institution is an incomplete medium of representation that can appropriate and distort the existence of the self. Hogle interpreted this

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[36] Hogle, 63. On the other hand, as Hogle observed, Shelley acknowledged that this new monetary system could benefit the labor class because "the fluctuating difference between use-value and market price does allow some kinds of labourers to make profit."

[37] Shelley, "On Love" in *Shelley's Prose: or The Trumpet of a Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark, (Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1954), 169.

"distance" as "the ever-widening gap between some solid ground and the signature on the bank note, possibly a forgery or at least a lie on every occasion, [which] appears at every level of self-relating to other or supposed substance relating to sign."[38] According to his interpretation, this sense of incompleteness and gap had been intensified in Shelley's age by the utmost discrepancy between the labor and monetary sign system, which was too unstable to represent the value faithfully. Therefore, because institutionalized medium cannot faithfully represent the value of individual subjectivity, the self continuously seeks a complete otherness that has not been fully institutionalized or internalized in the self, as Shelley defined love as a "powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves."[39]

Shelley's dilemma regarding the self and its signifier is reflected in his complex and ambiguous position among multiple prominent philosophers of his age: Hume, Shaftsbury, and Rousseau. As discussed above, due to the advent of paper currency and national debt bonds, individuals' fantasies or passions for the future became the main driving force that swayed the nation's economy. According to Robert Mitchell, after this trend became prevalent in eighteenth-century England, three strands of response to this economic force emerged. The first was the political economists who regarded the economic system as "apart from human actors."[40] They thought that if human beings' unstable passion or fantasy was the origin of the problem, concocting an economic model that excluded this variable might be a solution. The second one was the conservatists, such as Jonathan Swift or Lord Bolingbroke, who regarded the new

[38] Hogle, 67.

[39] Shelley, 170.

[40] Robert Mitchell, *Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era: Systems, State Finance, and the Shadows of futurity* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 45.

economic system as a conspiracy to move properties from “the landed class” “to a monied interest.”[41] The third one comprised moral philosophers, such as Hume and Smith, who “embraced the imagination, employing this term to understand society as the metasystem.” For them, sympathy or identification “named the dynamic principle that kept this system in communication with itself.”[42]

Admitting that nominalization became an irrecoverable principle of contemporary society and the individuals’ epistemology, Hume and other Scottish empiricists attempted to discover a system in which this concept of nominalization contributed to a stabilized society as a driving force. In other words, if it is inevitable that individuals’ selves be embodied through a particular medium or system of representation and that this system of representation supersedes reality, this systemic power can be utilized to solidify social bonding and communication. To Hume, the ability to sympathize with others is a driving force that embodies social stability when the intrinsic authority no longer maintains its original stature. For example, an individual recognizes another individual’s expression of humiliation or admiration, and the former understands the expression as the counterpart’s internal feeling for them. Moreover, because the individual recognizes (assumes) certain similarities between oneself and the counterpart, the imagination uses this similarity to associate their identity with the counterpart. As the universal homogeneity of paper notes is the crucial precondition for the international circulation of currency in the nominalized age, the mechanism of sympathy assumes the basic similarity among individuals as human beings. Regarding this assumption, sympathy consists of a process in which other people’s possession or projection of feeling toward oneself occurs.

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[41] Mitchell, 45.

[42] Mitchell, 47.

Hume further developed this theory of sympathy as a process in which individual subjectivity is formulated. Hume argued, as interpreted by Mitchell, "'I' can become proud of my physical and mental possessions only to the extent that my sense of an 'I' is actuated by the esteem of others."[43] Therefore, according to Hume, sympathy is the process of producing subjectivity and self. This process of producing modern subjectivity could be regarded as a process of establishing a stable society or community. Rather than relying on money, an institutional medium that is too simple to represent all the complex and different interests and relationships between individuals, Hume's process of sympathy and construction of subjectivity allowed more complex and reciprocal interaction and consensus between individuals.

We can examine Hume's influence on Shelley more closely by reading the following passage in *A Defence of Poetry,* written in 1821, in which he considered sympathy as a social virtue and language:

> The social sympathies, or those laws from which as from its elements society results, begin to develop themselves from the moment that two human beings coexist;……equality, diversity, unity, contrast, mutual dependence become the principles alone capable of affording the motives according to which the will of a social being is determined to action inasmuch as he is social, and constitute pleasure in sensation, virtue in sentiment, beauty in art, truth in reasoning, and love in the intercourse of kind. Hence men, even in the infancy of society, observe a certain order in their words and actions, distinct from that of the objects and the impressions represented

[43] Mitchell, 50.

by them, all expression being subject to the laws of that from which it proceeds.[44]

In this excerpt, we can observe that his argument was based on the same assumption that Hume's theory of social systems relied on: humans are designed to make and sustain a community and to depend on each other. Moreover, we can observe the influence of Shaftsbury, who contended the importance of benevolence as an innate quality of human beings, as implied by the phrase: "virtue in sentiment." As discussed above, Shelley's dilemma was that labor should be an absolute standard of value but also continually required a proper medium of representation. Likewise, Shelley believed that individuals retained innate benevolence and virtue, but he sought an appropriate medium to embody this benevolence to its full potential. As a poet, Shelley viewed the system that led human beings to perform virtue through the exchange of feelings as art. Furthering Shaftsbury's argument about innate benevolence, Shelley argued that since what was beautiful was directly associated with moral virtue, by naturally feeling pleasure from appreciating beautiful things, one could discover innate virtues and apply them. By tracing the trajectory of this argument, we conclude that Shelley contended that embodying aesthetic beauty could be regarded as presenting what is ethically virtuous because Shelley associated aesthetics with moral values.

However, at the same time, Shelley acknowledged the difficulty in constructing or finding the proper medium or form for this innate value to be fully represented. By referring to Rousseau, Shelley argued there was an immortal value, but language, the medium representing this value, had been degenerated or corrupted too quickly. Hume believed that the standardized

[44] Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry,* in *Shelley's Prose: or The Trumpet of A Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark (Albuquerque: New Mexico UP, 1954), 278.

system of representation, named "sympathy," could function as a stable social order. Rousseau partially agreed with Hume that a particular system of representation was necessary for individuals to communicate with each other, but that this very standardized system could drive society to corruption. Like Rousseau, who maintained a negative viewpoint regarding a standardized system of representation (language), Shelley argued, as time passed, language became "signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then, if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse."[45] In this excerpt, Shelley argued that when language was frequently circulated among people and standardized as a stable system of meaning in society, it ironically lost its potential to represent holistic meaning. This argument regarding the reduced potential of language suggests the dilemma of labor representation in the market. As stated above, the use-value of labor should be faithfully represented in the market. However, in the market, the value of labor is represented by monetary value. In turn, the monetary value represents exchange value determined by continuous circulation and repetition. As the exchange value could not fully represent the value of labor, the institutionalized language formed by circulation and repetition could not embody the holistic potential of language.

### IV-4. *The Cenci*: The Contemporary Credit Market and Reification of Value

In this chapter, I analyze how Shelley's closet drama, *The Cenci*, reflects the contemporary issues regarding paper currency and public credit. I also determine how he

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[45] Shelley, 278.

examined the potential and limits of Hume and Shaftsbury's theory of sympathy.

In *The Cenci*, Shelley further explored how a political authority could be maintained by reifying its intrinsic values in the credit market. Shelley explained in the *Preface* of *The Cenci* that he wrote this drama while traveling in Italy.[46] He was inspired while reading a manuscript about the Cenci family, "one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII."[47] As implied by the *Preface,* the intimate relationship between Count Cenci and Roman Catholic Church is a key to understanding how Shelley reflected his criticism of the English financial system in this drama. In *A Philosophical View of Reform*, Shelley discovered that the circulation system of English paper notes was not based on the consensus between the members of the society but instead on an external authority, the English government's scheme, which made people believe that the paper notes could be used as real money. In *The Cenci*, Count Cenci's sovereignty was based on the institutional ideology and authority of the Roman Catholic Church. Since Count Cenci maintained an intimate relationship with the Church, his atrocities toward his sons and daughter, such as forcing his sons to be killed on a battlefield, were connived by the Church. In this relationship between political and religious authority, the certificate of indulgence acted as a medium that enabled Count Cenci to interpret his behavior and deeds as a speculative and quantifiable epistemic frame, as implied in Camillo's diagnosis below.

It needed all my interest in the conclave

To bend him [the pope] to this point: he said that you

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[46] Shelley, *The Cenci,* in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002), 141.

[47] Shelley, 141.

Bought perilous impunity with your gold;

That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded

Enriched the Church, and respited from hell

An erring soul which might repent and live: -

But that the glory and the interest

Of the high throne he fills, little consist

With making it a daily mart of guilt.[48]

From this passage, the readers could realize that the purchase of indulgences executed the economic transaction between Count Cenci and the Church. By buying indulgences (a method for bribery), Count Cenci implicitly acquired the Church's tolerance for his vices, as implied in the passage, "you / Bought perilous impunity with your gold." By doing so, he liberated his atrocities from the frame of moral judgment, allowing them to be interpreted in the frame of economic transaction, such as whether his investment to the Church could "purchase" the "impunity" for his atrocities. Cenci's interpretation of his deeds under the speculative frame can be analyzed as Pocock's speculative imagination. As discussed above, Pocock argued that due to the advent of the certificates of national debts or promissory notes, whose due date of redemption never took place but kept circulating in the market, people's imagination for the tentative, ever-fluctuating value of these notes became the driving force of the English society. Based on this argument, Count Cenci's speculative frame converted his deeds and sense of reality into speculative terms—whether his action could be connived by the Church or not.

Then, was the gold (which enabled Count Centi to bribe the Church) the ultimate source

[48] Shelley, I.i. lines 4-12.

of Count Cenci's power? According to Brigham, "The real currency of *The Cenci* is 'names,' that is, 'authority,' patrimonial seal."[49] In other words, "Currency only constitutes the outer shell of representation; its roots lies in the intimate signs through which the self represents its identity."[50] While interpreting this argument, I argue that, in this drama, Count Cenci had his traditional authority as a father and an aristocrat, which could be maintained only when he virtuously behaved as a legitimate father of a ruling class in his jurisdiction. However, by continually committing crimes without being punished, he converted or degraded this patrimonial authority into a quantifiable, consumable credit. In this process, the coherent relationship between the signified and the signifier and the relationship between the form and the content were disrupted. Sincere there was no virtuous behavior to back up Count Cenci's patrimonial authority, his authority became nominal and was finally converted into quantifiable elements, as mentioned by Camillo that Count Cenci's credit was approaching its limit.[51] His gold functioned as a medium through which all these conversions of values took place.

Based on Rousseau's argument about the standardized medium of representation, the institution or system of patriarchy was represented by Cenci only in an inferior and generic form, which did not fit Shelley's aesthetic taste for producing moral virtue. Cenci relied on patrimonial authority, which descended from God the Father, to the Pope, God's substitute, to a secular emperor, and finally to a father of a household who imposed pain on others. He caused the death of his sons on the battlefield, and after receiving the news that his sons finally died, he expressed

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[49] Linda Brigham, "Count Cenci's Abysmal Credit," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language.* vol. 38, no. 3/4, 1996, 343-4.

[50] Brigham, 344.

[51] Shelley, I.i. lines 5-9.

his joy as follows: “My disobedient and rebellious sons / Are dead.”[52] He justified his deeds by accusing his sons of disobeying the patrimonial authority. However, in doing so, he reified his responsibility as a father and provider for his children in the logic of economic calculation: “And they will need no food or raiment more: / The tapers that did light them the dark way / Are their last cost.”[53] In other words, by emphasizing his authority over his sons, he argued that the latter were entirely at his disposal. Nevertheless, he neglected the fact that he was also supposed to have affection for his sons and fulfill his responsibility as a father. As a result, by interpreting patrimony in an arbitrary and perverted way, he converted the matter of his sons’ deaths into mere “cost,” an exchange value. The representation of his reliance on patrimonial authority took an inferior and degenerated form. He distorted and appropriated the image of Jesus’ blood, the symbol of sacrifice for his creatures: “Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood, / Then would I taste thee like a sacrament, / and pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell.”[54] In this passage, Cenci appropriates the most precious symbol of Christian divinity, a sacrament, into a cannibalistic and sadistic symbol unrelated to its original context, an aesthetically stereotypical and saturated image. By imposing pain on others and affirming his authority over his counterparts’ reactions to the pain he inflicted, he established his own power and identity. However, this way of identification entailed a lack of content or meaning. The violence and pain formulated Cenci’s identity, but these elements conveyed the instinctive reaction of fear rather than any singular and elaborated meaning or identity. Through this utter appropriation and subversion of the symbol, the extremity of his sadistic desire only intensified in scale like the

[52] Shelley, I.iii. lines 43-4.
[53] Shelley, I.iii. lines 46-8.
[54] Shelley, I.iii. lines 81-3.

bubble of people's fantasies regarding the contemporary credit market, which is only ever inflated according to the expanding volume of paper currency. Since paper money as a mere sign supersedes its signified—metal currency—and functioned as if it was monetary value, the readers could find little concrete meaning from Cenci's actions aside from violence. In this process, his own image of patrimony lost any meaning sharable with his community or society and was degraded into a mere sign.

Regarding Count Cenci's reification of patrimonial authority with the issue of sympathy and subjectivity emphasized by Hume, by reducing patrimonial authority, Count Cenci lost the complex and reciprocal epistemology of subjectivity; his identity was merely degraded into the fragmented image of patriarchy, as implied by the following excerpt.

All men delight in sensual luxury,
All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
Over the tortures they can never feel—
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's, and that mine.
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design of my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish, and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know,

Is as my natural food and rest debarred

Until it be accomplished.[55]

In this passage, Cenci reveals that his taste for pleasure differs from others; he enjoys others' agonies. Hume argued that reciprocity of sympathy—individuals' capacity to perceive others' emotional reactions and to sympathize with others' perceived feeling—was important not only for the peaceful maintenance of society but also for constructing individuals' subjectivities. However, Count Cenci did not want to establish reciprocal relationships with others, so his subjectivity did not develop to a complex level. He said he felt no remorse, fear, or sympathy for others' sufferings. Rather, as implied by the binary structure of the lines, "The sight of agony, and the sense of joy, / When this shall be another's, and that mine," for him, the pain was just others' pain (not his). He felt joy from that scene because he was not the one suffering. Therefore, in this drama, although the subject who felt joy and the subject who felt pain were closely connected (because Cenci imposed pain on others), he intentionally ignored this connection and merely enjoyed others' painful reactions. Due to the absence of sympathy and reciprocal interaction with others' feelings for him, his subjectivity could not take any sharable form, as suggested by the passage: "the picture of its wish, and it forms none." His imagination was too solipsistic to be circulated or shared with his surrounding community; therefore, his projection of desire remained formless. In addition, he was incapable of virtue, according to Shelley's argument (referred from Shaftsbury), that individuals' innate virtues are realized by sympathizing with others' pain and emotions.

In contrast to Count Cenci, Beatrice symbolizes Hume and Shaftsbury's ideal of

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[55] Shelley, I.i. lines 77-91.

sympathy. In the first half of the play, Beatrice is undoubtedly a symbol of virtue who resisted her father's oppression to protect her siblings and mother. She was not horrified by her father's torturous behavior and refused to participate in Count Cenci's unilateral way of communication, that is, his sadistic way of feeling. Hogle observed, "Her [Beatrice's] 'mirror' has reacted to his power-plays with inappropriate, dissociated responses ranging from the look of Madonna's pitying 'tenderness' to a glance of 'scorn' from a lofty position of moralistic judgment."[56] After Beatrice confronts Count Cenci in court at the beginning of the play, Count Cenci betrays his fear of failing to affirm his authority over her because she did not fully "reflect" the image he wants to see in others. Beatrice's "fearless eye," "brow superior," and "unaltered cheek"[57] symbolize her refusal to show her suffering. Instead, as Hogle observed, Count Cenci felt that he was morally judged by her.[58] Cenci declared he was willfully indifferent to others' suffering—"I have no remorse, and little fear." However, Beatrice's presence urged him to contemplate and recollect his subjectivity and its relation with others' perspectives of him. Orsino also observed that Beatrice's power made individuals reflect their inner minds. After hearing Beatrice's petition to the clergymen and noblemen in Cenci's court for saving his brothers at the beginning of the drama, Orsino confesses: "Yet I fear / Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze, / Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve / And lay me bare, and make me blush to see / My hidden thoughts."[59] Therefore, Cenci raped Beatrice because he wanted to eradicate her identity that reflected Cenci's identity as alienated from social norms and to thoroughly homogenize her to a

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[56] Hogle, "Transference Perverted: *The Cenci* as Shelley's Great Expose" in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002), 686.

[57] Shelley, II.i. lines 116-7.

[58] Hogle, 686.

[59] Shelley, I.iii. lines 83-87.

mere reflection of himself, a masculine and tyrannical self. He did so through rape, or “the imposition of masculine and patriarchal authority”[60] on her body.

Cenci’s plan was successful, and Beatrice lost her original singularity. The following excerpt can be considered as an example.

Lucretia: What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not:

Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,

But not its cause; suffering has dried away

The source from which it sprung…

Beatrice: (franticly) Like Parricide…

Misery has killed its father: yet its father

Never like mine…O God! What thing am I?[61]

Stuart Curran analyzes this scene: “Always she has been able to insulate herself from her father’s evil by standing against him. But this physical subjugation obliterates that relationship, forcing upon Beatrice an inextricable involvement with all that she loathes. Symbolically, she is made a part of the evil she has so long opposed.”[62] When Count Cenci raped Beatrice, she could no longer maintain her independent identity previously maintained by having a proper difference from her father. Instead, she attempted to fill this existential vacuum by projecting her volition to take revenge against her father. Ironically, her actions reinforced the kinship between her and her father, and she resembled him as a perpetrator. Beatrice’s change into a perpetrator and revenger

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[60] Hogle, 686.

[61] Shelley, III.i. lines 33-38.

[62] Stuart Curran, *Shelley’s Cenci: Scorpions Ringed with Fire* (Princeton University Press, 1970), 90-93.

undermines her ability of sensibility and imagination. As discussed above, Scottish empiricists argued that individuals could only access the perceived signs of reality rather than the external reality, which required further interpretation and cognitive process. Due to the influence of this argument, individuals were able to demystify the legitimacy of many conventional authorities, such as custom, religion, or politics. However, the rape made Beatrice regard her father as a source of pain, and she did not try to interpret and subvert the overall system of tyranny and oppression behind Count Cenci.

I think Beatrice's obsession with revenge recalls Shelley's critique of paper money in *The Philosophical View of Reform* as an institution of domination and inequality. As discussed above, Shelley observed that the ruling class designed paper money to manipulate ordinary citizens' ways of belief and feeling. Moreover, paper money was a mere sign that signified real money, metal currency. However, politicians allowed the rich people in the country to issue amounts of paper notes that significantly exceeded the amount of gold they retained. Afterward, politicians declared that the paper notes could be circulated as real money in the market. By contextualizing this observation with the play, I may argue that, like the public who did not penetrate this scheme behind the paper money but doubtlessly became accustomed to using paper notes as real money, Beatrice also eliminated all the other possibilities for the interpretation of this event, such as a complex power dynamic between political and religious authority, and attempted only to eliminate what she considered a source of her pain.

In the process of revenge, Beatrice became like her father, who refused to have reciprocal relationships with others. After the servants killed her father, she declared, as her father did, that she no longer suffered from any conscience or deep reflection of her inner subjectivity:

Be faithful to thyself,

And fear no other witness but thy fear.'

…………………………………………….

The deed is done,

And what may follow now regards not me,

I am as universal as the light,

Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm

As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,

Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock

But shakes it not.[63]

In this excerpt, Beatrice urged her mother, Lucretia, to ignore her inner voice. She described herself as an absolute being or elemental force with no reciprocal relationships with others.

An interesting point is that in the later part of this drama, Beatrice's ability to motivate others to mutual sympathy and self-reflection degenerated into an apparatus of domination and oppression. In ordering the servants to kill her father, she ironically manipulated those servants by urging them to confront the discrepancy between their reflection of their inner mind (conscience) and the crime that they signed up for: "Base palterers! / Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience / Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge / Is an equivocation."[64] In other words, Beatrice's ability to motivate self-reflection remains effective, but in this scene, it is used for the servants to over-contemplate their sense of guilt, bringing them infinite despair from

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[63] Shelley, IV. iv. lines 41. 46-52.

[64] Shelley, IV. iii. lines 25-28.

their reflection. Moreover, Beatrice overstimulated the servants' consciences by pointing out that they tried to convert their dignity into exchangeable value, "gold." In the court scene, the self-reflection aroused by Beatrice's presence was utilized to prevent others from testifying against her. When the servants are asked to testify on their crimes in front of the judge, Beatrice says to them: "Fix thine eyes on mine; / Answer to what I ask."[65] The servants could never confront her eye to eye and cried: "Let her not look on me! / I am a guilty miserable wretch."[66] The very same face that had urged Count Cenci to self-reflect was now used to overstimulate the servants' guilt until they refused to testify.

I think that Beatrice's degeneration from a saint to a tyrant and the changed role of sympathy reflect Shelley's agony regarding the medium of representation. As discussed above, in *A Philosophical View of Reform,* Shelley argued that people's labor should be an absolute standard of value. Still, at the same time, he understood that labor should be quantified and converted to exchange value in the market, which was unstable and reduced the medium of representation. Shelley developed this awareness into an insight regarding the corruption of language as a medium of representation. As soon as language is circulated in a community, it is institutionalized and standardized so that it no longer signifies holistic meaning. Beatrice's degenerated process of sympathy also reflects Shelley's dilemma about the medium of representation. In the earlier part of the drama, Beatrice's virtue, which motivated other characters to sympathize with others and reflect on themselves, was a refreshing subversion of the hegemony of Count Cenci, who negated any meaningful interaction with others. In this state,

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65 Shelley, V.ii. lines 82-83.
66 Shelley, V.ii. lines 90-91.

Beatrice's attitude and language holistically reflected her virtue. Sympathy, as a form of communication, was notably harmonized with the content, Beatrice's subjectivity. However, in the later part of the drama, the same process of sympathy becomes alienated from its owner, as Beatrice intentionally ceases to sympathize with others' feelings.

Shelley's contemplation of an ideal form of representation was suggestive of the discussion regarding the changes in the medium of financial representation—the advent of paper money. In the earlier part of this chapter, I discussed how the concept of paper money became widely accepted in the British market. People became accustomed to this nominal form of a financial medium because it facilitated ubiquity and uniformity, that is, because of its convenience for being carried and not being adulterated. However, at the same time, by relying on paper money, people's economic transactions were at the mercy of the volatile financial market, which was subject to speculation. Since the Bank of England fully controlled the circumstances of paper money and related policy, the market was frequently affected by the arbitrary intervention of a few personnel in the ruling class. As a result, the paper money system of representation proved to be a highly unstable, arbitrary medium to represent each individual's labor adequately. Paper money prevailed due to its nominal attributes; it relied on virtual contracts between individuals and could thus maintain uniformity in value and be ubiquitous. However, its rapid circulation made paper money a reduced, simplified medium in an institutionalized system subject to manipulation. Shelley identified these problems inherent in the paper money system and sought an alternative medium of representation: sympathy. In *The Cenci*, Shelley uses Count Cenci to criticize the British government, which converted people's credit and belief into quantifiable value. At the same time, by presenting Beatrice, Shelley tested the potential of sympathy as a medium for individuals to represent their subjectivity to other

members of society. However, as paper money became a simplified and reduced form of representation through circulation, in the drama, sympathy came to misrepresent individuals' subjectivities when it was circulated and reused.

# Chapter V

## A Glimpse of Liberation: The Indexical Nature of the Credit System and Shelley's Use of Arbitrary Language in *Prometheus Unbound*

### V-1: Introduction

In Chapter V, I will attempt to examine what solutions Shelley is offering for this problem of representation and a degenerated imagination. As discussed in Chapter IV, in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, Shelley criticized the new sign system of paper money for not faithfully representing the value of labor. While agreeing with Adam Smith's argument that labor itself should be a standard medium of representation, he also argued that labor cannot but be represented by a medium other than itself. His drama, *The Cenci*, parlays the dilemma of representation into a discussion about subjectivity and sympathy. Through Beatrice, Shelley presents Hume's theory of sympathy as a social virtue, and an alternative form of representation with which to replace the indexical language of credit and finance. Simultaneously, Shelley explores the limits of this theory by discussing how Beatrice's capacity for sympathy degenerates the moment it becomes a fixed form of representation.

In this chapter, I will argue that Shelley attempted to resolve this dilemma of representation by demystifying the rigid and coherent temporality and subjectivity established by financial institutions. First, I will discuss the relationship between language and thought by examining how Shelley inherited Rousseau's notion of metaphorical language. Then, I will argue that economic constructs such as the national debt and the paper money system stimulate speculative imagination by utilizing the indexical qualities of nominal language. These indexical qualities, in turn, originate from a linear, temporal understanding that the future and the present are bound up in the past. In my analysis of Shelley's closet drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, I will argue that Shelley attempts to dismantle this coherent sense of temporality by utilizing the arbitrary nature of nominal language in an ironic fashion. In other words, Shelley intentionally blurs the boundary between each counterpart of action: between perpetrator and victim, the one who speaks and the recipient of that speech. By doing so, Shelley attempts to embody contingency and potentiality in his poetic language, which can serve as an alternative to the indexical nature of contemporary economic and financial institutions and to fixed forms of representation and subjectivity.

## V-2: Rousseau's and Shelley's concepts of language

In the previous chapter, I discussed how Shelley's contemplation of a fair representation of labor in *A Philosophical View of Reform* developed into a matter of representing individual subjectivity. In my analysis of *The Cenci,* I noted that Shelley's text embodies Hume's ideal of sympathy, while at the same time arguing that this theory of sympathy as a form of representation exposes its own limits, by referring to Rousseau's argument that the process of

rectification of language is corruption. In *The Cenci*, Shelley demonstrated through Beatrice's transformation from saint into murderer that sympathy, as a form of representation, is also subject to corruption so long as it circulates within a community in a fixed and coherent state.

What, then, is Shelley's solution? What, if any, coherent and fixed form of representation will finally be instituted through the process of repetitive circulation? I argue that by citing Rousseau's theory of the origin of language, Shelley attempted to articulate an alternative form of representation through his interpretation of empiricists' emphasis on individual imagination and thought in the context of language. While refuting the existence of a priori principles, empiricists nevertheless inherited John Locke's view that the relationship between language and things is arbitrarily formulated through individual consensus, not mandated by any external authority, and that language expresses an individual's subjective thoughts and views.[1] As Locke's argument suggests, the empiricists accepted the subjectivity of language; they elaborated on Locke's theory, assigning great significance to an individual's perceptions and cognitive processes, which they believed to be contributory factors in the formation of language.

When Locke argues that signs refer to ideas in an individual's mind, he seems to suggest that ideas precede language, and that language merely represents ideas that have already been fully formulated. However, in some passages, he seems to suggest that language plays a much more complex role in human cognition. For example, he seems to imply that while images and ideas are perceived by the mind, it is language that connects these ideas and images.[2] Ettienne

[1] Jerold E. Hogle, "Language and Form," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 149.

[2] William Keach, "The Political Poet," in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. Timothy Morton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 107.

de Condillac and Horne Tooke, two linguists who had a significant influence on Shelley's concept of poetic language, argued that "the activities of thinking are impossible without some arrangements of language being there already."[3] Condillac developed and elaborated on Locke's theory about the relationship between human thought and language. Locke argued that ideas have two sources—sensation and reflection. Partially adopting this argument, Condillac argued that simple perception develops into reflection, which is a set of meaningful, selective, and sustainable concepts in the mind; and that, in this process of transformation from simple perception into reflection, the role of language is essential.[4] He discusses in detail the concept of natural cries as a kind of primitive language that parallel the development of language and the development of ideas.[5] Rousseau posited that primitive language was the language of action; for instance, a primitive human being instinctively screams when he/she encounters something that surprises them, so that the action of screaming would be the first type of language. However, that primitive form of language eventually develops into a more enduring system of meaning and arbitrary signs. Condillac argues that this process of evolution from natural cries to a full-fledged system of meaning is what allows the capacity for reflection, which is the process by which simple perceptions transform into elaborate concepts in the mind.[6] Therefore, Condillac reasons that reflection becomes possible only when the mind creates signs for its own use, and that language is so essential to the evolution of thought, that without language, thinking would not

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[3] Hogle, 149.

[4] Hans Arsleff, *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1982), 112.

[5] Arsleff, 112.

[6] Arsleff, 112.

develop.[7] In a similar vein, Horne Tooke contended that all mental activity is linguistic activity. This notion that signs refer not only to ideas but also to the formation of mental activity heavily influenced the Romantic poets' poetics.

Thus, perceptions are transformed into comprehensive feelings or thoughts through the act of cognition. Language contributes to this process of transformation, and functions as a set of signifiers or an index with which to label these emergent thoughts and feelings. In other words, individuals reformulate recurrent sensory impressions into coherent and consistent thoughts, and those coherent thoughts are labeled using indexical language. According to this theory, empiricists imply that language not only functions as a medium of expression that individuals use to convey their thoughts, but that it is also an arbitrary construct or epistemological framework that regulates and controls the way people think and feel because of its indexical nature.

Representation in the contemporary financial markets is also indexical. As discussed in Chapter IV, when promissory notes or the certificate of national debt are circulated in the market, their market price is determined by the future value of these notes and certificates. In this system, the indexical quality of these notes plays a key role. As the fluctuations in the market price of these notes and bonds are so transparently represented by numbers, which are an indexical language in their own right, conjectures about the future value of these notes heighten the speculative imagination. This in turn echoes the speculative nature of investment, which reinforces the arbitrary power of the indexical language of the markets. A major example of this would be the South Sea Bubble. In 1720, the South Sea company took over some portion of the

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[7] Arsleff, 112.

national debt from the English government and in return, was granted the right to monopolize all the trades in the South American region. Investors eagerly bought so many shares of the company's stock, that at one point, share prices rose to 1000 percent.[8] However, in December, this bubble exploded and the value of the shares dropped to 124 percent.[9] Of course, many investors went bankrupt, and the national economy found itself at the mercy of the fluctuating market value of stocks. The power of arbitrary language (numbers) had a detrimental effect on people's imagination, and on people themselves. As the empiricists argued, language can arbitrarily dominate those who use it. The indexical nature of the financial markets inflated investors' speculative fantasy and passions.

In a similar vein, Rousseau also criticized the indexical nature of modern social and economic institutions. In *On the Origin of Language,* Rousseau argued that in contrast to ancient society, in modern society, social institutions such as the law, contracts, and the credit system made rhetorical communication and persuasion useless, and "no longer is anything changed except by arms and cash."[10] In other words, unlike in the ancient world, in modern society people no longer try to persuade each other to resolve disputes verbally. Instead, by relying on the indexical language of contracts, laws, and the currency system, they exchange goods with money or get compensated or punished according to codified law. Although Rousseau's argument seems naïve and nostalgic, he notably pointed out that the indexical languages of the

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[8] Clyve Jones, "South Sea Bubble," in *The Oxford Companion to British History*. eds. Robert Crowcroft and John Cannon. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[9] Jones, "South Sea Bubble."

[10] Jean Jacque Rousseau, *Essay On the Origin of Language*, trans. John H. Moran and Alexander Gode, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1966), 72.

economic and legal worlds, such as paper currency and the law, have simplified communication between individuals. By introducing this system of indexical language, individuals limited their own cognitive abilities, because language is not only a means of communication but an epistemic framework within which external stimuli are processed into cognitive perceptions and thoughts. It thus became more difficult for individuals to think outside of the epistemological framework of social custom and the tyranny of governments that establish, control, and manipulate these social institutions.

Rousseau also regarded the process of language formulation through repeated impressions, as the institutionalization of language. He imagined that in its initial form, human language was a reservoir of creative, emotional energy. While arguing that human beings' "first expressions were tropes,"[11] Rousseau imagines the very first linguistic discourse in the so-called primitive era as follows:

> Upon meeting others, a savage man will initially be frightened. Because of his fear he sees the others as bigger and stronger than himself. He calls them *giants*. After many experiences, he recognizes that these so-called giants are neither bigger nor stronger than he. Their stature does not approach the idea he had initially attached to the word giant. So he invents another name common to them and to him, such as the name *man*, for example, and leaves *giant* to the fictitious object that had impressed him during his illusion. That is how the figurative word is born before the literal word, when our gaze is held in passionate fascination; and how it is that the first idea it conveys us is not that of the truth……The illusory image presented by passion is the first to appear, and the

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[11] Rousseau, 12.

> language that corresponded to it was also the first invented.[12]

According to this passage, what the savage human considers a "giant," represents their misrecognition of the first human being that they encounters, other than themself, as someone that is huge and formidable. Later, the first human being corrects their misrecognition through multiple encounters with others like them, and converts the feelings they repeatedly experiences into literal language. However, in the first figurative language, "giant" retains the first human being's vivid and visceral emotional energy. Although it is a product of misrecognition, this metaphorical language has a rich expressive potential that standard language does not possess. However, when the first human being repeatedly encounters other human beings and corrects his misjudgment, the vivid and visceral feelings inherent in the figurative dimension of language is appropriated and distorted. It loses its original expressive potential. Therefore, according to Rousseau, the creation of literal, standardized language through repetition and circulation is a corruption of language.

Shelley's concept of poetic language is indebted to Rousseau's interpretation of metaphorical language, which contains creative, visceral emotion, as he demonstrates further on in his *Defence.*

> All things exist as they are perceived—at least in relation to percipient. "The mind is its own place, and in itself Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven." But poetry defeats the curse which binds us to be subjected to the accident of surrounding impressions. And whether it spreads its own figured curtain, or withdraws life's dark veil from before the scene of things, it equally creates for us a being within our being. It

[12] Rousseau, 13.

> makes us the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos. It reproduces the common Universe of which we are portions and percipients, and it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration.[13]

From this excerpt, readers can acknowledge both Rousseau's and the empiricists' influence on Shelley's poetics. Shelley fully admits that each individual's subjective perspective determines the identity and attributes of other beings; he admits the powerful potential inherent in perception, thought, and language, which can determine reality itself by determining how reality is perceived. Still, at the same time, by referring to Rousseau, Shelley notes the irony of the fact that the impressions made by repetitive sensory experience can be reduced to a standardized frame of reference, which hinders one's capacity for creative and innovative cognition. Nevertheless, as discussed earlier, poetic language helps individuals escape from familiar, established ways of perceiving and thinking, while redeeming the liberating potential of creative and original cognition. In this case, the arbitrary power of language becomes a beneficial force that "creates for us a being within our being," and even "created anew the universe."

### V-3: *Prometheus Unbound* Act 1: The Indexical Language of Prometheus' Curse

I will now analyze how Shelley's representative work, *Prometheus Unbound*, embodies the concept of poetic language discussed earlier, while also examining how it could be tied into

[13] Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry,* in *Shelley's Prose: or The Trumpet of A Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark, (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1954), 295.

the contemporary economic context. In this work, Shelley refers to Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, which tells the story of Prometheus, a titan who brought fire and knowledge to human beings but was cursed by Jupiter to suffer from eternal torment. Shelley likely wanted to recall the rebellious image of this heroic figure, since he wrote this work in 1818-1820, which was a time when English people were suffering from excessive taxation and deprivation of suffrage. These issues fomented an atmosphere of civil disobedience, which resulted in the Peterloo Massacre (1819).[14]

Although he borrowed a character from Greek mythology, it was the literary form or the tradition of the myth that Shelley was attempting to demystify. Hogle observed that Shelley defined mythology as a set of archetypes established by the prevailing and dominant culture's customs or traditions, as stated in the following passage from *A Philosophical View of Reform*: "the names [employed by] religion—which have seldom been anything more [than] the popular and visible symbols which express the degree of power in some shape or other asserted by one party and disclaimed by another."[15] Therefore, as Hogle argued, Shelley thought that myths should be continually rewritten by contemporary authors to reflect new values and perspectives, if they cannot be fully eliminated from society.[16]

Another significant difference between Aeschylus's tragedy and Shelley's re-envisioning of it, is that Aeschylus emphasized Prometheus' heroic virtue, his "suffering and endurance."[17]

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[14] Michael Henry Scrivener, *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 140.

[15] Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform. Shelley's Prose: or The Trumpet of a Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark, (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1954), 231.

[16] Hogle, *Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989), 170.

[17] Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, 206.

Shelley, on the other hand, notes in the *Preface* that, “The imagery which I have employed will be found in many instances to have been drawn from the operations of the human mind, or from those external actions by which they are expressed.”[18] As this statement suggests, in his version of this drama, Shelley has chosen to revise this myth by converting all the traditional binaries and demarcations—such as protagonist and antagonist, external environment and the characters’ inner thoughts—into a question of human perception and cognition. This hermeneutic is suggestive of people’s changed perception of reality in the wake of the emergence of modern financial institutions. As discussed in Chapter IV, the mechanism of paper money and the speculative nature of financial markets were propelled by individuals’ cognizance of the reality that their imaginations were based on this perception. Their recognition of the future value of promissory notes or the certificate of national debt led directly to intentionally speculative investments. Their speculative imagination is directly reflected in the market value of these notes and certificates, which is in the indexical language of numbers, further stimulating individuals’ perception and imagination of the market value of these notes. Shelley’s statement betrays his attempt to demystify the arbitrary and nominal epistemology of a system that enslaves individuals. He does so by blurring the boundaries between what is viewed as material reality and what is regarded as an individual’s thoughts or perceptions.

The first half of Shelley’s *Prometheus Unbound* describes the tyranny that Jupiter subjects Prometheus to an institutional norm or custom that is as solid and irrefutable as an absolute physical condition itself.

O Mighty God!

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[18] Shelley, Preface to *Prometheus Unbound* in *Shelley’s Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat (New York: Norton, 2002), 207.

Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame

Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here

Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,

Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,

Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.

Ah me, alas, pain, pain ever, forever!

No change, no pause, no hope!—Yet I endure.[19]

In the passage above, the oppressor, Jupiter is called "Almighty"—he who retains absolute power. And Prometheus is bound and tortured by this absolute authority. Unique expressions in this passage carry negative connotations. Prometheus's environment is described as completely barren, "black, wintry, dead, unmeasured." Prometheus also agonizes over the fact that the cause of his pain is that he feels no "change" in his condition. According to Webb's analysis of this passage, "Jupiter's world defines itself partly through absences—it is without the normal signs of life."[20] Prometheus' surroundings are an absolute void, characterized by absence and meaninglessness. As the empiricists argued, an individual's thoughts and ideas are a product of their impressions, and these impressions are generated by sensory experience. Nevertheless, because he has been exposed to an infinitude of the same sensory stimulus, Prometheus can no longer formulate any meaningful ideas out of the apprehension of his surroundings. Bound by the chain, he does not suffer any specific pain, but the same pain at every moment, so incessantly

[19] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, I. lines 17-24.

[20] Timothy Webb, "The Unascended Heaven: Negatives in *Prometheus Unbound,*" in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, (New York: Norton, 2002), 696.

with “No change, no pause” that he cannot feel anything else in this place.

However, contradicting Prometheus’s own view of Jupiter as “almighty,” Shelley suggests that it is not some external authority that is responsible for this barren world of meaninglessness, but that it may be the result of certain internalized stereotypes or beliefs. His argument in *Defence*, for which he is indebted to the empiricists, is that “All things exist as they are perceived—at least in relation to percipient. “The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven,”[21]According to empiricism, because there is no way for individuals to access external reality directly but by way of a mental image or idea, the distinction between one’s external perception of reality and one’s internal conception of it is blurred. Therefore, following this argument, we may conclude as Shelley suggests in *Defence*, that the power of subjective imagination determines the reality that each individual perceives. However, this emphasis on the imagination also betrays the possibility that human beings could be victimized by stereotypical or institutionalized ways of thinking, which are concretized at the level of physical reality almost, in their minds. Act 1 dramatizes this dark potentiality, as The Earth is presented as a material embodiment of Prometheus’ curse on Jupiter[22], which the

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[21] Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*, 485. Shelley quoted this line from John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* Book I, and this is said by Satan. Shelley himself demonstrated the similarity between Satan and Prometheus in “Preface to *Premeteus Unbound*,”: The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus is Satan.” The quote above signifies Satan’s confidence in his mental power, and I think this emphasis on the power of individual mind is suggestive to empiricists’ theory discussed in this dissertation. However, as Madeleine Callaghan argues, the decisive difference between Satan and Prometheus is that whereas in *Paradise Lost*, Satan’s pride and ambition is morally judged in the poem, in Shelley’s drama, Prometheus converts the pride and ambition into idealism.

[22] The content of the curse is that Jupiter’s infinity and omnipotence will be torturing his own thought and mind (I.i. lines 286-291). I mentioned Prometheus’ curse to emphasize that in the drama, his state of mind is embodied by a physical transformation in material world.

following excerpt demonstrates.

> And the thin air, my breath, was stained
>
> With the contagion of a mother's hate
>
> Breathed on her child's destroyer-ay, I heard
>
> Thy curse, the which if thou rememberest not,
>
> Yet my innumerable seas and streams,
>
> Mountains and caves and winds, and yon wide Air,
>
> And the inarticulate people of the dead,
>
> Preserve, a treasured spell. We meditate
>
> In secret joy and hope those dreadful words,
>
> But dare not speak them.[23]

In the passage above, The Earth demonstrates that the very air "was stained" by the curse, and the whole natural world, such as the "seas," "streams," and "mountains" were not only affected by this curse but also became, in other words, bearers and embodiments of the curse. In contrast to the previous excerpt—which suggests that Prometheus' cognitive world is compromised by his exposure to Jupiter's world, which is void of meaning—in this passage, his thoughts and feelings, his language (the curse), are embodied in the material environment. Like the vicious circulation between one's speculative imagination and the economic reality embodied by the indexical language discussed above, both Prometheus' cognitive world and the physical setting in which the drama plays out to facilitate their own vicious cycle.

Linda Brigham points out the indexical quality of the material environment embodied by

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[23] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, I. lines 177-186.

The Earth's grudge and desire for retribution. She points out that the natural environment represented by The Earth is "the rigidity of justice, which, as a system of compensation, is rooted in the abstraction of exchange value."[24] With these words, "We meditate / In secret joy and hope those dreadful words / But dare not speak them," The Earth is remembering the curse as the unwavering promise not just of Prometheus' retribution against Jupiter's tyranny, but as the hope of compensation for one's suffering, both past and present. Therefore, the natural elements, such as the "mountains and caves and winds" are repositories of Prometheus' past techniques of reference, the symbolism of indexical language. Reminiscent of my analysis of *The Cenci*, when Beatrice—who could no longer resist her father's violence—pursued revenge, her saintly image was separated from her virtues and good behavior; it came to function as a mere sign, or form of credit that oppresses her servants. Likewise, The Earth's speech is still under the influence of the curse, the relationship between Jupiter and himself underpinned by hatred.

However, Shelley implies that Prometheus' language and epistemology are rendered differently from The Earth's indexical language in the scene in which Prometheus summons Jupiter's Phantasm and revokes his curse. When repealing the curse, he says, "It doeth repent me; words are quick and vain; / Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine. / I wish no living thing to suffer pain."[25] Escaping from his previous state, in which he was forced to be insensible to his surroundings and preoccupied with thoughts of retribution and revenge, Prometheus can now identify how the curse and his own words performatively influence the world around him.

Furthermore, in this scene in which the Phantasm is summoned and the curse is repealed,

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[24] Brigham, "The Postmodern Semiotics of '"Prometheus Unbound"'." *Studies in Romanticism* 33, no. 1, (1994): 39.
[25] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, 1.i. lines 303-5.

one of the most important aspects of indexical language, a clear and linear agency, is dismantled. As Wasserman famously argued and as many other scholars have acknowledged, Jupiter “is not a being or an autonomous power, but only the dark shadow of Prometheus, an unnatural conditions that mind wrongfully permits and can repeal by an act of will.”[26] This drama implies multiple times that Prometheus and Jupiter might not be completely distinct characters. Shelley utilizes this possibility to pursue his agenda as outlined in his *Preface*—that the events in the drama are “the operations of the human mind,” at its own limits. For example, when Prometheus recalls Jupiter’s Phantasm, the Phantasm feels like his voice sounds strange to his own ears, as the following passage implies: “What unaccustomed sounds / Are hovering on my lips, unlike the voice / With which our pallid race hold ghastly talk in darkness?”[27] This passage appears to suggest that the Phantasm is Jupiter’s ghost because the phrases, “our pallid race” and “in darkness,” identify the Phantasm as an inhabitant of the world of meaninglessness that Jupiter created. However, although he is an illusion that signifies Jupiter, the Phantasm is estranged from his own linguistic discourse. A voice that even he does not recognize controls his speech, leading him to exclaim, “what unaccustomed sounds / Are hovering on my lips.” And later, he confesses, “A spirit seizes me, and speaks within; / It tears me as fire tears a thunder-cloud!”[28] Then, who is the Phantasm exactly, or whose speech is this, if not that of Jupiter’s Phantasm? Does he reflect Jupiter’s agency or Prometheus’s, the summoner? The text does not give a definite answer. However, because the Phantasm’s linguistic discourse is untethered from its speaker, the

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[26] Earl R. Wasserman, *Shelley: A Critical Reading* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), 258.

[27] Shelley, I. lines 242-45.

[28] Shelley, I. lines 254-55.

Phantasm's curse is also liberated from its original context, symbolized as the hostility between Prometheus and Jupiter.

Robert Mitchell remarked on the similarity between the curse's rhetorical quality and the attribute of temporality that paper notes possess. According to Mitchell, Shelley observed that the system of national debt "limits future possibilities by enslaving both the present and the future to the past."[29] For Mitchell, the driving force behind enslavement is necessity. As the existence of a national debt continually generates a state of emergency, it precludes the possibility of tax money being put to good use in the future.[30] Likewise, the curse also "bind[s] the future to an event that will become past"[31] because the existence of the curse continuously recalls the need for retribution. Much in the same vein as Mitchell, I also would like to link state finance to the utterance of the curse. However, rather than focusing on the state of necessity and exigency that both the curse and the national debt generate, I wish to underline the fact that, by making the Phantasm "cite" the curse, the agent who verbally articulates the curse is rendered opaque, as noted above. Just as the debtor and the recipient are clearly mentioned in promissory notes, in this drama, at first glance, it would seem to be Prometheus who cursed Jupiter's tyranny. However, in this scene, the agent who uttered the curse is not Prometheus but the Phantasm of Jupiter, who is summoned by Prometheus' command. Prometheus himself does not remember the content of the curse. The opacity surrounding agency in this scene allows readers to be liberated from the seemingly rigid temporality that promissory notes prescribe, the future

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[29] Robert Mitchell, *Sympathy and the State in the Romantic Era: Systems, State Finance, and the Shadows of futurity*, (Routledge, 2007), 177.

[30] Mitchell, 177.

[31] Mitchell, 194.

and the present fully bound by the past.

I also argue that Prometheus is liberated from his past grudge against Jupiter, and newly identifies his own state as that of the perpetrator and not victim, because this scene reverses the positions of perpetrator and victim. The Phantasm finally places a curse on Jupiter through Prometheus and rearticulates it in the following passage. This passage strikingly implies that Prometheus' own bondage might have been caused by himself, not Jupiter.

> Fiend, I defy thee! With a calm, fixed mind,
>
> All that thou canst inflict I bid thee do;
>
> Foul Tyrant both of Gods and Human-kind,
>
> One only being shalt thou not subdue.
>
> Rain then thy plagues upon me here,
>
> Ghastly disease and frenzying fear;
>
> And let alternate frost and fire
>
> Eat into me, and be thine ire……I imprecate
>
> The utmost torture of thy hate;
>
> And thus devote to sleepless agony,
>
> This undeclining head while thou must reign on high.[32]

In this passage, Prometheus says, "all that thou canst inflict I bid thee do." As discussed earlier, this implies that it was Prometheus who facilitated Jupiter's agency and authority, rather than Jupiter himself. Based on this assumption, it must be noted that the one who has "a calm, fixed mind" is either Prometheus or Jupiter. After a few lines, with the same nuance, Prometheus says,

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[32] Shelley, I. lines 262-280.

"I imprecate / The utmost torture of thy hate." The reader can understand that (thy) Jupiter's hate drove the torture of Prometheus, but at the same time, Prometheus says that he uttered, or manifested, his own curse. This implies that Jupiter might be another aspect of Prometheus himself, the part that seeks domination and authority over others.

In the same context, we can remark on the contrast between when the curse was articulated and now, when Prometheus summoned Jupiter's Phantasm. When this curse was first uttered, Prometheus was the one who spoke it; but now, he has become the one who hears, or rather is the recipient of, this curse. If the Phantasm is Jupiter's ghost, then the Phantasm is articulating the words spoken by none other than Jupiter, his original self. Whereas, originally, Prometheus was the victim of tyranny, in this scene, his identity begins to merge with that of the perpetrator. Therefore, as the curse is recalled by objectifying and externalizing his other self as a form of the Phantasm, his own identity and self are divided. The opposing identities of victim and perpetrator overlap with each other. And these overlapping identities liberate Prometheus' present which has been bound by a past curse. He was obsessed with his grudge against Jupiter before he summons the Phantasm, and this grudge is that of a victim who suffers ceaselessly the torment he has been subjected to by Jupiter. Ironically, it is the overlapping identities of victim and perpetrator that liberate him from his past grudge so that he can encounter his present as full of possibility, and open to further change and progress.

This phenomenon of liberation enabled by overlapping identities can be more effectively analyzed by referring to Shelley's contrasting concepts of temporality, which were influenced by Hume's theory of causality. Firstly, Hume pointed out the customary human tendency to establish causality between events. He argued that while someone might ascribe a causal relationship to two events, those two events might merely be correlated. There could be other

possibilities that have not been discovered yet. Consider the following excerpt:

> And as the first imagination or invention of a particular effect, in all natural operations, is arbitrary, where we consult not experience; so must we also esteem the supposed tie or connexion between the cause and effect, which binds them together, and renders it impossible that any other effect could result from the operation of that cause. When I see, for instance, a Billiard-ball moving in a straight line towards another; even suppose motion in the second ball should by accident be suggested to me, as the result of their contact or impulse; may I not conceive, that a hundred different events might as well follow from that cause? May not both these balls remain at absolute rest? May not the first ball return in a straight line, or leap off from the second in any line or direction? All these suppositions are consistent and conceivable. Why then should we give the preference to one, which is no more consistent or conceivable than the rest? All our reasonings a priori will never be able to show us any foundation for this preference.[33]

In this billiard balls example, when Hume witnesses the first ball hit the second ball, and sees the second ball move, it appears reasonable to him to assume that the two balls touching is what caused the movement of the second ball. However, Hume points out that common sense, which posits a causal relationship between these two distinct events, is not based on an a priori principle, but relies on an arbitrary interpretation instead. As he goes on to argue, "In a word, then, every effect is a distinct event from its cause. It could not, therefore, be discovered in the cause, and the first invention or conception of it, a priori, must be entirely arbitrary."[34] By

[33] David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. ed. Peter Millican (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 21.

[34] Hume, 22

relying on visual observation, one might very quickly assume that the second ball moved because the first ball hit it. By making this inference, however, one assumes a priori principles in physics, where if one ball hits another, the second ball moves. However, from Hume's perspective, other interpretations could be made, like maybe both balls came to a stop. Or it is also possible that the first ball stopped right in front of the second ball, and that other invisible forces, such as a sudden breeze, is what actually moved the second ball? Our sensory abilities are limited to intuitively identifying whether these two events have a causal relationship or are only correlated. These two events are merely visual signs of what happened; however in order to identify what happened, individuals need to closely explore, interrogate, or decipher these signs. Therefore, if someone were to argue that they deduced a firm causality between these two events, it might be based on their arbitrary judgment rather than a priori principle. Moreover, by arbitrarily assuming a tight causality between two events, one would be losing other interpretive possibilities for the relationship between these two events.

In "An Essay on the Punishment of Death," Shelley defines "the passion of revenge," as "a savage state," and "undisciplined to civilization," in reference to Hume's theory of causality. He associates this "savage state" with human complacency and the habitual tendency to see connections between past and present.[35] Those who seek revenge interpret their present as the result of past events. Whether they seek to inflict pain or torture, Shelley's savages "are but faintly aware of the distinction between the future and the past."[36] As a result, these savages "live only in the past, as it is present,"[37] as did Prometheus who, at the beginning of the play,

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[35] Shelley, "Essay on the Punishment of Death," in *Shelley's Prose: or The Trumpet of a Prophecy*, ed. David Lee Clark, (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1954), 157.
[36] Shelley, 157.
[37] Shelley, 157.

was still locked in the changeless environment established by Jupiter's oppression, dreaming only of revenge. As an alternative to the savage's temporality, Shelley presents that of the philosopher. According to him, "philosophers" are free from "the abstract liability of irremediable actions," and they can make the present "determination of will," not events of the past, "the active source of future events."[38] In other words, to these philosophers, the past is no longer an absolute and unchangeable influence that unilaterally determines the future. Rather, they fully understand that the future remains open and undetermined, and it is their desire and will that truly affect the future.

Applying these contrasting concepts regarding temporality to an analysis of Prometheus' summoning the Phantasm and repealing the curse, one could argue that prior to his invoking the Phantasm, Prometheus' perception and imagination were constrained by the savage's notion of time. According to Shelley, the savage's present was so bound up in the past that he could not realize that it remains open to infinite and undetermined possibilities. Likewise, before Prometheus invoked Jupiter's curse, he only focused on the suffering and despair he experienced under Jupiter's reign; and in this state, he viewed Jupiter as the static and almighty source of all of his pain. From this epistemic perspective, Prometheus' present status is firmly rooted in his past condition. The relationship between the victim (Prometheus) and the perpetrator (Jupiter) also seems self-evident.

However, Shelley dismantles this seemingly clear and immutable relationship between Jupiter and Prometheus, between the past and the present. In this scene, when Prometheus becomes a recipient of his own curse, he muses that his identity as a victim is edging towards

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[38] Shelley, 157.

that of the perpetrator. Therefore, the binary between victim and perpetrator is blurred, and Prometheus is liberated from the epistemological bondage of his past, while acquiring a new perspective on his present state. As Hume suggests the escape from the seemingly clear causality between two events, Shelley's concept of the philosopher's time consciousness suggests that the present is not merely a result of the past, but full of potential and possibility. In this scene, Prometheus demonstrates these two contrasting perspectives on the relationship between his past and present. By doing so, he can regard his own past as a sign that retains multiple hermeneutic possibilities, not as an immovable and fixed source of pain.

This scene exemplifies what Shelley he argued in *Defence*: that the poet's language "purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity which obscures from us the wonder of our being" and renews "our minds" which were "blunted by reiteration" and "by the recurrence of impressions." As Hogle noted, Shelley's poetics "signif[ies] the self" of what "has been, and shall be," not of "what a person fixedly 'is'."[39] By embodying contingency and potentiality in temporality, Shelley allows the linguistic form to be continually renewed and reinterpreted, instead of treating it as fixed and inviolable.

Shelley's concept of alternative temporality as delineated above, can be tied to the state of British economics, especially the problems regarding paper money and the national debt. Shelley directly associates this problem of paper money, which was discussed earlier, with the problem of the national debt. According to him, the concept of the national debt is part of an economic 'system' that the ruling class uses to exploit citizens of other classes. As Shelley argues, "the fact is that the national debt is not a debt contracted by the whole nation towards a

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[39] Hogle, "Shelley and the Conditions of Meaning," 73.

portion of it, but a debt contracted by the whole mass of the privileged classes towards one particular portion of those classes."[40] According to him, members of the ruling class borrowed money from other groups in the same class, in order to finance the war. Both ruling class groups benefitted from this scheme while transmitting all the burdens that came with it to the rest of the country. Throughout all this, paper money just aggravated the state of exploitation. As the government released the money that they had borrowed into the market in an excess of paper notes, the value of the notes depreciated, which resulted in a huge surge in inflation, and in the devaluation of labor. Meanwhile, the rich creditors who lent money to the English government benefitted significantly, because they were able to earn a huge amount of interest. The interests and principle that those riches redeemed remained as a name of national debt, that the government tried to resolve this by imposing additional taxation on the lower class.

According to Robert Mitchell, Shelley believed that "the ever-increasing national debt enslaved future generations by deferring ever more interest and principal repayment to the future to meet the purportedly more pressing financial needs of the present."[41] More specifically, Shelley believed that when the government defers payment of the national debt, the deferral state in which the debt remains (as "to be paid" in the future), becomes the status quo. Mitchell argued that, as a result, "no matter how liberating it might seem to defer payment of parts of national debt to the future, the act of deferral perpetuated the form of causal necessity that Shelley argued was characteristic of savage time consciousness."[42] Due to the credit system's utterly simplified temporality, the present and the future—when the debt would become payable—were nothing

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[40] Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, 35.
[41] Mitchell, 177.
[42] Mitchell, 177.

more than a result of the past. In this context, the present is interpreted through the indexical lens of a monetary contract established in the past. However, in *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley dismantles all the conditions that facilitated the emergence of the indexical language of the credit system. By dismantling the linear causality between past and present events, and by blurring the distinction of different agencies, *Prometheus Unbound* enables readers to imagine multiple possibilities that are not subordinate to the linearity of indexical language.

Once he revokes the curse, Prometheus' insight eases the rigid past causality that positioned Jupiter as the sole origin of tragedy; he starts to become aware of the larger systems or institutions beyond Jupiter's nominal existence. His recognition of the existence of a larger system can be contrasted with Beatrice, who cannot comprehend the existence of institutions like the Roman Catholic Church, which enable Count Cenci's tyranny, but identifies her father as the sole origin of the pain she experienced after being raped. As soon as Prometheus revokes his curse, Mercury, Jupiter's emissary, visits him to ask for his submission. In the passage below, Mercury's attempt to persuade Prometheus shows the reader how relying on the traditional system of meaning could amount to a reliance on conventional authority.

There is a secret known

To thee, and to none else of living things,

Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven,

The fear of which perplexes the Supreme:

Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne

In intercession; bend thy soul in prayer,

And like a suppliant in some gorgeous fane,

Let the will kneel within thy haughty heart:

For benefits and meek submission tame

The fiercest and the mightiest.[43]

In this passage, Mercury asks Prometheus to reveal the secret he knows about Jupiter as proof of his capitulation. A significant point here is not the contents of the secret, but the fact that Prometheus refuses to articulate the secret verbally. In this passage, Mercury regards language as a mere representation of already existing meaning, saying, "Clothe it in words, and bid it clasp his throne." In other words, as Edward T. Duffy has noted, the reason why Mercury's notion of language is problematic is that he does not consider its performative function.[44] Instead of recognizing that speech is also action (as is the case with the verb, 'promise'), Mercury believes that it is mere "clothe" that represents (or misrepresents) specific content. However, in contrast to Mercury, Prometheus fully understands that language does not merely "clothe" secrets, but constitutes thoughts and ideas that can change how individuals perceive and interpret the world. Therefore, he cannot accept Mercury's request because he knows that the action of linguistic articulation itself, no matter the content of the secret, serves the conventional system of meaning.

The ensuing passage suggests that Mercury's encouragement of verbal articulation is not merely a request that Prometheus admit that Jupiter is the ultimate authority, but serves the conventional system of meaning, beyond Jupiter. When Prometheus refuses to heed Mercury's counsel, Mercury says, "Thou knowest not the period of Jove's power?"[45] and Prometheus

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[43] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, I. lines 371-380.

[44] Edward T. Duffy, *The Constitution of Shelley's Poetry: The Argument of Language in Prometheus Unbound*. (New York: Anthem Press, 2011), 65.

[45] Shelley, I. lines 412.

answers, “I know but this, that it must come.”[46] Both Mercury and Prometheus know that Jupiter’s reign is limited. This conversation reveals that Jove does not have any inherent legitimacy as absolute authority. Rather, it shows that Jove’s existence is itself a nominal placeholder within a larger indexical system of meaning. Therefore, this conversation indicates that Mercury’s call for surrender is not of surrender to Jove, but to that nominal or indexical system of language that, as the status quo, designates Jupiter as the current sovereign.

Although he successfully ensures that Mercury’s threats to get him to admit that Jupiter is ultimate authority are partly in vain, now the Furies attack Prometheus by utilizing his own sensibility to others’ pain. As stated earlier, in the process of remembering the curse, Prometheus realizes the performative influence of his own language on his surroundings, as implied in this passage: “It doeth repent me: words are quick and vain; / Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine. / I wish no living thing to suffer pain.”[47] Through this realization, he recovers his sensibility toward humans and the surrounding environment. However, the Furies utilize Prometheus’ revitalized sensibility towards the world and humans.

> In each human heart terror survives
>
> The ruin it has gorged: the loftiest fear
>
> All that they would disdain to think were true:
>
> Hipocrisy and custom make their minds
>
> The fanes of many a worship, now outworn.
>
> They dare not devise good for man’s estate,
>
> And yet they know not that they do not dare.

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[46] Shelley, I. i. lines 413.

[47] Shelley, I. i. lines 303-5.

The good want power, but to weep barren tears.

The powerful goodness want: worse need for them.

The wise want love; and those who love want wisdom;

And all best things are thus confused to ill.

Many are strong and rich, and would be just,

But live among their suffering fellow-men

As if none felt: they know not what they do.[48]

In this passage, the Furies do not suggest that human beings are lacking in virtuous qualities, such as "love," "goodness," and "wisdom." However, these good qualities lead to tragic results, given the overall trajectory of human history. In the same vein, Hogle also analyzes the Furies' rhetoric when they remind Prometheus of the "entropic declines" of human history, by underscoring the "metaphoric relations" between different human attributes.[49] In this passage, we confront the same problem that Shelley presented in *The Cenci.* In the previous chapter, I argued that Beatrice's sensibility, which encourages others to engage in self-reflection and sympathy, finally degenerates into an apparatus of oppression, as this specific form of representation(sympathy) keeps being circulated within the community. Likewise, as the Furies observe, all human virtue has finally deteriorated. And this argument as a whole actually utilizes Prometheus' revitalized sensibility. As the Titan who brought wisdom and fire to human beings, he deeply sympathizes with, and feels responsible, for them. However, because he can now sympathize with humans and their circumstances, the Furies' accusations acquire greater importance for him. In this passage, Prometheus' sensibility makes him more vulnerable to the

[48] Shelley, I. i. lines 618-631.

[49] Hogle, *Shelley's Process*, 178.

Furies' claims about human history, and if he believes in the Furies' concept of history, this concept gains form, or authority.

V-4: *Prometheus Unbound* Act 2: Dissolving Identities and Love

What is Shelley's solution this time? Is it any different from *The Cenci*? After Act 1, Prometheus is temporarily not present in the drama, having left after saying these words, "I said all hope was vain but love,"[50] and Asia and Panthea become the main characters of the drama. As the original characters were replaced with female characters, Prometheus loses his voice in the play and does not maintain a consistent subjectivity. However, because Asia and Panthea are introduced as main characters, the drama's language is liberated from the burden of history, trauma, and responsibility that Prometheus once bore. This is how Shelley achieves the poetic language that "creates anew the universe, after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by reiteration," as he demonstrated in *Defence.*

However, we cannot regard Panthea and Asia as completely distinct characters from Prometheus. At the beginning of Act 2, Prometheus appears in Panthea's dream.

> Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
> With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
> Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me,"
> I lifted them: the overpowering light
> Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
> By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
> And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,

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[50] Shelley, I. i. lines 824.

Steam'd forth like vaporous fire;

……

I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt

His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood

Till it became his life, and his grew mine,

And I was thus absorb'd—[51]

In this passage, Prometheus' voice describes Panthea as a shadow of Asia, her sister. And by viewing this dream through Panthea's eyes, Asia is profoundly connected with Prometheus. By utilizing Panthea's dream as a text, Prometheus' existence is transferred to Asia, as the lines, "His presence flow and mingle thro' my blood / Till it became his life and his grew mine," demonstrate. I think this utter dissolution and transference of subjectivity might be regarded as Shelley's attempt to overcome the limits of sympathy and subjectivity that Hume theorized, which was discussed in Chapter IV. Hume's sympathy presupposes the existence of a coherent and consistent subjectivity, which is notably represented in *The Cenci*. Beatrice's influence basically originates from her ability to enable others to reflect on their own deeds and sympathize with others' circumstances. However, as Beatrice's abilities are utilized to encourage the servants who murdered Count Cenci to take themselves to task by reflecting extensively on the fact that it is they who committed murder, the norm of coherent subjectivity could become a problem inherent in the concept of sympathy. By contrast, in Act II of *Prometheus Unbound*, Prometheus' subjectivity dissolves into "vaporous fire," and Panthea "saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt / His presence." Here, by describing Panthea as having directly "felt" Prometheus'

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[51] Shelley, II. i. lines 68-82.

presence without relying on any sensory clues, Shelley imagines a system of meaning and communication that is more visceral and direct than the reference system in conventional empiricist theory, in which sensory perceptions play a crucial role.

Act II of *Prometheus Unbound* mainly consists of Asia and Panthea's journey in search of Demogorgon, the unknown force or deity who dethrones Jupiter as necessity demands, and as is foreseen in the conversation between Mercury and Prometheus. In contrast to Mercury's demand for linguistic articulation, when Asia and Panthea are interrogating Demogorgon, Demogorgon avoids establishing a linear narrative, which would entail self-revelation and the deconstruction of conventional linguistic representation. When Asia and Panthea visit Demogorgon, they question Demogorgon based on the assumption that Demogorgon is omniscient. However, when Asia asks who created this world and imposed pain on it, Demogorgon does not give a definite answer, but says, "He reigns."[52] In his response, he does not specify whether the sovereign or creator is Jupiter or Prometheus. It is remarkable that Demogorgon uses the pronoun "he" to deliberately obscure who the designated subject of his statement is. In "On Life," while arguing that "the difference" between "the names of ideas" and "of external objects" "is merely nominal," Shelly claims that, "the words *I*, *they* are not signs of any actual difference subsisting between the assemblage of thoughts thus indicated, but are merely marks employed to denote the different modifications of the one mind."[53] By using pronouns, representative examples of indexical language, Demogorgon ironically points out Asia's preoccupation with indexical knowledge, an attempt to understand the world through

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[52] Shelley, II. iv. lines 31.

[53] Shelley, "On Love," 174.

binaries—Prometheus and Jupiter; perpetrator and victim; protagonist and antagonist. Later, when Asia asks who brought all this pain and these disasters upon the world, he concludes "Not Jove."[54] When she enquires, "His adversary from adamantine chains / Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare / Who is his master? Is he too a slave?"[55], she has already realized that Demogorgon cannot/will not give a clear answer. She also wonders whether her own question, an attempt to differentiate between perpetrator and victim, Jupiter and Prometheus, is valid.

Therefore, by converting the oppositional framework between Jupiter and Prometheus into a nominal confrontation (or juxtaposition) between pronouns, and by implying that Jupiter might not be the ultimate source of all evils in this world, but merely part of greater system, this play urges readers to reinterpret and reimagine seemingly rigid and dichotomized frameworks of reality. More specifically, I argue that this play unleashes the power to reinterpret and reimagine society's oppressive power structures, by exposing the nominal and arbitrary attributes of language that these structures rely on. Just as the British government arbitrarily issued an excessive volume of paper notes to exploit its citizens, despite their limited gold repository, this play also abruptly replaces the original protagonist, Prometheus, with Asia and Panthea. This suggests that it might be possible to convert the rigid, binary framework of perpetrator and victim into a mere juxtaposition of pronouns. By doing so, this drama encourages readers to dismantle the hierarchy of imagination and reality in pursuit of liberation.

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[54] Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, II. iv. lines 106.

[55] Shelley, II. iv. lines 107-9.

# VI. Conclusion

This dissertation explored how Wordsworth and Shelley resisted *and* reproduced the new social paradigm in eighteenth-century Europe, a paradigm resulting from what [Foucault and other scholars] have called nominalization or institutionalization. I argued that these poets' theories of sympathy and imagination were created in a dynamic relationship to the contemporary paradigm change from intrinsic to nominal; people began to believe that knowledge could function as a secondary commentary about things, rather than believing that knowledge shares intrinsic attributes with what it signifies. They relied on these concepts to resist or remedy the negative influences of this paradigm change. However, I also argued that these means of resistance were captured by the epistemology of institutionalization and therefore also reproduced institutions.

In developing these claims, I relied on Michel Foucault's argument regarding this paradigm change. Foucault argued that from the seventeenth century onward, European people no longer believed in an intrinsic relationship between the world and knowledge. They began to recognize knowledge as a secondary commentary of what it signified and came to see the relationship between knowledge and the world as arbitrary. In this dissertation, I contextualized this trend of nominalization in relation to the philosophical theory of empiricism. As I discussed

in the introduction, John Locke argued that people’s ideas were solely created by their perceived images of the external world. In addition, Locke presented self-awareness—which enabled individuals to regard themselves as the third person and distance their consciousness from their sensory perceptions—as a key faculty of the modern self. By arguing thus, Locke established an epistemic frame that enabled modern people to regard their knowledge and perception as independent from external reality. This emphasis on the arbitrary relationship between people’s perceptions and reality affirmed individuals’ potential to reinterpret and even recreate the meaning of external reality, which could be interpreted as their imagination.

However, I suggested that this subjective and autonomous ability to perceive and interpret could be subjugated by institutionalization. Thus, as empiricists argue, if there is no intrinsic connection between knowledge and reality, knowledge can arbitrarily deviate from its original referent and control it. Based on this possibility, I considered how nominal and institutionalized knowledge prescribed the orientations of human desire; in other words, what had been regarded as human nature, such as people’s bodily desires, impulses, and sense of temporality. Under this hypothesis, I analyzed Wordsworth’s and Shelley’s prose and poetry to examine not only their critiques of commercial and financial institutions but also the influence of institutions on their poetic theories. I found that they presented sympathy and imagination as alternative media of communication. Nevertheless, I also explored the possibility that their poems controlled people’s desires and impulses. Simultaneously, I investigated the extent to which these poets might have been aware of their poetry reproducing this prescription.

In Chapters II and III, I mainly examined how Wordsworth responded to the changed relationship between writers and readers in the mass-print market. In Chapter II, I argued that Wordsworth’s attempt to resist the loss of communication between writers and readers—and

between readers—was driven by the introduction of the mass-print market. As printed goods became more affordable to many people in Britain, commercial institutions, such as circulating libraries, periodicals, and reviews, also proliferated. These institutions not only catered to various readers' tastes but also formulated and subdivided different sociolects of readers. These institutions utilized their influences to maximize profit. For example, as Wordsworth lamented, they circulated multivolume Gothic novels to accelerate the consumption of reading materials by stimulating readers' sensual pleasure. To resist this trend, as a man of letters, Wordsworth attempted to reconnect to his readers by delivering universal humanity through his poetry. However, while following Shaftesbury's belief that humans could intuitively discern ethical good from their sensory experiences, Wordsworth constructed an educational framework through which readers' aesthetic appreciation of his poetry could result in the cultivation of ethical nature. However, his poetry instead culminated in prescribing to readers a mode of desire and the bodily impulse by appealing to their biological commonality. Consequently, his poetry reduced readers to biopolitical subjects, whose existences were reduced to a collection of perceptive faculties. Wordsworth's message of universal humanity, which was epitomized by people's respect for the deceased, was delivered as a commodified form, which only exposed how his poetic representation masked dehumanized subjects in his poetry.

In Chapter III, I analyze Wordsworth's "Essay, Supplementary" (1815) to examine how Wordsworth's perspective on the relationship between writers and readers changed. Whereas in the *Preface* to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth expressed a belief that his poetry could universally appeal to general audiences, in "Essay," he realized that he, as a writer, could only satisfy a limited number of readers. I argue that this realization is demonstrated by the dramatic elements of *The Excursion*, published in 1814. Whereas the main speaker figure in *The Prelude* and the

lyrics in *Lyrical Ballads* affirms his authority by manifesting his knowledge about poetic subjects, in *The Excursion*, the Wanderer cannot maintain his authority as a speaker. Rather, his knowledge about the characters in the poem is limited, and other characters in the poem, such as the Solitary, frequently conflict with him. In particular, the Solitary's rebuttal of the Wanderer's endorsement of imagination notably points out that Wordsworth's project to educate ethical values by presenting aesthetic experience may not work for all readers; despite this, he demands language as a universally recognizable sign. Similarly, in contrast to his lyrics in *Lyrical Ballads*, with which Wordsworth provides the readers with visceral aesthetic experiences, in *The Excursion*, he tends to provide a theoretical commentary on his poetry's rhetorical mechanisms. In doing so, Wordsworth seems to allow readers to observe the mechanism of his poetry from a more democratic, distanced perspective; however, simultaneously, his poetic language tends to rely on the utilitarian concept of language, which defines language as a stable and ramified system of meaning.

Chapter IV examined how Shelley responded to the negative influences caused by the paper money and credit system in Britain. Paper money was invented to facilitate the transaction of real money, the gold currency. In other words, because the metal currency was heavy and subject to adulteration, by using certificates of debt or payment, people could conveniently conduct economic transactions. However, paper money deviated from and did not remain a mere representation of the metal currency but arbitrarily formulated its own circulation system. Unlike the metal currency, there was no limit to the amount of issuance in paper money, and the British government abused its authority to issue paper notes. The British government issued a huge volume of paper money, which far exceeded their gold repository to fund the war against Napoleon. Finally, due to their limited gold repository, English citizens could not redeem their

paper notes into gold and had to use paper notes as if they were real money. This resulted in huge social conflicts and inflation. In *A Philosophical View of Reform*, Shelley accused the British government of reifying its authority and people's credit to the government as an instrument to exploit the English citizens. In *The Cenci*, Count Cenci, like the British government, converts his patriarchal authority to the Roman Catholic Church's connivance with his sadistic atrocities against his family and people. By presenting Beatrice, Shelley presents sympathy as an alternative medium of communication. However, he also explores the limitations of sympathy. In the latter part of the drama, Beatrice utilizes her ability to use sympathy to overstimulate her servants' sense of guilt and restrain them from confessing to their murder of Count Cenci. This conclusion implies that like paper money, sympathy, as a medium of communication can misrepresent individual subjectivity when it is ramified through circulation.

Chapter V argued that Shelley tried to resist the indexical language of financial institutions by dismantling the linear and coherent agencies in the drama, *Prometheus Unbound*. As empiricists observed, language was not a mere medium of expression but a framework of cognitive and mental activities. Therefore, the indexical language of contemporary financial institutions also controlled how people felt, desired, and imagined. As the South Sea Bubble in the 1720s demonstrated, the indexical but fluctuating value of stocks facilitated a speculative mode of imagination and passion. In *Prometheus Unbound*, this indexical language of the financial market is symbolized by the seemingly rigid framework of perpetrator and victim, Prometheus and Jupiter. However, as Hume's skepticism demystifies any conventional causality or coherency between two correlated events, this drama also dismantles the binary opposition of Jupiter and Prometheus by implying that Jupiter may be a mere representation of Prometheus' other self. In other words, by portraying the possibility that the binary frame of Prometheus and

Jupiter may be Prometheus' mental construction, this drama also implies that the indexical language of the credit system is no more than an arbitrary construction of the government and financial institutions.

In *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Abrams notably delineated the transformation of the definition of literature in the eighteenth century: from the Aristotelian mimesis of reality to the expression of inner feeling.[1] Many New Historicists demystified and historicized this new definition of literature that emphasized the authenticity of expression of inner emotion or feeling. In *Romantic Ideology*, for example, Jerome McGann criticized how, in Romantic poetry (especially Wordsworth's), the self was so transcendental that it was detached from any historical context; he argued that the Romantic concept of self only symptomatically delineated the poet's sense of displacement that he acquired from the traumatic experience of historical events.[2] Moreover, other historicists and materialists, such as David Simpson and Terry Eagleton, focused on the issue of Romantic poetics as an aesthetic ideology—in other words, as an instrument for the idealization and commodification of the poetic subjects. Similarly, these scholars largely regarded attention to the formal aspect of language as also an attempt at reification and commodification, with which I partially agree.

From a New Historicistic perspective, referring to these scholars, I also interpreted Wordsworth and Shelley's emphasis on the expression of inner feeling as an idealization and a commodification. Nevertheless, in this dissertation, by revisiting the formal aspect of

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[1] M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, *Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, 49.
[2] Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985, 88.

Wordsworth's and Shelley's texts, I tried to illuminate how these poets were well aware of the materiality and performativity of linguistic form. I argued that they wanted their literary forms to positively influence other forms of communication in society, such as commercial institutions in the mass print market or financial system. By referring to empiricists' awareness that language could never be a perfect or transparent medium to represent ideas, Wordsworth and Shelley coped with this institutional medium of communication that continuously acquired material reality. Additionally, by closely tracing these poets' differing perspectives that delineated the formal aspects of their works, this dissertation closely examined their trials and errors in deciphering the knowledge and language that operated these institutional mediums of communication. Wordsworth's anxiety as an author derived from the fact that authors could not assume any commonality between readers because they were too diversified. He also confronted the insurmountable influence of commercial institutions in the mass print market that formulated the readership itself by controlling the production, curation, and sales of reading materials. In *The Excursion*, reflecting his realization of the contemporary diversified readership, Wordsworth intended to make his poetry more democratic by introducing multiple conflicting perspectives. Nevertheless, in doing so, his poetry was more likely to rely on institutionalized language, a ramified and contractual form of language that could only signify mundane and saturated meanings. For Shelley, I described his developing trajectory of responses to the degenerative and speculative ways of imagination formulated by contemporary financial institutions. In my analysis of *The Cenci*, I argued that Shelley demonstrated the limitations of sympathy and imagination through Beatrice, who retained these virtues but reified them to project her political charisma. By presenting Beatrice's moral failure, Shelley implied that this new mode of communication, sympathy, could also become degenerative when it was circulated and ramified

in society, just as paper currency acquired its arbitrary power by being circulated. By contrast, in *Prometheus Unbound*, by dismantling the coherency of linguistic discourses in the drama, Shelley attempted to deconstruct the seemingly rigid materiality of contemporary financial institutions.

I think that these poets' struggles and errors could still be relevant to the criticism of the 21st century's medium of communication. Just as Wordsworth confronted the commercial institutions of the mass print market, we access movies and dramas through global commercial providers, such as AMC, Disney, and Netflix, which produce, curate, and categorize cultural goods for consumers. Under the influence of these institutions, we think that each consumer has a unique and singular taste; however, whatever we watch, these cultural goods are very succinctly categorized and homogenized by these institutions' labeling and keyword system, such as horror, true crime, romantic, and teens. Like Shelley, who witnessed how paper notes deviated from their original referent, metal currency, and arbitrarily constructed their own circulation system, we also live in a society where Bitcoin acquires a monetary value merely because it can be conveniently circulated and cannot be counterfeited. In this context, these poets' works assist us in critically evaluating the current social institutions. They create virtual and artificial realities which supersede and control our intuitive understanding of the world.

While I connected Wordsworth's and Shelley's poetry to philosophical and historical contexts, this attempt turned out to be somewhat limited, especially in meticulously tracing liminal and uneven historical contexts in 18th- and 19th-century Britain. Although I introduced the mass print market and paper money system in 18th-century Britain, my analysis of these historical contexts tended to simply verify Foucault's framework: from intrinsic to nominal. As I expand the project, I plan to incorporate more detailed research on these historical contexts—

especially the expansion of the print market and the creation of complex financial institutions.

For Shelley, I could have analyzed the dramas mentioned in this dissertation with a more sensitive genre awareness. For example, *The Cenci* can be contextualized in the tradition of the eighteenth-century Gothic. The Gothic describes intense emotions and feelings; however, this inflated mode of emotion was often utilized to make the works more stimulative and sensual. Therefore, sincerity is reduced to a mere commodity in the Gothic genre. Similarly, in *The Cenci*, I could interpret Count Cenci's intense but vacant sadism as a catalyst in accelerating the intense and speculative mode of imagination in the contemporary financial system.

Furthermore, I could analyze the conflating agencies in *Prometheus Unbound* using the theory of biopolitics. Agamben's argument that testimonies represented (or masked) the impossibility of seeing could be connected to how the Earth could not recite Prometheus's past curse on Jupiter, and Prometheus did not remember the content of the curse. This curse could only be represented by an in-between entity, neither Prometheus nor Jupiter, but Jupiter's Phantasm, summoned by Prometheus. As the two-dimensional image of the Gorgon imperfectly represents the impossibility of seeing, Jupiter's Phantasm, as a liminal subject, represents Prometheus' past grudge against Jupiter only to dismantle the rigid and fixated relationship between Jupiter and Prometheus.

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VITA

Minho Maeng

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: RESISTANCE AND REPRODUCTION: THE POETRY OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND PERCY SHELLEY

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in English at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2023.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Arts in English at Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea in 2014.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in English at Handong Global University, Pohang, South Korea in 2012.