

FEMININE-CENTERED HISTORY AND THE "GOOD CAUSE"  
IN MARY SHELLEY'S *PERKIN WARBECK*

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## ABSTRACT

JENA AL-FUHAID: Feminine-centered History  
and the “good cause” in Mary Shelley’s *Perkin Warbeck*  
(Under the direction of Jeanne Moskal)

This study advances the long-overdue critical reevaluation of Mary Shelley’s *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830) by examining the appearances of the sixteenth-century pretender to the throne, Perkin Warbeck (both prior to and contemporaneous with Mary Shelley), in conventional historical writings and narratives of political reform; providing the necessary, albeit esoteric, historical background, both Regency and medieval, for a thorough understanding of *Perkin Warbeck* and its historical moment; and analyzing Mary Shelley’s personal writings, letters, and journals for evidence of *Perkin Warbeck*’s function as a safe venue for Mary Shelley’s political opinions, participation in political reform, support of Wollstonecraftian ideology, and contributions to the “‘good cause’—the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge, of the rights of women &c” (*MWSJ* 555). Contrary to the scholarly assumption that Shelley retreated from the political sphere after P. B. Shelley’s death, I suggest that *Perkin Warbeck* is, in fact, a political allegory, and I use the late-medieval lives of Princess Elizabeth and Elizabeth Woodville to critique Regency events, chiefly, George IV’s persecution of Queen Caroline.

To Dr. Jeanne Moskal, for all of her invaluable wisdom and guidance;

To my wonderful family, for their unfailing love, support, and never-ending, much-needed  
patience;

and

To O. and the B.C., for everything.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE: THE MANY <i>PERKINS</i> : WHIG RECEPTION OF SHAKESPEARE, POLITICAL REFORM, AND THE REDEMPTION OF ELIZABETH WOODVILLE AND KATHERINE GORDON.....	16
CHAPTER TWO: QUEEN ELIZABETH AND QUEEN CAROLINE: THE INJURED QUEENS OF ENGLAND.....	42
CHAPTER THREE: WOLLSTONECRAFT, MARY SHELLEY, AND THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF <i>MARIA</i> .....	77
CODA.....	110
WORKS CITED.....	124

## INTRODUCTION

*“I shall be da paragonare with the Queen alone.”*  
–Mary Shelley<sup>1</sup>

The ideas behind this dissertation were spawned by the simple realization that Mary Shelley’s *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck: A Romance* (henceforth, *Perkin Warbeck*) has been largely disregarded. Having deeply appreciated *Perkin Warbeck*, I was left with several questions. Why would *Perkin Warbeck*, and the majority of Mary Shelley’s oeuvre, be left to languish in the shadow of *Frankenstein*? Why would a novel, written by a prominent author, steeped in history, politics, and social significance, be ignored? This study aims to resolve these issues and bring *Perkin Warbeck* much-deserved recognition by examining the appearances of Perkin Warbeck (both prior to and contemporaneous with Mary Shelley) in conventional historical writings and narratives of political reform in order to provide the necessary, albeit esoteric, historical background, both Regency and medieval, for a thorough understanding of *Perkin Warbeck* and its historical moment. I analyze Mary Shelley’s personal writings, letters, and journals in order to prove that *Perkin Warbeck* provided a safe venue for Mary Shelley to express her political opinions, to participate in political reform, to continue her support of Wollstonecraftian ideology, and to contribute to the “good

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Shelley, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 3 vols., ed. Betty Bennett (Baltimore: John Hopkins U P, 1980), Vol. 1, p. 318. Subsequent references to this edition will be cited parenthetically as *MWSL* with volume and page number.

cause'—the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge, of the rights of women &c" (*MWSJ*, II, 555).

It is undeniable that years of literary criticism and misleading authorial statements had firmly established Mary Shelley's works as, at best, subordinate to P. B. Shelley's and at worst, in the words of Erin L. Webster-Garrett, "what happens when a Romantic author stoops to write for profit."<sup>2</sup> In recent years, however, critics such as Betty Bennett, Nora Crook, Pamela Clement, Paula Feldman, Doucet Devin Fisher, Lidia Garbin, Lisa Hopkins, Greg Kucich, Anne Mellor, Jeanne Moskal, Esther Schor, and Erin L. Webster-Garrett, among others, have pushed for the revaluing of Mary Shelley's oeuvre. This movement began with the recovery of *Frankenstein* and advocated an appreciation of Mary Shelley for reasons besides—in Leigh Hunt's words—"her parents, her lord, / And the poor lone impossible monster abhorr'd."<sup>3</sup> While scholars initially restricted themselves to Shelley's more accessible, and scandalous, works, more recent scholars have begun to tackle the oft-assumed impenetrable *Perkin Warbeck*. In the following section of this introduction, I discuss *Perkin Warbeck's* fall into oblivion before detailing the rediscovery of Mary Shelley's oeuvre, focusing primarily on *Perkin Warbeck*.

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<sup>2</sup> Erin L. Webster-Garrett, "The Politics of Ambivalence: Romance, History, and Gender in Mary W. Shelley's *Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*," *CLIO* 37.1 (2007): 49-59, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Qtd. in Emily W. Sunstein, *Mary Shelley, Romance and Reality* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989), p. 338.

## The (Self-)Marginalization of Mary Shelley

The critical opinion of Mary Shelley has improved in recent years and Mary Shelley is no longer read solely “for the light she can throw on the poetic and intellectual development of her husband.”<sup>4</sup> However, “for most students, Mary Shelley is [still] either represented by a single work or read in relation to Percy Bysshe Shelley, Byron, and the so-called Satanic school of British Romanticism.”<sup>5</sup> While initially inexplicable, this dismissive attitude toward Mary Shelley’s works originates from Mary Shelley herself. Quotations from Mary Shelley’s own letters and journals are used, for the most part, to create the meek, apolitical, and inferior persona so long accepted in academia. It was Mary Shelley herself who wrote, “It is a painful thing to me to put forward my own opinion. I have been so long accustomed to have another act for me; but my years of apprenticeship must begin . . . . I would, like a dormouse, roll myself in cotton at the bottom of my cage, & never peep out” (*MWSL* I, 288-89). In an 1838 journal entry, Mary Shelley also wrote, “I recoil from the vulgar abuse of the inimical press . . . . I am silent therefore from prudence. I will not put myself so far forward,” and, perhaps most damningly, “In the first place, with regard to ‘the good cause’—the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge, of the rights of women &c.—I am not a person of opinions.”<sup>6</sup> This final quotation, coupled with Mary Shelley’s lifelong hagiography of P. B. Shelley and overt retreat from radicalism—in itself a litmus test of a “true” Romantic—established the scholarly perception of Mary Shelley as firmly

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<sup>4</sup> Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fictions*, p. xi.

<sup>5</sup> Esther Schor, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2003), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley*, 2 vols., ed. Paula Feldman and Diana Pugh. Oxford: Clarendon P, 1987; Vol. 2, p. 555.

outside “the elect.” This perception was most damaging to the works of Mary Shelley’s widowhood, and most particularly to *Perkin Warbeck*, as other issues contributed to *Perkin Warbeck*’s gradual slide into oblivion. In her book, *The Literary Career of Novelist Mary Shelley After 1822*, Webster-Garrett identifies the primary difficulty: “Of [Mary Shelley’s] final three [novels], *Perkin Warbeck* demands the most of readers. If one is uninitiated in the historical subject matter or is unaware of the types of arguments Shelley assumes as a shared background, it can be a rough read” (92). In addition to the immense historical knowledge required for a proper understanding of *Perkin Warbeck*, contemporary critics seem largely to have missed the text’s political and feminist opinions, as did the first readers, who found little to interest them. Even though one review noted in passing Mary Shelley’s “eagerness to impress upon readers her own peculiar view of historical fact,”<sup>7</sup> the majority of readers evidently shared the view of the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, which faults the novel for failing to “blend together with sufficient skill what is fictitious and what is true” and for Mary Shelley’s doggedness in “follow[ing] Warbeck through all his fortunes, whether his adventures be brilliant or stupid, fortunate or disastrous.”<sup>8</sup> *Perkin Warbeck*’s reputation deteriorated with time and the novel began to be, in Webster-Garrett’s assessment, “routinely passed over in surveys of Shelley’s fiction or quickly abbreviated as evidence of what happens when a literary author writes for profit”; to this day, *Perkin Warbeck* remains neglected.

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<sup>7</sup> *New Monthly Magazine* (1830), p. 457; qtd. in Webster-Garrett, *Literary Career*, p. 107. (1830) (*ELJ* 350-51; qtd. in Webster-Garrett 107).

<sup>8</sup> *Edinburgh Literary Journal* (1830), pp. 350-51; qtd. in Webster-Garrett, *Literary Career*, p. 107.

## The Rediscovery of Mary Shelley

Betty Bennett inaugurated the reevaluation of Shelley's historical novels, *Valperga* and *Perkin Warbeck*, in an essay she published in the *The Evidence of the Imagination* (1978), which she co-edited. In that essay, Bennett pinpoints the importance of Mary Shelley's feminine-centered historical fiction and notes that *Perkin Warbeck* attacks "the principle of 'legitimate' monarchical power" (365). Most importantly, Bennett defuses the power of that self-damning 1838 journal entry by restoring its context; other scholars were misled by its "previously abridged published form" (369). Mary Shelley's position, opines Bennett, echoes Godwin in disclaiming "the radicalism of 'mere drivellers'—not radicalism itself" (369). In this light, Bennett reclaims Mary Shelley's historical novels, as expressions of "her belief in the 'liberal cause'"; concludes Bennett, "it would be a critical error not to recognize in her historical novels how much a product of the reform movement she was" (369).

Somewhat inexplicably, Bennett's essay failed to generate much interest in Mary Shelley's historical novels. Anne K. Mellor's *Mary Shelley, Her Life, Her Fictions, Her Monsters*<sup>9</sup> succinctly sums up the transitional critical perception of Mary Shelley and the neglect under which the historical novels still languish. Mellor mentions the redemption of *Frankenstein* and its canonization as "an essential text," while acknowledging that the new "critical estimation" of *Frankenstein* has not extended to Mary Shelley's other writings or succeeded in reestablishing Mary Shelley herself. Mellor then announces her intention to "examin[e] the entire range of Mary Shelley's life and writings" (xi), but, again, *Perkin Warbeck* gets short shrift. Mellor characterizes *Perkin Warbeck* as a

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<sup>9</sup> Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley, Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

“thoroughly researched and well-told adventure store,” told “vividly” and “compellingly.” While applauding its theme—“the masculine betrayal of family bonds is a practice inherited from the past”—Mellor confesses that *Perkin Warbeck* “does not engage these conflicts in a compellingly personal way” (177-78). Thus, while Mellor does much with this biography and *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein* (1993)<sup>10</sup> to draw needed attention to unappreciated parts of Mary Shelley’s oeuvre, *Perkin Warbeck* remained largely neglected.

However, the critical landscape was forever changed by the publication of *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley* (hereafter, *NSWMS*) in 1996, making an authoritative scholarly edition of all of Mary Shelley’s novels available for the first time, including *Perkin Warbeck*. Doucet Devin Fisher<sup>11</sup> was responsible for a meticulously-researched edition that provided impeccable historical records and did much to facilitate later scholarship on *Perkin Warbeck*.

The following year, a collection of essays in honor of the bicentenary of Mary Shelley’s birth appeared. This collection, *Iconoclastic Departures*,<sup>12</sup> included an excellent essay by Lisa Hopkins, “The Self and the Monstrous,” which discussed *Perkin Warbeck* in depth, drawing attention to Hopkins’s prior work demonstrating the political relevance of the Perkin Warbeck figure and the political counter-culture surrounding

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<sup>10</sup> Audrey A. Fisch, Anne K. Mellor, and Esther Schor, eds., *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein* (New York: Oxford U P, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Doucet Devin Fischer, ed., *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck: A Romance*, by Mary Shelley, Vol. 5 in *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, gen. ed., Nora Crook (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996), 8 vols.

<sup>12</sup> Syndy M. Conger, Frederick S. Frank, and Gregory O’Dea, eds. *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley after Frankenstein: Essays in Honor of the Bicentenary of Mary Shelley’s Birth* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson U P, 1997); see, in particular, Lisa Hopkins’s essay, “The Self and the Monstrous: *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*,” pp. 260-274.

him. Hopkins also argued against the idea of linking Mary Shelley solely to Walter Scott, and argued for her being a “nineteenth-century alternative to Shakespeare” (Hopkins 262).

The critical Mary Shelleyian revival, spurred on by the publication of *The Novels and Selected Works* and *Iconoclastic Departures*, continued with the publication of *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters* and *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Falkner* in 2000<sup>13</sup>; in the former, Vincent Petronella continues the work of Hopkins by linking Mary Shelley's novels, including *Perkin Warbeck*, to Shakespeare, although he does not address the possibility of Mary Shelley augmenting or altering Shakespeare's historical representation.<sup>14</sup> In the latter collection of essays, *Perkin Warbeck* is also addressed. Building on prior criticism, Lidia Garbin does much to argue for the importance of *Perkin Warbeck* by linking Mary Shelley to Scott rather than to Shakespeare.<sup>15</sup> Garbin focuses on the influence of *Ivanhoe's* Rebecca and Rowena on *Perkin Warbeck's* Katherine and Monina and on linking Mary Shelley to Scott's method, by which historical fiction comments on “parallel issues” in the Romantic period (150). Garbin then reiterates the oft-repeated charge that Mary Shelley's “‘dormouse’ nature (coupled with a ‘revulsion against the Philosophical Radicals’) . . . prevented her from taking an active part in open political and social debate” (150-51), but adds the caveat

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<sup>13</sup> See Laura Dabundo, ed., *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters* (New York: U P of America, 2000), hereafter cited as *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*; and Michael Eberle-Sinatra, ed., *Mary Shelley's Fictions* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), hereafter cited as *Mary Shelley's Fictions*.

<sup>14</sup> See Vincent F. Petronella, “Mary Shelley, Shakespeare, and the Romantic Theatre” in *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*, pp. 121-134.

<sup>15</sup> Lidia Garbin, “Mary Shelley and Walter Scott: *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* and the Historical Novel” in *Mary Shelley's Fictions*, pp. 150-63.

that this “dormouse nature” did not prevent her from participating in this debate in the same way Scott did. As Garbin writes:

All her life, Shelley was attracted by, and involved in, contemporary matters, but her “dormouse” nature, which made her reluctance to expose herself to the public increase after the death of P.B. Shelley, prevented her from taking an active part in open political and social debate . . . . Historical fiction became the means through which Shelley could express her political anxiety, and in this she found a mentor in Scott, despite Scott’s quite different politics. (150-51)

Before elaborating on the comparison between *Ivanhoe* and *Perkin Warbeck* and Mary Shelley’s debt to Scott, Garbin states (in order to claim that the similarity is one of methodology but not of political beliefs), “The fictionalization of Perkin Warbeck as the true Richard of York, however, allowed Shelley to attack both usurped and legitimate monarchy and absolutist power” (152). Thus, Garbin supports the argument for *Perkin Warbeck’s* function as a vehicle for Mary Shelley’s political beliefs.

*The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley* (2003)<sup>16</sup> continues the establishment of Mary Shelley as an important historical author. Greg Kucich’s chapter<sup>17</sup> argues for the political importance of Mary Shelley’s historical writings (though not of *Perkin Warbeck*), contextualizing her within a shared effort by “many of her female contemporaries [to] reconstruct the past in order to redress the social and gender inequalities of the present” (Kucich 228). Deirdre Lynch<sup>18</sup> devotes considerable space to

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<sup>16</sup> Esther Schor, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2003).

<sup>17</sup> Greg Kucich, “Biographer” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, pp. 226-41.

<sup>18</sup> Deirdre Lynch, “Historical Novelist” in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, pp. 135-50.

*Perkin Warbeck* in her chapter, accurately noting the revolutionary nature of Mary Shelley's feminine historiography. Lynch writes:

The attention the novel devotes to the relationships among its female characters (arguably more important than the relationships they have with the hero) works to the same end. Writing women into the historical novel, Shelley writes against the grain of official historiography's definitions of the truth about the past. (143)

This encouraging start to the re-evaluation of *Perkin Warbeck* then blossomed with Webster-Garrett's *The Literary Career of Novelist Mary Shelley after 1822* (2006).<sup>19</sup> The majority of Webster-Garrett's analysis is devoted to *Perkin Warbeck*; she opens by summarizing the previous reasons for its neglect while setting the stage for a convincing argument for the importance of *Perkin Warbeck*. Although her arguments are multiple, for the purposes of this study, Webster-Garrett's most important points are: First, Mary Shelley's novels explore the issue of "feminine survival" (31); Mary Shelley's initial representation of a woman who survives is *Perkin Warbeck*'s Katherine Gordon. Second, although critics fail to acknowledge the political undertones of *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley uses the novel to argue for women's rights by providing an alternate model for women to follow. Third, "Katherine's defense bears clear signs of Shelley's investment in the tenets of Wollstonecraftian feminism, as well as, perhaps, an embedded autobiographical rejoinder to her own critics" (140). Fourth, Webster-Garrett draws attention to Mary Shelley's deliberate deviation from the historical sources in allowing Katherine Gordon speak for herself and "in speaking for herself,

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<sup>19</sup> Erin L. Webster-Garrett, *The Literary Career of Novelist Mary Shelley After 1822: Romance, Realism, and the Politics of Gender* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen P, 2006); subsequent references to this work will be cited as "Webster-Garrett; Literary Career."

Katherine speaks of how an entirely conventional sexual education made her a figure to despise” (140). Thus, Webster-Garrett hints that Mary Shelley is not successful in erasing the scandalous acts of Katherine Gordon’s life, but instead justifies her behavior by finding fault with her environment, rather than with Katherine Gordon herself.

This dissertation owes much, both directly and indirectly (in that similar conclusions were arrived at independently), to Webster-Garrett’s study, and it is an inescapable fact that it builds upon this strong foundation, as well as the works of Hopkins, Fischer, and the other pivotal critics mentioned above. This study builds upon and in some respects, attempts to counter existing literary criticism of *Perkin Warbeck* and is devoted, as a whole, to arguing that *Perkin Warbeck* is a feminist, reformist text and to recontextualizing *Perkin Warbeck* in terms of the monarchy and political environment during the early nineteenth century. These themes are explored throughout each of the ensuing three chapters of this dissertation.

Before proceeding to succinct summaries of the individual chapters, I will first provide a brief plot overview of Mary Shelley’s *Perkin Warbeck* to facilitate understanding of the ensuing arguments. *Perkin Warbeck* is ostensibly about a pretender to the throne, but Mary Shelley recasts the narrative and writes as though Perkin is the real Prince Richard, Duke of York. Following the death of King Edward IV, his two sons were imprisoned in the Tower by their uncle, who usurped the throne to become Richard III. The two princes mysteriously disappeared and were never seen again, but some years later, Richard, alias Perkin, reappeared claiming to be the rightful king of England. Perkin/Richard led multiple insurrections and invasions before eventually being imprisoned in the Tower of London and executed. History has since

largely named him as a pretender, but dissenters still remain. As Mary Shelley wrote in her Preface to *Perkin Warbeck*, "It is not singular that I should entertain a belief that Perkin was, in reality, the lost Duke of York. For, in spite of [David] Hume and the later historians who have followed in his path, no person who has at all studied the subject but arrives at the same conclusion."<sup>20</sup> Mary Shelley is referring here to noted historian David Hume who wrote the *History of England* and chose to ignore prior historians who disagreed with his own conclusion that Perkin Warbeck was an imposter. Mary Shelley goes on to reference historians such as Francis Bacon, Edward Hall, and Raphael Holinshed to support her decision to write as though Perkin was, in fact, Richard, as well as the behavior of James IV of Scotland and the Earl of Huntley, in bestowing Lady Katherine Gordon's hand in marriage on Richard/Perkin.

Despite the perceived importance of the titular hero, Mary Shelley's focus throughout her novel remains the female characters. Mary Shelley begins her novel with the defeat of Richard III and the flight of Perkin/Richard from England. She chronicles his adventures abroad while simultaneously describing events in England, primarily the fates of his mother and sister, Elizabeth Woodville and Princess Elizabeth. The conquering invader, Henry VII, marries the York heiress Princess Elizabeth, fusing the houses of Lancaster and York and founding the Tudor dynasty. Henry VII dislikes his wife and her family, imprisons her mother, Elizabeth Woodville, in Bermondsey Abbey, and despite the births of multiple children, is cruel and neglectful to his wife. While chronicling these events, Mary Shelley also follows Richard's many adventures

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<sup>20</sup> Mary Shelley, *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck: A Romance*, ed. Doucet Devin Fisher, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, gen. ed. Nora Crook (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996), 8 vols; Vol. 5, p. 5. All quotations will come from this edition and volume number and will be cited parenthetically as *PW*.

throughout Spain, Scotland, Burgundy, France, and Ireland, as well as his forays into England, marriage to Lady Katherine Gordon, his refusal to renounce his monarchical ambitions and live a quiet life with her at her request, imprisonment in England during which Henry VII falls in love with Katherine, and Richard's eventual execution. *Perkin Warbeck* concludes with Mary Shelley's famous "defense" of Katherine Gordon. This version of the historical events, particularly with regard to Mary Shelley's alterations and exclusions, forms an integral part of my argument and will be referenced throughout this dissertation.

The first chapter of this dissertation is divided into four sections. In the first section, I will discuss the literary history of Perkin Warbeck, sketching his appearances in the literature of the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. In the second and third sections, I discuss the relationship of Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* with the works of two of her most important predecessors, William Shakespeare and Horace Walpole. I will argue that Mary Shelley's novel interacts with both established history (Shakespeare) and the tradition of political reform (Walpole) and that reading the works of Shakespeare and Walpole illuminates the immense need for a feminine-centered reconstruction of the history of the War of the Roses, which Mary Shelley undertook. In the fourth section, I discuss the criticism establishing Perkin Warbeck's role within political reform and established appearances in literature and the theater at times of political unrest before moving to a discussion of the near-simultaneity, in 1830, of Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* and Alexander Campbell's *Perkin Warbeck or the Court of James the Fourth of Scotland*. I discuss both authors' focus on Katherine Gordon and heavy reliance on the "white rose" motif before

concluding that Mary Shelley's and Campbell's shared features comment on the infamous Romantic-period persecution of Queen Caroline by redeeming the character of another royal wife, the notorious Katherine Gordon.

The second chapter of this dissertation argues against the scholarly assumption that Mary Shelley retreated from the political sphere after P. B. Shelley's death. I instead suggest that *Perkin Warbeck* is, in fact, a veiled critique of Regency politics and of women's subordination within it. This chapter is devoted to an exposition of relevant Regency events, the complicated, but essential, medieval history, which is used to illuminate Mary Shelley's inclusions, exclusions, interpretations, and alterations to established history, and the way in which a systematic textual analysis of *Perkin Warbeck* details Shelley's construction of a political allegory, using the lives of Princess Elizabeth and Elizabeth Woodville to critique the Prince Regent's (later George IV's), persecution of Queen Caroline.

In the third chapter of this dissertation, I will argue against the scholarly perception of Mary Shelley as Wollstonecraft's failed successor. Instead I will argue that *Perkin Warbeck* is Mary Shelley's feminist manifesto and that Mary Shelley uses the female characters of the novel—Elizabeth Woodville, Jane Shore, Princess Elizabeth, and Katherine Gordon—to argue against the societal subordination of women to “the tyrant, whom choice or necessity has appointed to reign over them.”<sup>21</sup> After a close reading of Mary Shelley's treatment of Elizabeth Woodville, Jane Shore, and Princess Elizabeth, chapter three concludes with an analysis of the character of Katherine

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<sup>21</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria*, ed. Cynthia Richards (Glen Allen, Virginia: College Publishing, 2004), pp. 178-79; subsequent references to the novel will be cited parenthetically as *Maria*.

Gordon. I argue that Mary Shelley erases the majority of the scandalous acts of Katherine's later life and allows her to speak for herself in order to strengthen the argument that Katherine is not, and should not be, tied to her husband's fall. In general, I draw upon Webster-Garrett's point that Katherine Gordon is a Wollstonecraftian survivor who, significantly, speaks for herself.<sup>22</sup> I depart, however, from Webster-Garrett's characterization that Katherine ultimately becomes "a type of sexual monstrosity" (140). Instead, I show that Mary Shelley's Katherine implicitly argues for the independence of women, unsubordinated to their fathers and husbands, able to redeem themselves, and therefore able to survive, even when their men perish or fall. In this final chapter, I will also argue against the assumption that Wollstonecraft's influence on Mary Shelley is derived primarily from the *Vindication*. I will instead mount a systematic argument for Mary Shelley's inspiration being Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman; or Maria*. Using close reading, I examine the female characters and their interactions with men in both *Maria* and *Perkin Warbeck*, arguing for the validity of seeing Mary Shelley as the mature Wollstonecraft's successor. In conclusion, I argue that in spite of Mary Shelley's claim to have "no opinions" with regards to the rights of women, Mary Shelley is, as she always was, deeply invested in the "good cause" and, thus, plots Katherine Gordon's survival rather than her fall, her speaking for herself, rather than being spoken for; Mary Shelley thereby finishes the unfinished business of *Maria*.

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<sup>22</sup> This is also mentioned by Barbara Jane O'Sullivan in her "Beatrice in *Valperga*: A New Cassandra," in *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, ed. Audrey Fisch et al. (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1993), pp. 140-158..

The coda to this dissertation discusses a modern-day author whose works parallel those of Mary Shelley: Philippa Gregory.<sup>23</sup> While this pairing may at first seem incongruous, this coda discusses Gregory's role as a Mary Shelleyian successor in reclaiming the lost women of medieval and early-modern history. This section discusses both Gregory's fictional and non-fictional works with the hopes of demonstrating the continuing importance of writing feminine-centered history.

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<sup>23</sup> Philippa Gregory has published numerous historical fiction novels, including *The White Queen* (2009), *The Red Queen* (2010), *The King Maker's Daughter* (2012), and *The White Princess* (2013)—all published by Simon & Schuster.

**CHAPTER ONE: THE MANY *PERKINS*:  
WHIG RECEPTION OF SHAKESPEARE, POLITICAL REFORM, AND THE  
REDEMPTION OF ELIZABETH WOODVILLE AND KATHERINE GORDON**

As detailed in the introduction to this dissertation, Chapters Two and Three are devoted to an in-depth analysis of Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*, arguing, with direct textual support, for Mary Shelley's systematic construction of a political allegory in *Perkin Warbeck* in the former and for Mary Shelley's continued engagement with Wollstonecraftian ideals in *Perkin Warbeck* in the latter. To preface these arguments, particularly that of Chapter Three, Chapter One aims to situate *Perkin Warbeck* within its literary context, demonstrating Mary Shelley's interactions with predecessors and contemporaries. Thus, this chapter is divided into four sections: the first section is a detailed exposition of the literary appearances of Perkin Warbeck that preceded Mary Shelley's version; the second section discusses Mary Shelley's engagement with established history in the works of one of her most relevant predecessors, Shakespeare; the third section systematically compares Mary Shelley's novel with a work by one of Richard III's most imaginative apologists, Horace Walpole; and the fourth section is devoted to systematically comparing Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* to Alexander Campbell's novel in order to reveal surprising similarities between the two novels, to then link these simultaneous revisions to Queen Caroline's infamous trial, and to establish the continuing role of *Perkin Warbeck* within nineteenth-century political reform.

The antecedents of Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* have been chronicled by Jean de Palacio, Donald K. Anderson, Jr., Erin Webster-Garrett, and Lisa Hopkins, among others.<sup>1</sup> Before moving to a discussion of prior versions of the story of Perkin, I will first reiterate portions of these scholars' research by summarizing the relevant literary and theatrical appearances of Perkin Warbeck, and the surrounding history.

Although Perkin Warbeck is not a character in Shakespeare's history plays, they are a main source for the historical events detailed in Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*. Shakespeare is believed to have written the first tetralogy (*Henry VI, Part 1; Henry VI, Part 2; Henry VI, Part 3; and Richard III*) between 1589 and 1592; *The Life and Death of King John* in 1594 or 1595; and the second tetralogy (*Richard II; Henry IV, Part 1; Henry IV, Part 2; and Henry V*) between 1595 and 1599. Shakespeare himself, of course, had his sources. As David Bevington<sup>2</sup> notes in his edition of Shakespeare's works, the bard would have had access to the latest edition of Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), in addition to the historical writings of Robert Fabyan, John Stow, Richard Grafton, Edward Hall, John Foxe, and Polydore Vergil.<sup>3</sup> Shakespeare also utilized *The History of Richard III* (1557), which was sometimes erroneously attributed to John Morton, Bishop of Ely, but actually was written by Sir Thomas More between 1512 and 1519 and published posthumously.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Donald K. Anderson Jr., "Richard II and Perkin Warbeck," *Shakespeare Quarterly* xiii (1962): 260-3; Jean de Palacio, *Mary Shelley Dans Son Oeuvre* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1969); Erin L. Webster-Garrett, "The Politics of Ambivalence: Romance, History, and Gender in Mary W. Shelley's Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck" in *CLIO* 37.1 (2007): 49-59; and Lisa Hopkins, "The Self and the Monstrous: *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*" in *Iconoclastic Departures: Mary Shelley after Frankenstein: Essays in Honor of the Bicentenary of Mary Shelley's Birth*, ed. Syndy M. Conger et al. (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson U P, 1997), 260-74.

<sup>2</sup> David Bevington, ed., *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, seventh edition (Boston: Pearson, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Mary Shelley also lists Hall and Holinshed among her sources.

After Shakespeare and his influential sources, the seventeenth-century appearances of Perkin Warbeck differed mostly on the matter of Perkin's legitimacy. Those arguing that he was the rightful heir include, unproblematically, Thomas Gainsford in his *True and Wonderful History of Perkin Warbeck* (1618), Sir George Buc<sup>4</sup> (or Buck) in his *History of the Life and Reign of Richard III*, which argues that More/Morton "unfairly traduced" Richard III and that Prince Richard did not perish in the tower, and, with qualifications, John Ford's *The Chronicle History of Perkin Warbeck, A Strange Truth* (1634).<sup>5</sup> In the Perkin-as-imposter tradition, Francis Bacon's *The History of the Reign of King Henry VII* (1622) dismisses Warbeck as a "mighty trifle" (Webster-Garrett 2).

Eighteenth-century appearances of Perkin Warbeck include one of Mary Shelley's cited sources, David Hume's *Georgian History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* (1754-1762), and—conspicuously unmentioned by Mary Shelley—Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III* (1768). Less influential for Mary Shelley were La Paix de Lizancour's *Le Pretendant, ou le Faux Duc d'York* (1716), Baculard D'Arnaud's *Nouvelles Historiques* (1774-1783), and Sophia Lee's *Warbeck: A Pathetic Tale* (1786). While these versions of Perkin Warbeck are not particularly relevant to Mary Shelley's interpretation, they nonetheless indicate the ongoing fascination with the topic throughout the eighteenth century.

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<sup>4</sup> An important historical figure for his writings but also for his discovery of the *Titulus Regius*, a pivotal document which is discussed in greater detail in both chapter's two and three of this dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> See Hopkins, "The Self and the Monstrous: *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*", p. 262. Subsequent references to this essay are cited parenthetically by "Hopkins."

Surprisingly, Mary Shelley critics, such as Lidia Garbin, insist that Walter Scott is Mary Shelley's most relevant predecessor, rather than Shakespeare or other illustrious authors of versions of the Perkin Warbeck story. Scholars such as Garbin and Vincent F. Petronella contend that in *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley sought to emulate Scott's success, a conclusion supported by Mary Shelley's expressed admiration for Scott and her documented attempts to seek his advice.<sup>6</sup> I agree with Garbin's general contention that historical fiction functions as a "safe" medium for nineteenth-century novelists to comment obliquely on present events, but accept Hopkins's position that historical fiction as a genre allows multiple emphases and implementations. Hopkins argues that, rather than captivating the audience's interest with "orthodox events," "authorial sympathy," and "believable characters," as Scott does, Mary Shelley pushes the historical novel towards historiography rather than fiction and "challenge(s) rather than reinforce(s) the version of events we think we know"—in short, Mary Shelley is "a nineteenth-century alternative to Shakespeare" (261-62). These critics' views are not necessarily in opposition to each other; I would argue that Mary Shelley incorporates portions of Scott's technique, with the introduction of obviously fictional, sympathetic characters, such as Monina de Faro, and the use of considerable "authorial sympathy," with the portrayal of Katherine Gordon. That being said, both Mary Shelley's preface<sup>7</sup> to

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<sup>6</sup> See Lidia Garbin, "Mary Shelley and Walter Scott: *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* and the Historical Novel" in *Mary Shelley's Fictions*, ed. Michael Eberle-Sinatra (London: Macmillan P Ltd, 2000), 150-63; and Vincent F. Petronella, "Mary Shelley, Shakespeare, and the Romantic Theatre" in *Jane Austen and Mary Shelley and Their Sisters*, ed. Laura Dabundo (New York: U P of America, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Described in greater detail in Chapter Three: As Mary Shelley wrote in the Preface to *Perkin Warbeck*, "It is not singular that I should entertain a belief that Perkin was, in reality, the lost Duke of York. For, in spite of [David] Hume and the later historians who have followed in his path, no person who has at all studied the subject but arrives at the same conclusion" (*PW* 5). Mary Shelley is referring here to noted historian David Hume, who wrote the *History of England* and chose to ignore prior historians who

the novel and *Perkin Warbeck* itself reveal considerable authorial investment in challenging established history; popularized chiefly by Shakespeare, as well as by Hume, Bacon, Hall and Holinshed (the historians she cites). Therefore, Mary Shelley could be said to adapt Scott's technique in order to engage with the accepted version of historical events, which was largely perpetuated by Shakespeare's plays, thus making her a nineteenth-century respondent to Shakespeare.

The connection between Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* and Shakespeare has been partially explored. Petronella draws extensive connections between Mary Shelley's other novels and Shakespeare, but, concerning her *Perkin Warbeck*, notes only that *Perkin Warbeck* picks up where Shakespeare's *Richard III* ends and that her Katherine Gordon is indebted to Shakespearean heroines in non-history plays, such as Cleopatra, as well as to Hamlet. Hopkins, by contrast, focuses her Shakespeare-Mary Shelley discussion on *Perkin Warbeck*, noting a shared disregard for probability and historical accuracy. She allies Mary Shelley with John Ford against Shakespeare in their shared intent "to stand in conspicuous opposition to the version of events offered by More, and, above all, by Shakespeare" (Hopkins 265). Hopkins's analysis of Mary Shelley's allusions to Shakespeare demonstrates that *Hamlet* figures prominently, while Mary Shelley conspicuously avoids *Richard III*. As Hopkins notes, *Perkin Warbeck* reduces the Shakespearean Richard's infamous deformity to a single, ambiguous mention, without endorsement of King Richard's nickname Crookback. This reduction is striking, Hopkins notes, given Mary Shelley's lifelong interest in deformity and

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disagreed with his own conclusion that Perkin Warbeck was an imposter. Mary Shelley goes on to reference historians such as Francis Bacon, Edward Hall, and Raphael Holinshed to support her decision to write as though Perkin was in fact Richard, as well as the behavior of James IV of Scotland and the Earl of Huntley, in bestowing Lady Katherine Gordon's hand in marriage on Richard/Perkin.

monstrosity. The most relevant portion of Hopkins's argument for my purposes is her hypothesis that Mary Shelley set herself up in opposition to the established Shakespearean version of events. In the following portion of this paper, I will respond to Hopkins's theory by arguing that while Mary Shelley may be setting herself up in opposition to Shakespeare with the goal of establishing the true identity of Perkin Warbeck and subsequently clearing the name of Richard III, her novel also functions as an addition to Shakespeare's plays, emphasizing the importance of female characters such as Elizabeth Woodville and illuminating the marginalized women in Shakespeare's text.

As I discuss in greater detail in chapter three of this dissertation, Mary Shelley's focus throughout *Perkin Warbeck* is undeniably the women in Prince Richard's life: Elizabeth Woodville, Queen Elizabeth, Jane Shore, Monina de Faro, and Katherine Gordon. As Monina de Faro is a fictitious character, she is not relevant to a comparison with Shakespeare's first tetralogy, and as Katherine Gordon does not enter the picture until long after Richard III's death, she too can be passed over. Jane Shore and Princess Elizabeth of York are relevant to both works; however, neither is a speaking character in Shakespeare's play, rather, only characters mentioned in passing by other characters, such as Richard III and Elizabeth Woodville. Therefore, their significant presence alone in Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*, particularly when contrasted to their considerable diminishment in *Richard III*, establishes Mary Shelley's efforts to bring Jane Shore and Princess Elizabeth to the forefront in her feminine-centered history. Of the three major female characters of *Richard III*, two (Queen Margaret and Anne Neville) do not appear in Mary Shelley's novel; however, Elizabeth Woodville, who appears in both works,

amply demonstrates Mary Shelley's determination to subtly augment, if the necessity for historical accuracy does not enable her to wholly challenge, Shakespeare's presentation of the feminine.

Elizabeth Woodville is presented positively in *Henry VI, Part 3*, and in *Richard III*.<sup>8</sup> Richard's exceedingly unkind comments about her may be dismissed as unreliable, malicious, and/or part of his overall villainy. When Elizabeth actually speaks, she is admirable: "retain(ing) verbal mastery" and resisting Edward IV's advances until he proposes marriage.<sup>9</sup> Largely disappearing for the remainder of *Henry VI, Part 3*, she reemerges as a powerful opponent of Richard III's in the final play of the first tetralogy. Unlike Anne, Richard III's wife, Elizabeth Woodville, is undeceived by Richard's protestations that love excuses his acts and "in this second debate the preponderance of stichomythic responses are Elizabeth's, hers are the sarcasm and the greater dramatic force" (Kehler 118). Elizabeth neither denies nor accepts the proposal of marriage that Richard III offers for her daughter, Princess Elizabeth, playing for time until events are decided by Richard's death at Bosworth and Henry VII's accession to throne. The play concludes with Henry VII stating, "Oh, now let Richmond and Elizabeth, / The true succeeders of each royal house, / By God's fair ordinance conjoin together!" (*Richard III*, 5.5.29-31).<sup>10</sup> Thus, despite some praise for Elizabeth's mental abilities, Shakespeare concludes by obviating the necessity of her consent for her daughter's marriage. She is

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<sup>8</sup> Some critics have noted this positive representation; see, for instance, Dorothea Kehler, "Shakespeare's Richard III."

<sup>9</sup> Dorothea Kehler, "Shakespeare's Richard III" in *The Explicator*. 56. 3(2010): 118-21; p. 119. Subsequent references to this article are cited parenthetically as "Kehler."

<sup>10</sup> All Shakespeare quotations come from David Bevington's seventh edition of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare* (Boston: Pearson, 2004).

dismissed as irrelevant. Outcomes have been decided in the masculine domain, by events of war.

In contrast to Shakespeare's tidy dismissal of women's roles, Mary Shelley elaborates upon the courtship of Princess Elizabeth and Henry VII, crucially leaving power in the hands of Elizabeth Woodville on two separate occasions. First, when Princess Elizabeth has resolved to break her engagement to Henry VII, it is her mother who changes her mind by "devoting herself to cultivate a more rational disposition in her daughter" (*PW* 31). Elizabeth's persuasion is not just motherly, but also political, as Mary Shelley soon confirms. Elizabeth states:

Is your hapless fate decided? Why did I not join you at Sheriff Hutton [where Elizabeth and Edward, Duke of Warwick were staying]? Why did I not place your hand in that of your noble cousin [Edward, Earl of Warwick]? Ah, Warwick! could I even now inspire you with my energy, you would be free, in arms; and England to a man would rise in the cause of Edward the Sixth, and my sweet Elizabeth!" (*PW* 31)

In Mary Shelley's telling, Elizabeth Woodville had the power in the interval before the formal engagement to prevent the marriage, but she chose not to exercise it, a choice that she would come to regret immensely. Moreover, Mary Shelley suggests that if Edward, Earl of Warwick, had the energy of Elizabeth (a woman), Henry VII would not remain long on his throne, despite his declared betrothal to the York heiress. This subtle alteration and her detailed portrayals of Jane Shore and Princess Elizabeth constitute Mary Shelley's challenge to Shakespeare's version of severely limited female relevance and power in the War of the Roses.

Mary Shelley's interactions with the contrary, non-Shakespearean narratives associated with political reform are as important as her use of Shakespeare. As research has been done on the influence of Ford on Mary Shelley's novel as well as the relationships between Mary Shelley and her acknowledged sources, I would turn instead to an examination of one of her unacknowledged, but almost certainly influential, sources: Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III* (1768).<sup>11</sup> Mary Shelley's debt to Walpole is well established by his founding the Gothic-novel genre, of which Mary Shelley wrote the most famous example. Less known is a shared interest in the War of the Roses. Webster-Garrett and Linda Charnes have suggested some affinities, but little effort has yet been made fully to establish the relationship between Walpole's and Mary Shelley's historical texts.<sup>12</sup> Although a thorough comparison of all aspects of the two works, particularly the respective defenses of Richard/Perkin's authenticity, would be undeniably fascinating and provoking, in this chapter, I will restrict myself solely to an examination of Walpole's presentation of Elizabeth Woodville.

Walpole is largely concerned with reclaiming the character of Richard III and, therefore, the female characters that so occupy Mary Shelley figure little into his narrative. However, when they do appear, Walpole shows his determination to defend Richard III's reputation, even if it means savaging everyone else's. Walpole's defense of Richard begins with accusations against Elizabeth Woodville: "The ambition of the queen and her family alarmed the princes and the nobility: Gloucester, Buckingham,

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<sup>11</sup> Horace Walpole, *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III* (Twickenham: Strawberry Hill Press, 1770).

<sup>12</sup> See Charnes, "Shakespeare and the Gothic Strain" in *Shakespeare Studies* 38(2010): 185+.

Hastings, and many more had checked those attempts . . . as soon as her son should come of age, she might regain her power and the means of revenge” (Walpole 40). Thus, Walpole justifies Richard III’s usurpation as motivated by a just suspicion of the queen’s ambition and by the fear of her son’s likely revenge of any slights against her. (Surely it is most logical for a son to defend his mother?) Elizabeth, surprisingly, is also blamed for Richard’s murder of her own family members. Walpole writes of their executions: “at every step we find how much she contributed to draw ruin on their heads and her own” (31). While this episode is not addressed directly by Mary Shelley, it is by all accounts a most outrageous accusation. Members of Elizabeth’s family were murdered on two occasions: her father and brother by the Earl of Warwick years earlier during Edward IV’s momentary loss of his throne, and on a second occasion, the incident Walpole is discussing here. Richard III executed Elizabeth’s brother, Anthony, Lord Rivers, and her son, Lord Richard Grey. Executed with them was Lord Hastings, the only other noble likely to oppose Richard III’s usurpation. That anything besides Richard’s insatiable lust for power was behind these executions is unfathomable.

Walpole further maligns Elizabeth throughout his text, dismissing her marriage to Edward IV as “bigamy” (49), naming her children as bastards, approving the reinstatement of the claims of Eleanor Butler, referencing “the interest that her great relations must have made to set aside the queen’s marriage” and concluding that “nothing appears more natural than Richard’s succession” (56). Speculation regarding Walpole’s motivation for this interpretation is difficult, but it is undeniable that blatant historical falsification is taking place. It was well known that Lady Eleanor Butler predeceased Edward IV, and had there been a question regarding the legitimacy of the

marriage of Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville, they could have remarried at any time to negate them. However, such doubts were not publicly raised, neither by illustrious relations nor anyone else, and therefore a remarriage never took place. The accusation of precontract, while arguably valid, would in all likelihood never have emerged were it not for Richard III's desire to seize the throne. This version of events is supported by most credible historians, and was fictionalized by Mary Shelley:

Though no doubt was entertained as to the fact of Edward having married Lady Eleanor Butler . . . Elizabeth Woodville having so long filled the station of Queen of England, the public voice went in her favour, and the majority of the English people looked upon the tale which deprived her children of their rights, as a contrivance of their usurping uncle. (*PW* 27)

Walpole's shaky credibility is further undermined by his condemnation of Elizabeth Woodville in the matter of Henry VII's marriage to her daughter. Walpole writes:

It is impossible to say what so weak and ambitious a woman would not do. She wanted to have some one of her children on the throne, in order to recover her own power. She first engaged her daughter to Richmond and then to Richard. She might not know what was become of her sons; and yet that is no proof they were murdered. They were out of her power, whatever was become of them; and she was impatient to rule. (119-20)

Thus, scathingly, does Walpole dismiss Elizabeth Woodville. This representation of Elizabeth as power-hungry is nowhere to be found in Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*, which defends Elizabeth's character in the lines: "Ah! were I a cottager . . . though bereft of my husband, I should collect my young ones round me, and forget sorrow. I should

toil for them, and they would learn to toil for me. How sweet the food my industry procured for them" (*PW* 46). Thus, Mary Shelley recasts Elizabeth Woodville by showing her dismiss all thoughts of wealth and power, longing only for a simple life with her children.

Walpole's vitriol aside, there is, however, one aspect of his narrative that appears to have greatly influenced Mary Shelley. In discussing Elizabeth Woodville's role in a rebellious plot against Henry VII, Walpole writes:

But what was most remarkable, the queen dowager tampered in this plot. Is it to be believed, that mere turbulence and a restless spirit could in a year's time influence that woman to throw the nation again into a civil war, and attempt to dethrone her own daughter? And in favour of whom? Of the issue of Clarence, who she had contributed to have put to death, or in favour of an imposter? There is not common sense in the supposition. No, she certainly knew or believed that Richard, her second son, had escaped and was living, and was glad to overturn the usurper without risking her child. (96-97)

Walpole's repeated bombastic and relatively unanswerable questions suggest the ridiculous nature of the allegations so long accepted as fact. Although this passage is, again, unnecessarily derogatory of Elizabeth in blaming her for the earlier execution of George, Duke of Clarence, for treason, it is virtually transposed into Mary Shelley's novel, minus the slur against Elizabeth's character. Mary Shelley writes:

The tale of the imposture of Lambert Simnel [another pretender] was disclosed [to Elizabeth Woodville], and with it a change of plan, the result of the death of Warwick. Simnel's age and appearance accorded better with this prince than

with his younger cousin; it were easy to spread abroad that the report of his death was a fiction contrived by the king; that he had escaped in fact, and was in arms. If a more sinister fate had befallen him, guilt would impose silence on his murderer; if the attempt failed, no evil would occur; if successful, he would give instant place to the superior claims of the Duke of York. (*PW* 50-51)

Although the plot relayed to Elizabeth Woodville mirrors Walpole's theory, Mary Shelley paints a more noble and sympathetic image of Elizabeth. While Walpole details Elizabeth's imprisonment in Bermondsey Abbey by stating "the plot failed, and the queen dowager was shut up where she remained till her death" (97), Mary Shelley adds a touching loyalty to Elizabeth Woodville's characterization, writing "Elizabeth heard, with utter dismay, the sentence passed against her; courage was restored only when she found that her freedom could be purchased, by the confession of her son's existence, and place of abode" (*PW* 55). This passage not only adds considerable pathos to Walpole's version of events but also counters his fabricated image of an unfeeling mother who ceased to care for her sons once, "they were out of her power" (Walpole 120). Mary Shelley's Elizabeth is willing to be buried alive rather than risk her son's life. The interactions I have highlighted from Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*, and from Shakespeare's and Walpole's versions of events show the absolute necessity for a complete historical revision along feminine-centric lines, such as Mary Shelley undertook. Mary Shelley's success in resurrecting Prince Richard (and consequently defending Richard III), in rescuing Elizabeth Woodville from Shakespeare's marginalization of her and from Walpole's absolute vilification, and in attending to

long-marginalized female characters, such as Jane Shore and Princess Elizabeth, is thus all the more noteworthy.

Mary Shelley had numerous peers attracted to the Perkin Warbeck material. Mary Shelley scholars blame the publication of a version of the Perkin Warbeck story published immediately prior to Mary Shelley's—Alexander Campbell's *Perkin Warbeck; or the Court of James the Fourth of Scotland* (1830)<sup>13</sup>—for the poor sales of Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* (also 1830). Little attention has been given to Campbell's *Perkin* by modern critics, but the almost simultaneous appearance of the two novels with the same historical subject should surely spark our questions about why the story had such strong appeal for the time. Moreover, Campbell's and Mary Shelley's *Perkins* were preceded by John Bayley's *The Histories and Antiquities of the Tower of London with Biographical Anecdotes of Royal and Distinguished Persons* (1821-1825), and as Webster-Garrett notes, were followed by five books on Perkin Warbeck published between 1829 and 1832 ("*Perkin Warbeck Project*" 2). Of these five novels, the two that will be discussed in detail here are Campbell's *Perkin Warbeck* and, of course, Mary Shelley's. Before embarking upon a systematic comparison of Campbell's and Mary Shelley's *Perkins*, I will return to the question raised earlier regarding the almost-simultaneous appearances of Mary Shelley's and Campbell's *Perkins*. Although Webster-Garrett attributes these appearances to interest stimulated by the publication of Bayley's book, she also references a pattern previously discussed by Hopkins, namely, the continued association of Perkin Warbeck with a "political counterculture" (2) and his appearances at times of political unrest. The following portion of this paper will

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<sup>13</sup> Alexander Campbell, *Perkin Warbeck or the Court of James the Fourth of Scotland: an historical romance* (London: A.K. Newman, 1830).

provide an overview of the research establishing Perkin Warbeck's political uses throughout the centuries.

The writings of critics clearly establish the political relevance of Perkin Warbeck and his appearances at times of political instability. Hopkins attributes Perkin Warbeck's relevance in the seventeenth century to the fact that "any question of his legitimacy could in effect be used as leverage against the increasingly unsettled Stuart crown" (262). Willy Maley, too, notes that Ford's version of *Perkin Warbeck* "anticipates and participates in a decade of violent political upheaval," in the 1490s, 1590s, and 1630s, thus replicating the anthropological phenomenon of "survival."<sup>14</sup> Nor did Warbeck's political relevance disappear at the dawn of the eighteenth century; Hopkins notes that his badge of the White Rose was adopted as the Jacobite emblem in the 1715 and 1745 rebellions (264). Of the nineteenth century, Webster-Garrett observes that Bayley's book, which sparked interest in Perkin Warbeck, was published "in the wake of the Peterloo Massacre, the Cato Street Conspiracy, and George IV's public sex scandals" (2), thereby confirming the continuing role of Perkin Warbeck within narratives of political reform. To these political scandals, I would add two more, both of which further demonstrate the nineteenth-century political relevance of Perkin Warbeck: Napoleon's usurpation and the resulting political turmoil from 1799-1821, and Queen Caroline's infamous trial in 1820.

As two of the most infamous usurpers in history, Napoleon and Richard III share an obvious connection, and, for a Romantic-Period audience, both figures loomed large.

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<sup>14</sup> Willy Maley, "The Incorporation of Identities in *Perkin Warbeck*: A Response to Lisa Hopkins" in *Connotations* 7.1 (1997): 105-15; p. 105.

In addition to appearances in literature, *Richard III* was one of the “most consistently popular plays” of the nineteenth century, and furthermore its popularity was, according to Stuart Hampton-Reeves, “almost entirely due to the attraction of characters like Richard.”<sup>15</sup> Unsurprisingly, as one of the foremost political figures of the time, Napoleon was ever-present in the minds of both writers and the general public throughout the Romantic Period. The figure of Napoleon, like Richard III, was synonymous with usurpation. Historically, Napoleon’s usurpation began with his Coup d’Etat in 1799, when he established himself as First Consul, and was cemented by his later assumption of the title “Emperor.” The connection of Napoleon with usurpation in canonical Romantic-Period texts, such as Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, is discussed by critics such as Simon Bainbridge, among others.<sup>16</sup> Thus, when one assumes the generally constant presence of Napoleon in the English consciousness, coupled with his established status as an usurper, both historically and literarily, it becomes likely that Mary Shelley, or indeed, any other writer in the early nineteenth century, would be unable to write about an usurper, particularly one so infamous as Richard III, without drawing tacit parallels with Napoleon. Bainbridge notes the connection stating, “in seeking to comprehend and assimilate Napoleon, the writers had recourse to a plethora of archetypal historical, literary, and mythical figures,” which were used to “imply a narrative to Napoleon’s career, as well as a character judgment” (13). Unsurprisingly,

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<sup>15</sup> Stuart Hampton-Reeves, “Theatrical Afterlives” in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare’s History Plays* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2002); p. 230.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example, Simon Bainbridge, *Napoleon and English Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1995). Subsequent references to these works will be cited parenthetically.

Bainbridge lists Richard III as one of the figures used to “comprehend and assimilate Napoleon” (13).

As noted in the previous Shakespearian discussion, Mary Shelley deliberately avoids, as much as possible, the connection with *Richard III*, the political sensitivity of the issue and Mary Shelley’s personal situation (which will be further discussed in chapter two of this dissertation) perhaps being the reasons. It is an unmistakable feature of her narrative, however, and not of Campbell’s, that Perkin Warbeck is truly Richard, Duke of York, and therefore her Richard III is not guilty of at least one of the many crimes attributed to him. Mary Shelley, thus, subtly joins the ranks of other Romantic-Period writers, such as Scott, who in defending one usurper also defend, to some extent, Napoleon.

While Mary Shelley does not figure into Bainbridge’s discussion, which is devoted to more vociferous defenders or condemners of Napoleon, a brief survey of her personal writings supports my characterization of her support, however muted. In an 1818 letter, Mary Shelley relates an anecdote: “If it had not been for Napoleon said one man to us, my head would not have been where it is he brought peace to us—and I say nothing but there are people who wish him back.”<sup>17</sup> While Mary Shelley does not elaborate, and a survey of her journals for Napoleonic defense is relatively fruitless, it is nonetheless inescapable that her writing as though Richard, Duke of York survived, links her to the Romantic tradition of Napoleonic apologia and pits her against the

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<sup>17</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 3 vols, ed. Betty T. Bennett (Baltimore: John Hopkins U P, 1980), Vol. 1, pp. 62-63.

condemnation of Richard III, and Napoleon, perpetuated by the thriving theatrical tradition.

While the connection between Richard III's usurpation and Napoleon's usurpation is clear, Queen Caroline's trial initially appears to have little connection with the figure of Perkin Warbeck. Flora Fraser, however, noted of the trial that:

"The people" were not deterred from assembling outside the barricades, some ten or twenty thousand of them bearing banners and placards, with white favors in the men's hats denoting their allegiance to the Queen. The number of women—their badges were white handkerchiefs, which they waved vigorously—was remarked on by all.<sup>18</sup>

The reappearance of the white badge links Queen Caroline's 1820 trial not only to the Jacobite rebellions but also to both the War of the Roses and Perkin Warbeck's badge. Thus, I would argue that this pivotal event—the trial of the Queen—was a key factor in sparking the revival of Perkin Warbeck as a reformist figure that culminated in the almost-simultaneous publications by Campbell and Mary Shelley.

Establishing a symbolic connection between Queen Caroline and Perkin Warbeck opens the door for a reexamination of Campbell's and Mary Shelley's texts along political lines. I postpone until chapter two a systematic examination of Mary Shelley's political allegory in using the figures of Elizabeth Woodville, Princess Elizabeth, and Jane Shore to critique the treatment by Prince Regent, later George IV, of Princess Charlotte and Queen Caroline. For now, I will restrict myself to examining portrayals of Katherine Gordon, in both Mary Shelley's and Campbell's texts, in order to

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<sup>18</sup> Flora Fraser, *The Unruly Queen* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), p. 414.

argue that the striking similarities between these separate, simultaneously-appearing texts are directly related to the persecution of Queen Caroline.

Among the historical events of Queen Caroline's trial, the one most immediately pertinent is the consensus that she was excessively maligned as a direct result of the George IV's intense dislike of her. The marriage of the Prince of Wales and Princess Caroline was a disaster from their initial meeting onwards, with the later George IV's animosity towards and exclusion of Princess Caroline creating a deep divide within the monarchy. The advent of a permanent regency only served to increase the Prince Regent's persecution of her. As a result, Princess Caroline eventually agreed to leave her only daughter, Princess Charlotte, in England and depart for the Continent after being granted a generous allowance. Following Princess Charlotte's and King George III's deaths, King George IV renewed his persecution of his queen, attempting to block her return to England. However, he was unsuccessful, and, upon her return, in revenge, Queen Caroline was brought to trial. She was acquitted because, as her chief defense counsel Henry Brougham stated, even if all the charges were true, "after the treatment she had received ever since she first came to England, her husband had no right to the relief prayed by him, or the punishment sought against her" (Fraser 404). Even after her acquittal, George IV barred her from his coronation in 1821, while attempting to find grounds for a new trial. She died shortly thereafter amidst rumors of poisoning.

The effect of these proceedings was immense and reverberated throughout the country and Europe. In December 1820, Mary Shelley wrote to Leigh Hunt that, "So few of all the noblemen have defended the disgraced Queen, who I really believe to be most innocent. I feel great pity for this woman, and when one reflects upon the great

difference that exists between the wicked king, and this compassionate and good queen, who visits a servant sick with the plague, one becomes angry" (*MWSL*, I, 164). Here Mary Shelley draws attention to the good character of Queen Caroline, indicating that her disgrace is a result solely of the "wicked king" and the noblemen who have failed to defend her. Far from being as George IV alleged, Mary Shelley states that the Queen's "greatest fault is to amuse herself with a servant, instead of staying all alone" and that, "it is well known that it was the spies who created the feelings against her." Mary Shelley goes on to state that, "All are horrified by the indecency of this forever infamous proceeding" (*MWSL*, I, 164-65). While Mary Shelley does not overtly blame George IV, it is implicit in this letter-excerpt that all are truly horrified by the "indecency" of the King's "infamous" conduct.

While history does not record Campbell's opinion of Queen Caroline's trial, it is safe to assume that he, too, was, as Mary Shelley said "all" were, "horrified by the indecency of this forever infamous proceeding" (*MWSL*, I, 165). It is thus unsurprising that Mary Shelley, and perhaps Campbell, would be drawn to defend another much-maligned royal wife in the wake of Queen Caroline's persecution. This widely-known popular scandal, I will now show, informs Campbell's and Mary Shelley's portrayals of Katherine Gordon; their position as her apologists results from the backlash against the trial and resulting blackening of Queen Caroline's reputation.

Despite Campbell's and Mary Shelley's recharacterizations of her, the historical position of Lady Katherine Gordon is quite clear. As Webster-Garrett notes, she "appears in historical accounts as a sexual bounder and political opportunist" (5). Indeed, Katherine is a difficult character to defend. In her edition of Mary Shelley's

novel, Doucet Devin Fischer notes that Katherine's life after her husband's execution included such troublesome events as remaining in the court of Henry VII, her husband's murderer, possibly being Henry VII's lover, accepting a pension from Henry VII, and marrying (successively) James Strangeways, Sir Matthew Cradock, and Christopher Ashton.<sup>19</sup> With these striking facts, the simultaneous appearance shortly after Caroline's trial of two novels that praise Katherine deserves scrutiny. These recharacterizations likely resulted from the same stimulus. The similarity between Campbell's and Mary Shelley's works shall speak for itself.

The relationship between Mary Shelley and Katherine Gordon has been much discussed. Indeed, as critics have noticed, Mary Shelley preemptively calls readers' attention to her sympathy for Katherine with one of only two authorial footnotes in *Perkin Warbeck*:

I do not know how far these concluding pages may be deemed superfluous: the character of the Lady Katherine Gordon is a favorite of mine, and yet many will be inclined to censure her abode in Henry the Seventh's court, and other acts of her after life. I desired therefore that she should speak for herself, and show how her conduct, subsequent to her husband's death, was in accordance with the devotion and fidelity with which she attended his fortunes during his life. (395)

Critics have long noted the implicit defense of Mary Shelley herself within Katherine's defense as well as the avoidance of what Fischer terms the "suppressed acts" of Katherine's afterlife (395). Mary Shelley begins her recharacterization of Katherine long

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<sup>19</sup> Doucet Devin Fischer, ed., *The Fortunes of Perkins Warbeck: A Romance by Mary Shelley*, Vol. 5 of *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, gen. ed., Nora Crook (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1996), 8 vols. Subsequent references to this edition are cited parenthetically as *PW*.

before her stated “defense.” From her initial appearance in the novel, Katherine is described with immense approbation. Loyal, honorable, possessed of “sweetness,” “blameless affections,” and a “constant spirit” (*PW* 274), Katherine is a paragon of femininity. There is no trace of the “sexual boulder” in her, and, far from being a “political opportunist,” Mary Shelley’s Katherine begs her husband to abandon his attempt on the throne of England in the lines:

What is there in the name or state of king, that should so take captive our thoughts, that we can imagine no life but on a throne? Believe me, careful nights and thorny days are the portion of a monarch: he is lifted to that awful height only to view more destruction beneath; around, fear, hate, disloyalty, all yelling at him. The cold, heartless Tudor may well desire the prize, for he has nothing save the gilt crown to ennoble him; nothing but the supple knees of courtiers to present to him the show of love. But – ah! Could I put fire into my weak words—my heart’s zeal into my supplicatory voice—persuasion would attend upon me, and you would feel that to the young, to two united as we are, our best kingdom is each other’s hearts. (*PW* 302)

Katherine’s supplication is in vain, and after Richard/Perkin’s execution, Mary Shelley is left to deal with the stubborn, unlikeable historical fact that Katherine remained in the court of Henry VII. Therefore, after positively depicting Katherine throughout the novel, Mary Shelley centers Katherine’s final defense on the fact that Katherine remained with Queen Elizabeth and not King Henry VII, writing: “My Richard’s last act was to bestow me on his sister; it were impious to retract a gift made by the dying” (*PW* 399), and she further defends her tenure in Henry VII’s court with tales of her friendship with

Elizabeth and of her own devotion to Elizabeth's children. With this defense, Mary Shelley ends her novel.

Oddly enough, Campbell recharacterizes Catherine in strikingly similar terms to Mary Shelley. On her first appearance in his novel, she is called "the fairest flower in Scotland" (Campbell 2). Lady Catherine's character is further established by her assistance of an injured man, Barnard Chudworth. Although he is unknown to her and although many other people were present at the joust, Catherine ran to his assistance and

Speedily occupied herself in undoing the harness of the prostrate joust.

Having, with her own fair hands, removed his cumbrous bacinet, she proceeded to bathe the forehead of the wounded man with a little cold spring water, hastily procured by an attendant. She also carefully and tenderly wiped the blood from his pale countenance, as it came streaming down, with the embroidered handkerchief which she carried. (Campbell 124)

Thus, Catherine's kindness to even a lowly knight is firmly established. Indeed, her character is such that her "naivete and innocency of manner . . . nearly made Warbeck fling himself upon his knees, and confess" (Campbell 150). Thus, Campbell's depiction of Catherine is clearly constructed to emphasize her innocence and good character, in direct contradiction to her portrayal in the historical chronicles.

Following this early positive characterization, Campbell's Catherine progresses much as Mary Shelley's did. She, too, marries for love rather than for political advancement and is determined to be loyal to her husband. When he is captured, Catherine states, "if his grace has fallen into the hands of his enemies, it is time ye led

forth thy men to battle; and if your highness will not do this, Catherine Gordon will” (Campbell 209). After this impassioned defense, she braves considerable risk to join Perkin/Richard in his imprisonment.

Once Catherine is in Henry VII’s court, Campbell’s “defense” begins, much as Mary Shelley’s did. He first subtly refutes the supposed familiar relationship with Henry VII, stating that Catherine “in vain sought access to the monarch, to endeavour to arrest the fate to which he was doomed” (256), and concludes his defense of Catherine much as Mary Shelley did:

Henry’s queen, a woman of the most mild, generous, and benevolent disposition, and in almost every respect the opposite of her royal consort, prevailed on the lady Catherine, now desolate in a strange land, and awakened to a painful conviction of her own feebleness, and total want of influence or weight, in the circumstances in which she was placed, to accept of her protection and her friendship, both of which she enjoyed for many succeeding years. (259)

The similarities in Campbell’s and Mary Shelley’s endings cannot be a coincidence. However, if Perkin Warbeck’s established association with political reform, the recentness of Queen Caroline’s trial at Perkin’s nineteenth-century reappearance, and the similarity between Campbell’s and Mary Shelley’s portrayals of Katherine/Catherine are not enough to convince the reader of a distinct correlation, one final piece of evidence remains. As I have noted, the association of the white rose as an emblem of rebellion had a long life. Both Mary Shelley and Campbell repeatedly emphasize the white rose. Of Mary Shelley’s emphasis, Hopkins writes: “[Mary Shelley’s] repeated insistence on the fact that Duke Richard’s personal badge was the

White rose . . . and that he was indeed called by that name, also serves to align her visibly with Tory rather than with Whig versions of history” (264). Campbell’s little-noticed *Perkin Warbeck* has no critics to distill such a message, but even the most cursory reading of the novel reveals an even heavier emphasis on the emblem of the white rose. In the first volume, Campbell features one Allan Breck, about to be executed for murder, who begs for an audience with Lady Catherine. He tells her that he has had a dream and must warn her that, “a white rose, lady Catherine, will bring misery and sorrow to thy door” (17). Breck continues:

See, if he seeks thy favour, that he wears not a white rose as his badge. If at the banquet, or in the dance, any gay courtier shall seek to win thy smiles, see that white rose be not the favour he wears. If, in the garden, a suitor should pluck a white rose from its tree, and offer it to thee, accept neither the gift nor him that would bestow it. Shun, oh shun, descendant of Huntly, that fatal emblem, whenever and wherever it shall seem to mingle, however, slightly, with thy destinies. (Campbell 170).

This theme pervades the novel, reappearing at Catherine’s first sighting of Perkin/Richard and throughout their courtship. Thus, the proliferation of this motif throughout Mary Shelley’s and Campbell’s novels cements their connection with the political reform.

Critics have attempted to recover Mary Shelley’s *Perkin Warbeck* from the oblivion into which it has sunk, and, in doing so, have noted the radical political message buried within it. As Webster-Garrett writes (and which I discuss further in chapters two and three of this dissertation), Mary Shelley used Perkin Warbeck to

“speak a subversive tale to those willing to listen while fooling those hostile to her claims into believing that she has said nothing at all” (*Perkin Warbeck Project 2*).

Campbell’s *Perkin Warbeck*, however, is still subject to critical dismissal. Hopkins states that Mary Shelley adopted a “radically different point of view from” Campbell, who saw “Perkin straightforwardly as an imposter” (263), and Webster-Garrett dismisses Campbell’s *Perkin Warbeck* as “politically conventional” (13). In this section, I have attempted to demonstrate that Campbell’s *Perkin Warbeck*, like Shelley’s, deserves a critical reappraisal. The similarities between the two works, the political symbolism, and the simultaneous reclamation of one of the most notorious women in English history in response to the persecution of Queen Caroline should surely accord both *Perkins* a second look.

In conclusion, while this dissertation as a whole may be characterized as a “defense” of Mary Shelley’s *Perkin Warbeck*, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate the worthiness of Mary Shelley’s novel from a different perspective. Chapters Two and Three are devoted to proving the worthiness of Mary Shelley’s novel because of its political and feminist critique of the Romantic Period. This chapter, on the other hand, has attempted to demonstrate the importance of Mary Shelley’s novel because of its position within a centuries-long literary tradition of established history and political reform surrounding the figure of Perkin Warbeck by detailing Mary Shelley’s responses and alterations to such pivotal texts as those of Shakespeare and Walpole, and by illuminating Mary Shelley’s, and her contemporary Campbell’s, adjustments to the Perkin Warbeck story in light of the political turmoil created by the trial and persecution of Queen Caroline.

## CHAPTER TWO: QUEEN ELIZABETH AND QUEEN CAROLINE: THE INJURED QUEENS OF ENGLAND

New Historicist criticism of Romantic-Period literature—begun by Jerome McGann’s *The Romantic Ideology* (1983) and Clifford Siskin’s *Historicity of Romantic Discourse* (1988), and continuing with Michael Gamer’s *Romanticism and the Gothic* (2006)—argued that canonical Romantic poets obscured their historical determinants in order to take credit for their discovery of apparently universal truths. New Historicists further claim that Romanticists’ near-exclusive attention to poets replicated such mystifications, an error that they sought to rectify by attending to less-accessible Romantic-Period literature, such as its proliferating historical fiction. Moreover, they claim, the prior attraction to works claiming to embody universal truths has distorted our view of an author’s oeuvre by fetishizing one or two works to the neglect of others. This attitude is exemplified by canonizing Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), while dismissing *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck* (1830) as hackwork, “a failed if ambitious historical romance” that illustrates “what happens when a Romantic author stoops to write for profit” (Webster-Garrett 1). Accordingly, *Perkin Warbeck*’s obscurity has lasted into the twenty-first century, with fewer than a dozen articles and book chapters concentrating on *Perkin Warbeck*. In my view, this scholarly neglect of *Perkin Warbeck* is caused, in part, by Romanticists’ ignorance of the medieval history through which Mary Shelley comments on her own time. Their ignorance renders

*Perkin Warbeck* incomprehensible and obscures its political relevance. This chapter supplies the historical contexts, medieval and Romantic-Period, necessary to illuminate the nineteenth-century political critique inherent in, but obscured by, her medieval cover story. I analyze England's repressive political climate in the two decades preceding *Perkin Warbeck's* publication—a repressive political climate that exacerbated Mary Shelley's self-censorship about her sexual past and made it seem necessary to her to veil her attack in *Perkin Warbeck* on the monarchy and the sexual double standard. In sum, I establish *Perkin Warbeck's* function as an incisive political allegory.

### **The Royal Family, Publication, and Prosecution During the Romantic Period**

The severity of Romantic-Period censorship, which may startle the present-day reader, is a key context for Mary Shelley's veiled critique of the monarchy and the inadvisability of her writing openly about contemporaneous events. The Hanoverians were hostile to criticism. Before his descent into madness in 1811, King George III violently opposed the broadcasting of familial quarrels. Despite his interdict—or, perhaps, because of it—newspapers frequently printed news of the private affairs of the royal family, particularly that of the Prince of Wales and Princess Caroline. The early disagreements between the couple were exposed in an article accusing Lady Jersey, Prince George's mistress, of intercepting Princess Caroline's letters. Lord Jersey and the messenger involved then published declarations of innocence. The newspaper freely printed Princess Caroline's disparaging comments regarding Lady Jersey but omitted Caroline's less than

flattering references to her mother-in-law, Queen Charlotte. This kerfuffle illuminates the uses of, and limits on, periodicals that exposed royal peccadillos.

The dissension between the Prince Regent and Princess Caroline attracted popular interest in the royal family's private affairs. Queen Charlotte, convinced she was surrounded by spies, began to retreat from society; the Prince of Wales disobeyed his father's express dictates by publishing correspondence that revealed his father's refusal to grant him a military promotion. George III was unable to prevent his wife's merest utterances appearing in print but was as yet able to exercise control over errant members of the royal family, banishing his son from his presence and referring to him as "the publisher of my letters." Princess Caroline was also to feel the wrath of George III when she threatened to publish revelations of her husband's adulterous exploits. As Flora Fraser notes, this threat alone prompted the King, formerly "her protector," to turn "deaf to her further appeals"; in short, her "close, near filial relationship with the King . . . was over" (195).

The advent of the Regency—1811—unsurprisingly exacerbated publicity of the Prince and Princess's indiscretions. The Prince Regent's vindictiveness increased with his power: Leigh Hunt was jailed in 1813 for two years for libeling the Prince Regent as "fat, foolish, and fifty" (Fraser 230), and his brother, John Hunt, was sentenced to one year's imprisonment in 1821 for "comments concerning the trial of Caroline of Brunswick" (Bennett 174). This second imprisonment reflects the 1819 passage of six restrictive laws (including the Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act) known as the "Gagging Acts." Mary Shelley's optimistic letter to Leigh Hunt in December 1820 expressed assurance that he and his brother "will escape

when [the matter] comes to trial" (*MWSL* 170), which suggests that Mary Shelley did not yet realize the Prince Regent's newly-increased severity toward previously negligible offenses.

The Prince Regent's crackdown on the Hunt brothers accords with wider patterns of censorship, which restricted matters outside the royal family and continued throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Following the 1838 publication of the People's Charter, uprisings and arrests for treason multiplied. In the midst of Chartism's visibility, in 1840, Mary Shelley met with preemptive self-censorship from publisher Edward Moxon, who, requested that she omit certain atheistic passages from her edition of her husband's *Queen Mab*. The careful Moxon was nonetheless prosecuted "on blasphemous libel charges" (Sunstein 352). A friend offered the consolation that Moxon's prosecution would boost sales, but Mary Shelley, remembering the Hunt brothers, worried about the very real possibility of Moxon's incarceration.

A second, equally compelling reason for veiling her critique of the royal family was Mary Shelley's income, which was limited to the proceeds of her writings and a meager allowance from Sir Timothy Shelley, which he ungenerously insisted she must repay. Infuriated by Mary Shelley's publication of P. B. Shelley's *Posthumous Poems* (1824), Sir Timothy threatened to stop Mary Shelley's allowance altogether unless she halted its dissemination and abstained from further publication of P. B. Shelley's works. Mary Shelley conceded, and eventually Sir Timothy granted her an annual allowance of 250 pounds. These lessons in self-censorship immediately preceded Mary Shelley's commencement of *Perkin*

*Warbeck*, a novel so rife with self-censorship that it requires careful reading and copious historical research for the present-day reader to unearth Mary Shelley's reformist critique.

### **The Correspondence of Mary Shelley**

The relative candor of Mary Shelley's personal correspondence provides an important corrective to her self-censored novel. Her letters relatively openly reveal her opinions of the Prince Regent and her own identification with his wife, the uncrowned Queen. Mary Shelley often condemns the Prince Regent, for example mocking the effects of coronation in a letter to Sophia Stacey in 1820: "Alas, but a few days ago he was a good-for-nothing prince—bankrupt in character—but the crown that encircles the mortal temples of a king has regenerated him" (*MWSL*, I, 130-31). This passage illustrates Mary Shelley's general disdain for the Prince Regent's character and her distrust of the monarchy's symbolic power. Mary Shelley's tendency to identify with royalty has been noted by Sunstein, who charts Princess Charlotte's meaning for the author. Mary Shelley's correspondence reveals a variation: In an 1820 letter to Marianne Hunt, Mary Shelley expressed her sympathies with Queen Caroline by calling herself "Joan Bull" (*MWSL*, I, 138), an English version of Iona Taurina, a name given to the Queen Caroline figure in P. B. Shelley's *Oedipus Tyrannus* (1820) and a female counterpart of the figure John Bull, so frequently represented as the embodiment of sturdy English yeomanry.

A few months later, Mary Shelley again referenced the scandal surrounding the Queen in a rather unkind letter to Maria Gisborne in July 1820:

The Queen! The Queen! The Queen! Does it not rain Queens in England or at least orations sent post from Heaven with pleadings in favour of our heroic—magnanimous—innocent—injured—virtuous—illustrious—and lion-hearted British one—full of painful feelings, delicate subject . . . to be sure she is injured, but it is too great a stretch of imagination to make a God of a Beef-eater, or a heroine of Queen Caroline.—but I wish with all my heart downfall to her enemies, and that is no great stretch of compassion. (*MWSL*, I, 156)

Her sarcasm indicates Mary Shelley's disbelief of the propaganda proclaiming Caroline to be "virtuous, illustrious, innocent, and magnanimous"; she very much doubts the veracity of the "orations sent post from Heaven," and cannot believe her to be a "heroine." But Mary Shelley nevertheless acknowledges Caroline's undeniable injuries with the phrase "to be sure," and announces, even if the princess is not a heroine, that she wishes, "downfall to her (Caroline's) enemies." Thus, in spite of said sarcasm, Mary Shelley's sympathies are clearly with Caroline, as it does not even take much "compassion" on Mary Shelley's part to hope that Caroline will emerge triumphant.

Mary Shelley's identification with Queen Caroline also occurred in the context of a government investigation instigated by the newly-crowned George IV into Queen Caroline's relationship with Bartolomeo Pergami, her purported lover. In August 1820, when P. B. Shelley was still alive and Mary Shelley relatively secure, she nonetheless felt herself (and Shelley) persecuted in a way analogous to Caroline and Pergami. In an 1820 letter to Maria Gisborne, Mary Shelley imagines "a fresh batch (or green bag) of scandal" brought against her and P. B. Shelley (*MWSL*, I,

159), a reference that unmistakably links the Shelleys to the infamous green bags that carried the evidence against Queen Caroline, which were widely replicated in political cartoons and represented “repression, conspiracy, and in particular, the perjured evidence of the Italian witnesses” (Fraser 405). Caroline, like the Shelleys, had been betrayed by servants. One of Caroline’s servants testified for the prosecution; two of the Shelleys’ servants perpetrated blackmail. The troubling similarities would have done much to engage Mary Shelley’s sympathies with Caroline and cause her to doubt, if she did not already, the veracity of the allegations against Queen Caroline. Accordingly, increased sympathy characterizes one of Mary Shelley’s next references to the Queen, in a letter to Leigh Hunt dated December 1820:

So few of all the noblemen have defended the disgraced Queen, who I really believe to be most innocent. I feel great pity for this woman, and when one reflects upon the great difference that exists between the wicked king, and this compassionate and good queen, who visits a servant sick with the plague, one becomes angry; he, whose character you yourself have painted so well, as horrible; and she whose greatest fault is to amuse herself with a servant, instead of staying all alone. . . . It is well known that it was the spies who created the feelings against her, who exist in Italy. . . and really it seems to me that [the Italians] have a much more favorable opinion of her since the trial than before. All are horrified by the indecency of this forever infamous proceeding. (*MWSL*, I, 164-65)

Here Mary Shelley draws attention to the Queen's good character, attributing her disgrace solely to the "wicked king" and the unreliable noblemen. In private letters, then, Mary Shelley counters George IV's allegations, mitigating the Queen's greatest fault as merely "to amuse herself with a servant, instead of staying all alone" and as inflated by "the spies" whom it was "well known . . . created the feelings against her" (*MWSL*, I, 164-65).

Unfortunately, Mary Shelley's feeling of kinship with Queen Caroline was only to increase following P. B. Shelley's death, which left her, as she confesses to Thomas Jefferson Hogg in 1823, a "miserable wreck" (*MWSL*, I, 316). In debating whether to return to England, Mary Shelley writes, "[Sir Timothy and his family] will look on me indeed as a black-black sheep if I do not hasten to place myself beneath all the benefits of their clouded atmosphere & foggy virtue—I shall be da paragonare [compared] with the Queen alone" (*MWSL*, I, 318). Thus, just as Queen Caroline was persecuted after losing her protector, Princess Charlotte, Mary Shelley was exposed to the censure of the world following P. B. Shelley's drowning. Shunned by Shelley's liberal friends as an unworthy relict and condemned by conservatives for her prior elopement, Mary Shelley's identification with Caroline as outcast, and the unfair besmirching of her reputation, was complete.

### **A Feminine-Centered History of the Regency**

To examine Mary Shelley's construction of a political allegory within *Perkin Warbeck* requires an exposition of those portions of Caroline's life unmentioned in Mary Shelley's letters. This exposition will reveal the overt, but superficial

similarities between Caroline's life and the medieval history depicted in *Perkin Warbeck*, which are then considerably emphasized and developed by Mary Shelley, thus creating a political allegory. In the following section of this chapter, I relate events that, although unfamiliar to us, would have been known by Mary Shelley's audience. I discuss two distinct aspects of Regency history that correlate to Mary Shelley's material in *Perkin Warbeck*: first, the persecuted life of Princess Caroline; and second, the succession crisis following Princess Charlotte's death.

### **Princess Caroline**

The future Prince Regent married Caroline of Brunswick for rather unromantic reasons; he was in debt and had been told that if he married, Parliament would increase his allowance. Despite this inducement, after the initial meeting the Prince of Wales was revolted by his bride-to-be, famously stating, "Harris, I am not well; pray get me a glass of brandy" (Fraser 54). The marriage nevertheless took place, and encouraged by the King, who was "desperately anxious that the marriage should succeed" (Fraser 65), relations between the Prince and Princess of Wales remained relatively cordial until the birth of Princess Charlotte. Shortly thereafter, an open breach developed and separate residences were established. The Prince of Wales attempted to separate Princess Caroline and Princess Charlotte and instigated an investigation which resulted in Princess Caroline being accused of adultery and bearing an illegitimate child. Although the charges were fabricated, Caroline was punished by exclusion from court and separation from her daughter. Eventually cleared and allowed partial access to her daughter, Caroline was

marginalized and excluded from the royal family and polite society. The advent of the Regency increased her husband's power and in no way decreased his animosity towards his wife. He increasingly restricted Caroline from seeing her daughter and before long, a formal agreement was drawn up for Caroline to leave England.

Charlotte was displeased at her mother's departure, but Caroline was "weary of all the trouble she has herself endured," and departed, although she could not have foreseen that by leaving she was about to "bring upon herself fresh 'debasement and mortification', to exceed any that had gone before" (Fraser 251).

Caroline toured the Continent, and the Prince Regent left her alone until Caroline lost her last remaining protector, Princess Charlotte, whose 1817 death I will describe and contextualize later on. Rationalizing that "it would matter less now if he was to bring about the disgrace of the dead princess's mother, and he believed that the Government would encourage him to secure the succession by taking a new wife" (Fraser 303), the Prince Regent embarked on a new campaign for divorce. Luckily for Caroline, the Prince Regent was not yet King and the British public did not support his malicious plan, thus forcing him to bide his time. When George III died on January 29, 1820, George IV renewed his persecution of his wife. He demanded that her name be excluded from the liturgy and ordered officials abroad to not honor Caroline as England's queen. Persecuted abroad, Caroline returned to England on June 5, 1820, to "cries of 'God bless Queen Caroline'" (Fraser 363).

The crisis then came to a head as George IV was universally disliked and Queen Caroline was still quite popular. In spite, or perhaps because, of the immense popular support for Caroline, the governmental inquiry began. The green bags used

by spies in Italy to collect evidence against Caroline (which Shelley referenced in an 1820 letter to Maria Gisborne) were opened, the evidence against Caroline examined, and “for the first time the King’s animus against the Queen was on public display” (Fraser 393). The influence of George IV in these proceedings cannot be underestimated. As Fraser writes, “the King threatened to change his ministry if they should not decide in favor of a prosecution” (Fraser 398). Caricatures and publications against the King multiplied despite George IV’s attempts to suppress them;<sup>1</sup> as the trial began popular support for the queen proliferated. She was acquitted, because, as her chief defense counsel Henry Brougham stated, even if all the charges were true, “after the treatment she had received ever since she first came to England, her husband had no right to the relief prayed by him, or the punishment sought against her” (Fraser 404). Even after her acquittal, King George IV was far from ready to concede. He attempted to procure a fresh trial using a document written by the deceased Princess Charlotte as grounds. Although unsuccessful, George IV banned Caroline from the Coronation on July 19, 1821. She attempted to attend and was “turned away from entrance after entrance” when “she uttered her poignant cry to the sentry at Westminster Hall, ‘Let me pass; I am your Queen.’ It was then that the pages slammed the door in her face—a resounding affront which, more than all the magnificent show devised by King George IV, gave his Coronation its place in history. Caroline retreated at once to Cambridge House” (Fraser 456). This event represented the demise of the Queen’s cause and was to be

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<sup>1</sup> “The King was to write to Eldon of the caricatures which vilified and mocked him: ‘If the law as it now stands has not the power to protect the Sovereign against the licentious abominations of this description, it is *high time* that the law should be amended” (Fraser 404; emphasis is original).

Caroline's final humiliation. Sir Walter Scott wrote of Caroline's plight: "[the Queen's cause was] 'a fire of straw which has now burnt to the very embers, and those who try to blow it into light again, will only blacken their hands and noses, like mischievous children dabbling among the ashes of a bonfire'" (Fraser 457). The Queen did not long endure her disgrace. She fell ill on July 30, 1821, and although doctors were initially sanguine about her recovery, Caroline soon realized her death was imminent; Caroline burned her private papers, dictated a will in which she requested that her tomb bear the inscription "Caroline of Brunswick, the injured Queen of England," and died on August 7, 1821, less than three weeks after the Coronation. As Fraser tells, "Two hours after death, her body was black and swollen, which gave rise to rumours that she had been poisoned" (461). Thus ended the persecuted life of Queen Caroline. However, her life remained emblematic of the inherent evils of the subordinate status of women and the abusive power of the monarchy. It is thus unsurprising that Shelley would want to comment covertly on the major issues in Queen Caroline's life: her marriage, motherhood, and trial.

### **The Death of Princess Charlotte**

Monica Charlot, in her biography of young Queen Victoria, describes the monarchy's predicament following the death of Caroline's daughter:

When Charlotte died, her grandfather George III was still alive—but blind and insane. He was thus spared the spectacle of his offspring's behavior. He had fifteen children, of whom twelve were still alive—five daughters and seven sons—with not a legitimate heir between them. (16)

Thus, Charlot helps us understand, there was a separate set of royal problems, aside from the Prince Regent's reignited desire for a divorce. The longevity and stability of Queen Victoria's reign has made it easy for us to forget the messiness of the succession crises that her accession resolved. Charlot's summation is reminiscent of P. B. Shelley's contemporary critique in the sonnet "England in 1819," which Mary Shelley published in 1839. In that poem, P. B. Shelley wrote:

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King  
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow  
Through public scorn—mud from a muddy spring  
Rulers who neither see nor feel nor know  
But leech-like to their fainting country cling. (1-5)

Unsurprisingly, P. B. Shelley's lines express a general disdain for the monarchy and do not reflect the mood of the nation that "mourned its Princess" (Charlot 15). However, his description of "leech-like" Princes, the "dregs" of society, clinging to power for financial gain, foreshadowed coming events. These events, which I detail in this section, raised considerable questions regarding succession, marriage, legitimacy, and the right to the throne—all issues that Mary Shelley addresses in *Perkin Warbeck*, using a medieval screen to create her political allegory and critique of the post-Princess Charlotte debacle. An examination of these historical events is a necessary antecedent to a discussion of Mary Shelley's critique of nineteenth-century British monarchy in *Perkin Warbeck*.

Princess Charlotte, the heiress presumptive to the throne of England, had married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg in 1816. A rapidly ensuing pregnancy

seemed to guarantee succession; however, Charlotte miscarried twice before finally carrying a baby to term. Following a difficult third pregnancy and questionable medical attention, Charlotte delivered a still-born child after a forty-six hour labor. Following the delivery, in the early hours of the morning, Charlotte suffered a fatal post-partum hemorrhage and died on November 6, 1817, plunging England into mourning.

After Charlotte's death, "it suited nobody to enquire into prior marriages, bigamy and the legitimacy of Princess Charlotte" (Fraser 410), and energies were instead focused on the production of a new heir. However, these issues hovered in the public consciousness, affecting the later outcome of Caroline's trial and the public perception of the Prince Regent. Mary Shelley's examination of the monarchy in *Perkin Warbeck* heavily emphasizes the negative consequences of prior marriages and doubts regarding legitimacy. Thus, although the issue of Charlotte's legitimacy was preemptively negated by her demise, a brief discussion of the compelling evidence for her illegitimacy is pertinent.

The 1689 Bill of Rights barred Catholics and anyone married to a Catholic from the throne of England; the Royal Marriages Act of 1772 required that the children of the monarch obtain his consent before any marriage. The Prince of Wales's 'marriage' to the Catholic Mrs. Fitzherbert thus violated both of these acts and was all the more dangerous for its public, and religiously-valid, nature. The Catholic Church and, indeed, the Anglican Church considered the then Prince of Wales married to Mrs. Fitzherbert, even though English law, by an Act of Parliament, did not. The abovementioned laws barred children of forbidden alliances from the

throne but were not successful in wholly invalidating these marriages in the public eye. Caroline herself indicated that she considered the Prince Regent married, once infamously stating, "I never did commit adultery but once, and I have repented of it ever since. . . . It was with the husband of Mrs. Fitzherbert" (qtd. in Fraser 119). The Duke of Sussex's marriages also illuminate the multiplicity of problems created by the royal marriage laws.<sup>2</sup> Although Charlotte's legitimacy was never challenged, had there been claimants to the throne, her father's prior marriage would have been a potent weapon against her. As matters stood, however, Charlotte was England's popular heiress presumptive until her death, after which the dearth of other legitimate heirs created a succession crisis in England. The Prince Regent, soon to be George IV, had only one child, and, given his estrangement from Caroline, was unlikely to produce another. George III's second son, Frederick, was married but with no offspring and therefore the crown would most likely pass to either the third son, William, Duke of Clarence, or the fourth son, Edward, Duke of Kent. After Princess Charlotte died, both William and Edward intensified their matrimonial searches, marrying Princess Amelia Adelaide of Saxe-Meiningen and Princess Victoire, the sister of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, respectively, in a double wedding in Kew Palace. Edward and Victoire had first married at the Ehrenburg Palace in Coburg, but, with great foresight (perhaps learning from the mistakes of Edward IV

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<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Sussex married twice in direct contravention of the Royal Marriage Act. He ended his first marriage when it suited him, but maintained his former wife and children. He then went on to make an equally unlawful marriage, but rather than disregard this marriage as he had his first, the Duke instead grew accustomed to having to, according to Monica Charlott, "spend his energies under Victoria trying to secure official recognition for his (second) wife" (19). These new laws therefore, had the opposite effect of that intended, thus creating further uncertainty regarding legitimacy and rightful succession in England.

and Elizabeth Woodville), avoided questions regarding the validity of their marriage by staging a second ceremony in the presence of the Prince Regent.

The Duchess of Kent gave birth to Princess Alexandrina Victoria, but the Duchess of Clarence's first child, Princess Charlotte Augusta, died after being born prematurely. Then the Duchess of Clarence gave birth to Princess Elizabeth, who momentarily bumped Princess Victoria out of her spot as heiress to the throne. However, after Elizabeth's unexpected death a few months later, Victoria once again became heiress presumptive to the throne of England. It was considered doubtful at this time that Victoria would succeed to the throne, as any offspring of the Duke of Clarence would take precedence, as would any male children of her father, the Duke of Kent. However, fate intervened; the Duke of Kent died unexpectedly, and the Duchess of Clarence became pregnant on other occasions but was never blessed with a live birth, thus making Victoria the eventual queen.

These events occurred, mostly, in the fifteen years preceding the publication of *Perkin Warbeck* and ,with Queen Caroline's trial, occupied a great deal of the public consciousness. They illuminate Mary Shelley's commentary in *Perkin Warbeck* on the monarchy and the subordination of women. However, before I move to a careful analysis of *Perkin Warbeck* in light of the historical aspects detailed above, one final section of background information is still required: an exposition of Mary Shelley's chosen medieval screen. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, in spite of the proliferation of historical romances during the Romantic Period, they have received relatively little attention. David Duff's reexamination of the romance genre in *Romance and Revolution* did much to illuminate its political

usage but focused primarily on political poetry, dismissing prose historical romances as “an escape from the pressure of political affairs and everyday life” (Duff 3). This perception of irrelevance, coupled with the esoteric historical knowledge needed for a clear understanding of these works, are the main reasons for this neglect. Mary Shelley’s novel is particularly prone to neglect because analysis of it depends upon the reader’s being willing to work against the general scholarly perception and being conversant enough with medieval history to notice Mary Shelley’s construction of a political allegory using subtle alterations and emphases. The following section of this chapter will provide the necessary medieval background for *Perkin Warbeck*, which in turn enables the reader to then see Mary Shelley’s historical alterations, inclusions, emphases, and conspicuous absences in a whole new light, as a political allegory, critiquing the events of the Regency, the enduring power of the monarchy, and the subordination of women.

### **A Feminine-Centered History of the War of the Roses and its Aftermath**

*I speculate that Elizabeth Woodville would have prepared a safe haven for her second son, Prince Richard, after her first son Prince Edward, was taken from her. . . Prince Richard might have survived. . . . All this remains a genuine mystery.*<sup>3</sup>

The War of the Roses and the reign of Henry VII produced one of the greatest historical mysteries of all time: the fate of the Princes in the Tower. The popularity of this story and the surrounding events and characters, particularly Jane Shore, is attested to by numerous appearances in literature and the theater—Mary Shelley is believed to have seen *Perkin Warbec* in Paris (Sunstein 288) —throughout the

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<sup>3</sup> Philippa Gregory, *The White Queen* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p. 533.

sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. One novel, Alexander Campbell's *Perkin Warbeck; or, the Court of James the Fourth of Scotland* was published immediately before Mary Shelley's and has long been considered a reason for the poor sales of her novel. However, its publication also speaks to the enduring fascination with the fate of the Princes in the Tower long into the nineteenth century. For the modern reader, however, these dramatic events have been eclipsed by the tumultuous reign of Henry VIII. Historical background is therefore necessary to illuminate the novelty of Mary Shelley's interpretation, particularly her portrayals of women. Thus, in the following portion of this chapter, I discuss the historical lives of Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of England, and her daughter, Princess Elizabeth of York, later Queen Elizabeth.

### **Elizabeth Woodville**

Elizabeth Woodville, circa 1437-1492, had an eventful life. She was first married to John Grey, the eldest son of a neighboring family. She bore him two children, Thomas and Richard, before he was killed at the latter battle at St. Albans, fighting for Lancaster. With Lancaster defeated and Elizabeth widowed, her mother-in-law refused to grant Elizabeth her dower, and Elizabeth, after seeking assistance from William Hastings, stood on the side of the road under a tree that is now known as the "Queen's Oak"; when Edward IV rode by, she begged for his assistance. Legend has it that Edward was smitten with her and sought to make her his mistress. She refused, even when threatened with a dagger; her refusal led to

Edward's offer of marriage, and on Mayday, Edward secretly married Elizabeth with her mother and a few witnesses in attendance.

Edward's intentions regarding this secret marriage are questionable, in part because he had entered into at least one other marital contract, with a Lady Eleanor Butler. But Edward quieted doubters later: when urged to marry Princess Bona of Savoy, Edward publicly announced that he was already married to Lady Elizabeth Grey. Despite the court's disappointment, Elizabeth was brought to London and crowned; in spite of the accusations that proliferated whenever Edward IV lost power, there is no doubt that she was a very capable Queen Consort, fertile, devoted to her husband and children, and, despite her renowned beauty and charm, not to mention her husband's multiple infidelities, she never attracted a hint of sexual scandal.

Elizabeth's life and reputation, as well as her family's, were by no means unthreatened throughout her life. Edward IV briefly lost his throne in 1469 after the Battle of Edgecote. The first act of the rebellious Earl of Warwick was to retaliate against Elizabeth and her family's increasing power at court by beheading, unfairly and without trial, Elizabeth Woodville's father and brother. Warwick then seized Elizabeth's mother, Jacquetta, and accused her of witchcraft. Edward IV escaped and regained control of the kingdom, rescuing his wife's mother. However, Warwick rebelled again and Edward IV was defeated and fled to Burgundy<sup>4</sup>; Elizabeth sought sanctuary at Westminster Abbey with her mother, and did not emerge until after Warwick was dead and Edward IV had regained control of England.

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<sup>4</sup> Duke Charles, the ruler of Burgundy, was married to Edward's sister Margaret, who later became a powerful supporter of the Yorkist faction opposing Henry VII.

Following these rebellions, Edward and Elizabeth enjoyed a relatively peaceful reign until Edward IV's sudden death in 1483, after which Elizabeth again sought sanctuary, fearing the power of the soon-to-be Richard III. This time her flight was less effective, perhaps because Edward IV's violations of sanctuary during previous battles had set a dangerous precedent.<sup>5</sup> Once Richard III seized power, Elizabeth's family again bore the brunt of his vengeance. Her brother Anthony and her son Richard Grey were executed, her son Edward V seized, and although Elizabeth attempted to keep her second son, Richard, Duke of York, in sanctuary with her, she was forced to place him in Richard III's custody.<sup>6</sup> Richard III then sought to destroy his most powerful opponents, charging William Hastings with treason and Elizabeth with witchcraft, thereby paving his way to the throne. Richard accused Elizabeth of destroying his strength and withering his arm, stating: "Elizabeth the quene, who with hir witchcraft hath so enchantyd me that by thannoyance thereof I am dissolvdy" (Polydore Vergil, qtd. in Baldwin 165). Hastings was executed, but the witchcraft charge was disregarded, at least temporarily. Thomas More, Baldwin tells us, noted that the assembled lords all acknowledged that the claim was spurious since Richard's arm was "'ever such since his birth' and 'wel thei wist that the quene was to wise to go aboute any such folye'" (qtd. in Baldwin 166).

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<sup>5</sup> Following a decisive battle, "Somerset and perhaps a dozen others who had no hope of pardon sought sanctuary in Tewkesbury Abbey, but Edward forcibly extricated them and had them executed in the market place" (Baldwin 52). Queen Margaret had also claimed sanctuary but was turned over to the Yorks almost immediately.

<sup>6</sup> Many credible historians suggest Elizabeth did not hand over Richard, Duke of York, to Richard III, but, rather, to an imposter. This hypothesis is not, however, the one Mary Shelley uses to explain his survival and return to England.

Elizabeth's reprieve was short-lived as Richard then openly claimed the throne for himself using three arguments in order to declare Edward and Elizabeth's marriage invalid, their children bastards, and himself king. Richard reignited the accusations that witchcraft brought about his brother's marriage, this time including Elizabeth with her mother in the charge.<sup>7</sup> Richard and his allies charged that, "the ungracious pretended marriage' . . . 'was made . . . by sorcerie and witchcrafte, committed by the said Elizabeth and her moder, Jacquett Duchess of Bedford" (qtd. in Baldwin 166). Richard also alleged that "the marriage had been conducted secretly without the assent of the peers, in a 'profane place,' and that Edward was already pre-contracted to another lady, the Lady Eleanor Butler" (Baldwin 106). With these justifications asserted in the *Titulus Regius* of 1484, Richard then assumed the throne.

After Richard's coronation, Elizabeth remained in sanctuary, plotting rebellions on behalf of her sons until they mysteriously disappeared from the Tower and then on behalf of her eldest daughter, Princess Elizabeth. Following a failed rebellion, Elizabeth left sanctuary after Richard swore to protect and support her daughters. Amidst rumors that Richard planned to marry his niece, Princess Elizabeth, Henry Tudor invaded, killed Richard at the battle of Bosworth and became Henry VII, the first Tudor king of England.

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<sup>7</sup> Jacquetta was charged with using witchcraft to bring about her daughter's marriage to the King in 1469.

## Queen Elizabeth and Elizabeth Woodville's Final Years

The majority of the events detailed above precede *Perkin Warbeck*; the following events, regarding the life of Princess Elizabeth with Henry Tudor, form an integral part of Mary Shelley's novel. In order to realize the extent to which Mary Shelley is molding events to create the allegory and facilitate a political critique, an examination of the historical facts to the extent available is paramount.

Henry VII's actions upon accession can be interpreted in several ways; Mary Shelley clearly advocated a particular interpretation. Temporarily disregarding Henry VII's motives, his actions after Bosworth are as follows: Henry VII immediately sought physical custody of Princess Elizabeth and her cousin Edward, Earl of Warwick, the two most obvious challengers to the throne; he also repealed the *Titulus Regius* in 1485 and went so far as to order all copies of it destroyed.<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Woodville was given her full dower; her titles were returned to her. However, despite his promise to marry Princess Elizabeth, he only did so "in response to a Parliamentary petition to fulfill his promise" (Baldwin 118), a fact which Mary Shelley later emphasizes.

Henry VII then retaliated harshly against the suspected involvement of Elizabeth Woodville in a plot supporting the imposter Lambert Simnel. Elizabeth's participation was not proven, but "King Henry deprived Elizabeth Woodville of all her properties and confined her to Bermondsey Abbey on the unlikely grounds that she had imperiled his cause by surrendering her daughters to King Richard some three years earlier" (Baldwin 121). The charge conflicts with Henry VII's well-

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<sup>8</sup> This order was carried out so effectively that only one manuscript of the *Titulus Regius* is extant.

documented awareness of how Richard III had coerced Elizabeth; Henry VII had reconciled with her, restored her status, and repealed the *Titulus Regius* long after the fact. To suddenly punish her was mysterious; historians still debate the circumstances of Elizabeth's withdrawal from court. Baldwin lists many theories; however, Mary Shelley's own explanation, that Elizabeth was supporting her son Richard's cause, rather than Lambert Simnel's, is surely the most convincing.

After Elizabeth's incarceration in Bermondsey Abbey, she was infrequently allowed in court and died in extreme poverty on June 8, 1492. Elizabeth had little to bequeath and was "interred almost immediately without any form of ceremony. . . . [T]he King, and other senior peers and churchman were all conspicuous by their absence" (Baldwin 136). It was a sad end for the once beautiful, beloved, and influential Queen Elizabeth.

In the construction of her political allegory in *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley uses not only the character of Elizabeth Woodville but also that of her daughter, Henry VII's consort, Princess Elizabeth of York. The general absence of historical records makes Princess Elizabeth a more malleable character than Elizabeth Woodville and therefore ideally suited to Mary Shelley's purpose. Little is definitively established about the character of Princess Elizabeth, although the general scholarly consensus is that she was forced by circumstances to marry Henry VII. Prior to their marriage, there was considerable gossip that Elizabeth was about to marry her uncle, Richard III. There is a no longer extant but supposedly authentic letter in which the then-Princess Elizabeth expressed "the hope that Queen Anne's illness would soon prove fatal and that she would then marry her uncle King

Richard” (Baldwin 150). This letter supports the conclusion that Elizabeth was a reluctant participant in her eventual marriage to Henry; however, the couple did have nine children, and there is a touching contemporary account of the King and Queen comforting each other after the death of their eldest child, Prince Arthur. Elizabeth died in childbirth in 1503, and after her death Henry VII was, Michael Jones tells us, “stricken with grief” (304). He became increasingly ill before dying in 1509, never having remarried.

### **Mary Shelley’s Political Allegory in *Perkin Warbeck***

In *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley cleverly adapts some features of the events detailed above so that her medieval screen will accommodate key Regency facts. This manipulation, in turn, enables Mary Shelley to comment obliquely on current political events, gaining freedom of interpretation along with her “independen(ce) of the historical ‘truth’” (Garbin 152). I will build on Lidia Garbin’s point by showing the primacy of feminism in Mary Shelley’s historical freedom with the known facts about Elizabeth Woodville and Princess Elizabeth, the Regency inequality between the sexes instantiated in George IV and Caroline allegorizing the late medieval oppression by Henry VII of Elizabeth Woodville and Princess Elizabeth.

Mary Shelley apprises readers of *Perkin Warbeck* of her main principle in shaping her portrayal of the protean Henry VII:

Henry the Seventh was a man of strong sense and sound understanding. He was prudent, resolute, and valiant; on the other hand, he was totally devoid of generosity, and was actuated all his life by base and bad passions. At first,

the ruling feeling of his heart was hatred of the House of York—nor did he wholly give himself up to the avarice that blotted his latter years, till the extinction of that unhappy family satisfied his revenge, so that for want of fuel the flame died away. (26-27)

This opening passage establishes Henry VII, a man of good sense corrupted by “base and bad passions,” as an analogue of George IV, who was supposedly “blessed at birth with looks, talent and fortune—all of which he dissipated” (Fraser 138-39). Mary Shelley further notes that Henry VII’s persecutions of the Yorks were always tempered by calculation: “he never aimed at too much . . . . More of cruelty would have roused England against him. . . . He had that exact portion of callousness of heart” (*PW* 27). This portrayal of Henry VII as a calculated sadist would, for Mary Shelley’s first readers, conjure up Henry VII’s nineteenth-century equivalent, the Prince Regent, who persecuted Princess Caroline largely because her popularity outshone his. He, particularly during the trial, knew just how far he could go without rousing England against him. Mary Shelley consolidates the allegory in portraying Henry’s animosity towards his fiancée. Mary Shelley’s Henry VII, like the Prince Regent, had previously welcomed matrimony. Regency observers also knew well that Prince George sought to break the commitment; accordingly, Mary Shelley’s Henry VII, “resolved, if possible, to delay and break the marriage,” despite the urgings of his own friends and political prudence (*PW* 28). Mary Shelley’s deliberate emphasis that Henry VII resisted a politically advantageous marriage for personal reasons is an unmistakable reference to the Prince Regent’s jeopardizing of his own status with George III through his embarrassing of Caroline. Mary Shelley then

writes of the marriage ceremony that, “the forbidding manners of Henry threw a chill over the marriage festival. He considered that he had been driven to this step by his enemies . . . chief among these . . . was Elizabeth herself” (*PW* 32). The Prince of Wales viewed his bride with equal animosity. It has been suggested that he saw the Princess Caroline “as something approaching an instrument of the devil” (Fraser 57), and took reluctance one step further than Henry VII when, during the marriage ceremony, he “stood up in the middle of a prayer for no apparent reason as if to flee” (Fraser 61).

The scene then shifts to Elizabeth’s taking leave of her cousin, the Earl of Warwick, and her imagined future as Queen of England. Princess Elizabeth “might well entertain high anticipations of future power; she was in the pride of youth and beauty; the light spirit of expected triumph lighted up her lovely face. She was about to become the bride of a conqueror,” writes Mary Shelley, “her imagination fed on the good she would do for others, when raised to the regal dignity” (*PW* 29-30). Mary Shelley’s Elizabeth dreamed of “future power” in a way that Princess Caroline might well have done when she told her new fiancé of her “hourly and anxious expectation of being immediately sent for” (Fraser 45). Caroline’s short-lived enthusiasm for marriage is reflected in Princess Elizabeth’s loss of “the hope of influencing her husband, (without which) the state of a Queen appeared mere bondage. In her heart she wished to reject her uncourteous bridegroom” (*PW* 31). Princess Caroline, too, lost her illusions after her wedding night because her “drunken husband,” Fraser writes, “passed the greatest part of his bridal night under the grate, where he fell, and where (she) left him” (Fraser 62). This debacle,

coupled with Prince's earlier infamous call for brandy at their first meeting, undeniably led to Caroline, too, condemning her now-husband as a discourteous bridegroom.

Mary Shelley's further likens the Regency and medieval couples in the matter of an heir: King George III, England, and probably Caroline herself hoped for an heir and marital accord once Caroline became pregnant in the early months of marriage. Mary Shelley mirrors this hope in her Henry and Elizabeth: "the wishes and thoughts of all around were occupied by the hope of an heir to the crown, which the young Queen would soon bestow on England . . . [and which] would win her husband's affection" (*PW* 44-45). Although Elizabeth and Caroline both delivered healthy children—Arthur and Charlotte, respectively—the affection of their respective husbands did not follow. The Prince of Wales's response was to write a will that prevented Caroline from educating or caring for her child, or even getting custody. Mary Shelley's Henry VII again mirrors the Prince Regent's widely-known callousness. Mary Shelley writes:

Neglect was the lightest term that could be applied to the systematized and cold-hearted tyranny of Henry towards his wife. . . . though proud of the son she had given him, as the heir of his crown, he divided as much as possible, the infant from the mother, under the avowed though ridiculous pretence, of preventing her from inculcating principles of rebellion towards his liege and father. (*PW* 52)

Fischer notes that contemporary chronicles support Mary Shelley's characterization of Henry's marital relations, but Mary Shelley's choice of which established facts to

emphasize suggests that she invited her first readers to recall the Prince Regent's continual separation of his wife from Princess Charlotte. The Prince Regent had not made an idle threat in his farcical will. Throughout Princess Charlotte's life, whenever possible, and more successfully once Caroline lost the support of George III, the Prince of Wales restricted Caroline's access to Charlotte. These strictures were so successful that in biographies of Caroline it is not unusual to come across sentences such as "this was the first time since Princess Charlotte was three years old that mother and daughter had been permitted to sleep under the same roof" (Fraser 150). The future George IV severed physical, if not emotional, relations between mother and daughter to such a degree that, shortly before she died, Charlotte wrote to Caroline, then banished from England, "Why is my mother not allowed to pour cheerfulness into the seeking heart of her inexperienced and trembling child?"<sup>9</sup>

Mary Shelley's next mention of Henry VII's vindictive nature is directed at his mother-in-law rather than his wife, but here, too, the allegorical relationship between Elizabeth's trial and Caroline's trial is clear. Following the description of Henry's vindictive separation of mother and child, Mary Shelley moves to Henry's persecution of Elizabeth's mother, opening with the unambiguous line, "Henry hated Elizabeth Woodville . . . he hated her . . . in every way she was his enemy" (*PW* 53). This passionate declaration inescapably calls to mind the incident when King George IV was informed that his "bitterest enemy" was dead. Rather than rejoicing in Napoleon's demise, George IV infamously stated "Is she, by God?" (Fraser 454).

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<sup>9</sup> Qtd. in Monica Charlott, *Victoria: The Young Queen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 7.

Having recalled the relationship between George and Caroline to the reader's mind, using the exact word "enemy," Mary Shelley then makes Elizabeth Woodville's trial a logical result of Henry's animosity. Rather than emphasizing Elizabeth's treachery and participation in the Simnel plot, Mary Shelley makes it clear that Henry's hatred is the cause of her trial by reducing Elizabeth's guilt, but also by failing to mention certain previously-mentioned historical aspects of Henry's character that conflict with Mary Shelley's characterization: one of Henry VII's first acts as king was to restore her status, relegitimize her marriage and children, and grant Elizabeth her dower (the manors and allowance of which Mary Shelley's Henry is now so covetous). Instead, Mary Shelley moves seamlessly from the profession of Henry's hatred to narrating only two paragraphs later that "an enactment was leveled against the Queen Dowager . . . that she should forfeit all her goods and lands, and be confined for life in a convent, for having consented to the marriage of her daughter and Richard the Third" (*PW* 54). By structuring the section in this manner, with Elizabeth's plotting preceding the declaration of hatred, the Dowager Queen is absolved, and it is clear that her punishment is the result of malicious forethought rather than justified imprisonment for a treasonous act. Mary Shelley then moves to the passing of sentence on Elizabeth, and on her acceptance and imprisonment, and here imagines that Elizabeth was offered freedom and her wealth in exchange for "the confession of her son's existence, and place of abode" (*PW* 55). Elizabeth Woodville gives up her own freedom rather than deny her son his rightful chance at the throne of England. Mary Shelley's insertion of fictitious bribes would undoubtedly remind the Regency reader of the bribes offered to Queen Charlotte in

lieu of not returning to England<sup>10</sup> and claiming her rightful place as George IV's Queen Consort, further strengthening the allegory. After rejecting Henry VII's offer, "all hope was at an end for the unhappy lady" (*PW* 55), and Elizabeth was carried "to her living grave" (*PW* 56). Mary Shelley could not have Elizabeth die prematurely in direct contradiction with the historical facts, but in order to maintain the parallel with Caroline, who died three weeks after her aborted attempt to attend George IV's Coronation, she has Elizabeth carried, if not to her grave following her trial, then to the "convent-prison" which will serve as "her living grave" (*PW* 55-56).

Thus, in the opening sixty pages of *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley establishes an allegorical relationship between medieval events and the events of the Regency, particularly with regards to the subordinate status of women, as both wives and mothers, under the reigns of Henry VII, George III, and George IV. While the disparate time enables Mary Shelley to critique openly the avaricious and vindictive kings and the fates the women under their control, Mary Shelley's depiction of events and successful allegorical construction is such that one cannot imagine how, for a knowledgeable reader, the critique of George IV would have gone unnoticed.

Throughout *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley goes on to examine another issue troubling the monarchy in the early 1800s: marriage. As previously mentioned, after the death of Princess Charlotte, there was considerable uncertainty regarding the royal succession in England. In addition, because the Prince Regent saw fit to use Princess Charlotte's death as an opportunity to open divorce proceedings against his wife, many royal peccadilloes were dredged up and recalled to the public

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<sup>10</sup> "If she would give up her title and remain abroad, the new King promised her 50,000 pounds a year" (Charlot 26).

consciousness. This dredging, coupled with the flurry of hasty marriages within the royal family, resulted in considerable public attention being drawn to royal marriages, both legitimate and otherwise. Mary Shelley's choice of material and her critique of illegitimate marriage in *Perkin Warbeck* examine these issues.

Following the death of Princess Charlotte, focus was on the production of a new heir; however, questions of legitimacy were hovering just below the surface as the succession crisis loomed. They are raised prominently in *Perkin Warbeck*. In its opening pages, Mary Shelley writes, "Your father, the Duke of Gloucester threw the stigma of illegitimacy on King Edward's children, and thus took from them their right of inheriting the crown" (*PW* 16-17). As Mary Shelley clearly states, true illegitimacy was not required to rob the prospective heir of his throne, only the "stigma" of illegitimacy. It may have suited everyone to ignore the issue of the dead Princess Charlotte, but it was an unmistakable fact that "the stigma of illegitimacy" had attached itself to her long ago. Mary Shelley then writes:

He allowed that the evidence was strong in favor of that king's former marriage, and their consequent illegitimacy; but he said, that Elizabeth Woodville had so long been held Queen of England, and her children heirs to the crown, that it was impossible to eradicate the belief of the English people, that their allegiance was due to him who had been proclaimed even by his uncle, Edward the Fifth. (*PW* 19)

Mary Shelley's avoidance of proper names in the first quoted sentence facilitates the reader's interpretation of the sentence as describing Regency rather than medieval characters. Evidence was indeed strong for the Prince Regent's former marriage,

and the same phrase could not, in all honesty, be said of King Edward IV's former marriage, if it did even take place. Furthermore, just as Edward V was the long-accepted heir to the monarchy, so, too, was Princess Charlotte, and it was "impossible to eradicate the belief of the English people" that, marital indiscretions and disputes aside, "their allegiance was due to him (or her) who had been proclaimed" presumptive heir to the throne (*PW* 19). This passage, however, illuminates a possible consequence, although it did not materialize, of the imprudent actions of the Prince Regent and of his siblings.

Mary Shelley later draws attention to the problems resulting from secret marriages, when she writes of King Edward "that his light loves, and careless playing with sacred ties, had caused the blot of base birth to be affixed to his legitimate offspring, and so strewed the sad way that led them to untimely death" (*PW* 368). Although this passage could be referring to medieval characters, it is again suited to a critique of Regency affairs. Princess Charlotte's death was not caused directly by the "blot of base birth." The indiscretions of her parents, particularly her father, however, arguably "strewed the sad way that led" to her untimely death. The Prince Regent's "careless playing with sacred ties" with Mrs. Fitzherbert and many "light loves," such as Lady Jersey, were cited as the primary cause of discord between the couple and resulted in a permanent estrangement and Charlotte being used as a pawn between them. Imprisoned and confined by her father, Charlotte eventually fled to her mother, only to have help denied to her and to be told that "the Prince Regent . . . had absolute authority over her until she was twenty-one" (Fraser 248). Charlotte was then confined and abandoned by her

mother, who fled to the Continent; she turned to matrimony as an escape and married Prince Leopold in 1816. Monica Charlot contends that the marriage was mutually beneficial, bringing freedom to Charlotte and wealth to Leopold, but was not a love match. Charlot writes, “She [Charlotte] sought freedom, he [Leopold] prosperity” (6). This marital escape led to Charlotte’s pregnancies and “untimely death” in childbirth (*PW* 368). While Charlotte could have perished in childbirth regardless of her parents’ relations, they undeniably contributed to the situation preceding the birth, when “during the last weeks of her pregnancy the young Princess underwent a deep fit of depression. All the deprivations that she had suffered, in particular the lack of motherly warmth and closeness came to the surface” (Charlot 7). Charlotte’s depression stemmed from her parents’ relations and her mother’s resulting absence; in this state of depression, Charlotte wrote her mother an impassioned letter, lamenting her mother’s absence and the circumstances of it, and died delivering a still-born baby boy shortly thereafter. The Prince Regent’s “grief was seen by some as insincere . . . it was well known that his affection for his daughter was not unbounded” (Charlot 13). Thus, it is perhaps most perceptive of Mary Shelley to address the culpability of the Prince Regent in Charlotte’s death by stating that his “careless playing with sacred ties . . . so strewed the sad way” to Charlotte’s “untimely death” (*PW* 368).

In addition to the issues Mary Shelley raises regarding the subordinate position of women and (il)legitimate marriages within the monarchy, in the final pages of the novel Mary Shelley makes her most politically radical, and consequently most veiled and allegorized statement yet, using the character of Prince Arthur to

illustrate the inherent problem of monarchy. The reader might expect *Perkin Warbeck* to end on a gloomy note after Richard's execution, but, for Mary Shelley, hope apparently survives. Just as the radicals once anticipated reform under a liberal Queen Charlotte, so Mary Shelley creates the prospect for a brighter future with her description of the new heir to the throne, Prince Arthur. Arthur will, Katherine states, make a wonderful king. Katherine and Elizabeth have attempted to "foster the many virtues nature had implanted in the noble mind of Prince Arthur" in order to "bestow on the England [Richard] loved, a sovereign who will repair the usurper's crimes, and bestow happiness on the realm" (*PW* 400). With this prediction of greater prosperity in the future, Mary Shelley ends her novel. The greatest import of this section, however, lies not in what was said, but rather in what was not. Mary Shelley, and her readers, would have been well aware that Prince Arthur, like Princess Charlotte, died shortly after his marriage to Catherine of Aragon and thus did not go on to "bestow happiness on the realm." Fischer notes the incongruities of Katherine's speech, stating:

Arthur died April 2, 1502. Perhaps Mary Shelley would have incorporated Arthur's death into Katherine's epilogue in a second edition. The retrospective character and reflective tone of her "favorite's" confession suggest that it was made many years after Warbeck's death in 1499. The references to Arthur, however, place the interview with Edmund before 1502. (Fischer, *PW*, 399)

However, as opposed to being an error, as with Mary Shelley's other alterations, perhaps this otherwise inexplicable "oversight" is deliberate. By dwelling on the

future of England with a King Arthur, Mary Shelley draws attention to what her audience knows happened instead. Arthur died, and the throne thus devolved onto the younger brother, Prince Henry, who went on to become one of the most tyrannical persecutors of women in English history. By contrasting what was supposed to happen with what did, Mary Shelley illuminates the inherent problem of monarchy, namely, the distribution of power through inheritance as opposed to merit. Rather than maintain a system where power is inherited and attempt to raise future kings to “repair the . . . crimes” (*PW* 400) of the kings who preceded them, Shelley makes a compelling argument that monarchy should instead be abolished altogether. In these unspoken words, Mary Shelley hints, although she is unable to shout it from the rooftops, that she, too, belongs to the class of people previously mentioned in *Perkin Warbeck*, those who “even in modern days” (*PW* 306) are unhappy under the monarchy and dare to ask, “Why while there is plenty in the land, should we and our children starve? Why pay our hard earnings into the regal coffers? . . . Why should these men govern us? “We are many—they are few!”” (P. B. Shelley, qtd. in *PW*, 306). Thus, although critics have long asserted that Mary Shelley’s “‘dormouse’ nature . . . prevented her from taking an active part in open political and social debate” (Garbin 150-51), Mary Shelley used historical material to address contemporary anxieties; her medieval screen created a political allegory by which to covertly address, rather than retreat from, political issues of the Regency. Far from abandoning radicalism after the death of P. B. Shelley, Mary Shelley’s political opinions are alive and well, clearly manifested, in *Perkin Warbeck*. One only has to know where to look.

### CHAPTER THREE: WOLLSTONECRAFT, MARY SHELLEY, AND THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF *MARIA*

The previous chapter of this dissertation focused on countering critical claims that the widowed Mary Shelley retreated from radicalism and the political sphere and that her later novels, particularly *Perkin Warbeck*, demonstrate this withdrawal. Chapter two addressed the latter charge by providing the pertinent historical background behind Mary Shelley's carefully constructed, pointed political allegory masquerading as benign historical romance and thus, surprisingly, as a preservation of Mary Shelley's political radicalism. In this chapter I address the corollary charge, that Mary Shelley's retreat from politics was a betrayal of her mother's signature "'good cause'—the cause of the advancement of freedom & knowledge, of the rights of women &c" (*MWSJ* 553). To counter this accusation, I will demonstrate Mary Shelley's continued defense of and engagement with Wollstonecraftian ideals throughout *Perkin Warbeck*.

Wollstonecraft's influence on Mary Shelley was mediated primarily through her writings. In absence of a direct maternal bond, these writings, coupled with Godwin's memoir and Wollstonecraft's portrait by John Opie in Godwin's study, assumed an immense importance as the gateway through which Mary Shelley might know her mother. Of these writings, critics have focused primarily on *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and, in assessing her daughter, have looked to Mary Shelley's infamous journal

entry ["With regard to the "good Cause"—the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge—of the Rights of Woman &c—I am not a person of opinions," (MWSJ 553)], and judged her, despite early promise, to be wholly lacking as Wollstonecraft's successor.

Recently, critics such as Janet Todd, Marilyn Butler, and Emma Rees-Mogg—who together edited *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*<sup>1</sup>—have dislodged the *Vindication* from pride of place in Wollstonecraft's oeuvre, creating a more nuanced picture of Wollstonecraft's assessment of the status of women, in part by reexamining Wollstonecraft's *The Wrongs of Woman, or Maria* (1798). What now remains is to apply our refined notion of the mature Wollstonecraft to a discussion of the mature Mary Shelley as Wollstonecraft's successor. In this chapter, I will address the existing imbalance by chronicling, first, the neglect of the influential aspects of Wollstonecraft's oeuvre that has resulted from the critical focus on the *Vindication*; second, biographical acknowledgement of the lifelong influence of *Maria* on Mary Shelley; third, the critical reexamination of the fragmentary *Maria* and the significance of it with regards to Wollstonecraft's ultimate legacy; and finally, the argument for a reevaluation of the mature Mary Shelley as a tactical proponent of the "good cause" and *Perkin Warbeck* as Mary Shelley's attempt to pick up where her mother left off and thereby finish the unfinished business of *Maria*.

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, 7 vols., ed. Janet Todd, Marilyn Butler, and assistant edited by Emma Rees-Mogg (New York: New York U P, 1989).

## The Critical Relationship: Wollstonecraft and Mary Shelley

As Wollstonecraft's final work, *Maria* should claim greater significance. However, perhaps due to its fragmentary nature, it remains largely overshadowed by the *Vindication*. The *Vindication* takes pride of place in Wollstonecraft's oeuvre, but also as the perceived primary influence on Mary Shelley. Unsurprisingly, a survey of literary criticism reflects this imbalance. Mellor cites the *Vindication* as the chief Wollstonecraftian influence on *Frankenstein* and on *Mathilda*, chiefly because of the *Vindication's* critique of gender and of the bourgeois family.<sup>2</sup> Erin Webster-Garrett, too, relies on the *Vindication* as the key to Mary Shelley's novels, which, in her view, continue the *Vindication's* critique of "women's trapped social positions" and "the question of women's 'sexual' education" (Garrett 49). Webster-Garrett also connects Mary Shelley's other novels to the *Vindication*, linking characters from *Mathilda* and *Lodore* to the *Vindication's* ideology, stating that *Perkin Warbeck* generally "echoes Wollstonecraft's call in *Rights of Women* to 'men of understanding'" (134). Webster-Garrett also draws parallels between Madeline de Faro's death at the hands of Muslims in Spain and Wollstonecraft's critiques of Islam in the *Vindication*. Chronicling the consistent portrayal of the *Vindication* as Mary Shelley's primary Wollstonecraftian influence could continue indefinitely.

Yet biographers insist that Wollstonecraft's unfinished novel *Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman*—the sequel to *Vindication*, and published posthumously in 1798—

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<sup>2</sup> Mellor's consistent refusal to shorten the title of the *Vindication* in any way also speaks to the amount of importance placed on this particular work.

was immensely influential to Mary Shelley. Indeed, Emily Sunstein<sup>3</sup> opines that the young Mary Shelley read *Maria* as “her mother’s testament to herself” and as “a call to her daughter to pursue happiness while she is young” (53). *Maria*, therefore, proleptically justified Mary Shelley’s infamous elopement. Mary Shelley coped with Godwin’s disowning her, Sunstein suggests, by “rereading *Political Justice* and *Maria* in order to marshal from her parents’ mouths a vindication of her right to live with Shelley” (90); significantly, it was *Maria*, not the *Vindication*, that channeled her mother’s voice at this stressful juncture. Although that attempt at reconciliation was unsuccessful, *Maria* retained its significance throughout Mary Shelley’s life. In fact, as Sunstein notes, Mary Shelley was first drawn to her and Percy Bysshe Shelley’s friend Jane Williams because she reminded Mary Shelley of the titular heroine of *Maria* (196). Following Sunstein, some critics highlight *Maria* as the novel most representative of Mary Shelley biographically, because it chronicles the forced separation of mother and daughter. Barbara Jane O’Sullivan<sup>4</sup> sees *Maria* as the model for the separation of Beatrice and Wilhelmina in *Valperga*; Diane Hoeveler and Mellor<sup>5</sup> link *Maria*’s Jemima to *Frankenstein*’s creature; and Mellor further finds that the lingering hope at the end of *Maria*—that “female victims of neglect and oppression may yet find comfort among each other”—became a “monstrous impossibility” in *Frankenstein* (421); Julia Saunders

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<sup>3</sup> See Emily W. Sunstein, *Mary Shelley, Romance and Reality* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989); . subsequent references to this work will be cited parenthetically as “Sunstein.”

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Jane O’Sullivan, “Beatrice in Valperga: A New Cassandra” in *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, ed. Audrey Fisch et al. (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> See Diane Long Hoeveler, “Reading the Wound: Wollstonecraft’s ‘Wrongs of Woman, or Maria’ and Trauma Theory” in *Studies in the Novel* 31.4 (1999): 387-407; and Anne K. Mellor, “Righting the Wrongs of Woman: Mary Wollstonecraft’s Maria” in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 19.4 (2008): 413-24.

chronicles *Maria's* influence on *Valperga* and *Lodore*.<sup>6</sup> However, despite the abundant biographical support for the impact of *Maria* on Mary Shelley, the *Vindication* retains pride of place. The scarcity of critical attention to the influence of *Maria* on Mary Shelley, compared to that of the *Vindication*, becomes almost radio silence in the case of *Perkin Warbeck*. The absence of criticism examining the influence of *Maria* on this neglected Mary Shelleyian masterpiece signals a critical failure to investigate the tremendous influence of *Maria* on Mary Shelley's oeuvre, beyond the biographical and the obvious, and as something other than articulation of a standard of feminism that Mary Shelley was unable to measure up to.

### **The Critical Reevaluation of *Maria***

Recent critics have revisited *Maria*, illuminating its pivotal aspects—the morally fallen nature of men, the dependent nature of women, and the novel's complications of the *Vindication's* feminist argument—aspects that play a prominent role in my exposition of Mary Shelley's Wollstonecraftian debts in *Perkin Warbeck*. Although critics have not labeled them as what I hereby christen “fallen men,” they nonetheless have recognized the morally fallen nature of *Maria's* major male characters, who have harmed the novel's principal women characters: the unfairly imprisoned heroine, Maria, and the mistreated, lower-class attendant, Jemima. Maria is failed by her father, by her husband (George Venables), and by her lover (Henry Darnford); Jemima is failed by virtually all of the men she has encountered. Diane Long Hoeveler chronicles the dishonorable men involved with Maria and characterizes Darnford's view of women as

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<sup>6</sup> Julia Saunders, “Rehabilitating the Family in Mary Shelley's *Faulkner*” in *Mary Shelley's Fictions: From Frankenstein to Falkner*, ed. Michael Eberle-Sinatra (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000).

disposable and justly pillories Venables's preference for prostitutes over his wife. Venables cements his status as a fallen man, descending further into degeneracy than even his infamous predecessor, Lovelace, by attempting to trade his wife's sexual favors to a friend for five hundred pounds. In the novel, Maria describes the scene as follows:

He . . . took a letter deliberately out of his pocket, saying, "Your husband's honour is not inflexible . . . . Why, he left the room this very day on purpose to give me an opportunity to explain myself . . . . I snatched the letter with indescribable emotion. The purport of it was to invite him to dinner, and to ridicule his chivalrous respect for me. He assured him, "that every woman had her price,["] and with gross indecency hinted, that he should be glad to have the duty of a husband taken off his hands . . . and concluded with requesting him to lend him five hundred pounds for a month or six weeks." (153-54)

And, of course, Maria was thrown into the hands of Venables and consequently Darnford by the failings of her father. Maria's father, a minor character whose importance derives from his failure to provide a moral home and later haven for his children, begins an affair with "an artful kind of upper servant" (124), while his wife is on her deathbed. Afterwards, Maria reports, "my father's mistress was with child and he, doating on her, allowed or overlooked her vulgar manner of tyrannizing over us" (125). This untenable situation drove Maria to seek sanctuary elsewhere, namely in matrimony with George Venables. Once Maria realizes that a man in her life has "fallen"—be it Venables, Darnford, or her father—she attempts to distance herself from him, realizing that continued association would occasion her own fall. Thus, Maria distances herself from her father's immorality by marrying Venables. Then, upon seeing

proof of Venables's fall in the above-quoted letter, she states, "I call on you, Sir [her would-be lover], to witness,' and I lifted my hands and eyes to heaven, 'that, as solemnly as I took his name, I now abjure it,' I pulled off my ring, and put it on the table . . . I leave him as free as I am determined to be myself—he shall be answerable for no debts of mine" (154). However, as "marriage had bastilled [Maria] for life" (103), she found it difficult to distance herself from Venables. Wollstonecraft hereby delivers a succinct indictment of the period's divorce laws and misogyny. The law did not support Maria's lofty abjuration or provide an outlet for her to leave her degenerate husband; thus, after abandoning him, Maria suffered, the narrator tells us, "the condemnations of a mistaken world" (178). When Darnford was charged by Venables with adultery, Maria undertook his defense. Although unable to speak in court, she wrote an impassioned letter defending her conduct, begging to be freed from "the rigid laws that enslave women," and "exclaim[ing] against the laws which throw the whole weight of the yoke on the weaker shoulders, and force women, when they claim protectorship as mothers, to sign a contract, which renders them dependent on the caprice of the tyrant, whom choice or necessity has appointed to reign over them" (178-79). Maria's pleadings are dismissed by the judge, who "alluded to the fallacy of letting women plead their feelings, as an excuse for the violation of the marriage vow" (181). With this event, Wollstonecraft's unfinished manuscript ends. However, the fragmentary notes Wollstonecraft left behind indicate that Maria's pattern of behavior was to continue. Maria was to learn of Darnford's betrayal [indicated by notes such as, "her lover unfaithful" (183)], and attempt to distance herself permanently from him by committing suicide. Thus, although she loved Darnford, her much-vaunted principles would remain intact and, to

the end, she would refuse to maintain a relationship with a fallen man. This conclusion is further reinforced by the one drafted ending in which Maria survives her suicide attempt and, with Jemima's help, is reunited with her child. She decides to "live for [her] child" (184), but it is clear that this future has no room in it for a fallen man.

*Maria's* Jemima further illuminates the dangers of the socially-constructed dependence of women. Jemima is forced into immorality by subordinate situations and then flees in shame or is forced out of each situation when her "fallen" nature is discovered. As a child, Jemima began stealing food because she was hungry and only "fed the refuse" of her half-sister's table (108). When apprenticed to a woman who kept a slop-shop, Jemima again turned to stealing "from absolute necessity," suffered "under the lash of my task-mistress," and was subjected to multiple brutalities that Jemima describes as follows: "Often has my mistress . . . thrown me from one side of the kitchen to the other, knocked my head against the wall, spit in my face" (109). However, Jemima's situation worsened when she "suddenly grew tall, and something like comeliness appeared on . . . my face" (110). Jemima attracted the attention of the fallen man of the house and, following "blows and menaces," was forced to "submit to his ferocious desire" (110). Caught in the act by her mistress and left pregnant by her fallen "master," Jemima was kicked out of the house with an abortifacient and half a guinea. Jemima then descended to begging and prostitution. Throughout it all, Wollstonecraft's language makes Jemima's position as victim clear. Rather than enticing or seducing clients, Jemima was "accosted" and then "yielded" to "debasing misery" (112). Jemima initially refused to join a brothel, but after being "hunted almost into a fever" by a watchman from her neighborhood whom she had "unwittingly offended," was forced

“once more” to serve in a “house of ill fame” (113). Later, Jemima was persuaded to leave the brothel, accepting “the offer of a gentleman, rather in the decline of years, to keep his house” (113). Jemima says she would have enjoyed their life together, except for “the disgusting libertinism” of her “protector” (114). The term “protector” is ironic in that Jemima is subjected to “disgusting libertinism” because of this man’s fallen nature—“how could he sink into the grossness of sensuality!” Jemima reports (113)—but, compared to the degradation of her prior experiences, even the protector’s “grossness of sensuality” was an improvement, albeit a short-lived one. After her protector’s death, his surviving heirs turned Jemima out of his house, and she returned to London. There, Jemima became a washerwoman, found a lover, and then unwittingly instigated the suicide of that lover’s pregnant mistress, became stricken with remorse, and, after stays in the hospital, prison, and the work-house, at last found a position working in the madhouse in which Maria and Darnford found themselves incarcerated. It is notable that Jemima has attained this position with the help of a “shrewd—shall I say it?—villain” (119), who inspires no loyalty, but whose power over Jemima’s life is such that she is unwilling to betray him. Eventually inspired by Maria’s friendship, Jemima reforms and helps Maria and Darnford escape from the madhouse. Afterwards, Wollstonecraft barely mentions Jemima, aside from brief references to her as a companion to Maria, but her harrowing narrative reveals how a woman’s status and morals are tied, through enforced social subordination, to fallen men.

While acknowledging the prevalence of male villains, *Maria’s* critics have largely pointed to other reasons for the fall of Maria. Critics—and perhaps Wollstonecraft herself—have blamed Maria for her excessive sensibility and her inability to perceive

the true character of either Venables or Darnford. Maria's delusions about Darnford's character are the most damning, as Darnford furnished her with ample evidence of his true character early in their relationship. Indeed, he had written to Maria, "I will not disgust you with a recital of the vices of my youth" (100), before describing his lechery and excessive spending. He then described adventures with dull American women— "I found," he said, "I could only keep myself awake in their company by making downright love to them" (102)—and had, immediately before his incarceration with Maria in the madhouse, indulged himself with "the women of the town" (102). Despite abundant evidence of his debauchery, Maria still decides to consummate their love affair with a kiss, and "paradise bloomed around them" (106) in the madhouse.

In strengthening *Maria's* link with the *Vindication*, critics have also highlighted the novel's portrayals of the ill effects of women's limited education and access to professions—a portrayal particularly notable in the case of Jemima. However, Hoeveler pertinently notes that *Maria* undermines Wollstonecraft's stance in the *Vindication* by arguing that education is irrelevant. Hoeveler describes the similar fates of both educated (Maria) and uneducated (Jemima) women, attributing these fates to the patriarchal establishment rather than to (a lack of) education or employment opportunities (Hoeveler 6). Building on Hoeveler's argument, I would argue that Maria's excessive sensibility, foolish choices, and the dearth of education and employment opportunities are secondary issues that exacerbate the situations of, but do not cause the falls of, Maria and Jemima. Rather, Maria and Jemima fall because of their socially-enforced dependence, because they are—simply by nature of being female—wholly "dependent on the caprice of the tyrant," to borrow the narrator's

assessment, be it father, husband, or lover (178-79). When a man falls into dishonor, his control of the women in his life, and his power over their existence, is such that they, too, fall, however they may try to distance themselves. The stories of Maria and Jemima and their forced falls thus may be exacerbated by excessive sensibility, substandard education, and poor job opportunities, but, at the root, are caused by the unlimited power of patriarchy, as incarnated in the fallen men in their lives.

Given this assessment of *Maria* and the Wollstonecraftian model, this final chapter will demonstrate the influence of Wollstonecraft's construction of female dependency and the fallen man on Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*. This theme is one that Saunders has identified in Mary Shelley's oeuvre—though not mentioning *Perkin Warbeck*—, contending that just as Maria wasted her life on her passion for Darnford, so Mary Shelleyan characters, such as Frankenstein, Falkner (of the eponymous novel), and Lord Raymond (of *The Last Man*), indulged their respective passions. Saunders then argues that Maria, Frankenstein, Falkner, and Raymond are representations of Wollstonecraft's and Mary Shelley's "acute sense of the cost of ideals on the family" and that "they saw themselves not as Promethean free agents," but, rather, as "embedded in a web of responsibilities": "The fall of one individual brings the rest crashing down with him" (213). I would complicate Saunderson's theory by arguing that Mary Shelley saw her biographical selves—and sometimes, in their feminine incarnations, her literary selves—not as causing the falls of those around her and bringing them "crashing down," but, instead, as victims of a social subordination that left her susceptible to the moral failures and Prometheanism of the men in her life. Mary Shelley's journals reveal her

self-identification as follower or victim, rather than victimizer. In 1838, Mary Shelley wrote:

To be something great and good was the precept given me by my father: Shelley reiterated it. Alone & poor, I could only be something by joining a party—& there was much in me—the woman’s love of looking up & being guided, & be willing to do anything if anyone supported & brought me forward, which would have made me a good partizan—but Shelley died & I was alone—my father from age & domestic circumstances & other things could not me faire valoir<sup>7</sup> . . . all this has sunk me in a state of loneliness no other human being ever before I believe endured. (*MWSJ* 554-55)

This passage and many others throughout Mary Shelley’s journals and letters reveal that Mary Shelley was acutely aware “of the cost of ideals on the family,” not because of her own pursuit of selfish ideals, but rather because of her “first step in life” (*MWSJ* 555) and the immense suffering she underwent at the hands of P. B. Shelley’s ideals.

In the following portion of this chapter, I will apply the argument of Mary Shelley’s awareness of female dependency and the resulting repercussions to *Perkin Warbeck*, arguing for a reevaluation of the Wollstonecraft-Mary Shelley literary relationship. In contrast to the established criticism decrying Mary Shelley as Wollstonecraft’s failed successor, I will take a different interpretative path, arguing that *Perkin Warbeck* is Mary Shelley’s feminist manifesto, picking up where *Maria* left off. Indeed, it surpasses her mother’s work by imagining an existence for women in which they survive, rather than fall, and are no longer tied to the fates of their fallen men.

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<sup>7</sup> I.e., draw attention to myself.

## Mary Shelley and *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*

Critics' scant remarks on *Perkin Warbeck* classify it, like *Valperga*, as a feminine-centered history. Greg Kucich<sup>8</sup> states that Mary Shelley's historical romances are part of Romantic-Period efforts to draw attention to the neglected feminine side of history, while Deidre Lynch describes *Perkin Warbeck* as illuminating the role gender plays in perceived historical relevance.<sup>9</sup> In her article, Webster-Garrett states that *Perkin Warbeck* is devoted to recounting the buried histories of the late York and early Tudor women and that *Perkin Warbeck* could be more accurately described as "a revisionary history" rather than a romance (4). In addition to complicating the categorization of *Perkin Warbeck* as a "romance," critics have illuminated the consistent portrayals of women as dependent on male kindness, chivalry, and honor throughout the novel. William D. Brewer<sup>10</sup> links Mary Shelley's description of chivalry in *Perkin Warbeck* to that of P. B. Shelley and Godwin, arguing that Mary Shelley supports chivalry's idolization of the feminine and laments its absence during her own lifetime. Brewer (p. 10) references one of Mary Shelley's 1824 journal entries in which she writes of her own situation: "I find myself alone—deserted by the few I knew—distained—insulted . . . it is because I am a woman—a poor & unprotected—did there exist in men's breasts a spark of that chivalrous spirit—methinks many circumstances should awaken interest—it is not so" (*MWSJ*, II, 487-88). Brewer maintains that because of Mary Shelley's treatment at the hands of her contemporaries, she crafted King Henry VII as "a

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<sup>8</sup> Greg Kucich, "Biographer" in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Esther Schor (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Deirdre Lynch, "Historical Novelist" in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Esther Schor (Cambridge, Cambridge U P, 2003): 135-50.

<sup>10</sup> William D. Brewer, "William Godwin, Chivalry, and Mary Shelley's *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*" in *Papers on Language & Literature* 35.2 (1999): 187-201.

prototype for the selfish and ruthlessly competitive men of the nineteenth century who will help 'poor & unprotected' women only if it squares with their self-interest" (10). Following Brewer, Webster-Garrett examines the mindsets of Mary Shelley's Jane Shore, Princess Elizabeth, and Elizabeth Woodville, arguing that these women's behavior is the direct result of the systemic and insidious commodification of women. Here Webster-Garrett illuminates a deeper problem inherent in the subordinate status of women, namely that dependency becomes so engrained that women begin to perceive themselves as automatically bound to the level of their male champion or protector and to the "male acts of honor committed in their names" (15). What remains to be explored is the target of Mary Shelley's revisionary feminine-centered history; Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck* illuminates the consequences when women are bound, as wife or mistress, to a dishonored or morally corrupt man: a fallen man. I will trace this pattern in Mary Shelley's portrayals of Elizabeth Woodville, Princess Elizabeth, Jane Shore, and the sole survivor of such oppression: Katherine Gordon.

Following Mary Shelley's feminine-centered focus, the following portion of this chapter is divided into four sections, each devoted to Mary Shelley's portrayal of a female character and the way in which she illustrates the dangers inherently created by the subordinate status of women.

### **Elizabeth Woodville**

To illuminate the effects of socially-enforced female dependence, the first character I will discuss is Elizabeth Woodville: wife of Edward IV; mother of both Richard, Duke of York, and Princess Elizabeth; and Henry VII's Queen Consort. In this

section, I will illustrate the way in which Mary Shelley systematically ties Elizabeth Woodville's fall to the failings of her husband, King Edward IV. Although Edward IV is deceased at the beginning of *Perkin Warbeck*, his dishonorable behavior sets the novel's events in motion and leads to the fall of his widow, Elizabeth Woodville. Edward IV met Elizabeth Woodville on the side of a road and conducted a secret marriage with her. Edward IV then announced the marriage, and Elizabeth was brought to court, where she reigned as Queen Consort for many years; Edward was promiscuous both before and after his marriage, with devastating consequences. Most damningly, in 1464, Edward wed Elizabeth Woodville while rumored to have been secretly married or in contracted marriage with Lady Eleanor Butler. Therefore, Elizabeth's seven surviving children by him were considered illegitimate. In *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley sums up the events thusly: "the Duke of Gloucester [Richard III] threw the stigma of illegitimacy on King Edward's children, and thus took from them their right of inheriting the crown" (16). However, as the novel later goes on to say:

Though no doubt was entertained as to the fact of Edward having married Lady Eleanor Butler . . . Elizabeth Woodville having so long filled the station of Queen of England, the public voice went in her favour, and the majority of the English people looked upon the tale which deprived her children of their rights, as a contrivance of their usurping uncle. (27)

The "usurping uncle" (the Duke of Gloucester, alias Richard III, named protector of the realm at the deathbed of his brother, Edward IV) thus capitalized on Edward's immorality and fallen status in order to disinherit his nephews, one of whom was, of

course, Richard/Perkin, the titular hero of *Perkin Warbeck*.<sup>11</sup> In the *Titulus Regius*<sup>12</sup> of 1484, which is a statute issued by the English Parliament, Richard III declared Edward's marriage invalid, because of the above-mentioned precontract or marriage. As David Baldwin notes, "Canon law position (regarding the precontract) was that such an agreement was only a little less binding than marriage and precluded union with a third party for as long as it remained in being" (107). Thus it was argued, using the precontract, that Edward IV and Elizabeth Woodville were never married, their children were illegitimate, and consequently succession passed to Edward IV's younger brother, Richard III. The *Titulus Regius* also criticized Edward's sexual exploits during his reign, stating that he was "led by sensuality and concupiscence"<sup>13</sup> and accused Elizabeth Woodville and her mother of having brought about her marriage to Edward IV "by sorcerie and witchcrafte" (Baldwin 166).

As the above-quoted passages from *Perkin Warbeck* illustrate, Mary Shelley was familiar with the *Titulus Regius* and the accusation of precontract. The novel also

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<sup>11</sup> "Richard III (1452-85; ruled 1483-5). On becoming Protector of the Realm when his brother Edward IV died, he arrested and executed supporters of Edward's widow, and questioned the legitimacy of her children, the young Edward V and his brother, Richard, Duke of York" (Fischer, in *PW*, 12).

<sup>12</sup> According to the entry for "Titulus Regius" in John A. Wagner's *Encyclopedia of the War of the Roses* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO): "The petition (the *Titulus Regius*), which Richard had widely published after its presentation, invalidates the marriage of EDWARD IV and Elizabeth WOODVILLE by stating, without giving any sources, that Edward was not free to marry Elizabeth because he was already betrothed to Eleanor Butler. The BUTLER PRECONTRACT meant that the king and queen were living "together sinfully and damnably in adultery," and that all their children, including EDWARD V and Richard PLANTAGENET, duke of York, were "bastards . . . unable to inherit or to claim anything by inheritance." *Titulus Regius* also condemns the Woodville marriage as having been contrived by witchcraft, worked upon the king by the bride and her mother, JACQUETTA of LUXEMBOURG, duchess of Bedford, and as having been made in secret, "without reading of banns" and contrary to "the laudable customs of the Church of England . . . The document also argues that Richard III's accession is necessary for the restoration of good government, which suffered under Edward IV due to his acceptance of the "counsel of persons, insolent, vicious, and of inordinate avarice," meaning, the queen's family, the Woodvilles. Edward is characterized as "delighting in adulation and flattery, and led by sensuality and concupiscence" (Wagner 267-68.)

<sup>13</sup> Wagner, 268.

references the allegations of Edward's immoral behavior: "[Edward's] light loves, and careless playing with sacred ties, had caused the blot of base birth to be affixed to his legitimate offspring, and so strewed the sad way that led them to untimely death" (68). While this passage refers to the deaths of Prince Edward and Prince Richard, Edward IV's "light loves" and "careless playing with sacred ties" also "strewed the sad way" for the fall, incarceration, and later death of his queen, Elizabeth Woodville. Given, then, Mary Shelley's knowledge of the *Titulus Regius*, what is interesting is her deliberate omission in *Perkin Warbeck* of the (historical) accusation of Elizabeth's witchcraft. The novel points to the two other reasons for the dissolution of the marriage—Edward's affairs and the precontract—but by choosing not to include the accusation of witchcraft, Mary Shelley acquits Elizabeth of any wrongdoing in the novel.

In order to illuminate the magnitude of Mary Shelley's omission, a discussion of the historical Elizabeth's persona and the allegations of witchcraft against her is called for. As Fischer notes in her critical introduction to the novel, there was considerable discontent regarding the rapid rise of Elizabeth and her large family to power; in 1470-71, her mother, Jacquetta of Luxembourg, a descendent of the house of Burgundy, was charged with witchcraft. Jacquetta's story, albeit fascinating, lies outside the scope of Mary Shelley's novel; however, a brief discussion of this episode in her life and the example of a contemporary royal duchess is essential to understanding the gravity of later allegations against Elizabeth and the magnitude of Mary Shelley's omission.

Following the death of Henry V, the kingdom was left in the control of two royal dukes: Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester; and John, Duke of Bedford. The former ruled England, and the latter ruled the English territory in France until Henry VI was of age. The Duke

of Bedford married Jacquetta (Elizabeth Woodville's mother), and the Duke of Gloucester married a lady named Eleanor Cobham. The Duke of Gloucester was married to a Jacqueline of Hainault, but, after falling in love with Eleanor, her lady in waiting, abandoned Jacqueline, and returned to England with Eleanor. In 1441, when Eleanor was accused of witchcraft, King Henry V was at this point unmarried, his mother Catherine of Valois was deceased, and Jacquetta, the other royal duchess, had secretly married Sir Richard Woodville and considerably fallen in wealth and position, thus making Eleanor the premiere lady of the England. Position, influence, and the love of her husband were not enough to protect Eleanor. She was accused of "commissioning a horoscope that predicted ill-health for the king," and her physician, astronomer, and herbalist were tried, tortured, and executed; Eleanor "was found guilty of treason by royal decree . . . it was a verdict without a trial; as a woman accused of witchcraft, Eleanor could not hope for justice."<sup>14</sup> As punishment, Eleanor was forced to walk the streets of London in her shift, carrying a taper. She was then imprisoned for the remainder of her life, and her ever-faithful husband decried that his marriage to her was the result of seduction and sorcery and was, thus, null and void (Gregory, *Cousins'*, 68). Jacquetta and Elizabeth were well acquainted with Eleanor's fate and, understandably, feared a similar, if not worse, fate when the Earl of Warwick, a former mentor of Edward IV angered at being displaced by Elizabeth's accession, led a rebellion against Edward IV. Immediately following Edward IV's defeat and capture, Warwick executed Earl Rivers, Elizabeth's father, and Elizabeth's brother John. Then

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<sup>14</sup> Philippa Gregory, David Baldwin and Michael Jones, *The Women of the Cousins' War: The Duchess, The Queen and the Kings' Mother* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011), pp. 66, 68; subsequent references to this book will be cited parenthetically as "*Cousins'*."

Warwick sent a guard to snatch Jacquetta from her home so that she could be tried as a witch, the punishment for which was death (Gregory, *Cousins*, 129). Jacquetta was accused of having brought about the marriage between Edward and Elizabeth via witchcraft. Multiple witnesses were called, and it was evident that Warwick anticipated a death sentence (Gregory, *Cousins*, 130), but then, inexplicably, released Jacquetta.<sup>15</sup> Edward regained his throne and “Dauger<sup>16</sup>, prudently, declined to give the required evidence, and the King and group of his councilors (including Warwick) dismissed the case” (Baldwin 165). The allegations did not, however, disappear. Richard III reignited the accusations that witchcraft brought about his brother’s marriage in the *Titulus Regius*, this time including Elizabeth with her mother in the charge. Richard and his allies charged that, “‘the ungracious pretended marriage’. . . . ‘was made . . . by sorcerie and witchcrafte, committed by the said Elizabeth and her moder, Jacquett Duchess of Bedford’” (qtd. in Baldwin 166). Given the scandal of these accusations, Mary Shelley’s omission of them speaks to her desire to preserve Elizabeth’s innocence and to blame Elizabeth’s fall on her connection to her fallen husband, Edward IV.

This argument is further supported by the way Mary Shelley consistently places Elizabeth Woodville in an honorable light. The novel describes Elizabeth’s “queenlike brow; her beauty which had won Edward, her chaste sweetness, which had made her

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<sup>15</sup> Philippa Gregory sums up the situation this way: “What can have persuaded Warwick against sentence and execution, even though he had such compelling evidence to hand, and witnesses who swore to Jacquetta’s guilt? Perhaps he feared Jacquetta’s powers, perhaps he feared the influence of her family, her long friendship with Margaret of Anjou or the devotion of her daughter the queen” (*Cousins*, p. 130).

<sup>16</sup> “Jacquetta, Elizabeth’s mother, was accused by Thomas Wake of Blisworth . . . of using sorcery to procure his union with her daughter . . . . Wake produced a leaden figure of a man at arms, broken in the middle and fastened with wire, which he claimed, Jacquetta had made for this purpose, and called upon John Dauger, the parish clerk of nearby Stoke Bruerne, to bear witness that she had also fashioned two others representing the King and Queen” (Baldwin 165).

his wife" (358). Elizabeth's intrigues are justified in the description of Princess Elizabeth and Henry VII's wedding: Elizabeth Woodville "could not quell the rage that arose in her breast from her disappointment; and there were many present who shared her sentiments" (32). In the novel, Mary Shelley also defends Elizabeth, casting her as the most sympathetic of mothers when she says, "Ah! were I a cottager . . . though bereft of my husband, I should collect my young ones round me, and forget sorrow. I should toil for them, and they would learn to toil for me. How sweet the food my industry procured for them" (46). Passages such as these serve to obscure the ambiguity of the historical Elizabeth's character and, coupled with Mary Shelley's omission of the witchcraft charge from the *Titulus Regius*, place the blame for Elizabeth's fall clearly on Edward IV.

To further erase personal culpability and establish the systemic nature of female subordination, Mary Shelley goes on to chronicle Elizabeth's subordination under the reign of Henry VII. After the defeat of Richard III, Elizabeth Woodville was placed in an even more perilous position, dependent on the goodwill of the conquering king, Henry VII. Henry VII's historical actions after assuming the throne are somewhat ambiguous. He repealed the *Titulus Regius* in 1485 and went so far as to order all copies of it destroyed, a fact which Mary Shelley does not mention, as perhaps it does not fit with her construction of the cold and avaricious Henry VII. Mary Shelley does emphasize that Henry was forced into marriage with Princess Elizabeth, the marriage functioning thus as a logical reason for the repeal. Thus, the novel says,

Henry hated to owe his title to the crown of any part of the House of York; he resolved, if possible, to delay and break the marriage; but his own friends were

urgent with him to comply, and prudence dictated the measure; he therefore promised to adopt it—thus effectually to silence the murmurs of the party of the White Rose. (29)

Again, for further emphasis, the novel continues two pages later: “the dissatisfaction manifested by the English people, forced Henry to comply with the universal wish entertained of seeing the daughter of Edward the Fourth on the throne” (31). Thus, after the description of the marriage, the novel makes no mention of the restoration of Elizabeth Woodville, but instead has Henry develop a greater distaste for Elizabeth: “Henry hated Elizabeth Woodville. He considered that it was principally through her restless scheming, that he had been forced to marry the portionless (her detested claim to his crown her only dower) daughter of York, instead of forming an union with a foreign princess” (53). Having attracted the enmity of her powerful son-in-law, it was inevitable that the dependent dowager queen would fall even further; shortly thereafter, Elizabeth Woodville was condemned by the king and his council on a manufactured charge, described in the novel this way:

The third and last enactment was leveled against the Queen Dowager. Many of the council were astonished to hear it propped, that she should forfeit all her goods and lands, and be confined for life in a convent, for having consented to the marriage of her daughter and Richard the Third. (54)

Historians continue to debate the reasons for Elizabeth Woodville’s actual withdrawal from court. For Mary Shelley’s purposes, however, no theory suffices but that of a forced withdrawal. There is no hint of Elizabeth being ill or having planned her own

departure, but, rather, less than twenty-three pages after the description of her daughter's marriage to Henry VII, the novel depicts her as an unhappy prisoner:

And now all hope was at an end for the unhappy lady. The various acts of her tragic history were to close in the obscurity and poverty of a convent-prison . . . The heartless tyrant [Henry] was callous to every pang that he inflicted and rejoiced he had the power to wound so deeply one whom he abhorred. (55-56)

Unwillingly wrenched from her family, Elizabeth is, as Mary Shelley makes clear, a prisoner, completely in Henry's "power," and at the mercy of a "heartless tyrant." It would be difficult to imagine a scenario in which Elizabeth, her reputation unsullied and marriage left intact, would have been brought to such a pass. However, given her dependent status, Edward's spectacular post-mortem fall, and the vindictive nature of Mary Shelley's Henry VII, the outcome was nearly inevitable.

### **Jane Shore**

Mary Shelley's account of Elizabeth Woodville does much to reveal her radical historical revision; however, an examination of *Perkin Warbeck's* Jane Shore illuminates to an even greater extent Mary Shelley's emphatic establishment of Edward IV as a fallen man, her critique of the dependent status of women, and her consequent redistribution of blame away from the fallen women of the text—even from one so fallen as the infamous Jane Shore. Jane Shore is a historical figure who frequently appears in the pages of literature, from Thomas More's *The History of King Richard III* up through the Romantic Period, and beyond. Given Mary Shelley's consultation of numerous chronicles and amply-demonstrated historical knowledge, we can safely

assume that, as with Elizabeth Woodville, the changes to Jane's characterization serve a particular purpose. In this case, she wants to illuminate Edward IV's responsibility for Jane Shore's fall. The novel introduces Jane through a description of her home: a "wretched dwelling," "poor beyond meanness" (190). Jane's circumstances in this lodging, where she had "neither food nor fire" and looked "white" and "emaciated" appearance might seem at first glance to be the just deserts of a fallen woman. Mary Shelley shifts to an analysis of Jane's character, however, emphasizing her "look of such sweetness and patience," and declaring her seemingly to be "the very enshrinement of Christian resignation" (190). In the novel, Mary Shelley does not try to side sweep Jane's status as a fallen woman—she is both "fallen and miserable" (190)—but, as Jane begins to speak to Monina, the perception of her guilt is slowly erased. Instead of selfishly viewing her royal visitor as a route back to prosperity, Jane immediately hopes to use this opportunity to save Monina from a fate like her own. Jane first speaks to Richard and warns him that, "if he made [Monina] his victim, affection would be married to hate" (191). Mary Shelley's choice of words here is intentional. The word "victim" suggests the power dynamics of the relationship, which, given that Edward IV was the reigning monarch, was exacerbated. And by casting Edward/Richard clearly as the pursuer, the instigator, Mary Shelley emphasizes the fact that he is the one with the ability to force Monina/Jane to fall, or to abstain from seduction. Jane then relates her own experiences in an attempt to deter the prospective lovers: "Libertine he was called . . . he led me from the dull abode of connubial strife, to the bright home of love" (191). Edward IV's libertinism prior to his affair with Jane is notable and that description draws greater attention to the novel's previous assertion that Jane, for her part, "had

been good and humane” (190) before her encounter with Edward. In this way, Mary Shelley highlights the discrepancy between their moral states, regardless of their equal participation in the affair. Mary Shelley’s choice of the word “led” further confirms Jane’s passive rather than active role, thus casting Edward once again as the instigator and driving force behind Jane’s fall. It is evidently Mary Shelley’s intention that the reader place blame decidedly on the shoulders of Edward IV, the libertine who has led to the fall and imprisonment of his wife, brought his mistress to “waste and decay,” “shame; famine, sorrow, and remorse” (191) and led his children “to untimely death” (368).

### **Princess Elizabeth of York**

Mary Shelley’s initial portrayal of Elizabeth in *Perkin Warbeck* establishes her as the epitome of femininity, as the quintessential queen consort: “the gentle Elizabeth had . . . submitted patiently to her destiny . . . devoted herself to her mother; recreating herself in the society of her sisters” (31). Following Elizabeth’s engagement to Henry VII, the novel depicts her now subordinate position. Offended by Henry VII’s attitude upon the engagement, Mary Shelley’s Elizabeth Woodville asks him, “Is your hapless fate decided? Why did I not join you at Sheriff Hutton [where Elizabeth and Edward, Duke of Warwick were staying]? Why did I not place your hand in that of your noble cousin [Edward, Earl of Warwick]?” (31). Although the novel previously detailed Elizabeth’s desire for her cousin, stating that she spent time “contemplating the faded leaves she had brought from Sheriff Hutton, and lamenting the fate of Warwick” (31),

now that she is engaged, she affirms her new subordinated role to her affianced husband (Henry VII), rather than submit to her mother's wishes:

Mother . . . I was your child; plastic clay in your hands: had you said these words two hours ago, Warwick might have been liberated—I perhaps happy. But you have given me away; this ring is the symbol of my servitude; I belong to Henry. Say no word, I beseech you, that can interfere with my duty to him. Permit me to retire. (31)

With these words—"given me," "servitude," and "belong"—Mary Shelley's Elizabeth affirms her dependence, but this passage also demonstrates her understanding that Henry's disgrace would automatically occasion hers, as she is now, irrevocably, bastilled with her fallen man.

Mary Shelley cements the finality of these ties in the reader's mind with her depiction of Elizabeth's behavior throughout the novel. Following years of submission, Elizabeth's single demonstration of pride and spirit is swiftly quashed, but not by Henry. After being ordered by Henry not to recognize Richard/Perkin, she states:

"My poor Richard—your sister, a monarch's daughter, is finely taught by this Earl's son. But you will live then let him do his worst: the Queen of England is not quite a slave; if Henry can bind Elizabeth may loose; and the Duke of York laugh in another land at the malice of his enemy." (309).

For a brief moment, Elizabeth resists subordination, asserts her superiority as a "monarch's daughter," and defends her position as "not quite a slave." But in spite of these lofty assertions, Elizabeth's boasts are idle. Henry does bind, but Elizabeth does not "loose"; Richard is imprisoned in the Tower before being executed. Elizabeth

reverts to dependence as “the weak, despised, and powerless Queen” (391) and exerts herself only to ensure that Katherine and Richard have one final reunion before he is executed, a far cry from her boast that she will see him “laugh in another land at the malice of his enemy” (394).

### **Katherine Gordon**

Katherine Gordon is a problematic figure for analysis, not only because of the gap between her historical character and Mary Shelley’s presentation of her, but also because of the tempting parallels between Katherine and Mary Shelley herself. In this section, I will discuss Mary Shelley’s situation following P. B. Shelley’s death and why she was invested in presenting a situation in which a woman could recover from the death of her fallen husband. As I set out to prove, it is Mary Shelley’s close identification with Katherine as both widows of fallen men that motivates her to rewrite history, recast Katherine as a noble woman, and create a situation in which the wife of a fallen man can recover, survive, and most of all speak for herself.

Later in life, Mary Shelley’s letters and journals are peppered with references to her early missteps in life, regrets, and her immense suffering stemming from social criticism and ostracization. When Mary Godwin eloped with the married P. B. Shelley, she permanently upended her reputation. Nor was Mary Shelley an ordinary fallen woman, but, rather, an infamous member of the hypothetical “League of Incest.” Adding to her notoriety was the scandalous nature of Harriet Shelley and Fanny Imlay’s suicides and P. B. Shelley’s lost custody of his own children. Following P. B. Shelley’s early death, it was Mary Shelley who was left to deal with the fallout of their

unorthodox lives and to find a way to support their sole surviving child, Percy Florence. Mary Shelley was also left in precarious financial circumstances after P. B. Shelley's death. She wrote to support herself and her son, but was, as Walter Edwin Peck characterizes it, "a dependent of Sir Timothy Shelley" throughout her widowhood, "obliged to yield to his insistent condition that she must not bring the name of his outcast son before the public in any way," in return for a miserly allowance of "100 pounds per annum."<sup>17</sup> Under these circumstances, it is quite understandable that Mary Shelley was unwilling to risk offending Sir Timothy. Mary Shelley's reticence cannot, however, be blamed solely on him; her own personal notoriety was undoubtedly a factor. As Mary Shelley wrote to Edward Trelawny in 1829:

Could you write my husband's life, without naming me it were something—but even then I should be terrified at rousing the slumbering voice of the public— You know me—or you do not, in which case I shall tell you what I am—a silly goose—who far from wishing to stand forwards to assert myself in any way, now that I am alone in the world, have but the desire to wrap night and obscurity or insignificance around me . . . . Shelley's life must be written—I hope one day to do it myself, but it must not be published now . . . . it is still too sore a subject — Your tribute of praise, in a way that cannot do harm, can be introduced into your own life—But remember, I pray for omission— for it is not that you will not be too kind too eager to do me more than justice—But I seek only to be forgotten.

(*MWSL* 72)

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Edwin Peck, "The Biographical Element in Novels of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley" in *PMLA* 38.1 (1923): 196-219; here, 198-99.

This passage illuminates Mary Shelley's desire to distance herself from her husband's notoriety and the notoriety of their connection but it is also significant that this attitude was one that developed because she was "alone in the world," a fallen woman left to deal with the unpleasant legacy of a fallen man. Many of Mary Shelley's journal entries reiterate this position. For example, in 1838 she writes, "I recoil from the vulgar abuse of the inimical press . . . I am silent therefore from prudence. I will not put myself so far forward" (*MWSJ* 555).

Given Mary Shelley's position following P. B. Shelley's death and the notoriety of her own reputation, the kinship she feels with Katherine Gordon—the "sexual bounder and political opportunist" (Webster-Garrett 5)—and reformation of her in *Perkin Warbeck* is understandable. Mary Shelley draws attention to her intended defense of Katherine in one of only two authorial footnotes found in *Perkin Warbeck*. It was quoted in Chapter One, but bears repeating here. In the note, Mary Shelley asserts:

I do not know how far these concluding pages may be deemed superfluous: the character of the Lady Katherine Gordon is a favorite of mine, and yet many will be inclined to censure her abode in Henry the Seventh's court, and other acts of her after life. I desired therefore that she should speak for herself, and show how her conduct, subsequent to her husband's death, was in accordance with the devotion and fidelity with which she attended his fortunes during his life. (395)

Here, however, Mary Shelley is not being exactly honest. She does not describe the conduct of the historical Katherine; indeed, to do so would be rather difficult. Instead, Mary Shelley simply neglects to mention the majority of the scandalous acts attributed

to the historical Katherine. In her critical commentary in her edition of *Perkin Warbeck*, Fischer elucidates this fact:

The suppressed acts of Katherine's "after life" (described in Mary Shelley's acknowledged sources) included acceptance of a pension from Henry VII and three successive marriages (to James Strangeways, Sir Matthew Cradock, and Christopher Ashton) contracted during the reign of Henry VIII. (395)

Katherine's pension—eerily similar to Mary Shelley's allowance from her father-in-law—perhaps hits too close to home to be addressed. Mary Shelley also refrains from mentioning remarriages. It is important to note the time discrepancy in this final chapter, as indicated by Katherine's mention of a living Arthur. Fischer writes:

Perhaps Mary Shelley would have incorporated Arthur's death (if not Katherine's marriages) into Katherine's epilogue in a second edition. The retrospective character and reflective tone of her "favorite's" confession suggest that it was made many years after Warbeck's death in 1499. The references to Arthur, however, place the interview with Edmund before 1502. (399)

However, there are some advantages to an earlier date for the speech, namely that it allows Mary Shelley to avoid the issue of Katherine's three marriages, which, of course, would not yet have happened. Instead, Mary Shelley has Katherine's "defense" focus on her dwelling in Henry VII's court rather than her acceptance of a salary from him, which she justifies in the lines, "My Richard's last act was to bestow me on his sister: it were impious to retract a gift made by the dying" (399). Thus Mary Shelley excuses Katherine Gordon's tenure in Henry VII's court as posthumously doing her husband's bidding, rather than as an insult to his memory.

While Mary Shelley's defense of Katherine may on the surface appear as unsatisfactory as her claim that, "With regard to the "good Cause"—the cause of the advancement of freedom and knowledge—of the Rights of Woman &c—I am not a person of opinions" (*MWSJ* 555), a closer look at the final pages of *Perkin Warbeck* reveals a substantial victory for Katherine, and, by extension, for women as whole—and one that readers might initially overlook. Far from having no opinions, Mary Shelley states that it was of the utmost importance that Katherine "should speak for herself" (395). What is said is less important than the fact that Katherine was able to speak, to defend herself as best she could. Mary Shelley creates this opportunity for her fallen woman and thereby surpasses what her mother was able to accomplish.

Although *Maria* is regrettably unfinished, the notes, while diverging on possible endings, indicate that Wollstonecraft intended to have Maria defend Darnford against accusations by her estranged husband. Following Darnford's and Maria's escape from the madhouse, George Venables charges Darnford with seduction and adultery; Maria tasks herself with his defense. As Diane Hoeveler points out, "it is significant that Maria as a woman cannot speak in court, but instead finds herself forced to resort to writing . . . but that results only in her defeat and dismissal by the judge" (14), on the grounds of, in Wollstonecraft's words in *Maria*, "the fallacy of letting women plead their feelings" (181). Thus, despite her best efforts to advance the status of women in both the *Vindication* and *Maria*, Wollstonecraft's fallen woman was not given the opportunity to speak and her defense was dismissed.

On the other hand, Mary Shelley, although unable to imagine a completely successful defense for the historical Katherine, is nonetheless able to surpass the ending

planned for *Maria* and to give her self-declared “favorite” an opportunity to speak, to “plead her feelings,” to defend herself and her “woman’s education,” and most of all, to survive long after the death of her fallen husband (*PW* 398). And, thus, in spite of her claim to have “no opinions” with regards to the rights of women, in the moving and impassioned defense of Katherine Gordon, Mary Shelley convincingly advocates for an independent existence for women, countering the portrayals of many of the foremost novelists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which fallen women commit suicide or go into a decline after the departures of their fallen men. Instead, Mary Shelley presents a fallen woman who survives in the face of all obstacles, and “despise her if you will,” continued to “love and be loved” (*PW* 400), long after the death of her fallen man.

This chapter has focused on countering the critical dismissal of Mary Shelley as an advocate for women’s rights by illuminating the underlying feminism of *Perkin Warbeck*. However, one final defense of Mary Shelley is still needed. Although critics have long assumed a considerable disparity between the overtly feminist Wollstonecraft and the covertly feminist Mary Shelley, the difference is of style and method, but not of convictions. The mature Wollstonecraft considerably modified her early position in the *Vindication*, using *Maria* as a vehicle to depict the emotional fragility of women and the insufficiency of education to overcome a fundamentally inferior status. Wollstonecraft also used *Maria* as a way of commenting on her own mistakes, such as her relationship with Gilbert Imlay, by drawing striking personal parallels between her own life and that of Maria. Mary Shelley continued her mother’s work with a nuanced portrayal of Katherine Gordon in *Perkin Warbeck*. Like

Wollstonecraft's Maria, Katherine's defense functions as both Mary Shelley's defense of herself and acknowledgement of her own failings, but also as a continuation of her mother's feminist ideology. That this feminist manifesto has gone largely unnoticed is a direct result of the deliberate destruction of Mary Shelley's reputation. The reputations of Mary Shelley and Wollstonecraft were blackened throughout their lives and after their deaths. Wollstonecraft's reputation was such that she became known as a "hyena in petticoats"<sup>18</sup> and any respectable feminist distanced herself from Wollstonecraftian ideology for fear of ostracization. Wollstonecraft's reputation may have been destroyed and her works avoided, but those things happened because of her character and morals, not for a lack of merit in her revered works. The attack on Mary Shelley was far more insidious: she was depicted as morally fallen, but also innately talentless, lacking her mother's, father's, and P. B. Shelley's brilliance and radicalism. Sunstein provides one example of the attacks on Mary Shelley and her resulting fall from intellectual grace:

Reared "perfectly orthodox" by Godwin, [Edward John] Trelawny's Mary Shelley never believed in her mother's views and never had sympathy with any of Shelley's, while she conformed to the rules of the world as wife and widow, longing only to be respectable and accepted into society. (393)

Sunstein continues:

(Trelawny's) *Records* has reverberated from that day to this . . . . [H]is book entered a vastly disproportionate wedge between the Shelleys, shifted the ground so that the woman renowned for heterodoxy, character, and talent came to be thought convention and more or less deficient. (393)

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<sup>18</sup> I owe this characterization to Jeanne Moskal.

Critics have long recognized the damage done to Mary Shelley's reputation by the attacks of Trelawny and many other biased critics, both contemporaneously and posthumously. However, Wollstonecraft's recovery and the still negative perception of the majority of Mary Shelley's literary efforts, reveals the lingering success of these insidious attacks. Mary Shelley's later works, and Mary Shelley in her later years, are still seen today as, "more or less deficient" (Sunstein 393). Although I have not covered the entirety of Mary Shelley's later works, nor even the immense depths of *Perkin Warbeck*, this dissertation represents an effort to redress the existing critical imbalance, to argue against the dismissal of Mary Shelley's later works and for the relevance of *Perkin Warbeck* by integrating it within the feminist and political conversation of the Romantic Period, and, finally, to establish *Perkin Warbeck* as not only Mary Shelley's final plea for understanding and acceptance but also as the ultimate defiance of a system that ties women to the fates of men. Mary Shelley and her heroine, Katherine Gordon, unlike Wollstonecraft and Maria, survive their fallen men, and for this accomplishment, they should be, "unblamed" (PW 400). The Mary Shelley of 1830s may be, in some ways, unsatisfactory, but she nonetheless retains enough feminism and radicalism to argue for Katherine Gordon, for herself, and for all women, that the "selfish and ruthlessly competitive men of the nineteenth century," as William D. Brewer calls them, "permit a heart whose sufferings have been, and are, so many and so bitter, to reap what joy it can from the strong necessity it feels to be sympathized with—to love" (Brewer 10; PW 400).

## CODA

*"History: The quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences, in every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all."*

-Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*<sup>1</sup>

For a multitude of reasons, which are discussed throughout this dissertation, Mary Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*'s lack of popularity resulted in its failure to redress the historical imbalance by bringing attention to the forgotten women of history. However, Mary Shelley was not the first, nor indeed the last author drawn to commemorating royal women, but immediately after the publication of *Perkin Warbeck*, the genre of collective biography replaced the historical novel as the preferred means of such commemoration. Anna Jameson published *Memoirs of Celebrated Sovereigns* (1831), which was followed by Agnes and Elizabeth Strickland's *The Lives of the Queen of England, From the Norman Conquest* (1840-1848), and Mary Anne Everett Green's *Lives of the Princesses of England* (1849-1855). The vogue for collective biographies of royal women was spurred on by the long and illustrious reign of Queen Victoria, who featured prominently in collective biographies of queens. Two more, almost identical volumes, *The Queens of England* and *Biographical Sketches of the Queen of England*, appeared in 1851, and were succeeded by multiple biographical collections, which if not devoted solely to queens, featured queens, particularly Queen Victoria, rather prominently. However, as Alison Booth notes, these biographies tend to be less than

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<sup>1</sup> Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey*, in *The Complete Works of Jane Austen*, p. 1062.

nanced in nature, with women falling definitively into the “Bad Queen/Good Queen model.”<sup>2</sup> Booth goes on to state:

Many of Victoria’s royal predecessors in Britain had to flee their husband’s enemies or friends and forfeit their children; they were relatively powerless genetic vessels except in instances of regency or military leadership such as Margaret of Anjou’s. Most often foreign born, they were frequently viewed as alien to their people. (254)

With the depressing and dismissive analysis of queen as “powerless genetic vessels,” Booth falls into the category she herself previously criticizes by writing a “feminist project of recovery depend(ent) on enhancing the sense of women’s suppression in the past” (Booth 5). With an interest in emphasizing feminine suppression and subordination (incidentally a characteristic of Mary Shelley’s *Perkin Warbeck* as well), it is perhaps unsurprising that such works have been less than successful in accomplishing their design. However, feminine-centered history is still being written, and most importantly, finally thriving—significantly, in the genre of the historical novel. The author perhaps most responsible for the recent success of feminine-centered historical novels is Philippa Gregory. While Gregory’s widely popular work tends to be dismissed by serious academics, in this coda to my dissertation, I will argue that Gregory is following in the footsteps of writers devoted to the recovery of feminine-centered history, most particularly Mary Shelley, and surpasses, due to her humanized portrayals and her immense popularity, the works of “serious”: academics, such as Booth, by collectively portraying royal women throughout history, albeit fictionally, as

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<sup>2</sup> Allison Booth, *How to Make It as a Woman* (Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 2004), p. 252.

far more than “powerless genetic vessels” (Booth 254) and thereby accomplishes what Mary Shelley set out to do all those years ago.

Gregory has a thorough scholarly background, holding a doctorate in eighteenth-century English literature from the University of Edinburgh. Like Mary Shelley, Gregory began her literary career with fictional, arguably Gothic, novels: *Wideacre* (1987), *The Favoured Child* (1989), and *Meridon* (1990). However, Gregory soon moved to more realistic, historical fiction, as Mary Shelley did with *Valperga*, writing the internationally acclaimed *A Respectable Trade* (1992) and other novels throughout the 1990s. For my purposes, her Tudor novels and the Cousins’ War Series have the greatest relevance. Like *Valperga*, *The Other Boleyn Girl* (2001), *The Queen’s Fool* (2003), *The Virgin’s Lover* (2004), *The Constant Princess* (2005), *The Boleyn Inheritance* (2006), and *The Other Queen* (2008) draw attention to female characters forgotten, or portrayed one-dimensionally in established history, such as Mary Boleyn in *The Other Boleyn Girl*, Katherine of Aragon in *The Constant Princess*, and Katherine Howard, Jane Boleyn, and Anne of Cleves in *The Constant Princess*, with the inclusion of fictitious female characters, such as Hannah Green in *The Queen’s Fool*. Gregory subsequently turned to the War of the Roses, long overshadowed in the popular imagination by the scandalous life of Henry VIII and his many queens, with her Cousins’ War Series: *The White Queen* (2009), *The Red Queen* (2010), *The Lady of the Rivers* (2011), *The Kingmaker’s Daughter* (2012), and *The White Princess* (2013). Gregory enlisted her signature technique of centering her fictions on women deserving of recognition and a place in history. This series, like Mary Shelley’s *Perkin Warbeck*, shows evidence of greater authorial maturity and intent. Unlike the Tudor series’ mix of wholly fictional heroines with historical ones,

Gregory devotes each Cousins' War novel to a historical character: Elizabeth Woodville in *The White Queen*; Margaret Beaufort in *The Red Queen*; Jacquetta of Luxembourg in *The Lady of the Rivers*; Anne and Isabelle Neville in *The Kingmaker's Daughter*; and Elizabeth of York in *The White Princess*. *The White Princess*, in particular, closely follows the trajectory and perspective of Shelley's *Perkin Warbeck*. It is significant that Gregory allots several novels to material that Mary Shelley treats in only one; accordingly, it is useful to survey Gregory's earlier Cousins' War novels, which are characterized by defining, against tradition, women's sexual and political powers, especially when these powers are hidden behind apparent acquiescence to male power and/or are derived from witchcraft. *The White Queen* reconsiders Elizabeth Woodville, a largely disliked and forgotten Queen of England, by crediting rumors of witchcraft as facts that explain her power as wife and queen and as the widowed York matriarch. In one notable scene, Gregory rewrites Shakespeare's bargaining session between Richard III and Elizabeth Woodville for the marriage of Princess Elizabeth as a negotiation for Elizabeth and her family to relinquish claims to sanctuary, a crucial alteration illuminating the power of woman as negotiator outside of the realm of women's concerns, such as marriage. *The Red Queen* fictionalizes Henry VII's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, known in history books as "My Lady the King's Mother," stressing Lady Margaret's pivotal role in her son's overthrow of the York monarchs and accession to the throne, and implicitly contesting Lady Margaret's virtual absence from Shakespeare and from subsequent historians. *The Lady of the Rivers* best exemplifies Gregory's themes of women's sexual and political power underwritten by a hint of witchcraft. Gregory reconsiders reputed witch Jacquetta of Luxembourg, who renounced her eminent position as the Duke of

Bedford's widow—a position that by convention she would retain by marrying nobility—by eloping with her husband's chamberlain, Sir Richard Woodville; she bore him fourteen children, one of whom was Elizabeth Woodville, later Queen of England. Throughout the War of the Roses, Jacquetta exerted power, as advisor to the Lancastrian Queen Margaret and then to Margaret's successor, Jacquetta's own daughter, who became the York Queen Elizabeth. *The Kingmaker's Daughter*, like *The Red Queen*, is relatively witchcraft-free, but true to Gregory's commitment, it discovers women's power within lives of subservience. Focusing on Anne and Isabelle Neville, daughters of the "kingmaker," the Earl of Warwick, Gregory traces their politically-engineered marriages to rebels against King Edward IV. However, in Anne's second marriage to King Edward's brother, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, Gregory grants Anne an interval of power during Richard's Regency and reign, though her power ends with Richard's dalliance with Elizabeth of York and death shortly thereafter. Gregory concludes the series with *The White Princess*, which, like Mary Shelley's novel, begins with the Battle of Bosworth's aftermath.

Although my analysis throughout this coda is primarily historical, it is important to note one stylistic difference between Gregory and Mary Shelley. Gregory's books are largely written in the first person. This technique contributes to the informality of the texts, but also enables the reader to be interpolated as the queen in a way third-person narration does not permit. Gregory's narrators are frequently less famous, or even invented characters; for example in *The Queen's Fool*, the narrator is the fictional Hannah Green, who tells portions of Mary Tudor's and Elizabeth Tudor's lives, while *The Other Boleyn Girl* tells the story of Anne Boleyn from the perspective of her younger,

less-known sister, Mary Boleyn. Gregory also sometimes has multiple narrators, such as in *The Boleyn Inheritance*, where she switches between the first-person narratives of Jane Boleyn, Catherine Howard, and Anne of Cleves. This technique is extraordinarily effective, particularly when the narrator is a largely forgotten queen, such as Elizabeth of York, the subject of Gregory's *The White Princess*.

As I shall show, Gregory's similarities in *The White Princess* to Mary Shelley in *Perkin Warbeck* outweigh their stylistic differences. Gregory shares with Mary Shelley a plot in which Prince Richard survives and a drive to write feminine-centered history. Gregory helps us imagine what Mary Shelley might have written with more accurate chronicles, with less self-censorship about extramarital sex, and with less personal investment in Katherine Gordon's redemption. Both narratives commence with Princess Elizabeth's betrothal to Henry VII. In *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley stresses her joy in what lies ahead: her "high anticipations of future power"; her "light spirit of expected triumph"; and "her imagination fed on the good she would do for others, when raised to the regal dignity" (29-30). Mary Shelley omits any mention of a letter that reveals Elizabeth's strong earlier attachment to Richard, a letter no longer extant but probably authentic, expressing her hope that Queen Anne would die of her illness and that she herself could then marry her uncle, King Richard (Baldwin 150). Removing any allusion to uncle/niece relations as uncomfortably close to her reputed membership with her husband, step-sister, and Byron in the "League of Incest," Mary Shelley substitutes the Earl of Warwick as Elizabeth's prospective love interest. In her critical commentary in her edition of *Perkin Warbeck*, Fischer notes that the historical inaccuracy is derived from a Godwin-provided chronology. With no personal worries

about ruining her own reputation by fictionalizing incestuous relationships, Gregory can exploit the historical support for Elizabeth's affair with her uncle, reducing Elizabeth's guilt by stressing her emotional investment in Richard and her despair at his death, and crafting a more titillating novel. At her betrothal to Henry VII, Elizabeth looks backward: "If Richard had won at Bosworth . . . I would have been his queen and loving wife . . . the glorious sixteen months when I was Richard's lover, all but queen of his court, and he was the heart of my heart, will be forgotten."<sup>3</sup> Gregory's Elizabeth is free to long for her deceased lover/uncle and their halcyon days, whereas Mary Shelley's Elizabeth, confined by Mary Shelley's fragile reputation, merely benignly contemplates "the faded leaves she had brought from Sheriff Hutton, and lamenting the fate of Warwick" (*PW* 31).

Mary Shelley's and Gregory's treatments of the prospective queen's mother, Elizabeth Woodville, further illustrate Gregory's freedom from Mary Shelley's concerns about her personal reputation. Dismayed by Princess Elizabeth's plan to break her engagement to Henry VII, Mary Shelley's Elizabeth Woodville dissuades her daughter by "devoting herself to cultivate a more rational disposition on her daughter" (*PW* 31). Gregory's Elizabeth Woodville evokes more power along these lines by invoking a feminine-centered heritage in a letter to her daughter:

I know this is not what you hoped for, my dear, but Richard is dead and that part of your life is over. Henry is the victor and our task now is to make you his wife and Queen of England. You will obey me in one other thing also: you will smile and look joyful as a bride coming to her betrothed. A princess does not share her

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<sup>3</sup> Philippa Gregory, *The White Princess* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p. 4; subsequent references to this book will be cited parenthetically as *White Princess*.

grief with all the world. You were born a princess and you are the heir to a long line of courageous women. (*White Princess* 3)

Here Gregory demonstrates the commanding position of Yorkist Elizabeth Woodville, even after the Lancastrian triumph, and establishes the feminine-centered nature of all her work, emphasizing Elizabeth's illustrious female heritage rather than her masculine descent from a York monarch. Mary Shelley was privately proud of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, but the blackening of Wollstonecraft's reputation after Godwin published *Memoirs of the Author of the Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1798)—of which some state Godwin had “stripped his dead wife naked”—would have prevented Mary Shelley from referring, even in fiction, to descent from “a long line of courageous women.”

Mary Shelley's previously discussed investment in portraying the negative effects of women's dependence “on the caprice of the tyrant, whom choice or necessity has appointed to reign over them” (Wollstonecraft; Maria Wollstonecraft 178-79) results in considerable divergence between her narrative and Gregory's, particularly with regards to the characterization of Henry VII. Mary Shelley's Henry VII has a vindictive nature, which leads to the rapid banishment and imprisonment of Elizabeth Woodville in Bermondsey Abbey. Gregory's Henry VII is of a much milder, and kinder, nature, and therefore Elizabeth is not imprisoned until later in the narrative. Both writers, however, purport that Elizabeth is being imprisoned primarily for her participation in a plot on behalf of her son, Prince Richard, who escaped the plotting of his uncle, Richard III. Mary Shelley's Elizabeth is informed of Prince Richard's escape from the tower by Lady Brampton, initially disbelievingly stating, “I shall league with no

plotters to establish an imposter" (*PW* 36); and her daughter, Queen Elizabeth, remains uninvolved in the plot. Gregory's Elizabeths, however, are given far greater agency.

Gregory writes:

Mother please, let's have the truth between us for once. I don't forget that night, long ago, when we sent a page boy into the Tower instead of my brother Richard . . . I put the cap on his little head myself, and I drew up the scarf around his face, and warned him to say nothing . . . Nobody could imagine that we would dare create such an imposter. (*White Princess* 158)

Due to this explicit involvement, Gregory's Elizabeth Woodville appears far more involved in the plot that results in her imprisonment, whereas Mary Shelley had attributed Elizabeth Woodville's imprisonment to Henry VII's hatred and animosity: "Henry hated Elizabeth Woodville . . . he hated her . . . in every way she was his enemy" (*PW* 53). As a result, Elizabeth Woodville is forced to "forfeit all her goods and lands, and be confined for life in a convent, for having consented to the marriage of her daughter and Richard the Third" (*PW* 54). Gregory's Elizabeth is treated kindly by Henry VII, and only imprisoned after her guilt is undeniable. Gregory's Henry states, "I don't mean your mother to be enclosed . . . And I won't put her on trial if I can avoid it . . . I don't know all of [the plot] . . . She was behind this rebellion, I have evidence for that now. I even know how much she sent him to equip his army" (*White Princess* 181). While Gregory and Mary Shelley differ over Elizabeth's involvement, they agree on her rationale. Mary Shelley's Elizabeth Woodville sanctioned the rebellion on behalf of her son, and Gregory's Lady Margaret states to Queen Elizabeth, "It's for her son, isn't it? . . . That's the only claim she would fight for in preference to yours. That's the only

pretender that she would put against her own grandson . . . she must think that one of her boys, Richard or Edward, is still alive and she hopes to put him on the throne” (Gregory 179). Mary Shelley’s Elizabeth largely disappears from the narrative following her imprisonment, placing emphasis on Henry VII’s agency and cruelty. Gregory’s Elizabeth appears to retain influence from her exile at Bermondsey Abbey and frequently reappears in the narrative before her death, returning to court for Christmas and for Elizabeth’s confinements. Following Elizabeth Woodville’s imprisonment, Gregory’s and Mary Shelley’s narratives diverge as Mary Shelley follows Richard’s adventures abroad and Gregory remains in England with Queen Elizabeth. However, Mary Shelley’s and Gregory’s narratives cross once again with the appearance of Richard and Katherine Gordon. The encounter between Elizabeth and Henry before Richard’s capture is strikingly similar in both texts. Mary Shelley writes in Henry’s voice: “Betray no interest in the knave’s downfall, save as he is my enemy. If you display any emotion that awakens a doubt, that this canker rose be aught in your eyes except a base pretender—if you mark any feeling but stern contempt for one so vile—tremble. My vengeance will fall on him; and his blood be on your head” (*PW* 308). Gregory’s Henry is considerably kinder as a whole, but the underlying meaning of the speech remains the same, as well as the animosity between the couple on this particular topic:

If any one of you Yorks speaks of the boy other than as a young fool and a stranger, I will have him beheaded that same day. You will see him on Tower Green with his head on the block. The moment that you or your sisters or your cousin or any of your endless cousins or bastard kinsmen recognize the boy is

the moment that you sign the warrant for his execution. If anyone recognizes him then they die and he dies. D'you understand? (*White Princess* 428)

While the passages here quoted are strikingly similar, Gregory's passage is cocooned in text revealing that this speech stems from Henry VII's vulnerability and eternal uncertainty regarding his wife's loyalties, rather than stemming from the malice and hatred Mary Shelley's Henry bears towards his wife. With the stage thus set, Perkin/Richard is captured and both Gregory and Mary Shelley's Henrys become infatuated with Katherine Gordon. Mary Shelley writes: "The strangest sight of all was to see Henry act a lover's part . . . When [Katherine] was first presented to [Henry VII], in all the calm majesty of her self-conquering mood; her stainless loveliness had such effect, that surely he could deny her nothing" (*PW* 347). Mary Shelley indicates that there is at least an infatuation, if not genuine affection, on Henry's part. Gregory's Henry is depicted with no such reservations: "Henry has fallen in love for the first time in his life, and with the first choice he could possibly have made" (*White Princess* 440). At this point in the story, the narratives diverge. Mary Shelley is at pains to depict Katherine, her surrogate, as an irreproachable saint for both the personal and political reasons I have discussed previously. Gregory is bound by no such motivation and, thus, follows the historical chronicles rather closely, acknowledging the liason with the lines:

"Could you not persuade the king as you did once before? . . . could you not allow him—allow him whatever he wants?" Her dark eyes flicker up to mine in one long look, as if to acknowledge the irony that I should urge her to seduce my husband and to save the boy . . . "I [Katherine] paid by side of the bargain this

summer, when he said my husband would be safe . . . I gave the king what he wanted in return. I have nothing more to bargain with. (*White Princess* 501). Here Katherine is depicted as no saint, but rather an ordinary woman, who in giving Henry VII what he “wanted,” has lost her power to further persuade him. Gregory unites, as she does throughout her novels, sexual relations and political influence, whereas Mary Shelley’s Katherine—to bolster Mary Shelley’s respectability—is established firmly outside the realm of sexual bargaining.

*The White Princess* concludes with the death of Prince Richard and Elizabeth’s forgiveness of Henry while Mary Shelley concludes with an apology for Katherine Gordon. However, Gregory’s authorial note following the text again reinforces the similarities between the novels. Gregory states, “The death of the princes, traditionally blamed on Richard III, was not, I believe, his act, and the suggestion that one prince actually survived has been made by several historians whose books are listed below” (*White Princess* 521); Gregory here resembles Mary Shelley, who prefaced her novel with the statement, “It is not singular that I should entertain a belief that Perkin was, in reality, the lost Duke of York” (*PW* 5). Gregory, like Mary Shelley, and indeed Walpole, lists Elizabeth Woodville’s support of the Lambert Simnel rebellion as the most convincing evidence for Richard’s survival, writing, “I cannot think she [Elizabeth Woodville] would have risked her daughter’s place on the throne for anyone but her son” (*White Princess* 521). Thus, in *The White Princess*, and throughout the Cousins’ War series, Gregory allies herself with Mary Shelley, Walpole, and the long tradition of apologies for Richard III.

Despite their differences over Katherine Gordon, Mary Shelley's and Gregory's careers share a similar historical intent. Following the publication of *Perkin Warbeck*, Mary Shelley proposed to replace feminine-centered historical fiction with actual biography, suggesting a collection of women's biographies, including the Empress Josephine. Mary Shelley's proposal, however, was rejected, and Mary Shelley was largely restricted to the composition of traditional masculine-centric history in Dionysius Lardner's *Cabinet Cyclopaedia*, to which Mary Shelley contributed *Lives of Literary and Scientific Men*. Mary Shelley was able to incorporate the Lives of a few illustrious women, such as Madame de Sevigne, Madame Roland, and Madame de Stael, but her ambitions for a collective biography devoted solely to women remained unrealized. Gregory, however, was more fortunate. The success of the Cousins' War series prompted the publication of a book of completely non-fictional feminine-centered history: *The Women of the Cousins' War: The Duchess, The Queen, and the King's Mother*.<sup>4</sup> Each section recovers the story of a neglected, or forgotten, woman of history, and Gregory's introduction to the book itself reveals the extent to which the forgotten status of historical women has altered little in the almost two hundred years since Mary Shelley's effort. Gregory writes:

This book came about because so many readers ask me for the 'true' stories on which I base my novels, and there is nothing readily available . . . The existing biographies of Margaret Beaufort and Elizabeth Woodville were out of print

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<sup>4</sup> Philippa Gregory, David Baldwin and Michael Jones, *The Women of the Cousins' War: The Duchess, The Queen and the Kings' Mother* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011); subsequent references to this book will be cited parenthetically as *Cousins' War*.

when I started by research. . . . There was no biography at all of Jacquetta . . . . her story has never before been told. (*Cousins' War* 3)

Gregory accounts for this absence much as Austen once did, stating, "the interests of medieval chroniclers were not the same as ours. Historians today are interested in women, in the dispossessed, in the marginal, in the powerless" (*Cousins' War* 5). While historians and the public may at last be interested in women, the current state of affairs serves to further emphasize the originality and daring of Mary Shelley, and the injustice of the continued disparagement of her historical efforts. Nearly two hundred years ahead of her time, Mary Shelley devoted herself to recovering "the dispossessed," "marginal," and "powerless," as well as arguing against the marginalization and powerlessness of women in her own age, and in doing so, paved the way for all writers of feminine-centered fiction today, and the continued recovery of history without which our lives would be immeasurably poorer.

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