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COMMON LIFE, ANIMAL LIFE, EQUALITY: *THE LAST MAN*

BY HILARY STRANG

We were all equal now; but near at hand was an equality still more leveling, a state where beauty and strength, and wisdom, would be as vain as riches and birth.

—Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*¹

Lionel Verney is not yet the “last man” when he offers that reworking of the old trope of death’s leveling hand to describe the plague that has engulfed the earth in Mary Shelley’s 1826 novel.² The figure of death as a leveler, the guarantor of the equality of all, might seem merely the narrative occasion for a Romantic novel actually about a singular survivor, an exception to the rule, a solitary.³ But while the gothic charge of *The Last Man*’s title and generic trajectory may lie in the idea of an absolute global solitude, the novel’s force and interest is, surprisingly, less in Lionel’s inevitable status as “last” than in the leveling that has gone on before. “We were all equal now,” Lionel says, and the novel asks whether and how such equality can be distinguished from that still more leveling one near at hand. Can there be a democratic equality among persons that does not risk the reduction of personhood to the simple equivalence of one biological, animal life with another? This question, I will suggest in this essay, is not only a philosophical one, but a problem central to thinking about what it meant to call for a democratic politics in early nineteenth-century England. *The Last Man* sounds like it should be a tale of a singular life; it is instead, I argue, a novel of the politics of common life, a politics to which it is in no way incidental that in the end, that supposedly singular Last Man will have a dog by his side.

This essay is part of a larger project about the concept of leveling in England in the period from the French Revolution through the dissolution of Chartism in the 1850s. In this project I argue that the figure of the Leveler and tropes of leveling—metaphors that gesture back to the revolutionary period of the seventeenth century but are

reinvigorated in the reaction to the French Revolution—offer a vantage point from which to see the contests over emergent conceptions of democratic equality. (For some sense of the continuing power of these metaphors to shape how we imagine equality, we might consider our contemporary near-reflexive use of “leveling the playing field” as a description for what affirmative action, for example, is meant to do.) Indeed, I argue that the persistent appearances of levelers and leveling in both literary and political writing suggest the degree to which the question of equality is a pressing concern of the early- to mid-nineteenth century, a concern that literary critical work on the period has tended to overlook in favor of a liberal problematic of individuality and liberty.

In this light, what is striking about *The Last Man* is its representation of the promise offered by democratic equality and the crisis toward which such equality might tend. Its anxiety around leveling is not simply a Burkean fear of reduction and lowering (reducing all to the common standard), nor does it take the form of an attempt to naturalize leveling politics into something that can be remedied (and contained) by a larger economic system.⁴ Rather *The Last Man*, set at the end of the twenty-first century, makes the future a stage on which to enact post-French Revolution, pre-Reform Bill projects for democratic reform and human equality and to dramatize the possibilities and consequences of the optimism of those projects. *The Last Man* is thus a fiction driven by the problem Fredric Jameson argues is part of the structure of utopian science fiction; that is, the question of “how works that posit the end of history” and with it the eradication of political differences can “continue to be in any sense political.”⁵ English radicals in the wake of the French Revolution may have looked to the leveling of distinctions of “riches and birth”; in this essay I argue that Shelley’s novel considers whether the virtues of culture that mark out human life from animal life, and which are meant to supplant the old hierarchy of rank and wealth in a reformed social order—“beauty and strength, and wisdom,” as they are named in the epigraph above—might themselves be equally susceptible to leveling away, leaving political equality nothing but mathematical equivalence, ultimately robbing political life of its content altogether.⁶

That Mary Shelley was interested in life might seem to be a given: canonical Romantic-era literature, especially poetry, is famously concerned with the tension between the passing of the man and the possible persistence of the work; “life,” as a philosophical problem, is a familiar topic of Romantic poems and essays.⁷ Catherine Gallagher

has recently shown the pervasiveness of discourses of “life” in the intellectual exchanges of the nineteenth century.⁸ Michel Foucault’s account of the birth of biopower and biopolitics in this period, with the consequent transformation in the practice and idea of sovereignty, has also illuminated how “life” comes to be the stake in nineteenth century negotiations of power, political and otherwise.⁹ Here I read “life” in *The Last Man* not as part of a Romantic poetic project of transcendence or as a clue to Shelley’s psychic biography, but rather as central to the thought experiment the novel performs on the emergent biopolitical democracy, the kind of thought experiment that might eventually come to be called speculative fiction. *The Last Man* begins as a *Bildungsroman* of the future, and, as I will show, becomes a narrative surprisingly focused on politics proper, on debates in Parliament, modes of governance and the struggle to maintain a political life in the face of the plague. *The Last Man* suggests that central to the problem of emergent democracy is the question of what kind of life humans might have in common other than the basic, unwillful functionality of animal life.

My reading of *The Last Man* is thus aligned with criticism of the novel that sees it as primarily concerned with contemporary political problems, rather than as a reworking of the dynamics of the relationships among Mary and Percy Shelley and Lord Byron.¹⁰ There is a tendency in readings of *The Last Man* that emphasize its politics, however, to assume that the novel’s undergirding pessimism, its relentless portrayal of the collapse of systems both state and domestic, means that the novel is itself, as Lee Sterrenburg puts it, “anti-political.”¹¹ I want to insist, on the contrary, that the thought *The Last Man* is at work on is a political one: Shelley’s novel does not reject political life in favor of organic or domestic community, nor does it simply choose a second-generation pessimism, a denial of politics and possibility over the optimism of revolution, as Sterrenburg’s important reading suggests. Rather this novel puts a skepticism about a non-political life (in its many scenes of failed Ciceronian retreat to rural felicity) up against the fear that true democracy itself might ultimately mean an end to politics, might be just such a retreat from the grounds where living beings can become human.¹² My reading does not trace in this novel an implicit or occluded working through of a specific parliamentary debate of the 1820s; I do argue however that this novel vigorously and anxiously works on the conjuncturally pressing problem of what kind of politics democratic equality would produce, if it could sustain a politics at all—a question that at this moment of the formation of

radical and proto-liberal alliances in the wake of Peterloo and during the lead-up to the first Reform Bill, is as much immediate and political as it is a matter of Romantic or political philosophy.

The claim to a politics of life perhaps most significant for Shelley's historical conjuncture is Edmund Burke's famous description of the political and social order as a partnership "between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are about to be born."¹³ In *The Rights of Man*, Thomas Paine argues directly against what he depicts as the almost gothic obsession with the dead in this claim of Burke's.¹⁴ Indeed a denial of the ghostly tradition Burke invokes is the basis for Paine's conception of rights and politics:

Man has no property in man; neither has any generation a property in the generations which are to follow. . . . It is the living, and not the dead, that are to be accommodated. When man ceases to be, his power and his wants cease with him. . . . I am contending for the rights of the living, and against their being willed away, and controlled and contracted for, by the manuscript assumed authority of the dead; and Mr. Burke is contending for the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living.¹⁵

Here Paine's argument is not only against Burke but for a particular conception of the place of life and the living in the political order. Burke's dead are slave-masters, trying to own what cannot be owned; Paine's dead are, simply, dead. His argument is meant to rid a democratic social order of the burden of the dead, of tradition and responsibility to ghostly forebears. There are no wants, no powers, no rights that can inhere in death. Governance is only and absolutely a matter of and for the living; the necessary commonality among a generation of political beings is, simply, life.

Despite the force of Paine's rhetoric here, there are tensions in this argument that reveal its difficulty. Burke's dead may be fantastic (of course we cannot be governed by wants from beyond the grave), but they are also tyrannical. That Paine throws some of the strongest imprecations of the radical lexicon—tyranny, slavery—against the dead suggests his awareness that an enlightened scoff at superstition can't suffice to dismiss what Burke has conjured up. More than this, I want to suggest that for all its recourse to a position of political common sense (of course it is we who are alive who matter for politics), Paine's argument here is not an obvious one. This is perhaps the place where the conception of the human being as a rights-bearing political person, freed of all determinants natural and social (wealth, rank, birth, even

native capacity), looks the most reductive: all that matters is who is alive and who is dead; something like life alone is sufficient ground on which to form a society and a government.

It is this conception of the relationship between life as simply being biologically alive and political life that haunts *The Last Man*. We might well see a connection here, across considerable historical and political distance, to Hannah Arendt's famous reconsideration of Burke in the wake of the concentration camps: as Arendt argues in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, life itself, just being alive, is not the ground of rights nor of the political being that guarantees an individual a place in the communal order. Rather, a man who loses his political status, who is only alive, paradoxically also loses his rights-bearing status and with it his personhood, for "[i]t seems that a man who is nothing but a man has lost the very qualities which make it possible for other people to treat him as a fellow-man."¹⁶ *The Last Man* plays out a related fear about emergent democracy: if democratic man is a creature with rights inherent in him solely by the fact of his being alive, Shelley's novel suggests, does he not risk being mistaken for that other man of the 1790s whose endowment with life is sufficient to make him the matter of government, the individual given his definitive form in Thomas Malthus's *Essay on Population*? What distinguishes the person under democratic equality from the person defined by the reductive biopolitical logic of populationist equivalence?¹⁷

The Last Man's plague-ridden globe, inhabited only by an ever increasingly "thinned generation" (*LM*, 317) at first glance looks far distant from the *Essay*'s predicted future of an earth overrun.¹⁸ But Malthus makes a strong claim to the future in his insistence that human life is ultimately a matter of two actions, reproducing and dying, and that the central problem for government is the balancing of what he refers to as "births and burials." For the poor, life is sufficiently described by these alliterative events; the wealthy are overwritten by education and rank—what we might think of as the demands of culture—making them rather different creatures than the poor in their relations to each other and to the state.¹⁹ I will return later to the idea that cultivation is what protects human life from the bareness of the births-and-burials logic that to Malthus defines life for the poor. In the argument of the first edition of the *Essay*, death is what steps in to check the excesses of life: if the "tastes and sentiments" of the "man of liberal education" provide a kind of "preventative check" on reproduction for the upper and striving middle ranks (the kind of check government must famously step in to institute for the poor), for the lower orders

it is child mortality that provides “the positive check to population.”²⁰ Death is disarmingly functional here, neither the source of national bonds nor of democratic burden, but rather the state’s ally against the more or less unwilling drive of life. The future will be reclaimed from indiscriminate reproduction not by the growth of taste, sentiment or education but by the massive force of that positive check:

The vices of mankind are active and able ministers of depopulation. . . . But should they fail in this war of extermination, sickly seasons, epidemics, pestilence, and plague . . . sweep off their thousands and ten thousands. Should success be still incomplete, gigantic inevitable famine stalks in the rear, and with one mighty blow, levels the population with the food of the world.²¹

Governance may restrain the growth of population; the “vices” and “misery” (childhood death and starvation among them) of the ill-governed may check it as well; but mass death is “an equality still more leveling” (*LM*, 317) than these. The problem of births in Malthus’s description of human life reproduces distinction and hierarchy, as reproduction varies with rank, education and wealth. But at least at the global scale Malthus invokes here, death undoes distinction and makes humans equal, equivalent to what the earth produces and implicitly to each other as well.²² Mass death thus does what politics and philosophy cannot. The increased rate of mortality in poverty’s haunts is government’s ally in the balancing of births and burials; plague and famine are the ultimate guarantors of man’s equivalence with man. All equality can mean here is the equivalence of life with life, of the will to biological reproduction and the certainty of death. In the language of the epigraph to this essay, if this is what equality means, then the virtues of beauty, strength and wisdom are indeed as vain as the hierarchy of riches and birth.

Certainly the democratic republic demanded by Paine and the radicals of the 1790s and the various states advocated and implemented by Malthus’s followers are politically different worlds; my suggestion here is not that Shelley sees the two as the same. But there is a structural similarity to these conceptions of politics as driven by a human equivalence that rests on the opposition of “life” to “death”—when being alive, as we’ve seen in Paine, is all that counts—that troubles Shelley’s novel. In *The Last Man*, the optimism of Paineite democracy is pitted against a kind of radical despair that flows from the same source. As the few remaining English prepare to flee to France in an attempt to outrun the plague (a journey that reverses the 1790s

radicals' hope of the light of the French revolution reaching England's shores), Lionel reflects on the fortunes of his "thinned generation," which, abandoning both hearth and sepulcher, has experienced the "throw[ing] down" of the "boundaries of private property" and the consequent material and political equality of all (*LM*, 317). "[T]here was nothing to prevent each from assuming possession of his share" (*LM*, 317) Lionel tells us, implying by his Winstanleyan phrase that a long-denied right is at last fulfilled, that the shares due to all can at last be distributed.

But the plague that enables this new community, that indeed makes life, and not property, all that matters, has in the same movement robbed that share of all its value: "Now *life* is all that we covet; that this automaton of flesh should, with joints and springs in order, perform its function, that this dwelling of the soul should be capable of containing its dweller" (*LM*, 316, emphasis added). As I will detail more fully in what follows, Lionel and the other survivors have turned away from the world-making of politics toward a kind of depleted interiority that is neither self-reflection nor private judgment but just a hearkening to the grinding of the body's gears, a condition perilously like animal life or bare life. When all that counts is that we are alive, *The Last Man* suggests, all that counts is that we stay alive; the redistribution of wealth has produced an equality that registers only as a crude equivalence. The optimism of politics, which has occupied the previous volumes of the novel, has disappeared, and though the earth has become a common treasury for all, the survivors find no riches in it, not solace, not a new world, not even a possible new state.

This scene and Lionel's commentary on it enact an unexamined anxiety about leveling in this conjuncture: not the often expressed fear of what will be lost when wealth and rank are lowered to the common lot, or in Burkean terms of the disappearance of tradition and the social order that relies on it; in *The Last Man's* distant future England is already a republic and the symbols, rituals and form of the state are shown to be repeatedly manipulable in the name of various schemes of social betterment.²³ Rather the fear the novel's account of the last days of society plays out is that, *contra* Paine, human life in itself might be altogether too weak a force to shape a government and a social order. If equality is based on an equivalence that arises from the fact of our being alive, as we have seen Paine's version of natural rights suggests, and "life" now, in the 1820s as three decades of radical struggle have been more or less managed by the state, looks like it might be defined by Malthus's reproductionist model, what could a

world of absolute material equality look like? This novel of the future centers on that question about futurity: where could progress, spirit (in one of the favored terms of the era), even optimism, the motors of politics come from in a leveled world?

The Last Man explores this question through surprisingly explicit means. While certainly not a pre-Victorian Palliser novel, *The Last Man's* text is strikingly taken up by politics proper: accounts of debate and struggle in parliament, and representations of competing political strategies, modes of leadership, and plans and schemes for governance. As the novel begins in the twenty-first century, the narrator Lionel has formed a friendship with Adrian, son of the last of England's kings, and the recently minted republic echoes with the 1640s, as much as with the 1790s. A struggle between "aristocrats, democrats and royalists" is taking place in Parliament when Lionel enters into political life, and the atmosphere is redolent of "civil war" (*LM*, 49). This evocation is enough to set the scene, but the novel does not then return exclusively to what might have initially appeared its definitive narrative line, the fraught friendships and romances of the little band of Lionel, Adrian, Raymond, Perdita, Idris and Evadne (names surely better suited to the bowers of Windsor forest than the halls of Parliament). Instead, details of the competing plans and parties turn out to be of great interest to Shelley's novel. In *The Last Man*, possibilities for common life are negotiated specifically through political means. Its setting in the future, I argue, allows this novel to imagine variants of democracy actually existing and, with the arrival of the plague, what those equalizing projects might offer to sustain common life against that "still more leveling" equality.

The novel recounts three Protectorships—the name given to the prime minister's position in this republican era—each aimed at versions of political and material equality, each marked by narrative detailing of procedure and policy. The first Protector we see is Raymond, the aristocratic military adventurer. His "beneficial will" drives an administration with an emphasis on agricultural development and monument building (*LM*, 106–7), a period of governance under which, Adrian later says, "the poor and oppressed arose like morn-awakened flowers" (*LM*, 152). When Raymond abandons politics for romantic and martial pursuits, the plebian-style democrat Ryland takes up the Protectorship. His government is marked by radical "schemes" for "equalization" (*LM*, 234) and the "suppression of the privileged orders of the community" (*LM*, 232). Ryland's mode of governance is clearly meant as the opposite number to Raymond's benevolent technocracy, the leveling down

(suppression of the aristocracy) to Raymond's leveling up (raising of the poor), although both governments are directed toward and mobilize rhetorics of democratization and equality. In a dialectical movement, these two opposing strategies in turn give way to a third, Adrian's sentimental democracy. But the period of Adrian's Protectorship is also the moment of the plague's incursion into England. Thus the novel sets up Adrian's governance as not only producing a balance between the previous political strategies, but as a kind of synthesis of them, a resolution to the larger problem of whether any politics at all can continue in the face of the plague. To counter the threat to common life the plague represents, Adrian's Protectorship makes political life spread out from the capital and away from strategies for governing a population that have marked the previous administrations. The plague has begun to change the landscape of politics; with it, Adrian's rule and the novel's account of political life turn to the land, to an assertion of a rural moral order that for all its sentimentalism is meant as a politics fitted to a world in which the continuation of common life is at stake.

With Adrian's Protectorship, Ryland's anti-hierarchical government is replaced by a naturalized anti-hierarchical structure, in which rank, wealth and property are freely discarded in order to promote a new moral order. As the plague begins its devastation of the English countryside, Adrian engages in "earnest pleadings and benevolent eloquence" to convince the rich that in the face of mass death, a new division of labor and property is necessary (*LM*, 236). His tactics are persuasive, and

As is common in communities, a fashion was set. . . . It was more common, for all who possessed landed property to secede to their estates, attended by whole troops of the indigent, to cut down their woods to erect temporary dwellings, and to portion out their parks, parterres and flower-gardens, to necessitous families. Many of these, of high rank in their own countries, now with hoe in hand, turned up the soil. (*LM*, 237)

Parks become fields, parterres and flowerbeds become market gardens. Adrian's moral pleadings make an agrarian dream, nearly something out of Thomas Spence—through without physical force or even protest—come true.²⁴ How radical this transformation is is signaled by Lionel's noting that the view from Windsor Castle in this year 2094 is now "strips of potatoe-land and corn" (*LM*, 239): Windsor is not only no longer the home of the monarchy; its parks now grow potatoes, food signifying the peasant class, and a non-English peasantry at that.²⁵

The “spirit of benevolence” (*LM*, 237) that Adrian has mobilized does not in fact undo rank or class—the poor still “attend” the rich, and it is the laboring classes that the initial onset of plague has made indigent. Lionel’s description of this agrarian transformation as “a fashion” suggests how temporary the bonds of this moral community may be. Nonetheless, the transformation of the land is a radical one, both because the idea of private property turned to public sustenance comes from a tradition of radical political thought and because here, before the plague has enforced the Malthusian equivalence of alive or dead, political work has made for greater material equality. New commons have been dug from the property of the gentry, and a reborn common life follows.

Despite the apparent agrarian radicalism of Adrian’s Protectorship, as Lionel expands on Adrian’s plan to care for the rural poor, the new arrangement of country life their governance has instituted sounds increasingly like the kind of the rural moral world William Wordsworth’s poems imagine.²⁶ Indeed Shelley quotes Wordsworth as Lionel describes how he and Adrian will ensure that sympathy and a natural hierarchy will be maintained in the face of the plague and the overturning of the hierarchy of rank and property we’ve seen above (*LM*, 270). Lionel finds that although the landowners have taken to the new system readily, indeed “actuated by the purest benevolence,” they cannot provide the order the countryside needs:

The intimate sympathy generated by similar hopes and fears, similar experience and pursuits, was wanting here. The poor perceived that the rich possessed other means of preservation. . . . They could not place reliance on them, but turned with tenfold dependence to the succor and advice of their equals. I resolved therefore to go from village to village, seeking out the rustic archon of the place, and by systematizing their exertions, and enlightening their views, encrease both their power and their use among their fellow-cottagers. (*LM*, 272)

Thus in a move both moralizing and political, Lionel makes formal a hierarchy among “equals,” a miniature Parliament in each town. What holds these villagers together is not a set of deferential relations to rank and wealth, but the bonds of common life and experience, “intimate sympathy” that may be shaped and molded but is nonetheless natural (although notably not something shared between classes, a point I’ll return to below). Lionel describes his finding of these rustic Protectors as instituting “spontaneous regal elections” (*LM*, 272): The internal contradiction of the phrase (regal elections) and the larger contradiction

in describing the results of what Lionel has just made clear is a policy decision as spontaneous perhaps are meant to nudge the reader to a skepticism about this natural politics, based in a common sympathy and common life that nonetheless requires external “systemization” and further “enlightenment.”

Whether or not such a critique is implicit here, any doubts raised about whether Adrian’s governance can indeed sustain this synthesis of radical efforts at material equality and benevolent maintenance of order through local sympathy will prove to be well founded. The novel begins with Lionel as a boy, running wild through the hills, poaching from the parks of the gentry both for sustenance and defiance (*LM*, 24–25)—the rural order of the eighteenth century apparently still that of the twenty-first. With Adrian’s Protectorship that eighteenth-century English country life is transformed for the moment into something futuristic indeed, as private land is tilled for public food and a general benevolence is the order of the day. But this new system, which makes an old rural hierarchy more equal, fails exactly because of the imposition of a larger, more absolute equality. It is not only individual life that is lost as plague makes its way across England. As Lionel points out in the same passage in which he praises the system of rural elections, “[o]ften . . . the voice to which all listened was suddenly silenced, the helping hand cold, the sympathetic eye closed” (*LM*, 272). When a rural leader dies of plague, sympathy, help, and order die along with him or her. Sympathy and its attendant sentiments are the natural ordering principle of common life, the guarantee against the reductive equivalence of material equality, yet they turn out not to be equally distributed among the living. The “wise, the good, and the prudent” may occupy themselves with “labors of benevolence,” but they are as likely to die as “the young, the thoughtless and the vicious” (*LM*, 273).

Here we see that sympathy not only does not unite rich and poor (as Lionel’s plan above points out), it is also not everywhere available. The determinate article in Lionel’s phrase “the sympathetic eye” is more than poetic phrasing: no new sympathetic source and organizing voice take its place when that eye closes. The rural poor respond to the further inroads of plague with “resignation,” “licentiousness,” and a “general rush to London,” where “the occupations of life were gone” and only “the amusements remained” (*LM*, 272–3). Lost in the plague along with life is the ordering principle, the supposedly natural hierarchy of sentiment and sympathy. The hierarchy of rank and wealth is gone, but what has enabled its passing, the motivating force for a government organized around material and representative

equality, puts an end to the hierarchy of wisdom and sympathy as well. What is left is a life stripped of the ordering principles that had once been held in common.²⁷

Sentiment and sympathy should not however seem to be the last bulwark against the logic of alive-or-dead available to this future England's Protectors or to a Romantic period novel's imaginary. Scattered through *The Last Man* are signs of another stronghold of plenitudinous, common life: the theater in London, statues in Rome, the works of Shakespeare Lionel will carry with him at the novel's end all seem to suggest the power of culture, the transformative domain where "beauty and strength and wisdom" give value and possibility to human life, definitively marking it out from mere biological, animal life. Indeed, as Esther Schor and others have pointed out, *The Last Man* puts itself in critical dialogue with William Godwin's *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), a text that I argue explicitly stakes culture against death's leveling hand, against the specter of an absolute, material equality's potential to reduce human life to just life itself.²⁸ Culture is an emergent and as yet unfixed concept in this period, as Raymond Williams and more recently Philip Connell have argued; for Godwin culture is primarily cultivation, the complex of educative processes that form the individual and the pedagogical acts of self-formation in which the individual engages.²⁹ For Godwinite radical thought (which in this way intersects with certain strains of Victorian liberal thought), such self cultivation is more or less immediately social cultivation: society progresses as individuals do; education is aimed at the interests of a better social whole, not immediately at individual freedom or enrichment, although that freedom, on Godwin's account in *Political Justice*, may follow. It is explicitly against this optimistic picture of human life as the potential to grow ever more humane that Malthus stakes his populationist description of the human.³⁰ In the *Essay On Sepulchres*, the recompense for the dynamic of alive or dead turns out to be the possibility of culture itself and the social progress it enables: the ever-increasing population of the dead becomes a curriculum for the living. Fittingly enough, what the dead teach, Godwin argues, is how not to be just alive.

In the *Essay* Godwin proposes that the gravesites of famous and worthy men and women should be marked by wooden crosses and that maps to these sites—an "Atlas of those who Have Lived, for the Use of Men Hereafter to be Born"—should be produced.³¹ In this way the learning and accomplishments of the dead will remain available to those who are alive. The living thus become the "survivors" of

the “illustrious dead,” as Godwin locates in death what is meaningful about being alive (*ES*, 7). The fact of death means that no man can fully communicate his “extensive portions of learning and observation,” and thus the world is kept “for ever . . . in its infancy,” never maturing into its potential, Godwin argues (*ES*, 8). But death does not have to be this kind of social loss, even if—or perhaps because—it is inevitably an individual one. The “operation of human imagination and human feelings,” the same sentiments that make us mourn the death of friends, allow a kind of special contact with any of the dead (*ES*, 7). To stand on the spot where a great man has died—or even, more strangely, where a literary character is “buried” (*ES*, 24)—would give the survivor, Godwin suggests, a special access to that man’s learning and observation, a kind of impetus to self-education in what the dead have to teach.

This argument relies less on a Burkean (or Wordsworthian) assumption that it is the relationship to the dead that marks the line between the human and the animal than on a kind of nostalgic (and perhaps not incidentally colonialist) populationism, in which the supposedly greater numbers of the illustrious dead in England than in “new countries” (*ES*, 18) provide the living Englishman with a potential plenitude.³² With that argumentative move, it begins to be clear that this is a claim about culture in a recognizably modern sense as well, a collection of thoughts and texts (and memories and bodies) more or less defined and bound by national (and implicitly racial, in several senses of that word) belonging.

What initially looks like an eccentric meditation on death and culture turns out, however, to be an intervention in the problem of equality turning into equivalence and enculturated, common life into mere existence we’ve seen above. Indeed, it turns out that culture matters to Godwin here exactly because of the need to maintain a distinction between equality and equivalence. It is a “cold, calculating, literal principle” that says that we had better “feed the living, than expend what we have upon the posthumous, and already extinguished vanity of the dead” (*ES*, 10), Godwin argues against unnamed interlocutors:

The soundest morality would direct, impartially and in all cases, that the property existing in any society should be employed in such a way, as should most conduce to the welfare of the members of that society. . . . But this consideration must not be expounded too literally. If it were nothing would be valuable in the world, but food, lodging and clothes. Not balls only and palaces, but libraries also would be unnecessary.—We should always remember that in man there is a mind to be fed as well

as a body. *It is of more importance that man should be a virtuous and an honourable creature, than that he should merely be.* . . . Libraries therefore are good things. (*ES*, 10–11, emphasis added)

The claim that man is not “the mere creature of abstractions and mathematical or syllogistic deduction” (*ES*, 7), repeated here in the argument against “calculating, literal principle,” points to populationist thought and especially Malthus, long Godwin’s antagonist as this argument’s target. But the argument is not only against such Malthusian calculation. It is also meant as a corrective as well to the “soundest morality” that demands the impartial employment of property for the welfare of all. That aim suggests Godwin is also importantly contending here with radical advocates of democracy and equality (and even, perhaps, with the author of *Political Justice* himself).

This double movement points again to an increasing difficulty in distinguishing the logics and outcomes of democratic equality and Malthusian equivalence. Here what makes the distinction between the two, what keeps democracy from the literal, calculating logic of population is the kind of futurity ensured by culture. Culture, in Godwin’s argument, is revealed to be a concept that necessarily includes its quite literal transmission from the dead to the living, giving (as we’ve seen Paine describe it above) each generation a property in the next. Implicit in this argument is that a government “of and for the living” and only the living would be government in the absence of culture, administering to a mathematical conception of humanity and futurity. The hierarchy of rank and wealth implied by balls and palaces can be leveled, Godwin argues, but monuments to other values must be raised and maintained in its place—libraries, grave markers, atlases, the means of reproduction for (what will come to look like) the best that’s been thought and said. Culture, on Godwin’s account, is not only compatible with a more equalized society, it is exactly what staves off the threat of reduction to mere life such leveling presents.

Mark Philp notes that the *Essay On Sepulchres* was well reviewed by certain conservative journals, a surprising reception for anything Godwin produced.³³ I would suggest that this may point to how pressing the problem of equality and equivalence is in this conjuncture, as well as to just how potent Godwin’s solution is: an infamous radical’s musings on how to communicate with the dead are “in unison with the best and most generous feelings of our nature” as the *Critical Review* puts it.³⁴ It is tempting to linger over Godwin’s essay, odd as it may be, because this notion of culture as more than compensation for death—as compensation, rather, for life—remains entangled in what

we think it means to hope for a political future, as I hope my quick references to the development of liberalism later in the nineteenth century have not too reductively suggested.

But it is exactly this means of shoring up the human so it can remain human in the face of equality that *The Last Man* explodes. In one of his many declamations about the effects of the plague, the narrator Lionel explicitly counters Godwin's consoling thought that culture is not only the recompense for but the happy effect of death. With the onset of plague in England,

There was but one good and one evil in the world—life and death. The pomp of rank, the assumption of power, the possessions of wealth vanished like morning mist. One living beggar had become of more worth than a national peerage of dead lords—alas the day!—than of dead heroes, patriots, or men of genius. There was much of degradation in this: for even vice and virtue had lost their attributes—life—life—the continuation of our animal mechanism—was the Alpha and Omega of the desires, the prayers, the prostrate ambition of human race. (*LM*, 293–4)

The plague indeed dissolves the hierarchy of rank and wealth, but with this dissolution goes the hierarchy of culture as well. The living beggar is worth more than any of the dead, and implicitly more than the heroism, patriotism and genius the dead convey to the living, simply because he is alive. Again, what follows on the radical production of equality is the elevation of life, animal, biological, to all that can matter. In *The Last Man*, culture in its early nineteenth century components—virtue, love of country, genius, the qualities necessary for self-development—cannot protect against the degrading force of simply being alive.

I have argued above that the period of Adrian's Protectorship looks briefly as though it has synthesized the strengths and resolved the failures of the previous governments—and performed the magic trick of ameliorating material wants, blurring the boundaries of property, and organizing natural communities without revolution and in the face of death's leveling hand. The novel goes on unrelentingly to show this to have been only a last gasp of politics, a final moment of possibility for communal life. But Adrian's plan, his version of a political order tending to equality, is not simply passed by in that rush to London, dissipation and death we've just seen. Rather Adrian's Protectorship turns out to have been perfectly in keeping with what is to come, as Lionel narrates in a passage I have quoted in part before:

As the rules of order and pressure of laws were lost, some began with hesitation and wonder to transgress the accustomed uses of society. Palaces were deserted, and the poor man dared at length, unreprieved, intrude into the splendid apartments. . . . It was found, that, though at first the stop put to all circulation of property, had reduced those before supported by the factitious wants of society to sudden and hideous poverty, yet when the boundaries of private possession were thrown down, the products of human labor at present existing were more, far more, than the thinned generation could possibly consume. . . . We were all equal now; magnificent dwellings, luxurious carpets, and beds of down, were afforded to all. Carriages and horses, gardens, pictures, statues and princely libraries, there were enough of these even to superfluity; and there was nothing to prevent each from assuming possession of his share. We were all equal now; but near at hand was an equality still more leveling, a state where beauty and strength, and wisdom, would be as vain as riches and birth. (*LM*, 317)

This is not the apocalyptic future of Byron's "Darkness" (1816), in which the palaces are burnt for watch fires, nor of Barbauld's "Eighteen Hundred and Eleven" (1812), where the ruins of England's great buildings become the tourists' marvels of the future. The movement of this passage, rather, exemplifies *The Last Man's* dialectic of possibility and loss. The language at first is that of colonial encounter, hesitation and wonder in the face of an unknown world. The poor are free to inhabit the world of the rich; in a version of an eighteenth-century critique of luxury, the excesses of the rich have in turn made them poor. The Malthusian future of scarcity has been replaced by an abundance and a reversal of fortunes that should signal a golden age. But as we have already seen, that abundance is meaningless. Notice that in the roster here of superfluities are not only carpets, down beds and carriages, but—in direct contradiction to Godwin's opposition of palaces to libraries—pictures, statues and libraries as well.

Plague has extended the logic Adrian's Protectorship put into place: private property is transformed into a storehouse for all, defying the logic of population and calculation. And yet the extension of that optimistic project produces a mode of life in which optimism and plans, the motives of politics, are all in vain. As quickly as the poor have entered the palaces they are displaced by the next inhabitants, "young lambs . . . dropt in flower-gardens, and the cow stalled in the hall of pleasure" (*LM*, 319). In London, Lionel stares at St. Paul's and sees "[t]roops of dogs, deserted of their masters . . . and now and then a horse, unbridled and unsaddled, trotted toward us and tried to attract the attention of those which we rode, as if to allure them to seek like

liberty" (*LM*, 332). Once the human world has been transformed into a place where only life counts, other lives are free to wander in. The novel hints that a line more significant than that between rich and poor has been transgressed, and where culture was once housed now animal life impulsive and unbridled lives.³⁵

Indeed, as the plague progresses the sociality and cultural activity taken to demarcate human life recede. The novel suggests this regression both in the reversals and depletions of common, political life I've discussed above and in the structuring narrative necessitated by the novel's formal and proto-generic (as a novel of the future, a speculative fiction) commitments: the production of the narrator, Lionel Verney, as *The Last Man*. What comes as a surprise in this overarching narrative is not that Lionel is or will be the final human alive, as any reader might know from the title page, but that to be that last man means having to learn to be human in the first place, having to learn to participate in humanity, in a common life that is more than biological or animal, a life which, as we have seen, just as it seems to have finally become universal falls irrevocably away. I have argued above that in *The Last Man*, a version of democratic political life falls apart under the weight of its own equalizing logic and that once that common life is gone, human life withers away to its barest form, to the "human image" or "the animal mechanism" (*LM*, 294). To conclude, I want to briefly trace how the particulars of Lionel's story recapitulate in the individual this reduction of the species.

Throughout the course of the plague, once Adrian's conversion of inherited estates to market gardens has taken hold, Lionel notes the presence of animal life in what should be the exclusive precincts of humans, as we have seen above when the dogs and horses wander at "liberty" through London. In bountiful Italy, Lionel and his companions find throngs of sheep "taking unrebuked possession of hallowed sanctuary, or kingly council-chamber," and "the animals, in new found liberty, rambl[ing] through the gorgeous palaces, and hardly fear[ing] our forgotten aspect" (*LM*, 430). Such scenes may seem, at least to a reader familiar with later *Last Man* stories, a kind of inevitable feature of imagining the end of the world. But the story of animal life finding itself in human realms, indeed in palaces and council chambers, begins in the novel with Lionel himself. I have already said that as a boy Lionel runs wild, poaching on private land; in his account of his childhood, he "wandered among the hills of civilized England as uncouth a savage as the wolf-bred founder of old Rome" (*LM*, 14). Lionel is even more doubtfully human than this, however, living the

solitary life “of an animal” with a mind “in danger of degenerating into that which informs brute nature” (*LM*, 18). Indeed, only when Lionel meets Adrian, child of the former royal family, already himself a kind of philosopher-politician, does Lionel’s brute nature transform into something else:

The trim and paled demesne of civilization, which I had before regarded from my wild jungle as inaccessible, had its wicket opened by him; I stepped within, and felt, as I entered, that I trod my native soil. (*LM*, 27)

With his friendship with Adrian—who makes Lionel a “diplomatist,” the secretary to the Ambassador at Vienna (*LM*, 36–8)—Lionel is “admitted within that sacred boundary which divides the intellectual and moral nature of man from that which characterizes animals,” or as he more concisely puts it: “I now began to be human” (*LM*, 29). Lionel’s enculturation is not simply maturation or self-development, the cultural and ethical perfection of his human nature. Rather for Lionel, making a friend, learning the political and philosophical history of his country, getting a job, moving to the city, are the conditions of becoming human at all. Long before the sheep have taken up residence in the council chamber, another animal has found his place there.

There is some vague sense in the novel (one of its proto-science fiction stirrings, perhaps) that it may be exactly this former nature of Lionel’s that lets him live through the plague. Certainly it is an “instinctive love of life” that allows him to survive the shipwreck that drowns his final companions and to “str[i]ve . . . to restore my frame to the use of its animal functions” once he reaches the shore (*LM*, 444–5), where he dreams “of sights and sounds peculiar to my boyhood’s mountain life, which I had long forgotten” (*LM*, 446–7): once Lionel, who has thought of himself as “citizen of the world” and “enchain[ed] . . . to [his] fellow creatures” (*LM*, 157), is definitively alone, he regresses, back to childhood, back to animal life. As he attempts to console himself by meditating on how impressive the built “relics left behind” by humanity would be to the “new comers” if “the earth should be again peopled,” Lionel wanders into an empty palace

and opened the door of a magnificent saloon. I started—I looked again with renewed wonder. What wild-looking, unkempt, half-naked savage was that before me? (*LM*, 455)

The savage is, of course, Lionel’s own reflection in the mirror. But what makes this moment shocking is not the flicker of gothic horror at the

thought of some other, savage survivor. Rather, the shock is that in this mirror stage moment of estrangement Lionel does not misrecognize himself as a longed-for fellow human, but rather recognizes himself as now scarcely human at all.³⁶

The novel's most famous scene has Lionel enacting a final rebuke to culture for its failure to protect him from just such a moment, as he embraces "in bitter mockery" and "self-delusion" a marble statue outside the Vatican and notes its failure to respond (*LM*, 465). But it strikes me that the concluding image for *The Last Man's* account of how unsupported human life is against the reductive equivalence of alive or dead—against being just alive—comes somewhat earlier than this. Lionel is already the last man, but he is not, as the novel comes to an end, alone:

My only companion was a dog, a shaggy fellow, . . . whom I found tending sheep in the Campagna. His master was dead, but nevertheless he continued fulfilling his duties in expectation of his return. If a sheep strayed from the rest, he forced it to return to the flock, and sedulously kept off every intruder. Riding in the Campagna I had . . . observed his repetition of lessons learned from man, now useless, though unforgotten. (*LM*, 467–8)

As Lionel battles the encroachment of his animal nature, the reduction to mere biological mechanism that has been the fate of the rest of human life, the dog repeats what his humans had taught him, re-enacting his own enculturation. Earlier, when the last remaining humans have made camp at Versailles in their attempt to outrun the plague Lionel comments on their lack of "industry," marking the failure to labor as yet another sign of the decline of human common life (*LM*, 383). Unlike the humans, however, the dog keeps working: he remembers his lessons perfectly well.

If the plague leaves the humans without access to their Lockean essence, their natural condition of work and ownership, here an animal seems to be capable of keeping that human species-being alive.³⁷ Perhaps in finding a companion for the last barely-human in the industrious humanized animal the novel makes an ambivalent reference to a Burkean notion of habit and second nature as necessities of common, civilized life.³⁸ But perhaps we can also find in this moment a hint at the production of a new form of common life, a perverse kind of optimism in this rigorously pessimistic novel: common, democratic life has been dissolved by its own biopolitical logic, but when Lionel, carrying the works of Shakespeare, and the dog step into their little

boat to sail for Africa in the novel's final moment, at least there is the possibility of more than one living, humanized creature surviving the future.

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NOTES

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¹ Mary Shelley, *The Last Man* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994), 317. All references to this text are hereafter cited parenthetically by page number and abbreviated *LM*.

² This is a trope allied with those discussed in Kenneth Burke's account of figures of speech involving death. See Kenneth Burke, "Thanatopsis for Critics: A Brief Thesaurus of Deaths and Dying," *Essays in Criticism* 2 (1952): 369–375.

³ On the Romantic solitary see Celeste Langan, *Romantic Vagrancy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1995).

⁴ See as an example, Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986), 138.

⁵ Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), xiv.

⁶ For arguments about the emergence and status of culture in the nineteenth century see Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, rev. edition (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 87–93. Compare David Lloyd and Paul Thomas, *Culture and the State* (New York: Routledge, 1998), especially 1–30. See also Philip Connell's recent study of the entanglements of political economy, romantic thought and the emergent concept of culture, *Romanticism, Economics and the Question of "Culture"* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2001).

⁷ See, for example, Andrew Bennett, *Romantic Poets and the Culture of Posterity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999). For a different kind of critical engagement with the question of Romantic posterity see Paul de Man, "Shelley Disfigured," in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Continuum, 1985), 39–73. For a Romantic essay on the topic see Percy Shelly, "On Life," in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Sharon B. Powers (New York: Norton, 1977), 474–478.

⁸ See Catherine Gallagher, *The Body Economic: Life, Death and Sensation in Political Economy and the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), esp. chapters one (7–34) and two (35–61).

⁹ For an introduction to the concept of biopower, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 135–159. For recent engagements with biopolitics and the critique of sovereignty see Leerom Medvoui, "Global Society Must Be Defended: Biopolitics Without Boundaries," *Social Text* 91, 25.2 (Summer 2007): 53–79; and Antonio Negri, "The Labor of the Multitude and the Fabric of Biopolitics," *Mediations* 23.2 (Spring 2008): 9–24.

¹⁰ I am thinking here especially of arguments by Mark Canuel and Charlotte Sussman, as well as Lee Sterrenburg's now classic essay. See Mark Canuel, "Acts, Rules and The

Last Man," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 53 (September 1998): 147–170; Charlotte Sussman, "'Islanded in the World': Cultural Memory and Human Mobility in *The Last Man*," *PMLA* 118 (2003): 286–301; Lee Sterrenburg, "The Last Man: Anatomy of Failed Revolutions," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 33 (1978): 324–47.

¹¹ Sterrenburg, 328. For a (politically and theoretically) different take on the novel's collapsing of systems see Barbara Johnson, "The Last Man," in *The Other Mary Shelley: Beyond Frankenstein*, ed. Audrey A. Fisch, Anne K. Mellor and Esther H. Schor (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993), 258–266.

¹² For one of many such moments see Lionel's soon to be ironized desire to "leave 'life,' that we may live" (*LM*, 218). I discuss this more fully in a longer version of this argument, especially in relation to the novel's penultimate scenes of an attempted reformation of familial and political life in Italy (*LM*, 429–431).

¹³ Edmund Burke, 194–195.

¹⁴ See, for example, Paine's comments on Burke's logic being of a "marvelous and monstrous kind" (Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man, Part I*, in *The Thomas Paine Reader*, ed. Michael Foot and Isaac Kramnick [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987], 202).

¹⁵ Paine, 203–204.

¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1973), 300. Cited also in Andrew Norris, "Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Living Dead," *Diacritics* 30.4 (Winter, 2000): 38–58. On bare life and a critical account of Arendt's argument see also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1998).

¹⁷ On population and biopolitics see Foucault, 139–141. For quite a different reading of populationist thought and the matter of life see Gallagher's discussion of Malthus, 8–16 and 36–50.

¹⁸ After the publication of the first edition of the *Essay*, however, the future generally seems to have become a territory English writers ceded to or attempted to re-conquer from Malthus. In the first English last man novel (anonymous, 1806)—in fact a pirated (and freely translated) version of Grainville's 1805 French romance *Le Dernier Homme*—Malthusian reflections on the inadequacy of the earth "in after-ages . . . [to] sustain" an increasingly "immense population" are oddly inserted into an otherwise eschatological, millennialist narrative, suggesting something of Malthus's sway over even future scenes very different from that of the *Essay*. See I. F. Clarke's introduction to Grainville's novel: Jean-Baptiste Cousin de Grainville, *The Last Man*, trans. I. F. Clarke and M. Clarke, ed. I. F. Clarke (Middletown CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2002), xix–xli.

¹⁹ Thomas Malthus, *Population: The First Essay* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959), 22–24. On Malthus and poverty see Mitchell Dean, *The Constitution of Poverty: Toward a Genealogy of Liberal Governance* (London: Routledge, 1991). For a different reading of Malthus, which sees him as attentive to the problem of individual consciousnesses, including those of middle-class women, see Frances Ferguson, *Solitude and the Sublime: Romanticism and the Aesthetics of Individuation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), esp. 122–25.

²⁰ Malthus, 22–3, 25.

²¹ Malthus, 49. For a different reading of this passage see Tim Fulford, "Apocalyptic Economics and Prophetic Politics: Radical and Romantic Responses to Malthus and Burke," *Studies in Romanticism* 40 (Fall 2001): 345–368, esp. 354–355.

²² On Malthus's apocalyptic rhetoric see Fulford.

²³ The monarchy is weak as the novel begins. Before the action of the novel is well under way, Britain has become a republic through what the narrator describes as "the

gentle force of the remonstrances” of the people (*LM*, 20), a piece of wish-fulfillment in line with positions Mary Shelley takes up in her letters (see Morton Paley’s Introduction to this edition, xviii). Despite the apparent simplicity of this revolutionary moment in the novel, I argue here that this novel is complexly politically aware, as I’ll go on to show.

²⁴ On common lands see E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: The New Press, 1993), 97–184. See also Malcolm Chase, *“The people’s farm”: English Radical Agrarianism, 1775–1840* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1988).

²⁵ On potatoes see Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, “The Potato in the Materialist Imagination,” in *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 110–135.

²⁶ For a comparison of Wordsworth’s account of rural life to agrarian politics, see David Worrall, “Agrarians against the Picturesque,” in Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, ed., *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 240–260, esp. 248.

²⁷ Shelley’s account of how the theater functions as entertainment and solicitor of mass emotions in the era of the plague is relevant here: See *The Last Man*, 281–283.

²⁸ Esther Schor, *Bearing the Dead: The British Culture of Mourning from the Enlightenment to Victoria* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1994), 240.

²⁹ See Williams. See also Connell. Maureen McLane’s reading of Frankenstein and “the humanities” produces a version of Shelley’s relation to such questions I have found enormously productive (“Literate Species: Populations, ‘Humanities,’ and *Frankenstein*,” *ELH* 63 [Winter 1996]: 959–988).

³⁰ In the first edition of the *Essay* especially. On Malthus and Godwin, see Fulford.

³¹ William Godwin, *Essay on Sepulchres: Or, A Proposal for Erecting Some Memorial of the Illustrious Dead in All Ages on the Spot Where Their Remains Have Been Interred*, in *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7 vol., ed. Mark Philp (London: William Pickering, 1993), 6:29. Hereafter abbreviated *ES* and cited parenthetically by page number.

³² On the human and the animal in *Essay on Epitaphs*, see Alan Bewell, “The History of Death” in *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1989), 187–234.

³³ See Philp, “Introductory Note.” It is worth noting that the *Essay* is only ambiguously typical of Godwin’s thinking, and his novels especially offer a potential critique of just this version of culture (I am thinking particularly of the failure of the life of rural felicity in *Fleetwood* or the failure of enculturation, especially in the Wales episode, in *Caleb Williams*).

³⁴ *Critical Review*, 19 (1810): 29–34. Cited in Philp, 3.

³⁵ It might be worth making a comparison to one of our contemporary Last Man narratives, the 2007 film *I am Legend* (dir. Francis Lawrence), starring Will Smith. Although that film shows the streets of Manhattan as a kind of wild west of herds of deer and prowling lions (and, in an image straight out of *The Last Man*, a rich vegetable garden somewhere in lower Manhattan), the wilderness stays outside and culture keeps its place: the walls of this last man’s Washington Square townhouse are decorated with works from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and when this last man seeks solace in the museum, the only beast who accompanies him is his faithful dog.

³⁶ On the particulars of this form of misrecognition see Jacques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (1949), in *Ecrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 75–81, esp. 76–78.

³⁷ See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), esp. 285–302. For the concept of species-being and its relationship to labor, see Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, second edition (New York: Norton, 1978), 75–81. For an engagement with Lockean ownership in the context of historical transformations of property ownership in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, see Thompson 160–1.

³⁸ On Burke and habit see James K. Chandler, *Wordsworth's Second Nature: A Study of the Poetry and Politics* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), 62–74.

