

William Godwin. *Fleetwood*. Ed. Gary Handwerk and A.A. Markley. Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2000. 541pp. \$15.95; US\$12.05; £8.95. ISBN 1-55111-232-9.

Fleetwood: or, the New Man of Feeling, a lesser-known novel by William Godwin, was first published in 1805 and reissued with Godwin's corrections in Bentley's "Standard Novels" series in 1832. Until now, it has been available in only one modern edition, edited by Pamela Clemit as part of the *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin* (1992). This new scholarly edition by Gary Handwerk and A.A. Markley makes the second edition of *Fleetwood* readily accessible and affordable to readers of all kinds. Although the editors do not annotate variants between the first and second edition, they justify their choice of copy text on the grounds that Godwin himself oversaw the publication of the second edition. In keeping with other scholarly editions of eighteenth-century texts recently published by Broadview Press, including *Caleb Williams*, which they also edited, Handwerk and Markley include a comprehensive introduction and thorough appendices that provide the intertextual and cultural backgrounds to the novel.

The introduction paints a sympathetic portrait of Godwin as a social critic, highlighting his interventions in eighteenth-century debates ranging from education to child labour to marriage. With this historical commentary as well as a discussion of several texts that influenced Godwin, the introduction clearly goes beyond a narrow literary focus on genre. The editors also include a brief overview of recent criticism of *Fleetwood*. Their detailed account of Godwin's literary precursors and heirs is helpful, although it runs the risk of drawing attention away from the particular merits of Godwin's novel.

In addition, the introduction notes that *Fleetwood* abounds with examples of domestic injustice and social oppression suffered by women and the working class. With appended selections from *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* and from novels by Wollstonecraft, Inchbald, and Hays, the editors are clearly trying to make *Fleetwood* attractive to feminist scholars. Repeated speculation in the introduction about the extent of Wollstonecraft's influence on Godwin is interesting, although occasionally overstated. While Handwerk and Markley do not go so far as to portray Godwin as a steadfast apostle of Wollstonecraft's radical feminism, they tend to elide the differences between Godwin's and Wollstonecraft's views on gender and sexuality.

Diverse excerpts from twenty-two different texts make up the appendices, which reflect Godwin's eclectic tastes and capture the ambivalence of the novel with respect to form. Handwerk and Markley, however, make an unfortunate decision when they retain Godwin's brief preface to the first edition only to dispense with the longer preface to the second edition in which Godwin discusses the composition of *Caleb Williams*. This is a curious omission since the inclusion of over one hundred pages of appended material suggests the editors were not unduly constrained by considerations of length. Together, the introduction and appendices convey a sense of the political and social climate of Godwin's day. The inclusion of the second preface would have complemented their intention of reconstructing the cultural moment that produced this novel, while providing an interesting example of authorial voice through which Godwin comments on the effectiveness of first-person narration for capturing psychological complexity, a point equally relevant to both *Fleetwood* and *Caleb Williams*.

Despite the assertion in the introduction of *Fleetwood's* significance to the

rapidly growing field of gender studies, the editors offer no detailed comments on Godwin's theorization of gender and subjectivity, which arguably constitutes the heart of the novel as the only apparent point of convergence among the various plot lines. The introduction's somewhat cursory treatment of the story consequently overlooks the way in which the novel articulates the psychological toll exacted by social and economic inequity on all members of society, even privileged men such as Casimir Fleetwood. Moreover, with all the critical attention recently focused on representations of masculinity in eighteenth-century literature, this oversight by such astute editors is surprising. One would expect any novel with the subtitle *The New Man of Feeling* to address issues of gender and of masculinity in particular. Godwin does not disappoint readers in this regard. The eponymous protagonist's early education suffers from the death of his mother and the solitary propensities of a melancholic father who indulges his son's every whim. As one would expect from a Godwinian novel, Fleetwood's problems occur when he allows his passions to overtake his reason. Yet, unlike the tearful Harley or the trembling heroines of sensibility, Godwin's protagonist is not feminized as a result of his sensibility. Rather, Fleetwood's development occurs almost exclusively in a homosocial world, and his overwrought emotions incline him to take cultural codes of masculine behaviour to extremes. The lesson Fleetwood learns by the end of the novel is to balance his impetuous "masculine" passions with a "feminine" capacity for calm reflection and judgment.

The suggestiveness of the cover illustration for this edition goes some distance towards compensating for the absence of a focused discussion of the novel in the introduction. The cover depicts an intriguing, partially exposed photograph of an unidentified couple. The regular half of the photo shows a gentleman holding a book, while the exposed half shows a ghostly white outline of a woman. Given the attention of Handwerk and Markley in the introduction to Godwin's relationship with Wollstonecraft, the eerie trace of a female figure aptly signifies Wollstonecraft's posthumous "haunting" of Godwin's work as well as the conspicuous absence of significant female characters in the novel. Furthermore, two of the more subtle and complex elements of *Fleetwood* that will interest readers are its repeated invocation of memory and its psychological examination of melancholia, both of which work together to tone down the polemical style for which Godwin is known.

The strengths of this edition are the comprehensive introduction, the bibliography of secondary sources, and the breadth of primary materials found in the appendices. It will attract readers for its highly informative cultural focus and its readable format. Unlike other inexpensive classroom editions, Broadview texts are printed on good paper with adequate font size and leading. The brief footnotes and lengthy appendices contribute to the superior quality of the texts, but do not distract from the pleasure of reading. Overall, this scholarly edition of *Fleetwood* constitutes yet another impressive collaborative effort by these editors and the Broadview Press.

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