

The Development of Philosophical Ideas in the Novels of William Godwin and Mary  
Shelley: With a Focus on the Doctrine of “Necessity”

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## Introduction

William Godwin (1756-1836) and Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) were father and daughter, and both of them were distinguished English novelists. Though most of their works are now consigned to oblivion, some of them surely left their mark on the history of British literature. Godwin was a radical political philosopher and novelist who attracted the attention of his contemporaries with the publication of *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* in 1793. In this treatise, Godwin engaged in inquiring as to the mode in which human happiness and improvement may most successfully be introduced into society, denouncing all kinds of institutions and authority except “a stark principle justice.”<sup>1</sup> His ideas in *Political Justice*, which brought him fame and notoriety, profoundly influenced British intellectuals, social thinkers and poets in the 1790s. He incorporated his philosophical ideas into his works and continued to develop them at different stages of his literary career. He tried to exploit his novels and plays as a means of disseminating his political and philosophical ideas among those whom his works could reach.

Godwin’s attempt to weave his ideas and fiction skillfully together in stories was so radical and distinctive that nineteenth-century critics could distinguish his literary heirs, in other words, the novelists of “the Godwin school.” They were cultivated by “a common master,” “a common philosophical as well as poetical belief, common training, that of warfare with society” and had “many specific resemblances in manner and style.”<sup>2</sup> One of those novelists is his daughter, Mary Shelley, whose familial ties with Godwin and ardent reverence for him would feature prominently in her novels. Godwin’s influence on Mary pervades her works, especially in the figure of the family and in her philosophical ideas. Adopting his ideas, narrative technique, manner and style, however, she was to reappraise them, and, at one point, refute his ideal thoughts. Also

the father-daughter relationship produces no small effect on their ethical and political philosophies as well as their works.

This thesis attempts to examine the works of William Godwin and Mary Shelley, considering the development of the philosophical literary world in their novels. Specifically, it analyzes how Godwin develops the main principles of his political treatise *Political Justice* in his works and how Mary deals with Godwin's philosophy in hers. It also reassesses their passion for and attempts at inquiring into the human nature and discovering the nature of truth and virtue. In conclusion, this study tries to show the scope of the father's and daughter's literary achievements and the need for greater recognition of their value.

The first chapter analyzes the characteristics of Godwin's philosophical ideas in *Political Justice* and their significance in the period of controversy in Britain following the French Revolution. In *Political Justice*, he shows his conviction that the improvement of social conditions as well as of human beings is necessary. Placing faith in human reason, he insists that humankind is "perfectible." Central to the whole philosophical theory in *Political Justice* is the "doctrine of necessity." According to the doctrine, the operations of the human mind and resulting actions are determined by or occur according to the law of necessity. Under the law, the inevitable progress of society could lead to the perpetual improvement of human intellect and morality, that is, human perfectibility. In this chapter, consulting his background, we view how Godwin formulates and develops his philosophical ideas in *Political Justice*.

The second chapter studies Godwin's most popular and controversial novel, *Things As They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). Although *Caleb Williams* is referred to as the offspring of *Political Justice*, there is some philosophical discrepancy between them. In fact, the novel assumes no optimistic views of social reform and gives no promise of human perfectibility. It seems that Godwin's intention gets away from him in his novel. In this chapter, we try to find the source of the

contradiction between Godwin's philosophical intentions and his *Caleb Williams*. This chapter reveals a lack of clarity in Godwin's treatment of the doctrine of necessity in the novel, which implies some flaws in his own theory.

*St Leon; A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799) is examined in the third chapter. Along with *Caleb Williams*, it is also classified as a Jacobin novel. This chapter considers some significant changes in Godwin's philosophical thoughts for a probability of social reform and human perfectibility. After witnessing the course of the French Revolution and the rapid waning of the revolutionary movement in the late 1790s, Godwin had to review his optimistic political theory and attempted to modify some of the ideas voiced in *Political Justice*. This chapter demonstrates that *St Leon* shows his resignation to the difficulty of necessary social improvement and human progress.

Finally, the fourth chapter examines Mary's adoption and examination of Godwin's philosophy in her first novel, *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818). Mary embraced her father's philosophical theory. While adopting his ideas in her novel, however, she attempted to reappraise them. Through her speculation on the further decline of revolutionary ideas and her hard experiences in the real world, Mary gradually formulated some queries about Godwin's theory in *Political Justice*, evolving her own ideas as to the doctrine of necessity. This chapter sees how Mary tries to examine her doubts on Godwin's ideas in *Frankenstein* and explores her philosophy of human nature and life.

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## Chapter I William Godwin and his *Political Justice*

### 1. Godwin as a Liberal Dissenter

William Godwin was born in a dissenting family in the Cambridgeshire town of Wisbech in 1756. He was raised on extreme Calvinistic teachings. The system of Calvinism focuses on God's sovereignty and His eternal decrees. It teaches that humanity is totally depraved due to original sin. It also teaches that God, by His sovereign grace, predestines people into salvation and that Christ died only for those predestined. The doctrine of Calvinism exerted a great influence on the shaping of Godwin's character.<sup>1</sup> Excluded from Oxford and Cambridge because of his religious faith, he was schooled from 1773 to 1778 in one of the leading dissenting academies at Hoxton and then took the position of minister in Hertfordshire. In 1782, however, his readings of the French philosophers Rousseau, Helvetius, and especially the materialistic writings of d'Holbach shook his Calvinistic faith, and afterwards the doctrines of Joseph Priestley led him to veer to Socinianism.<sup>2</sup> He perceived that the doctrine of Calvin, which had taught him that "the majority of mankind were objects of divine condemnation, and that their punishment would be everlasting," was a supernatural despotism based on terror and coercion, and severed himself from it. He resigned from the ministry in 1783, and according to his diary, he became "a complete unbeliever" in 1787.<sup>3</sup>

Although Godwin set out on full-scale literary activity with religious skepticism in the 1780s, his philosophical ideas characterized by a radical resistance to authority and social convention originated in his fidelity to the traditions and presumptions of eighteenth-century Enlightenment Dissent. His past as a Dissenter, when young Godwin had to bear various forms of social restriction and oppression, provoked strong antipathy against the absurdity of every authority. During the late eighteenth century, many liberal Dissenters, including Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, played an active

role in political movements against court politics and the hegemony of privileged classes to constitute a marginal yet creative segment of English society.<sup>4</sup> Those dissenting spirits of the age searching for liberty, truth and justice offered Godwin, then just starting his career in London, a well-prepared environment for exploring the grander philosophical issues and expressing his liberal and rational political ideas in the world of the English literati.

Dissenters were fueled by the outbreak of the French Revolution. Price's famous Old Jewry Sermon, which was delivered after the attack on the Bastille, earnestly urged people to shun every conventional prejudice and was successful in getting several leading thinkers and liberal Dissenters, including Godwin, involved in the lively political discussion. Celebrating the revolution, Price declared:

Be encouraged, all ye friends of freedom, and writers in its defence! The times are auspicious. Your labours have not been in vain. Behold kingdoms, admonished by you, starting from sleep, breaking their fetters, and claiming justice from their oppressors! Behold, the light you have struck out, after setting America free, reflected to France, and there kindled into a blaze that lays despotism in ashes, and warms and illuminates Europe!<sup>5</sup>

Price's passionate sermon, which incurred the wrath of conservatives, inspired liberal thinkers demanding social reform to participate in intense political arguments. As a sincere friend of freedom and a liberal writer, Godwin explained his will to compose a political thesis a few years later in his first edition of *Political Justice*:

Political enquiry had long held a considerable place in the writer's attention. It is now twelve years since he became satisfied that monarchy was a species of government essentially corrupt . . . Long before he projected the present work, his mind had been familiarized to several of the speculations suggested in it respecting justice, gratitude, the rights of man, promises, oaths and the omnipotence of opinion. Of the desirableness of a government in the utmost degree simple he was

not persuaded but in consequence of ideas suggested by the French revolution. To the same event he owes the determination of mind which gave birth to the present work. (*PJ* 69-70)<sup>6</sup>

By the 1790s, Godwin had already written several notable pamphlets and political treatises sketching the main principles of his *Political Justice*.<sup>7</sup> His intellectual talent attracted the attention of London's literary men, and he contributed regularly to official organs. He started going into the Dissenting literary circle and attending meetings of radical political societies, where he met key figures such as John Horn Tooke, John Thelwall and Joseph Gerrald. Apparently Godwin derived much radical stimulus from them. In 1786, he got acquainted with a successful dramatist and miscellaneous writer, Thomas Holcroft, who would become Godwin's literary confidant and a major influence on his political views before Godwin made his own name.<sup>8</sup> Prior to his most successful years as a writer, Godwin wrote that "[my] mind became more and more impregnated with the principles afterwards developed in my *Political Justice*; they were the almost constant topic of conversation between Holcroft and myself . . . he [was] no less a republican and a reformer than myself."<sup>9</sup>

Godwin's direct contact with several intellectuals, especially Holcroft, and his debates with them at meetings encouraged him to embody his political and philosophical ideas and arguments in a novel as well as in a treatise. In the later eighteenth century, writers of liberal social views in Britain, who were influenced by the distinguished writers of the French Enlightenment such as Voltaire and Rousseau, turned to fiction and drama as a way of dramatizing and disseminating their ideas. They developed the conviction that "[a] good novel ought to be subservient to the purposes of truth and philosophy" and published their own fictional reformulation of philosophical ideas.<sup>10</sup> That notion necessarily formed the prominent feature of the so-called English Jacobin novels and revolutionary novels. Also to Godwin and other writers, the novel and drama could be not merely a useful vehicle for their propaganda and enlightenment

but also a more “effectual means of gaining the public ear” and “influenc[ing] the public mind.”<sup>1 1</sup> Therefore the 1790s and the next decade could see the publication of Godwin’s influential novels as well as political pamphlets and collection of essays. Simultaneously, he dedicated a great amount of his time to composing tragic dramas very earnestly. According to his diary, between 1790 and 1807, besides writing novels, Godwin made “his dramatic efforts” to write plays.<sup>1 2</sup> This period in which Godwin could make his ambitious literary attempts proved the most fruitful in his whole career, letting him find the most attentive public hearing both in a positive and negative way.

## 2. As the Author of *Political Justice*

For years I scarcely did anything at home or abroad without the enquiry being uppermost in my mind whether I could be better employed for general benefit; and I hope much of this temper has survived, and will attend me to my grave.<sup>1 3</sup>

Regarded as “a liberal *avant-garde* of philosophers and political writers,” Godwin was one of the most influential and controversial theorists in 1790s England.<sup>1 4</sup> In common with so many other Dissenters and radicals, young Godwin got caught up in the excitement of the revolution in France and felt that they were going to witness the dawn of the new age of the Enlightenment. He notes on the year 1789:

This was the year of the French Revolution. My heart beat high with great swelling sentiments of Liberty . . . I had read with great satisfaction the writings of Rousseau, Helvetius, and others, the most popular authors of France. I observed in them a system more general and simply philosophical than in the majority of English writers on political subjects; and I could not refrain from conceiving sanguine hopes of a revolution of which such writings had been the precursors.<sup>1 5</sup>

Retaining his “sanguine hopes” for the necessary social change and also keeping his calm eyes fixed upon the course of the revolution on the Continent, Godwin began to

compose *Political Justice* in 1791. As Allene Gregory mentions, it could be said that “he could not have written it in any other year.”<sup>16</sup> He entertained the vision of composing the treatise which, “by its inherent energy and weight, should overbear and annihilate all opposition, and place the principles of politics on an immoveable basis.”<sup>17</sup>

Appearing in February 1793, *Political Justice* was read widely and received enthusiastically by intellectuals of the time, attaining a large sale of copies in quarto and octavo. As a firm pillar of the ideas of justice, liberty, humanitarianism and egalitarianism, it could inspire contemporaries with an earnest revolutionary spirit and show them the theoretical justification of the movement for social change and parliamentary reform in England. Coleridge, one of the many youths on whom the book had a powerful impact, immediately wrote his sonnet to celebrate ‘Author of ‘Political Justice’:

Nor will I not thy holy guidance bless,  
And hymn thee, GODWIN! with an ardent lay;  
For that thy voice, in Passion’s stormy day,  
When wild I roam’d the bleak Heath of Distress,  
Bade the bright form of Justice meet my way—  
And told me that her name was HAPPINESS.<sup>18</sup>

Regardless of its anarchistic “wild theories,” as Wordsworth put it in *Prelude* (XI, 189), which inveigh against all the ever-accepted dogmas and traditional institutions of contemporary civilization, from political authority to social contract, *Political Justice* is written in a calm, highly contemplative tone and demonstrates the omnipotence of reason. Amid the political confusion and growing public agitation, Godwin’s systematized reflective treatise was given a highly marked place as an anchorage of the hopes of the advocates for social reform for the short time of the last decade of the

eighteenth century. In his *Spirit of the Age*, William Hazlitt states that “No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as the celebrated *Enquiry concerning Political Justice* . . . Truth, moral truth, it was supposed, had here taken up its abode; and these were the oracles of thought.”<sup>19</sup>

While fascinating people who were disenchanted with the political status quo, the abstract formulas for universal happiness which *Political Justice* presented received several penetrating criticisms, and with the publication of Thomas Malthus’s theory of population, these reached critical proportions.<sup>20</sup> The enthusiastic acceptance of Godwin’s new philosophy fizzled out all too suddenly because of a conservative backlash. By the turn of the century his ideas had been attacked as the most notorious and absurd of the contemporary solutions for societal problems. Some critics have commented on the general disillusionment with his abstract theories. Leslie Stephen says of Godwin’s ideas that they “were but gorgeous bubbles, destined to speedily collapse when brought into contact with the hard facts of the actual world.” Gregory also states that “*Political Justice* is an eminently reasonable book; much more reasonable than life ever is. Moreover, it is written in a style that carries conviction. It is only when one deserts the methods of logic for those of common sense that its absurdity appears.”<sup>21</sup> These comments give one reason for the oblivion into which *Political Justice* has sunk. Yet still it is an undeniable fact that Godwin’s abstract theories moved his generation.

### 3. “Wild Theories” in *Political Justice*

The words “Political Justice,” Godwin says, mean “the adoption of any principle of morality and truth into the practice of a community.” (1793 *PJ* 1:19)<sup>22</sup> The first emphasis in *Political Justice* is placed on specifying the corruptions and injustices of all systems of the government and analyzing their harmful effects on the inevitable rational development of human morality and happiness. Showing the roots of abuses and

injustice in society, Godwin insists that every governmental institution is “an evil” and “an usurpation upon the private judgement and individual conscience of mankind.” (*PJ* 408) In his theory, the “injustice and violence of men in a state of society produced the demand for government,” and government, “as it was forced upon mankind by their vices, so has it commonly been the creature of their ignorance and mistake.” (75-6) In other words, “government [is] indebted for its existence to the errors and perverseness of a few” and “it can no otherwise be perpetuated than by the infantine and uninstructed confidence of the many.” (248) Government was intended to suppress injustice, but it expanded far beyond its vaunted original purpose, giving rise to new occasions and temptations for the commission of injustice and moral coercion; people were inclined to ignore the utilitarian basis for government and grant it autonomy.

Although Godwin seems to be extreme in his anarchistic view, in which government is regarded as a great threat to the improvement of social conditions and to the happiness of a human being, he admits that government could have a positive value in a certain limited way.<sup>2 3</sup> While having a useful side if limited sufficiently, however, government always involves a considerable degree of evil, and by its nature it has a great tendency to expand and to increase its power of embodying and perpetuating injustice. Godwin thinks that since government arises from ignorance and mistakes of human beings, in proportion as any person would be improved in reasoning, private judgement and morality and be “wise enough to govern himself, without the intervention of any compulsory restraint,” government should be constantly diminished. Government, even in its best state, is an evil. Although people are “obliged to admit it as a necessary evil for the present,” it behooves them to have as little of it as the general peace of human society will permit. (*PJ* 253, 408)

Among the fundamental thoughts treated in *Political Justice*, one of the most controversial is the idea of human perfectibility. According to Godwin, human nature has no original propensity to evil. All the vices and moral weakness of human beings

are not invincible because they are attributed to the evils of political institutions. Human beings are naturally benevolent and rational, therefore, “perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement.” (*PJ* 140) Importantly, the idea of human perfectibility is founded on the assumption that a human being is the offspring of the external environment. That means the virtue and vice of a person should be traced to his external circumstances. Since the moral qualities of a human being are the product of his external environment, if sound reasoning and truth are adequately communicated to him, and if he is once disengaged from the evils which could arise from the present system of civilized society, he will be on the road toward perpetual improvement not only in his intellect but in moral character. There is no “original bias in the mind that is inaccessible to human skill,” and therefore, no defect in moral character is irrevocably entailed upon a human being. (116) Simultaneously, Godwin emphasizes that all the opinions, actions and dispositions of human beings are not “the offspring of any original bias that they bring into the world in favour of one sentiment or character rather than another” but “flow entirely from the operation of circumstances and events acting upon a faculty of receiving sensible impressions.” (98)

While dealing with the idea of human perfectibility, Godwin consistently shows his conviction that the improvement of social conditions as well as of human beings is necessary. His conviction is based on the doctrine of necessity, which is central to the whole philosophical theory in *Political Justice* and which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter. According to the doctrine, like objects and events in the material world, the operations of human mind are controlled by the law of necessity. All the thoughts and actions of human beings are determined according to the same necessity. Godwin states:

In the life of every human being there is a chain of events, generated in the lapse of ages which preceded his birth, and going on in regular procession through the whole period of his existence, in consequence of which it was impossible for him



to act in any instance otherwise than he has acted. (*PJ* 351)

In his optimistic view, under the law of necessity, if society would be more improved, it could necessarily lead to the improvement of human intellect and morality, which would encourage the further progress of society. The chain of improvement and progress could have a human being make a step toward perfectibility.

To Godwin, reason is a basic human quality susceptible of unlimited improvement, and the key to perfectibility. F. E. L. Priestley accurately points out: “reason not only judges the rightness of an action or the desirability of an end, but irresistibly urges toward that action or towards the pursuit of that end: it is not merely cognitive, but has an appetitive aspect.”<sup>2 4</sup> It could give us the power to “go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part.” (*PJ* 381) The emancipation of individual from political institutions and prejudices is due to the awakening of his reason.

Since reason cannot be improved without knowledge, however, education is the second underlying theme after the gradual diminishment of government in Godwin’s plan for the attainment of a state of perpetual improvement. When a person’s understanding is enlightened and his judgement matured by proper education, he can learn to put himself in the place of an impartial spectator in every situation. He can also learn to act according to the principle of justice which “proposes to itself the production of the greatest sum of pleasure or happiness.” (*PJ* 76) Hence he should accept Godwin’s more radical maxim: utility and general good should precede all private affections including gratitude, family feeling, and filial affection.

[T]hat an individual, however great may be his imaginary elevation, should be obliged to yield his personal pretensions to the sense of the community at least bears the appearance of a practical confirmation of the great principle that all private considerations must yield to the general good. (*PJ* 235)

Godwin argues that unadulterated justice obliges the individual of reason to regard

the increase of the general benefit as taking precedence over private happiness, calling upon him to consider maturely in what manner he could employ his talents, understanding, strength, time and property for the production of the greatest quantity of general good. Here we could assume the term justice as “a general appellation for all moral duty.” (*PJ* 168) Godwin’s illustration of the fire fable in the chapter of justice was a bit strong, and the logic shocked some of his contemporaries.<sup>2 5</sup> According to Godwin, all private affections are bad not in their own natures but in the sense that they should imply partiality and predilection and hence injustice, and they could become obstacles to universal benevolence. When the principle of pure justice requires a person to consider the best interests of the greatest number, he should have his reason act as an agent for genuine altruism and tear himself away from all private affections and predilections.

As one of the adherents of Godwin’s radical idea of justice, Henry Crabb Robinson notes: “No book ever made me feel more generously. I never before felt so strongly . . . the duty of not living to one’s self and that of having for one’s sole object the welfare of the community.”<sup>2 6</sup> Godwin strongly believed that a human being could achieve justice, since, “being possessed of higher faculties” than a beast, he is “capable of a more refined and genuine happiness.” (*PJ* 169) Once the person is in possession of disinterested benevolence, which is the immediate result of reason, he chooses what is actually for the general good and acts according to “the strict and universal decisions of justice.” (171-2) At this point, he could be on the high road to perfectibility and thus be the greatest contributor to the improvement of society. The day will come when each person, doing what seems to be right and satisfactory in his own impartial eyes, would also be doing what is actually best for the community.

Godwin’s optimistic ideas are derived from his unwavering conviction that a person is fundamentally a rational being with benevolent impulses. His trust in natural human goodness creates the possibility for the perpetual improvement of human

morality as well as the possibility for the “true euthanasia of government,” that is, the gradual abolition of all existing governmental institutions. (*PJ* 248) Godwin writes with confidence that “All that we observe that is best and most excellent in the intellectual world, is man.”<sup>27</sup> Considering Godwin’s conviction to be “too much ambition—‘by that sin fell the angels,’” Hazlitt stated that Godwin “conceived too nobly of his fellows” and “raised the standard of morality above the reach of humanity, and by directing virtue to the most airy and romantic heights, made her path dangerous, solitary, and impracticable.”<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, against the traditional views, D. H. Monro insists that Godwin’s doctrine of “natural goodness” is not “a piece of crass optimism, but an expression of his belief that every evil and cruelty are caused by lack of insight.”<sup>29</sup> Therefore, as a human being widens the scope of his knowledge and experience and improves his reasoning ability and understanding, his natural goodness inevitably becomes more and more active.

Godwin concludes that human being is “formed to glow with benevolence, to expatiate in the fields of knowledge, to thrill with disinterested transport, to enlarge [his] thoughts, so as to take in the wonders of the material universe, and the principles that bound and ascertain the general happiness.” (*PJ* 249-50) To reviewers, *Political Justice* was an ambitious book in which Godwin, “the first whole-length broacher of the doctrines of Utility,” “took the whole duty of man—all other passions, affections, rules, weaknesses, oaths, gratitude, promises, friendship, natural piety, patriotism—infused them in the glowing caldron of universal benevolence, and ground them into powder under the unsparing weight of the conviction of the individual understanding.”<sup>30</sup>

In order to comprehend Godwin’s philosophy critically, it is essential to understand his attitude about the constant alterations of his ideas. As has been seen, to Godwin, an intellectual person is susceptible of perpetual improvement in morality and intelligence. Therefore, it is proper for him to refine and modify his ideas or theories continually as his understanding is cultivated and improved. As would be argued in the study of his

novels, some of the most controversial radical opinions of Godwin's philosophy in *Political Justice*, particularly as to the truths of all private considerations such as domestic affections and mutual sympathy, were to receive important modifications a few years later. However bitterly he might be ridiculed for the constant alterations of his theories, Godwin never feared to modify his ideas nor did he apologize. When a "flippant young man" asked Godwin what were his fixed opinions, he replied "I have none; I left off my fixed opinions with my youth."<sup>3 1</sup> Access to intellectual and moral development might marry well with his philosophy of human perfectibility. We could see the everlasting alterations of his ideas are projected upon not only his political writings but his arresting fictional forms.

#### 4. Godwin's Contemporaries and his Circle

Before political controversies unfolded against the background of the French Revolution, political issues had been represented in the radical or conservative visions of contemporary novels. In those novels, the writer's allegiance to his political belief played a significant role. Such literary tide was much accelerated after the publication of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) which defended the existing aristocratic principles emotively and attempted to exculpate the decadent culture of the ancien régime.<sup>3 2</sup> The most controversial novels of the 1790s, known as English Jacobin novels or Anti-Jacobin novels, were written by those who were deeply inspired by the French Revolution and political protest in Britain and also stimulated by the political debate for which Burke's *Reflections* provided the impetus.

As R. W. Harris explains, England society saw political social confusion in the period from 1780 on:

. . . it was not simply that England came under the influence of foreign revolutionary ideas, but that with the rapid growth of population, urbanization, trade dislocations and periodic famines, social misery was such as to breed

discontent and revolt, while among the governing classes there was a mixture of fear, misgivings and social conscience.<sup>3 3</sup>

These concerns about political and social issues found their way into the novels of the time. There are some novels whose theories and literary forms could be considered early exemplifications of liberal attitudes of the late eighteenth century. Without regard to some crucial differences in ideas as to revamping the society, the novels of Henry Brook, Thomas Day, Fanny Burney, John Moore and Robert Bage influenced those of the revolutionary novelists.<sup>3 4</sup> Pre-revolutionary novels were characterized by a belief in the corruption of an individual by artificial and arbitrary social codes and institutions, a belief in the power of education by which someone can be taught to be a totally worthwhile and productive member of society, and a belief in human capacity for philanthropy and universal benevolence which could make class boundaries meaningless. Their standard characteristics and literary forms were to develop and refine in a whole stream of fictional works written by the revolutionary novelists.

Along with Godwin, some of the major revolutionary novelists include Thomas Holcroft, Elizabeth Inchbald, Mary Wollstonecraft and the earliest Robert Bage.<sup>3 5</sup> Inspired by revolution abroad and the growing expectation for the coming social reform in Britain, they “gave a much sharper edge to the social criticism usually found in Enlightenment and Sentimental fiction.”<sup>3 6</sup> With their respective knives, they repeatedly dissected the morally decadent culture of the privileged classes as well as the political corruption and abuses of the legal and penal systems. Mona Scheuermann states:

Bage satirizes, Inchbald criticizes, Holcroft laments, and Godwin denounces the injustices of society. The degree of anger changes, the tone of outrage is more or less shrill, but the underlying assumption is the same: men must note social evils and must attempt to redress them.<sup>3 7</sup>

Among Godwin’s circle, Holcroft could be seen as “an intellectual sparring partner

to Godwin.”<sup>38</sup> The influence of their friendship of mutual stimulation on the development of Godwin’s thought cannot be overestimated. They talked not only about several political issues such as the decadence of the legislative system and means of social reform but about cultural subjects including the theatre, dramas and novels. In 1792, Holcroft published one of his most highly-regarded novels, *Anna St. Ives*. His vision concerning the possibility of a perfect society was revolutionary enough to please his contemporary radicals and to irritate loyalists. Scheuermann indicates that *Anna St. Ives*, being a “how to book” on making good society, is “very much the sort of novel the author of *Political Justice* might have written had he put his energy into a fictional exercise (such as Holcroft’s) which had an almost entirely social thrust.”<sup>39</sup> A year later, Godwin put the same ideas into *Political Justice*.

*Anna St. Ives*, “arguably the first Jacobin novel,” is regarded as a significant work to analyze the principles of *Political Justice*.<sup>40</sup> The philosophical basis of the novel could be seen in the belief in infinite human improvement and unlimited progress of society. Indeed, the novel is full of the substantial rhetoric which could find its voice in *Political Justice*. Education is at the center of the novel because it is only through education that human moral and intellectual potential could be developed. The novel demonstrates how education could bring out reason which lies dormant in the nature of a human being and how improved understanding and judgement could lead him to become a member of society able “to contribute to the great the universal cause; the progress of truth, the extirpation of error, and the general perfection of mind.” (*Anna* 383) It also shows how reason, benevolence and truth could triumph over evils and errors. Following the guiding principles of universal benevolence, Anna St. Ives and Frank Henley, the heroine and hero in the novel, attempt to guide, enlighten and lead other people onward to the pursuit of true happiness. Believing in human perfectibility, they teach people that public good invariably comes before private interest. Through the use of rational persuasion, Anna reasons with them that it ought to be “the business of

your whole life . . . to promote among mankind that spirit of universal benevolence which shall render them all equals, all brothers, all stripped of their artificial and false wants, all participating the labour requisite to produce the necessaries of life, and all combining in one universal effort of mind, for the progress of knowledge, the destruction of error, and the spreading of eternal truth.” (172) In the utopian world of *Anna St. Ives*, the protagonists’ conviction that “[the] great end of life is to benefit community” does triumph over the opposition. (379)<sup>4 1</sup> Within “the Holcroft-Godwin guidelines of virtually universal benevolence,” people could necessarily be enlightened to achieve the universal cause.<sup>4 2</sup>

All the guidelines for the social and moral reform in Holcroft’s novel are the same as those outlined in *Political Justice*. *Anna St. Ives* is not only the first Godwinian novel but a translation of the principal ideas of *Political Justice* in a strict sense. Here Scheuermann’s suggestion gives a crucial insight for the following study of Godwin’s novels and the philosophical and political ideas in them: *Anna St. Ives* is “a more Godwinian novel in terms of the philosophy of *Political Justice* than any Godwin himself ever wrote.”<sup>4 3</sup> This suggestion seems to imply that there is some philosophical discrepancy between Godwin’s novels and his treatise. Among Godwin’s works, two novels which are classified as “Jacobin” are *Things As They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St Leon; A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799). And the one referred to as a true offspring of *Political Justice* is *Caleb Williams*, which was published immediately after the great success of the treatise. Gary Kelly points out that *Caleb Williams*, as well as *Anna St. Ives*, should be read as “a fictive rendering of the arguments of *Political Justice*.”<sup>4 4</sup> In an undated autobiographical note for 1793, Godwin himself wrote that:

The ‘Enquiry concerning Political Justice’ was published in February. In this year also I wrote the principal part of the novel of ‘Caleb Williams,’ which may, perhaps, be considered as affording no inadequate image of the fervour of my

spirit; it was the offspring of that temper of mind in which the composition of my 'Political Justice' left me.<sup>4 5</sup>

Although Godwin made different comments on *Caleb Williams* at different stages as a novelist, the note clearly states that he thought that the novel was written by the very spirit of *Political Justice* and the spirit of the time.

Judging from Godwin's account, *Caleb Williams* should be a sort of how to book on enlightening people and on reforming society just like *Anna St. Ives*. It should give the readers no leave to doubt that "we live in an age of light." (*Anna* 17) "Things as they are" Godwin described in the novel, however, assumed no optimistic views of society. In fact, the novel gives no promise of universal benevolence or the final triumph of reason and truth over evils. Regardless of his account, the novel implies that Godwin's intention gets away from him. So much is corrupt in the political institutions of Caleb's world that even the inevitable process of revolt only results in accelerating the degradations of the social structure. Moreover, the same applies to the world of *St Leon*, which was published in 1799. Ironically, *Caleb Williams* illustrates that the "age of light" was remote from "things as they are" in Godwin's time and that it was deemed to be "highly improbable."<sup>4 6</sup> Simultaneously, it is impossible for the readers to find out the light of reason in "things as they were" in the medieval period in *St Leon*.

Finding the source from which the contradiction between Godwin's philosophical intentions and his most important novels, *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon*, comes could go a long way towards achieving a better understanding of those novels as well as his other works. Additionally, *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* depict irresistible unreasonableness and twists in human nature, which seem to be fully assimilated into the warped structure of society and to assume a much more grotesque monstrosity than the evils of society. That makes it difficult to consider *Caleb Williams* as a true offspring of the principles of *Political Justice*. Similarly, it is difficult to regard *St Leon* as a fictive rendering of Godwin's optimistic philosophy. The invigorating longing for universal benevolence



and human perfectibility sounds “highly improbable” in both novels. As a result, that gives a unique value to the narratives among Jacobin and revolutionary novels of the late eighteenth century. From those points of view, *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* could be reevaluated and then the significant shifts in Godwin’s philosophical ideas in the narratives examined.

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## Chapter II Godwin's Philosophical Ideas in *Caleb Williams*

[The] history of political society sufficiently shows that man is of all other beings the most formidable enemy to man. (*PJ* 83)

### 1. *Caleb Williams* as the Offspring of *Political Justice*

In the first edition of *Political Justice*, Godwin argues that “literature” is one of “three principal causes by which the human mind is advanced towards a state of perfection,” “education” and “political justice” being the others. Regardless of the several disadvantages, literature could be a powerful vehicle of the diffusion of knowledge and truth “through the medium of discussion.” (1793 *PJ* 1: 19)<sup>1</sup> Literature would contribute to disengage the minds of human beings from every prepossession, and therefore, it also could be a powerful force for the amelioration of society. *Political Justice* served to diffuse Godwin's philosophical speculation, and it attached great importance to the enlightenment of the intellectuals of England. As Godwin admitted, *Political Justice* “appeared in a form too expensive for general acquisition” in 1793.<sup>2</sup> According to Godwin, he purposely published his work at such a high price because he had no intention of appealing to “the passions of the multitude.” He only wanted it to be studied “by the enlightened and sober-minded” who were never apt to get involved in “abrupt innovations” which he greatly deprecated.<sup>3</sup> Less than a year later, however, Godwin found it his duty to get knowledge and truth gradually communicated to “the multitude.” Hence, he planned to compose a novel, not a treatise, which could be a vehicle for conveying the tenets of *Political Justice* to “persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach.” (*CW* 1794 Preface)<sup>4</sup>

*Things As They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* was published in 1794. Kegan Paul calls it “the first of Godwin's novels which was destined to survive” as one of the masterpieces of English literature.<sup>5</sup> According to the 1794 Preface to *Caleb*

*Williams*, the novel is “a study and delineation of things passing in the moral world,” chronicling the details of things as they are in English society. (CW 1794 Preface)<sup>6</sup> It records the enormous abuses of authority, intolerable oppressions, and dreadful ignorance and vice, all which were encouraged by government machinery. Godwin thinks that the history of political society is little else than a history of the various schemes that a human being has “formed to destroy and plague his kind.” (PJ 83) The 1794 Preface makes it clear that the narrative is intended to serve as a “vehicle” for presenting a “truth [that] the spirit and character of the government intrudes itself into every rank of society” and a “general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism, by which man becomes the destroyer of man.” (CW 1794 Preface) It suggests that the novel should convey the anarchistic elements and didactic purposes to be expected from the author of *Political Justice*.

If the author shall have taught *a valuable lesson*, without subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort ought to be characterised, he will have reason to congratulate himself upon the vehicle he has chosen. (CW 1794 Preface; emphasis added)

As the preface suggests, the narrative attempts to dissect “things as they are” in England of Godwin’s age in the light of his political philosophy, and it should try to illustrate the inevitable reformation of society as well as the probability of the perpetual improvement of human beings. The phrase “things as they are” had significant meaning in the period of political upheaval of the later eighteenth century England. When confusion and ambiguity gripped the hearts of the public, the phrase was used to remind people of their social obligations. William St Clair states that Godwin uses the phrase in the title to firmly link his novel to “the tradition of protest.”<sup>7</sup> Pamela Clemit suggests that Godwin’s vision of the phrase is principally “indebted to Dissenting notions of impartial judgement.”<sup>8</sup> In the famous sermon against which Burke was prompted to write his *Reflections*, the Reverent Price urged the public to “study to think of all things

as they are, and not suffer any partial affections to bind his understanding.”<sup>9</sup> Siding with Price’s notion, in *Political Justice* Godwin also encourages “the wise and virtuous man” to “see things precisely as they are, and judge of the actual constitution of his country with the same impartiality as if he had simply read of it in the remotest page of history.” (1793 *PJ* 1: 209)

Lack of impartiality is one of the worst enemies of the friends of reason and liberty who aim either at the correction of old errors or at the counteracting of new encroachments by the government. It was not until they could view “things as they are” with an impartial eye and grasp the workings of the social machinery and their influence on people that the first vital step towards the social reform would be made. The original title of *Caleb Williams* offers Godwin’s didactic Dissenting intention and his hint of the way in which it ought to be read.<sup>10</sup> As Clemit points out, it also reflects Godwin’s esteem for Thomas Paine and his authorial stance and independent mind in *Rights of Man* (1791).<sup>11</sup> In his “open and disinterested language,” Paine suggests that it is vital to “view things as they are, without regard to place or person,” in pursuing universal benevolence and happiness. Prior to his writing of *Political Justice*, Godwin was clearly inspired by Paine’s emphasis on “humanity and impartial reflection” and his assaults on the irrationality of “aristocratical law.”<sup>12</sup>

The original title leads the readers to regard the novel as a novelized *Political Justice*, in other words, a “*Tendenz-roman* very much in the spirit of its radical author and its revolutionary times.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Godwin’s account in the 1794 Preface helps them to suppose that the narrative is a certain contribution to the French Revolution debate which has raged on in England. Godwin explains:

The following narrative is intended to answer a purpose more general and important than immediately appears upon the face of it . . . While one party pleads for reformation and change, the other extols in the warmest terms the existing constitution of society. It seemed as if something would be gained for the decision

of this question, if that constitution were faithfully developed in its practical effects.

(CW 1794 Preface)

Paine and Wollstonecraft were important two of the representatives of “one party,” Burke being a delegate of “the other.” The controversy as to the great revolution and the bloody collapse of the French monarchy was most intensified between 1791 and 1793, and the pamphlet debate between radicals and loyalists continued to render a significant service to the ongoing intellectual political debate till even 1796.<sup>14</sup> Given that context, the outspoken preface is so convincing and timely that it could be considered as an unmistakable indication of Godwin’s intention of participating in the intellectual debate.

On the other hand, as several critics have pointed out, the boldness of its imaginative design and romance plot make the narrative far more than a straightforward translation of the tenets set out in *Political Justice*. The momentum of the imaginative power as well as intense human passions that Godwin powerfully delineates demonstrate that *Caleb Williams* is not just an active commitment to the French Revolution debate nor a typical political *Tendenz-roman* of revolutionary times. There is Godwin’s retrospective account of *Caleb Williams* thirty-eight years later, which some critics are willing to consider as a more accurate account than the 1794 and 1795 Prefaces.<sup>15</sup> In this account, Godwin presents *Caleb Williams* in quite a different light than he did in the prefaces. In “a high state of excitement,” he admits that, he attempted to “write a tale, that shall constitute an epoch in the mind of the reader, that no one, after he has read it, shall ever be exactly the same man that he was before.” While writing the “series of adventures of flight and pursuit,” Godwin was “engaged in exploring the entrails of mind and motive, and in tracing the various rencontres and clashes that may occur between man and man in the diversified scene of human life.” (CW Appendix II)

While the two earlier prefaces emphasize the political reflections in the narrative, Godwin’s later account rather highlights the manly heroic aspect of the adventure as well as the Romantic element of delineating the events intertwined in the recesses of

human minds with the powerful energy of imagination. The account might also bring a new meaning of the replacement of the original main title “Things As They Are” by the subtitle “The Adventures of Caleb Williams” and the subsequent deletion of the former and the final survival of the latter. Besides the aim of averting anti-Jacobin hostility toward the novel, there might be more significant intention in the alteration of the title.

The 1794 Preface and Godwin’s later account seem to represent the essence of *Caleb Williams* in different ways. That shows the novel can be susceptible of wide interpretations. This chapter analyzes Godwin’s intentional adoption of the tenets of *Political Justice* and his ambivalent treatment of them that make the narrative elusive and woefully equivocal. How his political thoughts and especially his doctrine of necessity are dealt with in the novel will be studied here to figure out what the true “valuable lesson” the narrative conveys is. And the chapter also tries to examine the perceptible gap between Godwin’s authorial stance as a political philosopher and a novelist, viewing the potential Romantic possibilities in *Caleb Williams*, in particular in his delineation of “the private and internal operations of the mind” of his protagonists. (CW Appendix II)

## 2. An Anarchical View of “Things As They Are”

Regarded as the practical accompaniment to the spirits of *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams* offers a chronicle of institutional decay in English society from the seventeenth century on. When consulting the 1795 Preface in which Godwin refers to censorship by the government of that time, the narrative could also be considered as a chronicle of a reign of “Terror” by anti-Jacobinism. It is a first-person narrative in which the hero Caleb Williams, as “his own historian,” exposes the injustices of the aristocratic culture and hegemony supported by a corrupt legislature and an amoral penal regime. (CW Appendix II) Caleb’s history is elaborately constructed to delineate a terrible political society where “man is of all other beings the most formidable enemy to

man.” Godwin placed the following aphorism on the title page of the first edition:

Amidst the woods the leopard knows his kind;

The tyger preys not on the tyger brood;

Man only is the common foe of man.

It seems that the readers could effortlessly consider this aphorism in relation to the revolutionary mind and Jacobinism, although it was expunged from the second edition.<sup>16</sup>

Impelled by an “unconquerable spirit of curiosity,” like Bluebeard’s young wife, Caleb Williams, an innocent young secretary, opens his master Squire Ferdinand Falkland’s forbidden “trunk” (“chest,” in the first edition).<sup>17</sup> In spite of repeated warnings, Caleb persists in his attempts to discover what so distresses Falkland and what makes “the melancholy” that has taken hold of his mind “invincible.” (CW 103) He successfully unmasks his past hidden murder. As a result of his imprudent act, however, Caleb is thrown into “a theatre of calamity.” (3) He is falsely accused of an atrocious robbery and reduced to a life of flight, in which he is perpetually harassed by the pitiless social despotism and ostracized from all human friendliness. Caleb gradually grasps “the contents of the fatal trunk” from which all his misfortunes originate. (315) They are not merely the evidence of his master’s murder. To Caleb they are the great enemies of mankind that universally hunt their prey in human society: the tyranny of political and social institutions; the cruel privilege of the aristocratic code and the pettifogging legal system.

The narrative is consistent in moral indignation at and anarchical criticism of “things as they are.” Moral depravation and social miseries are attributed to the government by which the inhuman legal system is invented and vindicated. Caleb’s history, which could be read not as “the relation of a looker-on” but as the “compact of words hot from the burnt and branded heart of the miserable sufferer,” successfully draws the readers into his experiences of awful persecution and unjust punishment.<sup>18</sup>



His emotional biting criticism of “things as they are” is so acute and poignant that it is more radical and influential than the logical arguments in *Political Justice*. The anonymous author of the critical pamphlet at that time comments on Godwin’s view of the contemporary modes of despotism of society in a rather ironic tone: “[Godwin] gets up, goes abroad into “the throng miscalled society,” sees only its errors and its vices, its knaves and its dupes; and writes as if little or nothing else was in existence.”<sup>19</sup>

The narrative is in three volumes: the history of Falkland in the first volume, Caleb’s persistent watch upon Falkland and the intellectual and psychological combat between them in the second volume, and their flight and pursuit and final confrontation in court in the third volume and postscript. The long-lasting life of flight as an innocent fugitive gives Caleb ample occasion to observe the modes of political and domestic despotism, especially the tyranny of institutional law, allowing him to reflect upon the inevitable effect of political authority on people. It highlights Godwin’s anarchical notions: The spirit and character of political institutions intrude themselves into every rank of society to poison the minds of people before they can resist, rendering them incapable of the exercise of reason and judgement. In consequence of that, human beings are all fated to be more or less oppressors, sufferers, honest knaves, or very innocent dupes.

The stories of people of humble station inserted into Caleb’s history also call attention to Godwin’s view as to the despotic force of law. Each of the stories serves as a propaganda weapon, demonstrating that legislation is “grossly the favourer of the rich against the poor” as is evident in the character of the game-laws, the land-tax laws and the criminal laws. (*PJ* 93)<sup>20</sup> The spirit of legislation not only endorses every attempt “to throw the burthen from the rich upon the poor” but encourages the wealthier part of community “to associate for the execution of the most partial and oppressive positive laws.” And “the administration of law is not less iniquitous than the spirit in which it is framed.” (94) Observing “things as they are,” Caleb acquires the same notion:

Wealth and despotism easily know how to engage those laws as the coadjutors of their oppression which were perhaps at first intended [witless and miserable precaution!] for the safeguards of the poor. (CW 72)

The tragedy of the tenant farmer Hawkins and his son, Leonard, proves perfectly that legislation always serves as protector of “the insolence and usurpation of the rich.” (PJ 91) Squire Barnabas Tyrrel wants Leonard to enter into his service, but Hawkins thinks of the future welfare of his son and refuses to make a gentleman’s servant of him. Consequently, the honest parent and child are oppressed by all types of tyranny and despotism, in particular those of the legal system, to their ruin. Here Godwin exhaustively depicts how injustices are fostered by aristocratic privileges and public blindness. Boorish Tyrrel manipulates the law to dominate and torment his tenants, leaving “no means unemployed that could either harass or injure the object of his persecution.” (CW 72) After being unjustly persecuted in every cruel way by Tyrrel, Hawkins and Leonard are charged with his murder and executed on flimsy circumstantial evidence.

Godwin’s anarchical view has its echo in the distinctive voice of Hawkins, who is considered as “a truly Godwinian figure”<sup>21</sup>: “[the] law was better adapted for a weapon of tyranny in the hands of the rich, than for a shield to protect the humbler part of the community against their usurpations.”(CW 73) The awful story of Hawkins and his son, who are hanged for a murder that they did not commit, illustrates the epitome of the corruption of political institution. Here the most wretched consequence is still that despotism intrudes itself all over the country so deeply and cunningly that people can neither notice all the injustices done under their very noses nor scent out the bloody hands of despotism waiting for a chance to deprive them instantly of their human rights. H. N. Brailsford refers to the society described in *Caleb Williams* as “a vast sounding-board which echoes the first whispers of their private folly, until it swells into a deafening chorus of cruelty and wrong.”<sup>22</sup> Under such circumstances, those

over-governed people of dulled judgement and ingrained cowardice would “not rise up as one man, and shake off chains so ignominious and misery so insupportable.” (156)

### 3. Terror: the Order of the Day

To proclaim a condemnation of “things as they are” Godwin also turns his efforts to the depiction of the foul conditions of prison-houses and dungeons as well as the courts of justice that “with all the superciliousness and precipitation” wrongly convict innocent people. (CW 183) Brailsford calls the narrative “a forensic novel” which sets out to frame an indictment of “a crazy system of coercion.”<sup>23</sup> The numerous scenes of trials and prisons were especially significant to Godwin, for England had been facing a major crisis of free speech in the very months in which he was writing *Caleb Williams*.<sup>24</sup> To cope with the heightening radical revolutionary climate, the reactionary government decided to curb radical thoughts and open-air meetings. As Godwin made mention of that in the 1795 Preface to *Caleb Williams*, the government started to threaten publishers and radical thinkers. The crisis of the concept of free speech is equivalent to the predicament of the enlightened age. It posed a serious menace to Godwin, who conceived it to be his duty to disseminate truths about “things as they are” as an agent of gradual social reform. Godwin analyzes the situation of those days in *Political Justice*:

An attempt to scrutinize men’s thoughts, and punish their opinions, is of all kinds of despotism the most odious; yet this attempt is peculiarly characteristic of a period of revolution. (PJ 270)

Godwin’s apprehension about the odious “attempt” is mirrored in the difficulties that face Caleb in a life of secrecy. In order to earn for himself the means of existence, Caleb determines to become a literary person, for he believes that he has a natural bent for writing. After a while he can obtain a footing in the publishing world, however, he is obliged to throw down his pen because of the violence of his pursuit by the blood

hunting authorities. Among those hunters is Gines, a ruthless spy of Falkland and a clever retainer to the administration of the laws. “[S]carcely less formidable and tremendous” than Falkland, Gines “consecrate[s] every faculty of his mind to the unkenneling” of his game from “[its] hiding place.” (CW 261) Caleb’s awkward situation reflects the state of anxiety in which radical writers including Godwin were silenced and brought to bay by sedition proceedings. Caleb observes the inhumane nature of the legal system but he cannot bring it to light with his pen. On the other hand, the government’s censorship system can be seen in Gines’ “mechanical occupation of a blood hunter.” (261) His acuteness is eminent in the way of information gathering and handling, and his skill is distinguished in misleading the honest but ignorant public.

In the increased efforts by the government to crackdown on radical meetings and conventions, the Suspension of the long-established right of Habeas Corpus Act was passed on 7 May 1794. That actually enabled the government to begin mass arrests of suspected traitors. Joseph Gerrald, a member of the London Corresponding Society (LCS) and a friend for whom Godwin felt admiration and affection, had already been arrested and charged with sedition. To Godwin, Gerrald was one of the martyrs to “the cause of reason and public justice.” His high spirit and devotion to “pure philanthropy and benevolence” excited the deepest respect in Godwin, acting as a noble stimulus to the composition of *Political Justice*.<sup>25</sup> Also Godwin saw the arrests of several radicals in the LCS. Among them were Thomas Hardy, John Horn Tooke and John Thelwall, and even his close friend Thomas Holcroft was tried for high treason.<sup>26</sup> In government eyes, those intellectual radicals were a menace to established order and fanatical revolutionary agitators. They were undoubtedly a high potential danger to all written laws and constitutions in England. In Godwin’s eyes, on the other hand, the arrests and trials represented “the most odious” kind of “despotism” which had to be extirpated. His note sums up well the then tense situation:

The year 1794 was memorable for the trial of twelve persons, under one indictment

upon a charge of high treason. Some of these persons were my particular friends . . . . This trial is certainly one of the most memorable epochs in the history of English liberty. The accusation, combined with the evidence adduced to support it, is not to be exceeded in vagueness and incoherence by anything in the annals of tyranny. It was an attempt to take away the lives of men by a constructive treason, and out of many facts, no one of which was capital, to compose a capital crime.<sup>27</sup>

The provocative 1794 Preface is dated 12 May, the very day of the arrest of Thomas Hardy. The terrors of the day and the tyrannical atmosphere in England are clearly reflected in the trial scenes and the melancholy state of prisoners in *Caleb Williams*. The “sense of danger” and “the apprehension that any mistake may be quite fatal” which reign over Caleb’s story are built on “the probability of such mischance that Godwin sees as he looks around him.”<sup>28</sup> Godwin attended trials for sedition and sedulously read the published transcripts of many major trials during the composition of *Caleb Williams*.<sup>29</sup> Also he entered into correspondence with the persecuted. He reconstructed what he saw, heard and read to create the tense atmosphere of the trials to which Caleb is brought. Simultaneously, through the description of innocent people whom Caleb meets in dungeon, Godwin clearly protests against the government’s indiscriminate arrest and jailing of radicals.

David O’Shaughnessy points out that the fictional trial scenes in *Caleb Williams* are “based on contemporary historical events very much in the public eye.” Therefore they are “textual islands” which “are already ‘concretized,’ determinate textual moments” to the contemporary reader. As O’Shaughnessy states, for those who are familiar with the ongoing trials through newspaper, pamphlet, commentary and hearsay, “the connotations” of those scenes “were and are unmistakable.” The “concretized” historical episodes give the novel verisimilitude, successfully filling “the indeterminate gaps” between Caleb and the contemporary reader as well as between things as they are

in fiction and reality.<sup>30</sup> The reader is led to reflect on the modes of despotism in the course of justice and “things passing in the moral world.” And he is expected to ascertain what is subverting morality.

According to his diary, in April and May 1794, Godwin regularly visited Gerrald in Newgate. Then Gerrald was awaiting transportation to the penal colony at Botany Bay, where he was to sicken and die two years later.<sup>31</sup> Much of Godwin saw there did provide some of the significant incidents in the narrative. Godwin expressed in one of the prison episodes his admiration for “the unfortunate Joseph Gerrald” and resentment against “the sad and fearful evils attendant on conviction” he received.<sup>32</sup> Caleb relates the tragic story of the noble young man, Brightwel, who is imprisoned on a false charge and dies of a disease in consequence of his confinement:

Such was the justice that resulted from the laws of his country to an individual who would have been the ornament of any age, one who of all the men I ever knew was perhaps the kindest, of the most feeling heart, of the most engaging and unaffected manners, and the most unblemished life. The name of this man was Brightwel. Were it possible for my pen to consecrate him to never dying fame, I could undertake no task more grateful to my heart. (CW 191)

No contemporary reader or critic could have failed to notice the courageous spirit and benevolence of Gerrald in the characterization of Brightwel whose “judgment was penetrating and manly, totally unmixed with imbecility and confusion.” (191) The “fate of this unfortunate martyr” produces in Caleb’s mind an unyielding spirit, making him renew his determination not to give in to the yokes of the laws and wildest caprice of the authorities. (193)

Caleb also describes in detail the wretched circumstances of the prison into which he is sent by the forces of legal despotism Falkland mobilizes in his own defense.

Our dungeons were cells, 7½ feet by 6½, below the surface of the ground, damp, without window, light or air, except from a few holes worked for that purpose in

the door. In some of these miserable receptacles three persons were put to sleep together . . . . He that would form a lively idea of the regions of the damned, need only to witness for six hours a scene to which I was confined for many months. (CW 181, 183-4)

The miserable dungeon is another epitome of the whole tyrannical machinery of English society which allows “the sinews of innocence” to be “crumbled into dust by the gripe of almighty guilt.” (183) Caleb comes to realize that this represents “the engines that tyranny sits down in cold and serious meditation to invent” and “the empire that man exercises over man.” (181) Thomas, Falkland’s footman, who visits Caleb in prison, is considerably shocked at the sight of him and says: “Why I thought this was a Christian country; but this usage is too bad for a dog . . . Lord, what fools we be! Things are done under our very noses, and we know nothing of the matter.” (202)

Godwin is indebted to John Howard’s *The State of the Prisons* (1777) and *The Newgate Calendar* for the prison episodes and the portrayal of the unwholesome conditions of prisons.<sup>33</sup> They give life to his reasoned criticisms of the penal methods of his time. The view on the dehumanizing effects of the imprisonment is clearly derived from the key analysis of the relation between morality and punishment in Godwin’s political philosophy. He states in his essay: “Let us plunge into the depth of dungeons, and observe youth, and patriotism, and talents, and virtue, pining for years in hopeless oblivion. Such are the ‘thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.’”<sup>34</sup> Godwin treats such punishment as an abuse of the ancien régime by despotic authorities as well as by dogmatic Christianity, whose only purpose he believes is ruling people by terror and guilt. Similar notions are repeatedly dealt with in his other novels. *St Leon* has an impressive scene of a medieval prison. St Leon, indulging in retrospection, describes the gloomy prison of a “virtuous and religious city” Constance: “within the walls of the prison, there had existed nothing that could by any possibility cherish and refresh the human heart.” (*SL* 220, 260)<sup>35</sup>

Through delineating the conditions of the prisons, Caleb attempts to have the reader give up the illusion that “England has no Bastille” and there “no man can be punished without a crime.” Three fourths of the prisoners Caleb meets are persons of whom “even with all the superciliousness and precipitation” of England courts of justice “no evidence can be found sufficient to convict.” (CW 181-3) Here Godwin attempts to have the contemporary reader wake up to the fact that England *does* have its Bastille, which is nothing less than a symbol of the despotic government. By Caleb’s mouth, Godwin urges the public to realize that the despotic regime, which has recourse to the employment of spies, inquisition and punishment, could result in social disintegration, just as in France.

Godwin believes that “[the] only sense of the word punishment” should be “that of pain inflicted on a person convicted of past injurious action, for the purpose of preventing future mischief.” (PJ 635) Far from reforming the criminal and making him moral, the existing punishment under the coercive threat, which “has nothing in common with reason,” creates false motives for action and discourages “the cultivation of virtue.” (644) Fetters and chains cause the further moral corruption of not only the prisoners but the jailers, making them callous. Godwin’s moral philosophy permits no corporal punishment since it just produces “a train of disgraceful passions, hatred, revenge, despotism, cruelty, hypocrisy, conspiracy and cowardice.” It gets the punisher “seized with the lust of unbridled domination” and the punished with “hopeless disgust.” (674) Solitary confinement, which Caleb goes through several times, is likewise unacceptable, for it prevents the human being whose nature is essentially social from learning the moral responsibilities of social life.

In the novel, besides the intolerable pains of fetters and chains, the prisoners often have to undergo prolonged confinement long before their cases are heard at the Assizes. Brightwel cannot survive that situation and so dies. To the prisoners, whether they are innocent or not, existence is only “a scene of invariable melancholy,” and they are



perpetually tormented by dreadful ideas that “the coming period would bring a severer fate.” (CW 180) The novel repeatedly emphasizes that the prisons gradually deprive the prisoners of the exertions of a mind in health, dulling their humanity. Prisons are certainly “seminaries of vice” in that way. (PJ 676) And they are a copy of what government machinery is on a contracted scale. When describing the didactical prison scenes, B. J. Tysdahl points out, “here and there Godwin almost forgets that he is no longer writing a political essay.”<sup>36</sup>

More impressive still, Godwin’s anarchical notion as to social institutions is expressed through the voice of an outlaw. The notable character Raymond, the leader of a band of thieves, is introduced by “analogy with the Good Samaritan.”<sup>37</sup> Among outlaws, Raymond, who evokes an image of an eighteenth-century Robin Hood, has retained his humanity and morality. His words are very Godwinian:

Who that saw the situation in its true light would wait till their oppressors thought fit to decree their destruction, and not take arms in their defence while it was yet in their power? Which was most meritorious, the unresisting and dastardly submission of a slave, or the enterprise and gallantry of the man who dared to assert his claims? Since by the partial administration of our laws innocence, when power was armed against it, had nothing better to hope for than guilt, what man of true courage would fail to set these laws at defiance, and, if he must suffer by their injustice, at least take care that he had first shown his contempt of their yoke? (CW 220)

The words of Raymond, like those of Falkland’s footman Thomas, reinforce Godwin’s conviction that the existing legal system has deviated from the traditional frame on which it ought to be based and has changed to barbaric machinery. It is so awfully alien to justice that no one can expect that it serves as “the distribution of justice, which is the end of human reason.” (CW 182). Raymond suggests that the deviation should continue to be aggravated in the society corrupted by the government.

The spirit of criticism against the constitution of society, which is the essence of *Political Justice*, is coherent in Caleb's whole story. The contemporary reader ought not to misread Godwin's intention in the 1794 and 1795 Prefaces. *Political Justice* not only documents "things as they are" but also outlines "things as they ought to be." It successfully suggests that the age of enlightenment "must put an end to the system of coercion and punishment" and at long last could bring about "a simple form of society without government" to complete "the fabric of political justice" (PJ 701). On the other hand, however, unlike *Political Justice*, Caleb's narrative illustrates no visions of a rational order to come. It does focus on "Terror," that is, "the order of the day," offering no philosophical optimism but pessimism. Interestingly, that is demonstrated at a quite early stage of the narrative by the death of one of the characters, Mr. Clare. He is "a poet whose works have done immortal honour to the country." (CW 23) He is also a perfect embodiment of impartial judgement and universal benevolence as well as a luminary of the moral world. The equanimity of his behaviour and his exuberant benevolence, joined with his talents and intelligence, make him the idol of those who know him including Falkland.

Throughout the novel, the promise of a rational order to come can only be found in Mr. Clare and his unshakeable belief in the prospect of human improvement and the general welfare that are parts of "the great business of the universe." (CW 33) That promise is gone forever when he dies of a contagious disease all too suddenly. The promise of human perfectibility is also gone. The young man of virtue, Brightwel, "in a certain sense" has "a broken heart," while trying to believe that the time would come when all possibility of intolerable oppression and injustice would be extirpated. Indeed, Brightwel foresees "that he should not survive his present calamity." His death seems to imply the end of the possibility of "a happiness reserved for posterity." And Raymond also feels the same "despair more calm, more full of resignation and serenity" as Brightwel does. (192) When Caleb dissuades him from his calling as a thief, Raymond

says:

It is now too late. Those very laws, which by a perception of their iniquity drove me to what I am, preclude my return. God, we are told, judges of men by what they are at the period of arraignment, and, whatever be their crimes, if they have seen and abjured the folly of those crimes, receives them to favour. But the institutions of countries that profess to worship this God, admit no such distinctions. They leave no room for amendment, and seem to have a brutal delight in confounding the demerits of offenders. (CW 227-8)

He realizes that offenders just have to “go on in folly, having once begun.” (228) The deaths of Mr. Clare and Brightwel imply that moral and social improvements are too lofty to be attainable, in other words, “highly improbable.” Despair that takes hold of Raymond conveys that “things as they are” have blinded people from seeing things impartially, forbidding them to think upon “things as they ought to be.” Unlike *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams* offers hardly any discussion as to the way towards a better society.

#### 4. Criticism on Aristocracy Principles

While Caleb’s narrative as a fugitive shows the monstrous workings of English law, the story about Falkland is intended to powerfully demonstrate the monstrous history of the predominance of chivalric code and its corrupting influence. It is clearly regarded as the response to Burke’s “aristocratical principles” in his *Reflections*. As Caleb is dominated by his uncontrollable curiosity, Falkland is an obsessed seeker of honour and reputation. The excessive love of reputation is one of Godwin’s favourite motifs when describing the distorted offspring of the ancien régime and its aristocratic culture. Falkland is all the time obsessed and tormented by his concern about his image in the public eye. The tragedy caused by “[the] desire to preserve a noble façade of reputation” is repeated in Godwin’s works, and is especially marked in *St Leon* and his second play

*Antonio; or, The Soldier's Return* (1800). That sort of desire, which is always encouraged by aristocratic customs, is condemned as “a preoccupation with the sort of self-love that fosters respect for a good name rather than for social usefulness.”<sup>38</sup> Here is Godwin’s utilitarian conviction refuting Burke’s vehement defence of aristocratic traditions. Like other radical thinkers, through challenging Burke’s glorification of the “age of chivalry,” Godwin attempts to make his political stance clear in the French Revolution debate. To argue with Burke’s statement that extols in the warmest terms the chivalric code as the aristocratic legacy and the existing constitution of society, those radical thinkers could intentionally equate “chivalry” with “aristocracy” in their argument.<sup>39</sup> In order to indicate the defects of aristocracy, Godwin points out “the poison of flattery and effeminate indulgence” as the tendencies of chivalry. (*PJ* 471) He also claims that the feudal spirit of the “age of chivalry” should by its nature encourage an individual in his servility to the more favoured class than his.<sup>40</sup>

In *Caleb Williams*, Godwin tries to personify his claim as to chivalry and aristocracy in two squires, Falkland and Tyrrel. They are completely different in disposition. Richly influenced by heroic poetry and romance, and also trained in Italy during the grand tour, Falkland drank deeply of “the fountain of chivalry” from an early age. (*CW* 11) According to the explanation by Gary Kelly, Falkland is named after an overchivalrous hero of the Royalist side in the English Civil War period, Lucius Cary, Viscount Falkland. Though an intellectual gentleman and the best representative of the gentry class and culture, the real Falkland destroys himself because of his royalism and loyalty to his king, in other words, because of “a chivalric and feudal prejudice.”<sup>41</sup> Falkland in the novel also brings destruction on himself.

Though Caleb often loses control of himself because of his desire for vengeance on Falkland, it is “the poison of chivalry” that Caleb’s reason always attacks as the source of Falkland’s degeneration. (*CW* 326) Like the potion that transforms a good Dr. Jekyll into a cruel and violent Mr. Hyde, that poison paralyzes Falkland’s moral sense. At the

end of the narrative, looking back on his whole history, Caleb just laments the loss of Falkland's virtue:

Falkland! thou enteredst upon thy career with the purest and most laudable intentions. But thou imbibedst the poison of chivalry with thy earliest youth; and the base and low-minded envy that met thee on thy return to thy native seats, operated with this poison to hurry thee into madness. Soon, too soon, by this fatal coincidence were the blooming hopes of thy youth blasted for ever! (*CW* 326)

Caleb's overwrought rhetoric reminded the contemporary reader of Burke's emotional lamentation for the obsolete code of chivalry, the loss of the spirits of "men of honour, and of cavaliers":

But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. Never, never more shall we behold that generous loyalty to rank and sex, that proud submission, that dignified obedience, that subordination of the heart, which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom. (*RF* 73)<sup>42</sup>

In Burke's view, chivalry is a "nurse of manly sentiment and heroic enterprise." He celebrates a "chastity of honour, which felt a stain like a wound, which inspired courage whilst it mitigated ferocity, which ennobled whatever it touched, and under which vice itself lost half its evil, by losing all its grossness." (*RF* 73) He goes on to insist that it is chivalry that has distinguished the virtuous character of Europe from the states of Asia and from those states which had flourished in the most brilliant periods of the antique world. Behind Burke's claim is his intention of defending the existing English political system and the established aristocracy which is a mainstay of the social order. Additionally, predicting the Terror in France, he tries to make the public realize the doctrinaire inhumanity of the French Revolution and prevent its subversive energy from extending to England. He tries to avoid a repeat of "the patriotic crimes of an enlightened age." (70)

In *Political Justice*, on the other hand, Godwin claims that “Indeed ‘the age of chivalry is’ not ‘gone’! The feudal spirit still survives that reduced the great mass of mankind to the rank of slaves and cattle for the service of a few.” Far from being a relic of the past, that spirit, which has been perpetuated by the unequal distribution of property and wealth, still survives to make people “sell their independence and their conscience for the vile rewards that oppression has to bestow.” (*PJ* 726) In the novel, to refute Burke’s idealization of the code of chivalry, Godwin makes Caleb gradually disclose the maladies of the aristocratic traditions and tear off what Burke admiringly calls “All the decent drapery of life” which “had its origin in the ancient chivalry.” Burke goes on to say that it is “necessary to cover the defects of our naked, shivering nature, and to raise it to dignity in our own estimation.” (*RF* 73-4) It is nothing less than “the gore-dripping robes of authority” in Caleb’s eyes. (*CW* 210). He attacks those who are dressed in the robes as well as who celebrate them by exemplifying the deep influence of the chivalric code of honour on Falkland’s thought and disposition.

Caleb realizes that the very chastity of honour fostered by chivalrous ideals forces Falkland to continue to live to “the phantom of departed honour” until his death. (*CW* 326) Rather than ennoble Falkland, those ideals promote the defects of his nature to bring him into a “theatre of calamity.” Though understanding much better than Caleb how he has degraded himself to “the blackest of villains” by clinging to fame, Falkland could never give up his desire to leave behind him “a spotless and illustrious name.” (136) That is the corrupting effect of the chivalric code of putting reputation and honour before virtue and universal benevolence.

While making Caleb attack the false ideals inherent in the aristocratic traditions, however, Godwin does not deny the virtuous nature of Falkland completely. Indeed, in certain way, he does accentuate the graces of the character. Godwin’s characterization of Falkland in that way often puzzles the reader and the critic. Falkland’s nobility and elevated mind are fascinating enough for them to sympathize with him in his suffering

from beginning to end of the narrative. The reader sees Falkland's noble anguish even in his cruel acts against Caleb. He is a man of gallantry and exquisite benevolence, which are progeny of the laws of honour and the aristocratic "grand and decorous principles and manners." (RF 77) As David Duff points out, in *Political Justice*, mentioning the faults of the aristocratic system, Godwin makes the very limited concession of chivalry: "There was once indeed a gallant kind of virtue" communicated "[the] accomplishments of chivalry" to "young men of birth." (PJ 471) Godwin combines the gallant virtue in the ancient code of chivalry with the chivalric legacy idealized by Burke to yield the character of the mixed yet exalted morality.<sup>43</sup>

A very generous and merciful squire to his tenants and people, Falkland has the highest capabilities for greatly contributing to the general welfare. His belief in aristocratic duty has its source in "[a] conscious dignity, a noble pride, a generous sense of glory and emulation" that Burke counts as irreplaceable virtues of the nobility. (RF 46) In his argument with Tyrrel, Falkland advances his opinion about the distinction of ranks and aristocratic responsibility in society:

I believe that distinction is a good thing, and necessary to the peace of mankind. But, however necessary it may be, we must acknowledge that it puts some hardship upon the lower orders of society . . . We that are rich, Mr. Tyrrel, must do every thing in our power to lighten the yoke of these unfortunate people. We must not use the advantage that accident has given us, with an unmerciful hand. (CW 76-7)

Falkland's thoughts reflect Burke's speculation about the venerableness of ancient institutions and the aristocracy essential to the social order. The feudal system and hereditary distinction are indispensable to maintain the social order, and if those born to the inheritance of every superfluity would perform their duties to the great mass of people with fervid philanthropy, they should be a bulwark of human improvement and happiness. With a nostalgic tone Burke looks back at the medieval period in which every person "in a situation to be actuated by a principle of honour" could accomplish

his bounden duties to “[subdue] the fierceness of pride and power,” “[make] power gentle and obedience liberal,” “[harmonize] the different shades of life” and “by a bland assimilation, [incorporate] into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society.” (RF 46, 74) Godwin delicately weaves Burke’s tone into Falkland’s disposition and thoughts, consequently making it difficult to dismiss the character as a paragon of an evil legacy of the ancien régime. And that makes Falkland “the most real” and “the most grand” imaginary existence since Shakespeare’s Hamlet.<sup>44</sup> Burkean aristocratic virtues and chivalric legacy in Falkland eventually give him a unique place among the other “fool[s] of honour” in Godwin’s works. (CW 102)

The consistency in Godwin’s anarchical criticism of the existing regime is well achieved in his delineation of the workings of contemporary legal system. It appears to be diluted here because of the feudal spirit exemplified in the character of Falkland. The complexity of his view as to chivalric concepts makes the narrative different from other contemporary revolutionary novels, which usually deal with the aristocracy as a target of criticism of the ancien régime. Inchbald’s *Nature and Art* (1796), which commands a central place in English Jacobin novels alongside Holcroft’s *Anna St Ives* and *Caleb Williams*, discloses keen dissatisfaction with the uselessness of the aristocracy, cutting down the pretensions of the privileged. There are several Jacobin novels which deal with the same theme. The characters of the aristocracy in *Nature and Art* are almost entirely disagreeable. Inchbald slaps at their indifference to the sufferings and drudgery of the poor and their worse hypocrisies. The privileged few cherish the mistaken idea that they have the pretension to set themselves up as “the arbiter of morality” just because of their hereditary rank and title, regarding their hypocritical petty charity as noble generosity and benevolence.<sup>45</sup>

Revealing the essence of the French Revolution, Inchbald tries to demystify and then dismiss Burke’s idealization of aristocratic principles differently from Godwin. Her condemnation of “the insensitivity and hypocrisy” of the aristocracy is eloquent enough



to be inflammable, and that makes her political stance in the contemporary controversy more substantial and explicit than Godwin's in *Caleb Williams*.<sup>46</sup> She considers the aristocracy and the wealthy as, while pretending to be philanthropic and benevolent, the real parents of the starvation and sufferings of the poor. In fact, they drive the poor to accept their petty charity, making them unable to earn "a moderate subsistence" for themselves. It is well illustrated that the privileged classes are the very enemies of the universal good, for they prevent the poor from being productive members of society. Inchbald not only attempts to dispel a Burkean embroidered image of the aristocracy but ironically decries the education of the rich that promotes societal injustice and callousness. Unlike Godwin, she sees no abilities in them but "To be served by the poor." (NA 410)

Certainly, Inchbald's critical views of the upper classes and her dissatisfaction with the unequal distribution of property in society are influenced by Godwin's theoretical ideas developed in *Political Justice*. In the chapter entitled "The Moral Effects of Aristocracy," Godwin remarks: "The features of aristocratical institution are principally two: privilege, and an aggravated monopoly of wealth." (PJ 471) In view of his utilitarian justice, he also analyzes the aristocratical character:

Aristocracy, like monarchy, is founded in falsehood, the offspring of art foreign to the real nature of things, and must therefore, like monarchy, be supported by artifice and false pretences. (PJ 479)

According to Godwin's analysis here, monarchy and its old friend aristocracy depend for "their perpetuity upon ignorance." In its "gloomy and unsocial" empire, the lords rule the lower ranks of society "with a rod of iron" and make them "serfs," "villains" and "brutes" with "a stricter hand." (PJ 479) The aristocrats' means of "superfluity and luxury" are the most counterproductive. They are just small ease to "a few" but "plentiful subsistence of the many." So far as the society retains these forms of government supported by "an extreme inequality of possessions," no one can be a

useful member of society whose “talents are employed in a manner conducive to the general advantage.” (483) Inchbald shares with Godwin his anarchical opinion that “The higher and the lower classes will be alike corrupted by their unnatural situation.” (484) And she adopts his analysis in her novel more sharply in a way than Godwin himself.

In *Caleb Williams*, as for the characterization of Falkland, Godwin lets his anarchical attack on aristocratic principles be overshadowed by Burkean blessings of the feudal spirit and chivalry. He gives many examples of evil customs of “the features of aristocratical institution” in the characterization of Tyrrel. Tyrrel’s insolence and abusive use of the privilege represent the other real condition of aristocracy. Rather than using Inchbald’s method of decrying the corruption and pretensions of the upper classes with wit and fine irony, Godwin creates “a suffocating atmosphere of dismay” to denounce that gloomy and unsocial empire of aristocracy.<sup>47</sup> While Godwin successfully sets Tyrrel up as the embodiment of the harmful effects of the aristocratic establishment, however, that is still blurred due to Burkean honourable Falkland whose virtue has no doubt been nurtured by aristocratic principles. In that sense, the character of Falkland seems “a fictional refutation” of the ideas in *Political Justice*.<sup>48</sup>

Caleb’s attitude towards Falkland constantly wavers between admiration and regret, while the reader wavers between admiration and compassion. As some critics point out, Caleb’s sorrowful admiration for and regretful condemnation of his master show Godwin’s mixed attitude towards Burke and his virtuous ideals.<sup>49</sup> Don Locke mentions the note added to *Political Justice* at the death of Burke in 1797 and emphasizes the similarity between Godwin’s account of Burke and Caleb’s emotional farewell to Falkland.<sup>50</sup> In the note, Godwin recollects with grief Burke’s “characteristic excellencies” and “the grandeur and integrity of his feelings of morality”:

He has unfortunately left us a memorable example of the power of a corrupt system of government to undermine and divert from their genuine purposes the noblest faculties that have yet been exhibited to the observation of the world. (*PJ* 788-9)

Like Caleb, Godwin deplores Burke's letting the distorted values of the aristocracy prey on his own mind and spoil "his illustrious talents unwarped" that ought to be exercised "for the advancement of intellect, and the service of mankind." (*PJ* 789) Here Godwin seems to imply that a man of noble faculties who like Falkland and Burke excels at enlightening people and society can excel at misleading them too. The contradiction between Godwin's admiration for Burke's noble faculties as a politician and his disapproval of Burkean "aristocratical principles" is reflected in two-faced Falkland who is torn between his inner virtue and actual deeds. As a result, that exaggerates the intrinsic merit of Falkland rather than the erroneousness of his values and actions.

Godwin's moral intention found in the character of Falkland is one thing, but its virtual effect on the contemporary reader appears quite another. The aristocratic values based on the feudal spirit of the age of chivalry could be both the destroyer and the guardian of the morality and virtue. Hearing the tale of Tyrrel's malice towards unfortunate Hawkins, Falkland tries to resolve the matter himself and reason Tyrrel out of his immorality:

If I see you fall into a pit, it is my business to draw you out and save your life. If I see you pursuing a wrong mode of conduct, it is my business to set you right and save your honour. (*CW* 76)

It is Falkland, not Caleb, who has the intention of enlightening other people through the application of rational persuasion and who attempts to serve the public good. He knows how to employ his influence and "the advantage that accident has given [him]" for the best possible purposes. On the strict principle illustrated by Archbishop Fénelon and his servant, it is clearly advisable that Falkland should be saved rather than Caleb, not to mention rather than Tyrrel. Tysdahl states that the character of Falkland is "really no clear example at all of the kind of rule Godwin argues against" in his *Political Justice* and obscures his political stance implied in the 1794 Preface.<sup>51</sup> The contemporary reader might have regarded Falkland sympathetically as a truly tragic hero who is

swerved from the path of “human perfectibility” because of a single flaw, his excessive attachment to honour and reputation, without which he could become one of the finest agents of universal benevolence and justice throughout the community.

##### 5. The Doctrine of Necessity in *Caleb Williams*

No maxim can be more common, at the same time that no maxim can be more irrefragable; than that man is to a great degree the creature of the circumstances in which he is placed.<sup>52</sup>

In order to consider Godwin’s political intention in *Caleb Williams*, it is essential to examine his delineation of the doctrine of necessity. It is one of the most important components of his philosophy and an optimistic idea central to the whole theory in *Political Justice*. “Necessity” is a word which was used much more than “determinism” in theological and scientific debate in his time. It also acquired greater importance in political and philosophical thought of the time and in the French Revolution debate in England, in which Godwin and his new philosophy played a major role.

Godwin starts with the affirmative proposition that “all the actions of men are necessary.” (*PJ* 336) Not only objects in the material universe but all the thoughts and actions of human beings are determined under the law of necessity. Each event in the material world derives inevitably from its predecessors. The universe is a chain in which everything is connected with everything else as “antecedent” and “consequent.” According to Godwin, this theory can be applied to the operations of the human mind: “Mind is a real principle, an indispensable link in the great chain of the universe.” (352) The operations of the mind and the attendant actions of human beings derive from impressions and opinions received by the preceding experiences and the perceptions of them in earlier life. Therefore, the character of any individual and his disposition and habits are the necessary results of “a long series of impressions” of external

circumstances. (341) What all this means is that human beings are all children of their environment.

Besides the great chain connecting everything in the universe, Godwin also uses another metaphor to explain the workings of the law of necessity. He sees the whole world as a gigantic “billiard-board” and each event in the world as “a ball” on the board. (*PJ* 351) The behavior of each ball is determined by how it is impinged by the others racing on the board. No ball ever moves about at will or capriciously. Exactly similar to this, the operations of the human mind can be regarded as a billiard ball, which is determined by the impinging of the preceding balls of “impression” and “opinion.” And each action a person takes is one of the consequences of a series of impingings. Godwin thinks: “Man would not be in any degree more an agent or an accountable being.” (345) In other words, human is “in reality a passive, and not an active being.” (354)

As everything in the material universe takes place according to the law of necessity, events of any sort in human mind arise from the uniformity of conjunction of antecedents and consequents. The point is that this theory of mind denies a general idea of human free will. The ultimate act of mind is “not styled free, from any quality of its own” because it was preceded and chosen by another act. “The ultimate act resulted completely from the determination that was its precursor. It was itself necessary.” The act is only a link in the eternal chain of antecedents and consequences. “Trace back the chain as far as you please” and you will find that “every act at which you arrive is necessary.” “That act, which gives the character of freedom to the whole, can never be discovered; and, if it could, in its own nature includes a contradiction.” (*PJ* 346-7) It ought to be remembered that the ground or reason of any event in the material universe or in human mind, of whatever nature it might be, “must be contained among the circumstances which precede that event.” (348)

The mind is supposed to be in a state of previous indifference, and therefore cannot be, in itself considered, the source of the particular choice that is made. There is a

motive on one side and a motive on the other: and between these lie the true ground and reason of preference. (*PJ* 348)

Those principles underlie Godwin's philosophy concerning moral improvement and political justice. He indeed enunciates each principle in his endeavors to make it a well-established theoretical one for the contemporary reader. Then he tries to put forward his theory as to the reformation of society and human perfectibility. It is under the law of necessity that human reasoning faculty and the modes of social existence can be susceptible of perpetual improvement. It is only through the law that the hope of lasting benefit to the species can be promised. Godwin's doctrine of necessity had a great impact on the intellectuals and middle-classes during the revolutionary ferment to lead them to entertain hope of all future progress. It also impressed Romantic poets and got Wordsworth to say "Throw aside your books of chemistry and read Godwin on Necessity."<sup>53</sup> His discussion of the law of necessity urged people to think about the true conditions of human progress.

That a human being is the offspring of his environment means that responsibility for every action taken by him inevitably devolves on the external circumstances surrounding him. Those circumstances, which decisively affect a human mind, disposition, habits and actions, include all the events of his whole life, but consist significantly in the pervasive influence of upbringing, education, and more important, government. By the term "government" Godwin does not mean the political institution alone but rather the entire social regime and cultural and economic organization. To him government is "nothing else but education on a larger scale."<sup>54</sup> Person's perception of the world, in other words, of "things as they are" is crucially influenced by the government where he lives, by the way he makes a living, by conventions and customs, by art, science and literature, and by all the other ways in which opinions, notions and values are spread through a society. That's why the doctrine of necessity lies at the core of Godwin's political thought of the reform of society. The perpetual improvement of

the environment, particularly through social and political reform, leads human being to the road towards the attainment of a state of perfectibility.

Sharing the idea of John Locke and others as to the educational process, Godwin thinks that the original state of the human mind can be a *tabula rasa*. He considers the mind of the young as “a sheet of white paper” which can be “susceptible to every impression.” “[U]ncrowded with a thousand confused traces,” every impression it receives is “strong and durable.”<sup>55</sup> Every person begins life in absolute ignorance, gradually accumulating impressions and knowledge through experiences. Importantly, Godwin’s theory of the development of human mind indicates his fundamental belief in the innate goodness of human nature. Admitting “the mighty power of circumstances,” he insists that if a human being were “sheltered from childhood from the bleak winds of adversity” and if “mild and enlivening gales . . . played on his brow,” he would afford “an example of truth and generosity and honour.”

No philosopher, no careful observer of the qualities of the human mind, will deny, that every man has the seeds of some good in him which favourable circumstances might have ripened into a crop of no contemptible virtues.<sup>56</sup>

If a human being is able to advance in reasoning faculty, knowledge and impartial judgement under “favourable circumstances,” he necessarily arrives at a state of disinterested benevolence and justice to become a virtuous and beneficial member of society.

Along with the form of government, the educational environment ought to be perpetually measured and ameliorated. “Favourable” education can be an essential contributor to the improvement of person’s reason, encouraging his acquirement of sound knowledge and ability of private judgement. As a matter of course, the educational environment is an underlying theme in all of Godwin’s works. Upbringing is especially important to him because it determines a person’s normal opinions and therefore his future acts. The temper and habits of any person arise from the chain of

necessity, and “they will not be abruptly superseded and reversed.” (*PJ* 341) His education in the earlier years of his life also provides “the best opportunities at which the determinist chain can be redirected.”<sup>57</sup> It has a great influence on whether necessity becomes a parent of virtue or vice.

Regarded as a fictional version of *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams* is expected to manifest Godwin’s inferences from the doctrine of necessity and to present a good illustration of the way in which that law of necessity is operating on human being as well as on society. In the characterization of Falkland and Tyrrel he clearly fleshes out his philosophical view as to the chain of necessity which starts to be directed and redirected in early upbringing and educational environment.

In the earlier part of the narrative, the reader is led to realize that Falkland’s only flaw, his obsessive love of honour, which turns out to be the parent of all his crimes, is the result of flaws in his early education; at fault are the circles of young noblemen with whom he falls into company during the grand tour and his devotion to “the idle and groundless romances of chivalry.”(*CW* 97) That educational environment impresses on young Falkland the belief that nothing is “so well calculated to make men delicate, gallant and humane, as a temper perpetually alive to the sentiments of birth and honour,” leading him to engage himself in brilliant affairs of honour. (10) It also fosters in him not only adherence to “the pure principles of ancient gallantry,” but an “acute sense of injury and insult” which could actuate him to vow severe vengeance against whoever hurts his name and honour. (11) Through his upbringing and early education, Falkland is compelled to become a “fool of honour and fame” who preserves his reputation at any cost (102): he murders Tyrrel, who insulted and humiliated him in public; allows innocent Hawkins and his son to hang for that crime; and persecutes and oppresses the foolish young secretary who spied on him and uncovered his dark secret. Every act of Falkland is a link in the deterministic chain directed in his earlier life and therefore his ruin is a necessity.



Tyrrel's tyrannical disposition is also formed by the typical upbringing of the gentry, which is an "unfavourable soil for high moral qualities to spring up, and spread their branches to the air."<sup>58</sup> He has been completely spoiled and indulged. "Every thing must give way to his accommodation and advantage; every one must yield the most servile obedience to his commands." Conscious of his advantages in his physique and opulence, he becomes a grand master who is "insupportably arrogant, tyrannical to his inferiors, and insolent to his equals." Under that circumstance, the activity of his mind, "being diverted from the genuine field of utility and distinction, show[s] itself in the rude tricks of an overgrown lubber." (CW 17) Every spectator of his tyranny "could not prevent himself from reproaching the system of nature, for having giving birth to such a monster as Tyrrel." (90)

The name of this nasty character is suggestive of devilish Sir James Tyrrel in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, who mercilessly organizes the murder of the princes in the Tower under the King's order. It is easier to conclude that his upbringing makes him a "diabolical wretch" whose obsession for power and furious jealousy cause a chain of tragic events. (CW 89) As is the case for Falkland, Tyrrel's fierce disposition and cruel habits lead to a plethora of unfortunate results: the execution of Hawkins and his son; the death of sweet Emily Melville, a young cousin of Tyrrel, who was in love with Falkland and punished for that; the fatal madness of his enemy Falkland; and lastly his own death. It is said that those tragic accidents should result from masculine egoism which grows in both Tyrrel and Falkland through their early education and which never allows them to make any compromise in any situation.

The doctrine of necessity plays a significant role in the history of the fatal discord between Falkland and Tyrrel. They are "like two stars fated never to appear at once above the horizon." (CW 19) Falkland's "impatience of stain or dishonour" is capable of destroying his formidable enemy, and so with Tyrrel's "untamed, though not undiscerning, brute" disposition. (16, 19) The feud that springs up between the two

squires is necessarily “nourished by concurring circumstances” till it attains “a magnitude difficult to be paralleled.” (19) The streams of their thoughts, opinions and actions, which seem to be pointing to only one termination, demonstrate plainly Godwin’s statement:

In the life of every human being there is a chain of events, generated in the lapse of ages which preceded his birth, and going on in regular procession through the whole period of his existence, in consequence of which it was impossible for him to act in any instance otherwise than he has acted. (*PJ* 351)

Applying his theory, there are no grounds on which to condemn Falkland and Tyrrel for their thoughts and deeds. The responsibility for their misdeeds should be traced back to the deleterious effects of the unfavourable early education they had. The mighty power of circumstances gradually compels them to “moral degradation,” and renders them “deaf to the calls of honesty and benevolence.”<sup>59</sup> Thus they are not regarded to be accountable for their moral deterioration. “It ought . . . to be the circumstances, and not the man, that should be called up into judgment.”<sup>60</sup>

Godwin’s belief in the doctrine of necessity is also embodied in the thoughts of Mr. Collins, a respectable and moderate old steward of Falkland, and Caleb’s beloved friend and protector. He is one of the most stable and incorruptible characters in the narrative. Collins is firmly convinced that external circumstances should produce human character. According to Kelly, Godwin named Collins after the early eighteenth-century philosopher Anthony Collins, who was a foremost defender of Necessitarianism.<sup>61</sup> Collins never knows that his noble master murdered Tyrrel in secret, considering Caleb a poor criminal who requited Falkland’s great kindness with ingratitude. Coming across Caleb upon a road after ten years of separation, Collins says to him:

You know my habits of thinking. I regard you as vicious; but I do not consider the vicious as proper objects of indignation and scorn. I consider you as a *machine*: You are not constituted, I am afraid, to be greatly useful to your fellow men; but

you did not make yourself; you are just what circumstances irresistibly compelled you to be. I am sorry for your ill properties; but I entertain no enmity against you, nothing but benevolence. (*CW* 310; emphasis added)

An advocate of the truth of Necessitarianism and of the theory that a human being is “only the vehicle” under the law of necessity, Collins does not blame Caleb for his misdeeds and ingratitude. (*PJ* 351) He believes that the power of circumstances renders Caleb just such as he is, and not otherwise. It is impossible to fail to read Godwin’s argument in the words of Collins. Godwin writes “our prevailing emotion will be pity, even towards the criminal,” who, from “the various circumstances which act upon him from infancy,” is “impelled to be the means of the evils, which we view with so profound disapprobation, and the existence of which we so entirely regret.”<sup>62</sup> Feeling pity for Caleb, Collins displays “benevolence” towards him. That is also fully in accord with the premises of Godwin’s utilitarian ethics.

## 6. The Doctrine of Necessity and Fatalism

Godwin’s new philosophy introduces people to the “unreserved conviction, that man is a machine, that he is governed by external impulses, and is to be regarded as the medium only through the intervention of which previously existing causes are enabled to produce certain effects.”<sup>63</sup> If a human being is “a machine” with no free will and constituted to be what he is, Falkland and Tyrrel are indeed creatures and victims of circumstances. They are not a little aware that their acts gradually change their whole history into misery and guilt, but they cannot mend their ways nor avoid the predictable tragedy. Like Collins, some consider their tragedy as the pure product of necessity. Others are more likely to call it their fate or destiny. It can be said that Falkland and Tyrrel only have to bow to the inevitable. Their acts are inevitable parts of “a great series that is perpetually flowing” and not optional at any moment. (*CW* 33) Seeing the inevitable current of their history makes it difficult to figure out the difference between

the law of necessity and the fate or destiny. Significantly, a machine which has neither free will nor volition seems to be practically the same as a plaything in the clutch of fate. Those fallen under an unfavorable environment, such as Falkland and Tyrrel, are little different from the unhappy who are at the mercy of fortune. Godwin's doctrine of necessity or determinism is theoretically quite different from fatalism, but they seem to have the same nature to mortals. Both of them offer little meaning in life in the novel.

That a human being is only a machine also means that he cannot be held morally responsible for any of his actions. Tyrrel should not be punished for his meanness or for his actions even if they are products of pure malice. He should be offered not punishment but "benevolence." Punishing a person with no faculty of having or using his will for his evil acts is unjustified. Thus, the truth of Godwin's doctrine of necessity seems to be incompatible with didactic moralism in a crucial way because it denies punishing evil in theory. All that should be hoped for under the law of necessity is that reformation of social and educational environment will lead to moral improvement, rendering any sort of punishment unnecessary. In other words, until the environment is reformed, "unfavorable soil" continues to produce its abortive creatures, who are regarded as unhappy victims of the cruelty of fate or destiny.

The boundary between the law of necessity and the working of fate is more ambiguous in Caleb's history. It is easy to see the universal law of necessity in the patterns of cause and effect in the thoughts and actions of Falkland and Tyrrel. On the other hand, however, there can be a certain discomfort when applying that law to the nature of Caleb, his actions and particularly his curiosity which "more than any other, characterised the whole train of [his] life." (CW 4) His history and background are not in the least enough to explain his "unconquerable spirit of curiosity" which is to ruin him. Curiosity impels Caleb to place himself as "a watch" upon his patron Falkland. (107) Caleb looks back on when he first entered into Falkland's service;

To novelty and its influence, curiosity had succeeded. Curiosity, so long as it lasted,

was a principle stronger in my bosom than even the love of independence. To that I would have sacrificed my liberty or my life; to gratify it, I would have submitted to the condition of a West Indian Negro, or to the tortures inflicted by North American savages. (*CW* 143)

Katherine Richardson Powers offers an interesting explanation about the relation between Caleb's inquisitive mind and his name. She observes that "Caleb" is a biblical name meaning "dog" and it labels Caleb Williams as "an inquisitive busy body who 'dogs' the steps of his master until he finally becomes a dog in a lower sense by causing the death of a great and good man."<sup>64</sup> His name can be a delicate hint of his innate disastrous curiosity, but where it comes from is far less obvious than the sources of Falkland's excessive love of fame and Tyrrel's tyrannical nature.

Caleb most often suggests that all his misfortunes arise from external circumstances and blames "things as they are" for his forlorn condition and distress. His misfortunes are certainly encouraged by the social system and its corrupt practices. Yet it is his curious nature that ought to be blamed as a natural parent of his misery. The point is that there seems to be no consistent principle of necessity in the process by which Caleb's inquisitive mind becomes "an unintelligible chimera" he annexes to himself. (*CW* 98) When Caleb insists that his curiosity gives him his "mechanical turn," he is aware that he is only a machine which is operated on by external force and that what he thinks and does is inevitable in the current of necessity. (4) Caleb cannot figure out where his curiosity comes from, even though it is a previous cause by which his decisions and actions are determined. Neither Caleb nor the reader can find the missing link in the whole chain of necessity in Caleb's history. Likewise, it is almost impossible for a human being to know all the workings of the law of necessity or all the links in his deterministic chain. The imperfect chain of necessity may be regarded as the caprice of fate or destiny. On other occasions throughout his narrative, Caleb is eager to attribute his misery to the unpredictable of his life, that is, an "obstinate fatality" and "ill destiny."

(125, 146) He calls his curiosity a “fatal impulse that seemed destined to hurry [him] to [his] destruction.” (121) Caleb also regards Falkland’s life as “the uninterrupted persecution of a malignant destiny” and Tyrrel as a poor being in the hands of a “malicious destiny.” (46)

Caleb’s expressions of a string of gloomy and sinister forebodings have a certain convincingness and tend to diminish the note of Godwin’s strict philosophy of necessity. The law of necessity which Collins empowers allows no interference of chance, irregularity or caprice in any event in the world as well as in human mind. It is expected to properly manifest the essential conjunction of every antecedent event with its consequent. Likewise, there must be a clear conjunction between Caleb’s motives and actions. It is hardly possible, however, to read that sort of conjunction to balance his original curiosity with his every action as a spy on his master. While having a deep veneration for Falkland’s unaltered dignity, Caleb calls his spying on his master “the experiment,” and confesses that it gives him “a kind of tingling sensation.” (CW 107-8) There is no simple principle of causation that balances the frankness and simplicity natural to Caleb’s disposition with his sadistic “experiment.” He repeatedly inflicts mental torture on Falkland through touching the secret wound of his mind in an indirect and remote manner. Sometimes Caleb’s apparently casual comments perturb Falkland, and sometimes his clever questions and innuendos suggest to his master that Caleb should know more than he expressed. Caleb writes: “the reader will easily imagine the disturbance that was almost daily endured by a mind so tremblingly alive as that of my patron.” (110) On the contrary, the reader can find out little sufficient reason for Caleb’s impulsive feelings and behavior of trifling with Falkland. They seem to be explained only by a sudden caprice or impulsiveness.

Viewed from another angle, it is considered that Caleb does employ the principle of necessity profitably in his experiment. The principle allows people to detect the conjunction between the person’s character and habits and the environment under which

he has been fostered, and a real coherence between his motives and actions as well as his past and future actions. It enables them to “predict what men would be, from what they have been.” (*PJ* 341) From the same idea of regularity and conjunction arise “all the schemes of policy” in consequence of which people propose, “by a certain plan of conduct, to prevail upon others to become the tools and instruments of their purposes.” (341)

All the arts of courtship and flattery, of playing upon men’s hopes and fears, proceed upon the supposition, that mind is subject to certain laws, and that, provided we be skillful and assiduous enough in applying the motive, the action will inevitably follow. (*PJ* 341)

Often involuntarily, Caleb exploits those certain laws to control Falkland. He successfully excites Falkland to get angry and agitated. Interestingly, however, Caleb has no apparent purpose such as self-defense or revenge. He has little idea what motivates his own actions going beyond the bounds of curiosity and how much “enjoyment” he derives from them. (*CW* 108) With his observation and reason, Caleb understands well that there is a considerable danger in his employment. Foreseeing the particular outcomes of his pursuing the experiment, and feeling how rapidly he is advancing to the brink of the precipice, Caleb can neither stop himself nor avoid his own ruin, just like Falkland and Tyrrel. Given the way things are going, it is no wonder that Caleb attributes his uncontrollable curiosity and sudden emotional intensities to the unpredictability of life, fate or destiny. It is much easier to “admit the interference of chance and irregularity” rather than the “uniform conjunction” in a series of events in Caleb’s mind. (*PJ* 343)

According to Godwin, as human beings gain further understanding of the science of the human mind and universal laws of necessity, they willingly exclude those appearances of irregularity and chance. (337) They will be able to change the unpredictable at the present time into the predictable in future. However, Caleb’s

narrative implies that universal laws might never be found in the human mind and that the unpredictability of life will continue to trifle with human beings under the name of fate or destiny. As a consequence, his narrative demonstrates the great difficulty of making a universal application of the principle of necessity to phenomena and events of any sort.

There is a remarkable argument about Godwin's employment of his philosophy of necessity in the work. It states that though the world of *Caleb Williams* is certainly subject to the law of necessity, it is a "Gothic necessity" characterized as "mysterious, inexorable, and malignant." In this view, the adaptation of Godwin's concept of deterministic necessity is analyzed in the Gothic tradition:

In accordance with Godwin's determinism, the characters are subtly directed by their interaction with the world around them. But through their own intense irrationalities and imaginative energies, they create Gothic monsters of each other and impose a perspective that transforms a morally neutral necessity into a Gothic fatality and their world into a region of sorrow presided over by a malignant demon.<sup>65</sup>

As stated above, notwithstanding a crucial difference between them, determinism and fatalism are two sides of "necessity." In the world of *Caleb Williams*, the chain of necessity seems to have both deterministic and fatalistic elements, and that marks the narrative. The former is manifested in the accounts of the backgrounds of Falkland and Tyrrel and also elucidated in the philosophical ideas of Collins. The latter is seen in the irrational compulsions of the two squires and Caleb and in their ways, some of which are indeed involuntary, of inflicting dreadful sufferings on each other. Gothic fatalistic necessity might be imprinted in the reader's mind because not only Caleb but the other characters frequently refer to some incomprehensible necessity as an "obstinate fatality," "mysterious fatality" or "ill destiny." (CW 125, 131) Those terms effectively make the reader conscious of "those invisible personages" who from time to time "interfere in



human affairs” and “scatter destruction upon the earth from [their] secret habitation.” (296) Additionally, the universal laws of necessity are often personified by the characters. That makes the boundary between determinism and fatalism further ambiguous to render Godwin’s doctrine of necessity equivocal in the novel.

Malignant destiny, inexorable fate and a horrifyingly obsessive mood are the key elements of Gothic literature, which was at the height of its popularity at that time. Many Gothic novels, including Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, exploit and depict those elements powerfully and mysteriously. When *Caleb Williams* is analyzed in the Gothic tradition, the awful prison, which is one of the most effective tools for Godwin to attack the history of despotism, turns into one of those traditional Gothic “fortresses” from which “the wretched victim is never known to come forth alive.” (CW 151) When the deterministic law of necessity undergoes a transformation as a result of the Gothic perspective, not only Caleb’s curiosity but even Falkland’s passion for chivalry and overwhelming sense of honour undergo a “Gothic distortion” as well. They are regarded as the products of grotesque influence of Gothic destiny on human beings rather than as the products of Godwin’s anarchical ideas. Consequently, the “hidden laws of Gothic necessity” emphasize the fatalistic elements of the universe, making Falkland “a Gothic quixote” and Caleb a Gothic victimized character.<sup>66</sup>

It might be said that while Godwin’s necessity or determinism forms a political frame of the novel, Gothic necessity or fatalism shapes the course of its action. Even after Caleb succeeds at last in eliciting from Falkland a confession of his own guilt at the trial, the shadow of malignant destiny still seems to loom over him. Caleb’s postscript tells the reader about Falkland’s death three days after his confession and Caleb’s desperate remorse. Disillusioned and chastened, Caleb now regrets the “misjudging and abhorred intervention” by which Falkland’s reputation was tarnished. (CW 326)

I have been his murderer . . . I wantonly inflicted on him an anguish a thousand

times worse than death. Meanwhile I endure the penalty of my crime. His figure is ever in imagination before me. Waking or sleeping I still behold him . . . now that I am truly miserable. (CW 325)

Significantly, in his remorse in the postscript, while considering himself as a passive being in the universe which is governed by whether deterministic or fatalistic impulses, Caleb seems to feel that he might be a free “agent or an accountable being” in some ways. A. D. Harvey indicates that Caleb’s history “embodies the deeply tragic notion that the individual is not merely trapped by his environment, but that *he himself* is the trap.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, the true tragedy is that Caleb cannot figure out whether he himself is a being with a free will or a kind of machine, and he cannot find the real meaning of his existence. And Falkland and Tyrrell are victims of the same tragedy. That might imply the limits of Godwin’s doctrine of necessity in a way. At the same time, it seems to imply the limitation of a political reading of *Caleb Williams*.

## 7. The Nature of Man: A Creature of Mingled Substance

Absolute confidence in humanities forms the basis of Godwin’s doctrine of necessity. His conviction concerning the progressive nature of human being in knowledge, in virtuous propensities and in social institutions forms his philosophy of gradual social reform. Influenced by the thought of d’Holbach, Helvétius and Rousseau, Godwin discarded his Calvinist beliefs and became an ardent defender of natural human goodness. He turned down the notion of original sin in favour of the belief that human corruption originates in the vices of political institutions.<sup>68</sup> His earlier novels in the 1780s already showed his trust in the power of human reason and private judgement and his rejection of hereditary vice.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, *Caleb Williams* highlights the distortions of political institutions as “the only perennial source of the vices of mankind.” (PJ 497) That implies Godwin’s dismissal of Burke’s trust in the power of the political constitution of England. In *Reflections*, Burke underlines a sense of humanity’s

fallibility and imperfections which are redeemed only by the traditional institutions and fundamental laws. Burke describes the traditional “frame of polity” in the image of “a relation in blood.” (*RF* 32) He regards the state and its laws as a benevolent paternal figure and the individual as a fallible child figure.<sup>70</sup> He also sees violent revolution as filial ingratitude. In *Caleb Williams*, the “frame of polity” is a parent of human evil and prejudice, and it aborts natural goodness which is inherent in human beings as a potentiality. Godwin’s trust in natural human goodness is represented by the main characters who are “all upstanding likeable people, even beyond the ordinary in their humanity.”<sup>71</sup> The only exception is Tyrrel, but even in him there is a seed of goodness.

Godwin clearly tries to underline the great amount of good in human nature, invalidating Burke’s notion that human beings are inherently so sinful and fallible that they are in need of legislative restraints. On the other hand, however, the careful reader realizes that Godwin consistently points to evidence of the credulity of the human mind in *Caleb Williams*. This, in addition to the fault which lies in political institutions, is one of the reasons why from the “set of morally ordinary, even above average people, so much horror and evil accrues” in Caleb’s world.<sup>72</sup> That reminds the reader of Godwin’s indicating another view about human nature in the skeptical tone: “The whole history of the human species, taken in one point of view, appears a vast abortion. Man seems adopted for wisdom and fortitude and benevolence. But he has always, through a vast majority of countries, been the victim of ignorance and superstition.” (*PJ* 402)

Indeed the main characters in the narrative cannot escape being the victims of ignorance and credulity. The tragedy of Caleb and Hawkins ascribes the critical side of the cause to their ignorance of “things as they are” and their falling back on the working of law. Emily Melville cannot protect herself from Tyrrel’s persecution because she has neither “dictates of experience” to direct her fortitude nor “better information” about the world. (*CW* 58-9) Collins’ incapability to find out the truth about the revered Falkland is the obvious example of the credulity of his mind. Above all, through the narrative, the

general public is described as a “victim of ignorance and superstition.” All people are fundamentally good, but ignorant about “things as they are,” in other words, the despotism by which they are deceived and exploited. Believing blindly the integrity of Falkland, “a gentleman of six thousand per annum,” people are lost to the sincere appeals for sympathy and help from Caleb, a truly innocent “servant.” (276-7) They are not conscious that their credulity and blindness promote social injustice and perpetuate despotism. The reader sees how the false values of an unmitigatedly corrupt society intrude themselves into the public and how they prosper and blight hope of future change.

Fundamentally good, the characters are also flawed and morally vulnerable. The potential blame for the tragic end, which should be inevitable under the universal law of necessity though, seems to oscillate fluidly between the characters, particularly Caleb and Falkland. There is no settling it definitively on any one character. Therefore, it is quite difficult for the reader to find the complete cornerstone of good and evil in the narrative. There is no room for a paragon of goodwill and virtue in Caleb’s world, and that makes *Caleb Williams* different from such Jacobin novels as Holcroft’s *Anna St Ives*. The wisest and most virtuous character in the novel is obviously Mr. Clare. Falkland is deeply affected by Clare’s tranquil expostulation. Even tyrannical Tyrrel is “held in involuntary restraint” by Clare’s “intellectual ascendancy” and his “venerable character.” (CW 37) As Tysdahl mentions, Clare, “an eloquent paragon of virtue,” is “one of a number of benevolent father-figures in the novel who all die or are caught in situations in which they cannot help those in need.”<sup>73</sup> He dies before the narrative reaches its first climax. While his great works “have done immortal honour to the country that produced him,” “the influence of Mr. Clare’s presence and virtues” is quickly and entirely removed from both Falkland and Tyrrel. (23, 37)

Many factors in the novel seem to disrupt the reader’s moral sense: the death of Mr. Clare, Caleb’s remorse and self-reproach, Falkland’s virtue and benevolence, the

portraits of sensitive and bewildered characters, and natural human goodness and flaws. *Caleb Williams*, like all of Godwin's later novels and plays, does not provide a stable scaffolding of good and vice. Contrary to expectations encouraged by the 1794 Preface, the narrative does not offer the image of a society in which people become either black or white nor does it present the picture of a perfect society, or the possibility of one. Here, we are forced to be active readers and necessarily forced into "habits of intellectual activity."<sup>74</sup> *Political Justice* encourages us to understand the nature of human being as well as the nature of political society as the first step towards social reform and human perfectibility. Godwin's delineation of elusive characters might be indicative of his political intention to bring out "habits of intellectual activity" with which we should inquire about human nature and "things as they are." That is one of the possible reasons why Godwin avoids using the characters as his perfect mouthpiece.

Another interpretation of the elusiveness of the main characters is found in Godwin's notion that human being is "a creature of mingled substance." He admits that, in spite of his innate innocence and good nature, human is "many times a day compelled to acknowledge what a low, mean and contemptible being" he is.<sup>75</sup> A careful reading of Godwin's philosophical works including *Political Justice* shows that there is abundant recognition of the negative side as well as the positive side of human nature. In spite of his belief in the possibility of universal benevolence in human nature freed from original sin, Godwin is not the naïve optimist that his critics sometimes pictured. His recognition of person's great potential for evil and flaws, a recognition which is to be developed in a more skeptical tone as Godwin grows older, is inserted into the elusive and vulnerable nature of his characters in *Caleb Williams*. There Godwin seems to start reconsidering and reassessing his doctrine of necessity and his belief in the probability of human perfectibility. The following chapter deals with his novel *St Leon*, considering some significant changes in Godwin's political theory and philosophical ideas voiced in *Political Justice*.

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### Chapter III Significant Changes in Godwin's Philosophical Thoughts in *St Leon*

As to myself, after having for four years heard little else than the voice of commendation, I was at length attacked from every side, and in a style which defied all moderation and decency . . . The cry spread like a general infection, and I have been told that not even a petty novel for boarding-school / misses now ventures to aspire to favour, unless it contain[s] some expressions of dislike and abhorrence to the new philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. After *Caleb Williams*—Decline of Revolutionary Movement

By the end of the eighteenth century, the political situation and national mood in England had completely changed. Confronted with the excesses of the Terror, the outbreak of war with France and its accompanying domestic economic impoverishment, the revolutionary movement in England had rapidly declined. Under the conservative reaction and hostilities against the spirit of social innovation, the radical fervour burned out and revolutionary aspiration evaporated. Godwin's "new philosophy" in his *Political Justice*, whose popularity had already been on the wane, was exposed to severe criticism by the public and the anti-Jacobins. Hazlitt notes:

Now he has sunk below the horizon, and enjoys the serene twilight of a doubtful immortality. Mr. Godwin, during his lifetime, has secured to himself the triumphs and the mortifications of an extreme notoriety and of a sort of posthumous fame. His bark, after being tossed in the revolutionary tempest, now raised to heaven by all the fury of popular breath, now almost dashed in pieces, and buried in the quicksands of ignorance, or scorched with the lightning of momentary indignation, at length floats on the calm wave that is to bear it down the stream of time.<sup>2</sup>

The public taste for literary works is inevitably subject to the political swing to conservatism. As Louis Cazamian puts it, right from the start of the nineteenth century



till 1820, the general public in England was “in the grip of a Tory reaction which flatly rejected radicalism.”<sup>3</sup> That means people no longer wanted to read literary works and arguments favouring political change or social reform. In fact, the public was disgusted with the enlightened political philosophy.

The result of the French Revolution and the political conversion to Toryism required Godwin to reconsider his radical ideas in the original *Political Justice*. While continuing his speculation on the possibility of gradual social change and his “industrious and conscientious endeavour to keep his mind awake to correction and improvement,” he started his following literary stage with efforts to modify his political ideas. (*PJ* 72)<sup>4</sup> The modification was also greatly encouraged by his private experience in the later 1790s. In March 1797, he married Mary Wollstonecraft, the well-known author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) and *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796).<sup>5</sup> According to Godwin’s later memoirs, Wollstonecraft “refine[d] and raise[d]” his “sensibility.”<sup>6</sup> And their married life led him to a new understanding of “the principles of parental and filial affection, / of love, attachment and friendship.”<sup>7</sup> He had several years with her in which they were “as happy as is permitted to human beings.” However, Godwin’s happy life ended abruptly when Wollstonecraft died from puerperal fever in September 1797, ten days after giving birth to Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. Godwin wrote to Holcroft amid his mounting woes: “My wife is now dead . . . I firmly believe that there does not exist her equal in the world. I know from experience we were formed to make each other happy. I have not the least expectation that I can now ever know happiness again.”<sup>8</sup> Brailsford states that the year marks “the culmination of Godwin’s career” and “it would have been well for his fame if it had been its end.”<sup>9</sup>

His personal experience exerts not a little influence on the correction of his original philosophical ideas. The correction resolves itself into the following three points: modest reflection on the excessive passion for reason, reevaluation of the role of human

feelings in moral and social improvement, and reconsideration of the possible marriage of utilitarianism and human nature. As shall be seen, they are developed in the third edition of *Political Justice* (1798), *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of Rights of Women* (1798), *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799), and *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, Preached at Christ Church, April 15, 1800* (1801). Those works are significant as indicators of Godwin's revised thoughts and his sincere attention to human feelings, especially private devotion and domestic affection.

## 2. Godwin's Revised Philosophical Theory

Godwin wrote in his diary of the year 1798 that he would "correct certain errors in the earlier part of [his] 'Political Justice'" and the part to which he alluded was "essentially defective, in the circumstance of not yielding a proper attention to the empire of feeling."<sup>10</sup> Admitting the errors of the first edition, he made a number of alterations in the third edition of *Political Justice*. There was a notable softening in his rationalism in that edition, where he gave more importance to the role of feelings and sentiment in the whole moral economy. He realized that feelings were incentives for people to act, concluding that the "voluntary actions of men [were] under the direction of their feelings." He also added; "Reason is not an independent principle, and has no tendency to excite us to action; in a practical view, it is . . . a comparison and balancing of different feelings." (*PJ* 77)<sup>11</sup>

The first edition of *Political Justice* underestimates the role of feelings in the moral world through making much of the theory of impartial justice and universal benevolence. It attaches little importance to private affections and consequently allows the concept of the family to be "dissipated" by "the explosive charities of universal benevolence."<sup>12</sup> There Godwin emphasizes that private attachments necessarily hinder the general good and the greatest benefit to society. As is evident in his argument about

the Archbishop of Fénelon, which is an explicit example of the principle of impartial justice in his moral philosophy, Godwin asserts that the emotional pull the familial units exert should give way to a universal benevolent pull in all respects. His claim clearly diminishes the value of domestic bonds. If of the illustrious educationalist, the Archbishop of Fénelon, and his chambermaid only one could be rescued from a burning house, justice definitely requires that the former should be saved. The yardstick for judging is which of them is “more conducive to the general good than the other.” Furthermore Godwin proceeds:

Supposing the chambermaid had been my wife, my mother or my benefactor. This would not alter the truth of the proposition. The life of Fénelon would still be more valuable than that of the chambermaid; and justice, pure, unadulterated justice, would still have preferred that which was most valuable. Justice would have taught me to save the life of Fénelon at the expense of the other. What magic is there in the pronoun ‘my,’ to overturn the decisions of everlasting truth? My wife or my mother may be a fool or a prostitute, malicious, lying or dishonest. If they be, of what consequence is it that they are mine?<sup>13</sup>

In the second and third editions of *Political Justice*, however, Godwin watered the tone down and used “the valet” in lieu of “the chambermaid,” “my brother, my father” in lieu of “my wife, my mother.” (*PJ* 170) Although Monro regards it as “a sop to popular prejudice,” alterations of the wording cannot be considered apart from his private relationship with Wollstonecraft.<sup>14</sup> Godwin already tried to integrate into his original doctrine a review of the roles of human feelings in the second edition of *Political Justice*. He laid further emphasis on them when he discussed private judgement in the third. Godwin’s emendation “covertly acknowledge[d]” that there were certain private attachments and emotional pull that could not be “readily deem[ed] expendable.”<sup>15</sup>

After having the experience of “domestic pleasures” and fathering daughters,

Godwin felt the necessity to readjust his theory concerning domestic bonds and human private affections. (*Memoirs* 167)<sup>16</sup> It seems that he realized that it was unfeasible to deny that there was a certain “magic” in the pronoun “my.” Interpreting his revision as a retreat from strict rationalism, that is, “pure Godwinism,” De Quincey stated that “the second edition [of *Political Justice*], as regards principles, [was] not a recast, but absolutely a travesty of the first: nay, it [was] all but a palinode.”<sup>17</sup> It is certain that the rationalism of the first edition is toned down and that some utilitarian theories are reconsidered and consequently further systematized in the later editions.<sup>18</sup> But it should still be noted that Godwin made no essential change in his political doctrine from one edition to another. Some critics including Monro, David Fleisher and James Bonar support Godwin’s claim that “the spirit and great outlines” of *Political Justice* remain untouched and that the alterations are not of a fundamental nature. (*PJ* 72) Moreover, Monro even points out that Godwin was not by any means blind to the part feelings play in human behaviour, and neither did he wish to exclude them from his doctrine. In order to improve his philosophy, Godwin needed to pay “a proper attention” to the operation of feelings in the moral world.<sup>19</sup>

Godwin’s recognition of the value of private affections and feelings is developed first in his *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which he began to write a fortnight after Wollstonecraft’s death.<sup>20</sup> Alongside *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature* (1799) and the third edition of *Political Justice*, this work is seen as the culmination of Godwin’s political philosophy. It not only shows that Godwin distanced himself from his early self-sufficient rationalism but also suggests the intention of a concession to human feelings and emotions, cultivating interest in the inspection of the interior, private, and domestic. In *Memoirs*, which is an elegiac biography of his deceased wife, he presents Wollstonecraft as “a worshipper of domestic life,” stating that she “felt herself formed for domestic affection, and all those tender charities, which men of sensibility [had]

constantly treated as the dearest band of human society.” Looking back on “the more delicious and heart-felt pleasures of domestic life,” Godwin moderately represents Wollstonecraft’s maternal devotion and her great capacity for domestic affection as “the treasures of her mind” and “the virtues of her heart.” (*Memoirs* 166, 98, 195) The emphasis on human affections which gathered further impetus is figured as “the enduring gift that Wollstonecraft bequeaths to her husband.”<sup>21</sup>

Contrary to Godwin’s expectations, *Memoirs* incurred blame for the accounts of Wollstonecraft’s wanton behavior, which included her love affairs, one with the married Henry Fuseli and one with Gilbert Imlay, and her two attempted suicides. Godwin was publicly criticized as one of “the leading champions of infidelity,” and *Memoirs* was damned as “a narrative of his licentious amours,” while modern critics acknowledge its value as a prominent personal biography.<sup>22</sup> As a matter of fact, Godwin himself would not allow his daughter Mary to read the work because of its revelations about Wollstonecraft’s private life before her marriage to him.<sup>23</sup> Although it resulted in accelerating the reaction against Godwin’s moral view, it is nonetheless true that *Memoirs* was a pivotal work, one in which private affections and attachments were transformed from a threat to universal benevolence to an emblem of the human capacity for contributing to the sum of human benefit and fulfilling the demands of pure justice.<sup>24</sup>

His greater receptivity to “the empire of feelings” and his revised ideas about private affections find their further expression in *St Leon*, Godwin’s second popular novel after *Caleb Williams*. It was written during the period of the triumph of the conservative reaction and appeared in December 1799, the very end of the eighteenth century, which marked the peak of the fever of anti-Jacobinism.<sup>25</sup> *St Leon*, along with *Caleb Williams* and Holcroft’s *Anna St Ives*, is considered a principal example of the revolutionary novel, which contains a philosophical study on the great political agitation provoked by the French Revolution and empirical thoughts on human perfectibility. On

the social level, however, many critics reckon the novel to be a product not so much of the ebbing revolutionary movement as of the burgeoning romantic movement. In fact, romantic poets including not only Lord Byron, Percy Shelley and John Keats but even Coleridge admired and praised it.<sup>26</sup>

The year 1797, when Godwin embarked on *St Leon*, which he referred to in his diary as his “Opus Magnum,” marks the turning point in his post-revolutionary literary career as well as in his private life.<sup>27</sup> In January he completed *The Enquirer*, a collection of essays which embraces a variety of subjects from educational systems to English styles of writing.<sup>28</sup> In late eighteenth-century England, philosophical works and political treatises were repugnant to the public. Therefore, as St Clair implies, if Godwin wanted to let the public know his changed opinion, he would have to turn to fiction and write a new novel.

The Preface to *St Leon*, with which he followed up *The Enquirer* and *Memoirs*, successfully demonstrates the declared shift in his attitude towards human affections. It is regarded as “the most important statement in all the four volumes” of the novel for the reader to follow the train of Godwin’s thought.<sup>29</sup> It is intended in a certain degree to stand by itself, like each of the essays in *The Enquirer*. It shows that Godwin envisaged the narrative as a heritage of his lost life of ideal happiness with Wollstonecraft, which Brailsford called a successful “strange experiment in reconciling individualism with love.”<sup>30</sup> It also makes obvious that Godwin sought to reconcile a sentiment of general benevolence with private emotion in the narrative. Because of his “great conversion to the value of domestic ties,” the harshness of Godwinian rationalism is mitigated and tempered more greatly in *St Leon* than in other works.<sup>31</sup>

In the Preface, Godwin admits that “for more than four years” he has been anxious for opportunity to redress some of his earlier inflexible statements in *Political Justice* which treated “the affections and charities of private life” with no great degree of indulgence and favour. To provide a full explanation for his changed position, Godwin

states:

Not that I see cause to make any change respecting the principle of justice, . . . but that I apprehend domestic and private affections inseparable from the nature of man, and from what may be styled the culture of the heart, and am fully persuaded that they are not incompatible with a profound and active sense of justice in the mind of him that cherishes them. True wisdom will recommend to us individual attachments; for with them our minds are more thoroughly maintained in activity and life than they can be under the privation of them; and it is better that man should be a living being, than a stock or a stone. True virtue will sanction this recommendation; since it is the object of virtue to produce happiness, and since the man who lives in the midst of domestic relations will have opportunities of conferring pleasure, . . . without interfering with the purposes of general benevolence. Nay, by kindling his sensibility and harmonizing his soul, they may be expected, if he is endowed with a liberal and manly spirit, to render him more prompt in the service of strangers and the public. (*SL Preface*)

The last passage of the Preface is directly quoted from the second edition of *Memoirs*, expressing his conviction that the cultivation of private affection is indispensable to the complete growth of the individual and can, in its turn, foster wider social benevolence. Godwin quotes the same passage for a third time in the pamphlet published two years later, which is known as a reply to Dr. Parr. Contemporary readers could immediately read the influence of the thought of Wollstonecraft in the passage, as could Inchbald and Holcroft. “True happiness,” Wollstonecraft says, “must arise from well-regulated affections.” Never indiscriminately praising affections, she is persuaded that, if well-regulated, private affections will nurture social affections:

. . . if you wish to make good citizens, you must first exercise the affections of a son and a brother. This is the only way to expand the heart; for public affections, as well as public virtues, must ever grow out of the private character, or they are

merely meteors that shoot athwart a dark sky, and disappear as they are gazed at and admired.

She believes firmly that “it is the recollection of these first affections” for “their parents, their brothers, sisters, and even the domestic brutes” that “gives life to those that are afterwards more under the direction of reason.”<sup>32</sup>

The story of *St Leon*, in which the eponymous hero sacrifices the pleasures of domestic life to gain secret knowledge only to find himself an outcast from human society, is an unequivocal manifestation of Wollstonecraft’s influence in concession to private affections. Through the delineation of familial bonds which are never enjoyed in *Caleb Williams*, the novel indicates that Godwin no longer denies the value of private affections and that he has realized “the beauty and duty of loving ‘the little platoon to which [he] belong[s].’”<sup>33</sup> Just like Godwin, St Leon eulogizes domestic affection over and over again: “I have learned to value my domestic blessings as I ought. Having preserved them, I esteem myself to have lost nothing.” (*SL* 93) Yet at the same time, the novel seems to confirm the restrictive position of human affections in the ethical world. More accurately, the story shows that private affection, only when kept within due bounds, is no longer selfish in its tendency and at variance with social affection. Virtuous main characters including St Leon himself never have their private affections run out of control, and therefore never compromise the general good by them. *St Leon* is an ambitious experiment in the marriage of utilitarianism and private affection, and of reason and emotion in the sphere of morality.

Then the same views are expounded in detail in the significant pamphlet *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr’s Spital Sermon*. It is one of the most excellent works of Godwin’s, to which Coleridge offers his tribute of admiration.<sup>34</sup> There Godwin analyzed once more the French Revolution and its aftermath marked with blood and substantial accomplishments, and insisted on the consistency of his essential philosophical ideas about gradual social progress, explaining more fully certain



modifications in his views on human feelings and affections. He wrote it in the first place to reply to all the attacks on his character and writings he had received from those who exhibited intemperate and incessant hostilities against the advocates of the new philosophy of *Political Justice*. Among them were James Mackintosh and Samuel Parr, former personal friends of Godwin who hailed his doctrine when it first appeared in 1793.<sup>35</sup> After the change of the public mood in England, however, Mackintosh openly started to criticize Godwin's political theory in his discourses, and in a famous anti-Godwinian sermon the Reverend Parr attacked the new philosophy as being "accompanied with a long and portentous train of evils, which [had] been negligently overlooked, or insidiously disguised" by its panegyrist. There Parr treated Godwin as a "wily insinuator, the child of affectation" who was "entitled at best only to contempt or pity" and as "a modern sage of capacious mind" who was "rapt in beatific visions of universal benevolence."<sup>36</sup> With "the generous rancor-free spirit which is the mark of true philosophy," Godwin refuted their arguments in his pamphlet before turning to a more worthy antagonist: Thomas Malthus, whose *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) delivered a more formidable theoretical attack on Godwin's political theory.<sup>37</sup>

In the eloquent pamphlet, Godwin quoted at length from the Preface to *St Leon*, allowing private affections to play a part in moral reasoning and judgement:

I would now say that . . . I ought not only, 'in ordinary cases, to provide for my wife and children, my brothers and relations, before I provide for strangers, . . . but that it would be well that my doing so, should arise from the operation of those private and domestic affections, by which through all ages of the world the conduct of mankind has been excited and directed.'<sup>38</sup>

Every person will be more influenced by motives peculiar to him as an individual than by an abstract principle of philanthropy. He ought to, by a necessity of nature, be more anxious about the welfare of those with whom he is closely connected than the welfare of strangers. The general propensity is scarcely an object of moral censure.

Well-regulated, it is a germ of a sentiment of general utility.<sup>39</sup> A series of those views greatly reflect Wollstonecraft's belief that early experience of affections for kindred and intimates is the foundation on which public affections and benevolence are naturally fostered. Being surprised to discover Godwin's conversion and moderation in the pamphlet, one of the contemporary reviews stated that he set out "the doctrine of the particular and general affections in so clear and masterly a light."<sup>40</sup> An individual of impartial justice in the first *Political Justice* was like "a stock or a stone" or like Houyhnhnms, noble and intelligent horses, perfectly governed by reason, that are depicted in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). In the pamphlet, Godwin describes a theoretical and aesthetic human image which comes a little closer to "a living being."

As has already been mentioned, Godwin does not suggest that private affections be given a paramount place in the moral world. They must be assigned their sphere and kept within bounds "in the great chart of a just moral conduct." A man's parental and filial affection and sentiment of love are "most admirable instruments in the execution of the purposes of virtue," yet it is certainly not them that determine him to be virtuous. "A truly virtuous character is the combined result of regulated affections." It belongs to one who could teach himself to recollect the principle of general utility "as often as pious men repeat their prayers" even when he is employed in benefiting more particularly to his family with "the dearest and most powerful sentiments of their nature." Thus, the duty of universal benevolence, that is, the duty of adding a contribution to the general stock of happiness, is still of sovereign importance even after the re-adjustment in Godwin's theory. People must always have their reason keep a strict eye on their passions and affections, which are all liable to excess, and in any situation assign them "rigorous limits." Godwin states that "I must take care not so to love, or so to obey my love to my parent or child, as to intrench upon an important and paramount public good."<sup>41</sup>

Godwin tries to demonstrate that the cause of universal benevolence ought never to be diminished by the full recognition of the beauty of private and domestic affections. Simultaneously he tries to illustrate somehow or other that the duty of being conducive to the demands of public good and that of “loving the little platoon” to which an individual belongs would by no means be mutually exclusive. In the treatises and novels he wrote after *Caleb Williams*, Godwin seeks to present the possibility of a virtuous individual of passion and feeling who has still a great capacity for making general utility the regulator of his actions and contributing to the production of the greatest public sum of happiness.

### 3. Godwin’s Revised Religious Ideas

As Daniel E. White points out, the moderation of Godwin’s earlier philosophical position is inseparable from “a longer and far more complex reflection upon his own religious history,” in other words, “the history of rational Dissent.”<sup>42</sup> To a philosophical moralist bred in Dissenting cultures, pondering the moral value of religious beliefs in general and of Christianity in particular is his lifework. Development not only in his political ideas but in his religious notions always accompanied further philosophical speculation and enquiry under the influence of a range of new ideas in his social circles and his own extensive reading. In fact, Godwin’s “great conversion” to the value of feelings and emotions in the later 1790s was almost concurrent with his reconsideration of his early Calvinistic belief. In an unpublished account written in 1800, “The Principal Revolutions of Opinion,” Godwin listed the three principal errors which he detected in the doctrines of his original *Political Justice*, each of which he thought resulted from his early Calvinistic principles:

1. Stoicism, or an inattention to the principle that pleasure and pain are the only bases on which morality can rest.
2. Sandemanianism, or an inattention to the principle that feeling, not judgment, is the source of human actions.
3. The

unqualified condemnation of the private affections.

It will easily be seen how strongly these errors are connected with the Calvinist system which had been so deeply wrought into my mind from early life, as to enable these errors long to survive the general system of religious opinions of which they formed a part.<sup>43</sup>

Godwin rejected his early stoicism for what he referred to as a theory of universal benevolence. White regards Godwin's repudiation of stoicism as "a typical example of the liberal progression among many Dissenters away from Calvinism and toward the less rigorous religion of heterodox Presbyterians, General Baptists, and Unitarians."<sup>44</sup> The second and third are errors, as Godwin claimed in the note, detected as a result of his perusal of David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40). Sandemanianism is a principle that the young Godwin embraced when he was the solitary pupil of Samuel Newton, a minister of the Independent Congregation in Norwich. According to Godwin's account, it is "the strictest and severest [form] of Christian religion."<sup>45</sup> The condemnation of private affections is a doctrine that Godwin acquired from the Reverend Joseph Fawcett and that he is here most anxious to renounce. He refers to Fawcett as "a declared enemy of the private and domestic affections; and his opinions on this head, well-adapted to the austerity and perfection which Calvinism recommends, had undoubtedly great influence on my mind."<sup>46</sup> While Godwin ascribes his rooting out of the latter two errors only to the influence of Hume, it can also be attributed to his coming into contact with Wollstonecraft's ideas.

The notes record Godwin's wavering religious beliefs in the 1780s and 90s. He became a deist after reading d'Holbach's *The System of Nature* which was a classic of French materialism, and then "reverted to Christianity under the mitigated form of Socinianism" under the influence of Joseph Priestley and his *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*.<sup>47</sup> Remaining a heterodox Dissenter, he became "a complete unbeliever" in Creeds in 1787, taking his "last farewell of the Christian faith" in 1788.<sup>48</sup>

Early in the 1790s, in consequence of his conversations with Holcroft, to whom Coleridge once referred as “Fierce, hot, petulant, the very High priest of Atheism,” Godwin became an atheist.<sup>49</sup> Through his contact with ideas of Wollstonecraft and other contemporary thinkers, however, by about 1800 he “ceased to regard the name of Atheist with the same complacency [he] had done” for several preceding years, while retaining the “repugnance of understanding for the idea of an intelligent Creator and Governor of the universe”:

My theism . . . consists in a reverent and soothing contemplation of all that is beautiful, grand, or mysterious in the system of the universe, and in a certain conscious intercourse and correspondence with the principles of these attributes, without attempting the idle task of developing and defining it.<sup>50</sup>

In that undated note, Godwin writes he owes a great deal of that train of thinking to Coleridge. Undoubtedly Wollstonecraft’s name ought to be added. Godwin’s representation of her religion in *Memoirs* demonstrates that he was attracted to her religious character.<sup>51</sup> Free from any strict dogmas, Wollstonecraft did not believe in the doctrine of future punishment. While expecting a future state, she would never “allow her ideas of that future state to be modified by the notions of judgment and retribution.” Godwin explains “her God” whom “she was accustomed to converse with”:

To her mind he was pictured as not less amiable, generous and kind, than great, wise and exalted . . . . The tenets of her system were the growth of her own moral taste, and her religion therefore had always been a gratification, never a terror, to her. (*Memoirs* 33-4)

Notwithstanding their different religious backgrounds, Godwin willingly admitted that her religion and virtue closely allied with his. Even during his atheistic years, in his circle, he always exposed himself to discourse and discussion concerning faith in God, specifically the ideas of God as Creator of the universe and His attributes. That helped his further reconsideration of Dissenting culture and of the Calvinist tradition,

facilitating his development from unbelief to a qualified form of theism.

Moreover, Godwin's experience of domestic happiness also encouraged his religious development, in which his new faith in private affections was gradually sublimated into "a sentimental gospel of love."<sup>52</sup> His conversion to those affections allowed him to have a "soothing contemplation" of the beautiful and mysterious in the system of the universe and to take his departure from being a "complete unbeliever." *St Leon* reflects that tendency, which is inherited and reinforced in all his subsequent novels. Godwin's contemporaries responded positively to the religious faith merged into his novel. One of them regarded *St Leon* as "Godwin's atone[ment] for the former paradoxes of his vanity or errors of his heart." He willingly thought that Godwin felt "the beautiful simplicity of the Christian doctrine," and at length showed himself to be "the able champion of revelation."<sup>53</sup> In *St Leon*, Godwin's reply to Parr, as well as in his notes, the shift in Godwin's religious thought appears the most prominent when considered in relation to his changed assessment of the position of feelings and domestic sympathy.

His theoretical shift to private concerns in the late 1790s by no means indicates that in his works subsequent to *Caleb Williams* Godwin withdrew from radical politics or gave up his preoccupations as a liberal political thinker and reformist. Rather, he seemed to engage in his duties more ardently than before. To grasp political realism, he regularly went to the houses of parliament, recording important debates and events. During the composition of *St Leon*, he applied himself to an enthusiastic study of the French Revolution and an enquiry into the process of advancing knowledge and truth. They led him to "a more culturally refined discourse and program for reform."<sup>54</sup> In *The Enquirer*, "descend[ing] in his investigations into the humbler walks of private life," Godwin theorizes about how the spread of knowledge and truth could be mediated and the cause of reform promoted through the mechanism of a literary text. There he insists that "the cause of political reform" and "the cause of intellectual and literary refinement"

must be “inseparably connected.”<sup>55</sup> *St Leon* was written immediately after *The Enquirer* with the same conviction that social improvement and literary engagement should be connected.

Much as *Caleb Williams* was presented as a literary vehicle for the expression of the refined and abstract speculation of *Political Justice*, *St Leon* was intended to convey to the public the ideas of *The Enquirer* and Godwin’s modified and developed thoughts. In *Caleb Williams*, Godwin tried to disturb his readers’ complacency about things happening in the real world and to arouse doubts in their minds by showing them the grotesque workings of political institutions and the evils of social prejudices. Readers were expected to sublimate their doubts and suspicions into rational observations of and discussions on general social conditions. In *St Leon*, on the other hand, he attempted to exploit “things as they were” for “a figurative rendering of contemporary concerns” to provide a crucial insight into “things as they are.” Through an extensive survey of the history of Europe “which [bore] directly on the situation of beleaguered radicals in the mid-1790s,” Godwin threw some doubt on contemporary political and traditional ideologies.<sup>56</sup> Simultaneously, he delineated the theoretical shift that had been taking place in his thought to provide readers with the initial impulses towards the search for philosophical truths in a different way from *Caleb Williams*. *St Leon* has all the important philosophical themes common to his works since *Caleb Williams*. One of them is the possibility of the marriage of universal benevolence and domestic affection. The operation of the law of necessity in the moral world is also dealt with throughout the novel. The chain of necessity in “things as they were” which bears directly on “things as they are” offers a new perspective on the shift in Godwin’s philosophical ideas of human perfectibility and social reform.

#### 4. The Possibility of the Marriage between Utilitarianism and Private Affection in *St Leon*

The particularized historical setting of *St Leon* is the time of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation. Mainly the narrative covers events in Europe that occurred between 1515 and 1565. Godwin read some fifty works of history of that era during the composition of the novel. It tells the confessional tale of Reginald de St Leon, a French nobleman, whose chivalric and feudal values degenerate into a craving for wealth and distinction. Having gambled away his fortune and been reduced to a poverty-stricken vulnerability, St Leon accepts two gifts from a mysterious dying stranger: the philosopher's stone and the elixir vitae. They represent the miraculous arts of "multiplying gold and of defying the inroads of infirmity and death." (SL 1) The only condition of the acceptance of those fatal gifts is absolute silence concerning their supernatural powers. That condition by which he is able to hold his privileges ultimately estranges him from his beloved family and cuts him off from humanity. His pathetic quest to reestablish his connection to society and the rest of mankind makes him wander through the Continents and get involved in European religious controversy, finally bringing him to set off to aid people suffering from a desperate famine in a Hungary exhausted in the struggle between Christians and despotic Turks.

Like Falkland in *Caleb Williams*, the disposition of St Leon is calculated to be understood as a product of circumstances. He is descended from "one of the most ancient and honourable families of the kingdom of France." (SL 3) Given an aristocratic education set up by his mother who "loved his honour and his fame" more than "his person," he has a passion for chivalric honour and the respect of the world. (4) James T. Boulton implies that Godwin again owes his inspiration for this character to Burke and has the novel bear marks of a symbolic purpose similar to that of *Caleb Williams*.<sup>57</sup> In addition to his early training, the circumstance that fixes the yet vacillating character of St Leon's youthful mind is his presence as a spectator at the celebrated meeting of



Francis I and Henry VIII in a field between Ardres and Guines.<sup>58</sup> The glamorous and dazzling scene of the meeting are impressive enough to implant in him an insatiable “passion for splendour and distinction,” and his military experiences as a martial soldier of the king effectively intensify that passion. (5) St Leon’s history tries to “particularize and historicize” the abstract insistence upon “the social determination of character” in Godwin’s philosophy.<sup>59</sup> All of the future ills of his life, which are foreseeable from the very outset of the narrative, stem from his birth, upbringing and early experiences in “the genuine theatre of honour and fame.” (28)

The first turning point of his life comes along when St Leon encounters an incomparable woman, Marguerite de Damville, who eventually becomes his life partner. Her character not only emphasizes the novel’s biographical element but represents the Romantic stress on the power of emotion and feeling. Marguerite, whose attributes bear a notable resemblance to those of Wollstonecraft, is the very embodiment of domestic affections. It is in the characterization of this sympathetic wife that contemporary readers were best willing to see how Godwin had modified his philosophical ideas in the light of Wollstonecraft’s thought. Holcroft wrote to Godwin: “Your Marguerite is inimitable. Knowing the model after which you drew, as often as I recollected it, my heart ached while I read.”<sup>60</sup>

Marguerite’s philosophical ideas about domestic ties and values, though idealized by Godwin, reflect the thought found in Wollstonecraft’s *Letters from Norway*. Marguerite enlightens St Leon with “all the gratifications that attend upon domestic affections,” reasoning with him about “the passions of a mind depraved” seeking splendour and chivalric glory. (SL 37, 85) Her expostulation shows some principal ethical ideas belonging to Wollstonecraft. In *Letters from Norway*, Wollstonecraft criticizes the “poms and vanities of life” for their baleful effect on human moral character, and attacks the “tyranny of wealth” which is “still more galling and debasing than that of rank.” She also explores the destructive influence of the “chase after wealth”

on domestic relationships, suggesting that it shrivels private affections and that in such a chase “all the endearing charities of citizen, husband, father, brother, become empty names.”<sup>61</sup> Moreover, Wollstonecraft’s theoretical ideas concerning liberal individualism and egalitarianism are echoed in Marguerite’s thought. Marguerite thinks that a person could take “the only genuine road to independence” only through dismissing “artificial tastes” and “idle and visionary pursuits” and living in “true patriarchal simplicity” which cultivates his heart and mind. (*SL* 85)<sup>62</sup>

St Leon’s exuberant admiration for his wife echoes the great tribute to Wollstonecraft in *Memoirs*: “[Marguerite’s] mind was well furnished with every thing that could add to her accomplishments as a wife and a mother.” (*SL* 34) He also describes her as the light of truth:

I no sooner observed her manners, and became acquainted with her merits, than my heart was unalterably fixed. I became as it were a new man. I was like one, who, after his eyes had grown imperceptibly dim till at length every object appeared indistinct and of a gloomy general hue, has his sight instantaneously restored, and beholds the fabric of the universe in its genuine clearness, brilliancy, and truth. (*SL* 35)

Godwin’s contemporaries had already met a perfectly virtuous female in Holcroft’s *Anna St Ives*. Anna, like Marguerite, is full of sensibility and has a distinguished moral taste. While Anna, who always guides herself by the ruling principles of justice and benevolence, is a perfect heroine of reason and enlightenment, Marguerite has warmer feelings and more domestic sympathy and is greatly maternal in her ability to support and console. St Leon’s high praise for her persuaded readers of Godwin’s having become the “warm and eloquent panegyrist of connubial love, domestic sympathy, and kindred connections.”<sup>63</sup>

It is easy to detect Godwin’s intention to reveal the change and correction of his thought to the public in the characterization of Marguerite as a “worshipper of domestic

life” and St Leon’s panegyric on her virtues. Nevertheless, there is equivocality and ambiguity in Godwin’s treatment of his own theoretical intention, making it difficult to confirm his hard-earned conviction that the experience of domestic affections is essential to human development and general happiness. First of all, like the poet Clare in *Caleb Williams*, who is the perfect mentor figure to Falkland, Marguerite lacks crucial energy to prevail upon St Leon to surrender his obsessive claim to admiration and homage. Therefore, in spite of her eloquent expostulation, she can neither guide him to simple and genuine pleasures in the domestic sphere nor prevent him from being attracted by the stranger with alchemic secrets whose presence she necessarily feels as an evil. Fundamentally self-silencing, Marguerite is a complying and submissive wife. St Leon looks back on his old days and says that “the only defect of character I am able to impute to her” would be her “ill-judged forbearance and tenderness for my feelings.” (SL 52)

Some critics claim that the idealized female vision in the character of Marguerite is at variance with the progressive views in *Political Justice* concerning woman as a socially independent individual. They imply that Godwin overly celebrated the traditional feminine virtues in Marguerite because he wanted to moderate the public’s rage towards the image of Wollstonecraft that his *Memoirs* had stirred up and because he intended to retrieve her honour as a wife and a mother. St Clair considers the narrative itself a product created in “expiation of the impiety of the *Memoirs*,” stating that Marguerite is “loyal, supportive, forgiving, long-suffering, domestic, motherly, religious, and lacking in any kind of overt sexuality . . . If [she] is the culmination of the perfecting policies recommended in *Political Justice*, few people of either sex would wish to accelerate the process.”<sup>64</sup>

Secondly, St Leon could not be considered a reliable interpreter of his own belief in domestic affection and its efficacy. The confession he makes is full of praise for the beauty of the common sentiment of tenderness, the mutual interchange of attachments

and familial affections. However, these prove insufficient to persuade him to become a genuine member of “[the] society of Marguerite,” that he regards as “the true school of humanity.” (SL 49) The yearning for substantial rewards such as peaceful domestic life and reciprocations of affections, which originates in his guilt over the calamities of his family, can only blur his obsessive need for wealth and show. His sense of the blessing of domestic affections never diminishes at any time in the course of his whole history, as some critics point out.<sup>65</sup> Yet, throughout the narrative, his heart remains veering between the persistent masculine ambition for distinction and outbursts of irrepressible joy and raptures at the happiness of calm domestic harmony. His eulogy on domestic affections and their virtues appears to represent no more than moral standards to him and rings hollow in readers’ ears. Louise Joy suggests that St Leon only writes about the sustained appeal of domestic affections by fits and starts and persistently tries to draw his narrative back to its “moral epicenter.” For all that, as Joy states, it seems that domestic affections are not absorbing enough to enthrall the attention of the eulogist himself.<sup>66</sup>

Thirdly, a series of events in St Leon’s mind accompanied by the arrival of the stranger, which is the second turning point in his history, draws attention to Godwin’s mixed ideas as to domestic attachment as a foothold towards universal benevolence. They are depicted in relation to his ideas of solitude and individualism. As *Caleb Williams* does, some contemporary novels use the theme of terrible solitude to disapprove abuses of the exclusive political system that punishes an individual who would not orient himself to established national, religious or ethnic customs. And others exploit it to emphasize the need for friendship and roots in a community and to confirm that without a sense of community and sharing, all the satisfactions a human being could attain are empty. In *St Leon*, Godwin intended to use the motif of solitude as a fatal obstacle to private attachments and domestic ties, showing that “Man was not born to live alone . . . when those ties are broken, he ceases from all genuine existence.” (SL

282) On the other side, however, the same motif is also represented as an essential condition of the achievement of universal benevolence.

St Leon's inheritance of the secret arts reflects his inner desire for mental and physical solitude. Indeed, he cannot refuse the temptations of the stranger because he in a sense is drawn to the man's solitary situation, that which renders him capable of "standing, and thinking, and feeling, alone." (*SL* 126) St Leon observes "the marks of a vigorous and masculine genius" in this dying man who is obviously precluded from ever having warm domestic ties. (141) In St Leon's mind, the sense of inscrutable solitariness is mixed with the ideal of unfettered liberal individualism to be a *sine qua non* for the pursuit of his exalted aspirations. Juliet Beckett implies that the stranger not only awakens in St Leon a burning Promethean aspiration to forbidden knowledge and its benevolent use for mankind but gives him "the doctrine of Promethean individualism." According to the doctrine, in order to accomplish his ambition and execute lofty plans, a man has to dissolve all family ties and conceive an ardent attachment to that aim beyond the limits of the domestic sphere.<sup>67</sup>

When St Leon hesitates to accept the secret gifts, the stranger insists that no gallant action or great discovery be carried out and no important benefit be conferred upon the human race by a man who is incapable of separating himself from every private affection and domestic tie.

A man can never be respectable in the eyes of the world or in his own, except so far as he stands by himself and is truly independent. He may have friends; he may have domestic connections; but he must not in these connections lose his individuality. Nothing truly great was ever achieved, that was not executed or planned in solitary seclusion. (*SL* 138)

Further tracing of St Leon's history gradually reveals that his decisions at every stage of his life are derived from the more obstinate view that the concept of family ties is inconsistent with the value of individuality, which is undoubtedly associated with

Godwin's philosophical view of individualism. For Godwin, "individuality is of the very essence of intellectual excellence" and moral refinement. He entrusts the progress of society to those who have "the fortitude to maintain [their] individuality." (*PJ* 757) His defense of the value of individuality, which leads to determined attacks on all social contracts and traditional customs, including matrimonial vows, cohabitation and all forms of cooperation, is based on his belief in the social utility of individualism. Society is "nothing more than an aggregation of individuals." (176) The improvement of society must depend on the improvement of each individual and on the exercise of reason. Even in his period of transition, Godwin did not temper his attacks on social institutions. He thought that persons "ought to be able to do without one another" as intellectual individuals at any time. Each individual must be free from all forms of social contract and institution and stand alone, becoming "the most perfect man, to whom society is not a necessary of life, but a luxury, innocent and enviable, in which he joyfully indulges." (761) Godwin goes on to say:

Such a man will not fly to society, as to something requisite for the consuming of his time, or the refuge of his weakness. In society he will find pleasure; . . . But he will resort with a scarcely inferior eagerness to solitude; and will find in it the highest complacency and the purest delight. (*PJ* 761)

The essential idea of utilitarianism and individualism which has underlain Godwin's political theory would not complement his new understanding of the utility of family ties and private affections. That reflects the inconsistency between St Leon's celebration of domestic affection and his undercutting its potential to general utility as well as Godwin's complicated thought about it.

The stranger's belief is incompatible with that of Marguerite because she insists that through her devotion to her family she makes a genuine contribution to "the instruction of all connected with [her], and to the mass of human knowledge," and therefore to general happiness. She gives her son Charles "the refinements and purifying

of intellect” and expands his heart with domestic pleasures from which “a heart burning with the love of mankind” grows. He will be “the counsellor and protector” of his family and of people connected with him. He will “institute in his adoptive country new defences for liberty, new systems of public benefit, and new improvements of life.” (*SL* 86) In her idealistic thought, the domestic sphere is a true school of public affections and public virtues. As stated already, this view reflects Wollstonecraft’s idea about the sound process of gradual social improvement as well as the portrait of Godwin’s virtuous individual of universal benevolence and domestic affection in the Preface. St Leon seemingly extols the virtues of Marguerite’s thought, yet deep in his heart he cannot sympathize with it at all.

St Leon confesses that he is “deaf to the soundness of [Marguerite’s] exhortations.” He feels them “totally foreign to [his] own situation.” (*SL* 79) Her words have “the sound of an angelic lyre,” but they can only calm his spirit. (233) On the other hand, the expostulation of the stranger sounds like “the voice of thunder” “rolling in a rich and sublime swell” to him, strongly appealing to the passion of his soul. (136) Below the threshold of consciousness, he feels no scruples about becoming the possessor of Promethean knowledge to win back his individuality, which he has lost in peaceful but “inglorious obscurity” with his family. (126) He determines to pursue his lofty aspiration “beyond the depressing limits of a domesticated life.”<sup>68</sup> More importantly, it is not until St Leon breaks family ties that he realizes a sense of duty of universal benevolence. In fact, renouncing domestic pleasures leads him to desire to become an independent productive member of society. With unlimited powers of action and alchemical arts, he tries to make his benevolent and masculine mark in a wider sphere of life.

St Leon’s story fails to indicate the possibility of marriage between private affection and a sense of universal benevolence. The possibility seems to be denied in Promethean and Godwinian individualism. The two pulls—private and universal

benevolence—never stand together in St Leon’s motives. Either one or the other is alternately in the saddle in his mind. He turns his attention to disinterested acts or philanthropic ends only when he is freed from every familial obligation. Within the domestic sphere, where he says he can enjoy tranquilizing pleasures, he is overwhelmed by his grief for loss of reputation and guilt over the calamities of his family. There he is physically and mentally fragile, clinging to unproductive objects such as the restitution of both his family name and patrimony and apathetic about the pursuit of public good. Every thought in his mind has “no room for the sentiment of general humanity.” (*SL* 91)

With the inheritance of secret arts, St Leon becomes “individualism personified,” like Prometheus.<sup>69</sup> The sudden and suspicious change in St Leon not only causes his only son Charles to leave his “unnatural father” and family but brings Marguerite to an invalidism from which she never recovers (*SL* 197). She is delivered of a dead child and expires.<sup>70</sup> Placing his daughters in France under another name, St Leon at last “burst[s] [his] fetters and [is] free.” (293)<sup>71</sup>

I exerted myself to shake off my lethargy, and rouse the faculties of my soul. I refused to give way to omens of evil portent, and resolved to see what might yet be made of my endowments. There is no misfortune that has not in it some slight mixture of good. My being now alone, and detached from every relative tie, left me at liberty to pursue my projects with a bolder enterprise. (*SL* 302)

Laying aside his “revel[ing] in the luxury of domestic affections,” St Leon becomes an “indefatigable planner” of his life, ceaselessly striving to navigate his fortune and to maintain and enhance his independent status in the world. (101) Even his ambition for fame shows the valuable nature of a “species of reputation” which is “connected with usefulness” and can give “efficacy to [his] services to others.”<sup>72</sup> St Leon’s attempt to assist the starving and shelterless inhabitants of war-torn Hungary and to restore its ravaged economy is the most philanthropic and benevolent action in his life: “I resolved to pour the entire stream of my riches, like a mighty river, to fertilise these wasted



plains, and revive their fainting inhabitants.” (369) As a result of his attempt, he is celebrated as a “savior of Hungary.” (376)

Finally, with the death of Marguerite, her blueprint for an ideal community constituted of virtuous individuals capable of yoking universal benevolence and domestic affection is consigned to oblivion. Readers are given faint glimpses of the blueprint as a past legacy while St Leon is eulogizing Marguerite and her virtues. As his story unfolds, the blueprint is practically erased by the account of European countries characterized by religious disturbances and Machiavellian tactics, where St Leon accumulates personal experiences after leaving his family. This means that the possibility of combining private pull with benevolent pull in the moral world is doubly denied in the novel.

St Leon’s history in the end seems to reveal Godwin’s complicated skepticism on establishing the principle of the successful cultivation of “individual attachments” without “interfering with the purposes of general benevolence.” (*SL* Preface) Godwin’s contemporary critics gave considerable attention to his great conversion to the value of private affections. They willingly emphasized and praised “the social and domestic virtues placed in their proper rank” in *St Leon*.<sup>73</sup> As mentioned, however, the novel shows inconsistency between Godwin’s intention as seen in the Preface and his philosophical belief. Certainly, private attachment is no longer condemned as selfish in tendency. Rather, it is one of the most noble manifestations of human nature. On the other hand, the novel could neither remove the threat that personal attachments pose to an active sense of impartial judgement and universal benevolence nor demonstrate the efficacy of private affections as a means of gradual social change. Actually, the novel shows that it is almost impossible for an individual to reach his full potential as a contributor to both public welfare and domestic and private attachments. Indeed, it fails in positing not only private affection but universal benevolence as agents in resolving all the social problems for which Godwin provides optimistic remedy in *Political*

*Justice*. All St Leon's benevolent attempts to be "the steward and the father" of all human creatures are thwarted by the power of entrenched human prejudices and ignorance. That is related to Godwin's notion of the chain of necessity receding from human perfectibility.

##### 5. The Operation of the Law of Necessity in *St Leon*

As in *Caleb Williams*, Godwin is perfectly consistent when he describes how deeply the spirit of a person's social conditioning intrudes itself into his mind and how difficult and seemingly impossible it is for him to dispel its influence on his character and habits of mind. His protagonist's inability to reject a false sense of honour and chivalric values demonstrates again the descriptive framework of *Political Justice*, suggesting that a prejudiced institutional mechanism could poison and spoil the human mind, whose nature should be shaped for the love of goodness and justice. It is a delineation of the negative side of the law of necessity. Simultaneously, when St Leon recalls the propensity of his acts as "fatal and irresistible," that arouses doubts concerning the optimistic foundation of Godwin's philosophy. (SL 51) In *St Leon*, as in *Caleb Williams*, Godwin neither delineates the positive operation of the law of necessity nor demonstrates how to direct and redirect "the determinist chain" governing human beings. In fact, *St Leon* implies that Godwin's ideas of the operation of necessity show a marked tendency towards a skeptical view of social progress and human perfectibility.

Godwin gives St Leon superhuman powers with which he wanders about European countries including republican Switzerland, Germany, Roman Catholic Italy and Spain for a few centuries. Those powers enable him to witness "the rise and falls of empires." (SL 164) Godwin could employ "St Leon's peregrinations in so many different countries under so many different systems" in order not only to attack corrupt social institutions but to emphasize the inevitable progress and improvement of society and human beings in the course of history.<sup>74</sup> Actually, however, he only delineates irrationality and

disorder in medieval European society. St Leon's story denies the possibility of the human mind "shak[ing] off the fetters of prescription and prejudices."<sup>75</sup> On the contrary, it manifests the "imperfectness of [his] nature," implying that human nature tends to turn against perpetual improvement. (262) That is illustrated in Godwin's treatment of the doctrine of necessity in the moral world.

St Leon's world is governed by the law of necessity. The novel repeatedly conveys that "[in] the life of every human being there is a chain of events, generated in the lapse of ages which preceded his birth, and going on in regular procession through the whole period of his existence." (*PJ* 351) St Leon recognizes that chain better than anyone else through his experiences for centuries.

Every thing in the world is conducted by gradual process. This seems to be the great principle of harmony in the universe. Nothing is abrupt; one thing is so blended and softened into another, that it is impossible to say where the former ends and the latter begins. (*SL* 169)

Through his experiences, he gradually realizes that the chain of necessity governing his world is one of evil custom and ignorance without beginning or end. St Leon's history gradually makes that clear. First of all, as mentioned above, that is indicated in his failure in becoming a pupil of Marguerite.

St Leon forfeits all domestic ties when he accepts the promise of the gifts. His weakness in succumbing to the allurements of those superhuman powers is certainly the result of his early upbringing and experiences in "the genuine theatre of honour and fame." It is impossible for him to ignore the furious words the mysterious stranger hurls at him while taunting his hesitation:

Feeble and effeminate mortal! You are neither a knight nor a Frenchman! Or rather, having been both, you have forgotten in inglorious obscurity every thing worthy of either! Was ever gallant action achieved by him who was incapable of separating himself from a woman? Was ever a great discovery prosecuted, or an important

benefit conferred upon the human race, by him who was incapable of standing, and thinking, and feeling, alone?" (SL 126)

The man's diatribe kindles a sense of shame and eagerness for fame in St Leon's bosom that he is powerless to resist.

St Leon's temper and habits of mind are "perfectly conformable to principles of the strictest honour," leading him towards "the high road to ruin." (SL 35) They arise from the chain of necessity and therefore would not be "abruptly superseded and reversed." (PJ 341) Unlike Falkland in *Caleb Williams*, St Leon is given the perfect opportunity at which "the determinist chain [could] be redirected."<sup>76</sup> It is "the true school of humanity" well integrated into "[the] society of Marguerite," where she reasons with him and endeavours to cultivate his understanding. (SL 49) Her lessons seem to spark "a new turn to [his] tempers and disposition." (255) As has already been seen, however, they excite his respect but can only produce "imperfect" and "transient" conviction. (87)

In his doctrine of necessity, Godwin states that if a person's temper and habits are superseded or reversed, it should be "in consequence of some strong reason persuading, or some extraordinary event modifying his mind." (PJ 341) And if the reason and event are favorable and proper, according to the law of necessity, they can correct the defects of his character and increase excellencies. This is the essential element of Godwin's doctrine of necessity which promises human perfectibility. Marguerite's lessons do not have enough strength to correct "[the] monstrous deformity" of St Leon's character and cannot reverse the chain of necessity in his life. (SL 36)

Secondly, St Leon's inability to serve as "[a] benefactor and parent of mankind" implies the inability of human beings to be set free from ideological prejudices. (SL 416) The alchemical arts bestowed on St Leon give him ample time to observe the succession of events in the world, enabling him to grasp the operation of the law of necessity. He gains a wide range of knowledge and experience through his wandering life. Now he "stand[s] in the place of an impartial umpire" amid events and appreciates

that there is “[a] chain and combination of events, that proceeds systematically from link to link.” (154, 228) Under the law of necessity, “the further [men] have extended their enquiries and observation” of events, “the more reason they have found to conclude that everything takes place according to necessary and universal laws.” (*PJ* 343) St Leon also understands that there is “essential conjunction between [human] motives and actions” as well as “between [human] past and future actions.” (341) According to Godwin’s doctrine of necessity, the ability to “trace a method and unity of system in men’s tempers, propensities and transactions” is one of the most essential attributes of an individual on the high road towards the attainment of human perfectibility. (340) St Leon gradually acquires the ability to predict what persons would be and think thanks to the capacity of living for ever. As Handwerk points out, in this sense, the stranger’s gifts can be seen as the powerful tools of enlightenment:

The elixir of life might even be seen as the ideal Enlightenment drug, for . . . it allows St Leon to accumulate enough personal experiences and precedents to make truly informed, rational choices. It grants him as an individual the wisdom ascribed by the Enlightenment to historical progress as a whole. In addition, his wealth makes him . . . essentially independent of social or governmental constraint on his freedom of action.<sup>77</sup>

In fact, St Leon learns to make reasoned choices and use his ability for the sake of his survival. He is imprisoned in Constance because he cannot give a satisfactory account of the sudden growth of his wealth and the disappearance of the alchemist. Interestingly, he efficiently traces “[the] method and unity of system in men’s tempers, propensities and transactions” in order to choose a bribable person who will help him escape from prison. “[A]mong persons of middling rank and easier circumstances,” there are “varieties of disposition.” Some have “the whim of integrity,” or place “a sturdy sort of pride in showing that they [are] content with what they [have], and [are] too high for a bribe.” Others, “though of plebeian rank,” value “reputation” and “[are]

of opinion that no advance of station could compensate for the name or the consciousness of dishonour.” (*SL* 234) Through employing the arts deduced from “the unity of system” in persons, St Leon at last succeeds in finding “a man whose very soul melt[s] at a bribe, whom money [will] seduce to perpetrate whatever his judgment most abhor[s].” (237) He uses the arts to “prevail upon others to become the tools and instruments of [his] purposes” depending on the situation. (*PJ* 341) And it is the same arts of playing upon men’s hopes, fears, sense of honour and greed that the stranger employed for singling St Leon out as the inheritor of his gifts.

The point is that St Leon can never use those arts in order to contribute to the general welfare. He valiantly endeavours to become “a machine capable of . . . so much utility to other men.” (*SL* 154) Importantly, his failure as a social reformist results from deep-seated ideological prejudices and superstition enchainning the public and himself. Every time his “great ‘experiment’ in benevolence” makes him aware of impregnable strength of superstition and prejudices rooted in human minds.<sup>78</sup> His invisible powers always cause him to be the object of morbid curiosity and total hatred of people. St Leon can neither show his benevolent intentions to those who consider him a wicked necromancer nor reason them out of superstition. “[The] jaundiced eye of superstition metamorphose[s]” a noble benefactor into “a devil.” (267) St Leon unsuccessfully tries to “control the madness of infuriated superstition,” which is itself he has to admit the product of necessity. (285) The mob is the manifestation of Godwin’s skeptical reassessment of the operation of necessity.

There was no malice in their hearts. They were in reality a mere material machine, led on without reflection, and, when they had committed a momentary ravage, astonished themselves the most at the injury they had perpetrated. They were as light and variable as a feather, driven with every breath; and nothing could argue greater obliquity of intellect than to suppose, because they were in a certain temper and sentiment to-day, that they would be found in a similar temper and sentiment

to-morrow. (*SL* 285-6)

When a superstitious Italian mob burns down St Leon's house and kills his devoted servant, he realizes that nothing can "defend a man from the unrelenting antipathy of his fellows." (*SL* 289) His conviction leads readers to the pessimistic conviction that their contemporary age, "things as they are," is essentially the same as the middle ages, "things as they were," in both of which "man only is the common foe of man." According to St Clair, this episode recalls "the Birmingham riots of 1791" in which Joseph Priestley's house was burnt and destroyed by reactionary conservatives.<sup>79</sup> The awful incident in the novel results in introducing St Leon as well as contemporary readers to a most pessimistic view of human and social progress: "there [is] a principle in the human mind destined to be eternally at war with improvement and science." (289-90)

On the other hand, St Leon is also fettered by religious ideology and superstition. His inability to employ his alchemical arts as "Enlightenment drug" is in one way attributed to his notion that alchemy is immoral and "corrupt[s] the vitals of honour" and that "[an] adept and an alchemist is a low character." (*SL* 210) While trying to use his powers for "holy and beneficent purposes," he accepts the ideological thought that the possession of those superhuman arts is "a transgression of 'natural' human limitations" and therefore blasphemy.<sup>80</sup> The efficacy of those powers appears to St Leon a "curse." Ideological thought hinders him in his active use of alchemical ability. In fact, it is clearly observed that his alchemical arts are indeed a curse because their condition of secrecy brings him domestic loss and social ostracism.<sup>81</sup> And his ideological prejudices, which repeatedly cloud his judgement and fray his patience, could be condemned as a true "curse." As Handwerk has pointed out, St Leon himself "impedes" his own reformist attempts by the ideology that he "internalizes and perpetuates" in spite of his efforts to consciously reject it.<sup>82</sup> Ideological conviction is a link in the eternal chain of necessity in St Leon's life, and it is impossible for him to remove it.

The chain of necessity receding from social progress and human perfectibility is symbolically depicted in a repetition of events in his personal and social history. St Leon's restoration of youth and health through the medium of the *opus magnum* foregrounds "[a] symptomatic repetition of his fate."<sup>83</sup> His life is a repetition of bonding and separation and of alternately revived ambition and despair. St Leon cannot avoid repeating failures in his reformist attempts; he tries to use the philosopher's stone to save people, becomes an object of their hatred and persecution, and ends in the dungeon and prison as a criminal, a dealer in black arts, or a heretic. He eventually finds that he is "only acting over again what [the stranger] experienced before [him]." (*SL* 339)

Also repetition of his fate is manifested in his son Charles. St Leon meets his son again after 15 years of separation. Thanks to his changed appearance and name, St Leon can form a friendship with him. Charles, who is now a renowned knight of Austria, has fought against the Turks and their allies for "the overthrow of Mahomet and his blasphemous impieties." (*SL* 444) His "martial heroism" never allows him to tolerate philanthropic attempts to end the war (Charles never knows that it is his father who has carried out those attempts to rescue people in Hungary from famine). (446) Charles has dropped his father's surname and taken his mother's, "de Damville," out of deep respect to Marguerite and her virtues. Like her, he is "perfectly noble [and] self-sacrificing."<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, however, his sentiments and passions are indeed the embodiment of the chivalric values with which St Leon was infatuated and by which he was deluded. Charles clearly inherits his father's earliest disposition and ideological propensities, as if they were hereditary traits. Moreover, St Leon confesses that though he now regards chivalric order and heroic code as parents of his eternal regret, he cannot help but admire "the grandeur of soul with which this heroic fable inspire[s] [Charles]": "I [am] sensible to the lustre which military zeal cast[s] round the character of my son." (446) The repetition of events in St Leon's mind as well as Charles' nature and ideological prejudices are manifestations of the determinist chain that "proceeds systematically



from link to link” without being redirected through the whole period of a person’s life.

Heightened skepticism about the fulfillment of necessary social reform and improvement is also reflected in the repetition of events in the history of human society. In the novel, Godwin uses authentic historical events for his analogy to his contemporary events. The Italian mob episode is typical, and so is the Spanish Inquisition. As Caleb’s adventure reveals the oppressions of feudalism and the tyranny of institutional law, St Leon’s peregrination discloses the corruption and inhumanity of social structures such as Hungary’s bureaucracy and theocracy, which Godwin sternly criticizes through the mouth of St Leon. Through employing historical events of his age, Godwin brings forth “the power of historical repetition” to provide “a tough-minded demonstration” of how insistently ideological prejudices are inherited and “re-emerge.”<sup>85</sup>

The Chief Inquisitor argues in defense of the Inquisition: “The passions of mankind [are] on the side of falsehood; man, unrestrained by law, [is] a wild, ferocious, and most pernicious beast, and, were it not for the wholesome curb of authority, would speedily throw off all ties and limitations, human and divine.” “[The] heretical followers of Luther and Calvin” who attack the inherited collective creeds are in reality “the determined enemies of all revelation.” He goes on to insist that the Inquisition is “the most salutary institution” because it “supersede[s] the necessity of innumerable punishments” by “a moderate and judicious exhibition of terror.” (*SL* 315) As Flanders comments, the Inquisition clearly reflects British government in the 1790s that tried to suppress all liberal political thinkers and ideas.<sup>86</sup> The assertion of the Chief Inquisitor emphasizes again that the chain of events has not been redirected from “things as they were” down to “things as they are.” The Inquisition is generated and acting “under the direction of immutable laws” for the sake of men born weak, ignorant and evil. (315) While resenting the Inquisitor’s remarks, St Leon has no materials for refutation or rational persuasion after observing the multitude collectively violent, passionate and

deprived of private judgement.

St Leon's pessimism about humankind is fatally intensified when he witnesses the awful scene of the "*auto da fé*," which is performed in honour of the return of Philip the Second, "pious and inquisitorial tyranny." (SL 337) The cruel form of execution, burning to death, is one of the most appalling offsprings of bloodthirsty superstition in the middle ages.<sup>87</sup> The Spanish Inquisition and the "*auto da fé*" are indeed not negative legacies that Godwin's contemporary readers find only in "the remotest page of history." Unjustified trials and executions are acted under the despotic institutional law in Caleb's world and in the reign of Terror by anti-Jacobinism in 1790s England. Also the merciless executions and the madness of an infuriated multitude were witnessed in the Terror in France. St Leon cannot help showing deep skepticism about the necessity of perpetual improvement in human morality and the possibility of social reform: "Prejudice, party, difference of countries, difference of religions, and a thousand wild chimeras of fanaticism or superstition, are continually arming us against a man, of whose virtues and qualities we are ignorant, and into whose benevolent or evil intentions we disdain to enquire." (305) His skepticism seems to be shared by Godwin and his contemporary fellows.

The pessimistic view of the chain of necessity which produces the historical repetition of events is integrated into St Leon's remarks:

Oh, no! human affairs, like the waves of the ocean, are merely in a state of ebb and flow: "there is nothing new under the sun:" two centuries perhaps after Philip the Second shall be gathered to his ancestors [he died in 1598], men shall learn over again to persecute each other for conscience sake. (SL 338)

Here Godwin has St Leon quote a verse from Ecclesiastes: "There is nothing new under the sun."<sup>88</sup> Interestingly, the same verse is quoted in *Letters from Norway*. There Wollstonecraft delineated underdeveloped governments, uncivilized customs and people of poor intelligence in Sweden. Still, she expressed her strong faith in human

improvement and social progress achieved since Solomon's age. She harbored hopes for "more noble and beneficial" change and progress of humankind.<sup>89</sup> Unlike Wollstonecraft, on the other hand, St Leon reflects his disappointment concerning every cherished hope for mankind in this verse. Instead of showing the progress of mankind from the uncivilized to the civilized state, his long wandering and eventful journey conveys that the fulfillment of progressive ideals is a great illusion.

St Leon brings his story to an abrupt close with enthusiastic praise for the illustrious history of Charles and his happy marriage with a virtuous girl, Pandora.

[Charles'] virtue was at length crowned with the most enviable reward the earth has to boast,— the faithful attachment of a noble-minded and accomplished woman. I am happy to close my eventful and somewhat melancholy story with so pleasing a termination. (*SL* 478)

His last remarks in chivalric tone are also the repetition of a eulogium to domestic affections. And their marriage reminds readers of the marriage between St Leon and Marguerite.

## 6. Pessimistic Views about Human Perfectibility

Godwin is very persuasive when demonstrating the social determination of human character and habits in his novels *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon*. He is very eloquent when delivering a sweeping criticism of corrupt governments and social systems. Both novels illustrate the spirits and characters of political institutions deeply intruding into human minds of every rank. Both provide plenty of examples of the destructive impacts of ideological social prejudices upon the dispositions of individuals. In those points, political purpose in the narratives seems to be in accordance with purpose in *Political Justice*. In *St Leon*, through a great deal of emphasis on the virtue of familial attachments, he successfully registers his conversion to the value of domestic and private affection, although unsuccessfully treating it as a stepping-stone towards the

achievement of universal benevolence. The question is why *St Leon* is thus fraught with pessimistic views about human perfectibility and necessary social progress. As has already been discussed, *Caleb Williams* also shows the difficulty of fulfilling political progressive ideals voiced in *Political Justice*. The doctrine of necessity that introduces perfectibility to humankind is transformed into fatalistic necessity in *Caleb Williams* and into the manifestation of human imperfection in *St Leon*.

It is difficult to trace the train of Godwin's thought from the original *Political Justice* to *St Leon*. Likely explanations of the shift in his philosophical thought might be the conservative reaction in England and the influence of Wollstonecraft. The reactionary movement burst over radicals and social reformers after the Terror in France. Godwin's new philosophy was steeped in universal unpopularity and odium. To him the world seemed to go back into barbarism. Like *St Leon* as a social reformer, he seemed to feel disappointed by the reality that people "with all the fervours of affection" cling to the opinion that "the vices, the weaknesses and the follies which have hitherto existed in our species, will continue undiminished as long as the earth shall endure."<sup>90</sup> *St Leon*'s pessimistic views also reflect the endless difficulty of maintaining progressive ideals "without discredit," which "beleaguered radicals in the mid-1790s" were confronted with.<sup>91</sup>

That difficulty facing Godwin is symbolically depicted in *St Leon*'s philosopher's stone. Godwin exploits ideological prejudices against medieval alchemy, "old philosophy," for his analogy to reactionary pressures on his doctrine of necessity called "new philosophy" in his age. The two philosophies, despite their possible benefits to human welfare, were each regarded as a dangerous heresy in their respective ages of revolutionary upheaval. However, the old philosophy was practically a medieval forerunner of chemistry. New philosophy was based on natural science and "human science." (*PJ* 337) Each of them is a symbol of the perpetual progress of mankind, aiming at human perfectibility. Rejection of them is nothing less than a refusal of human

improvement and progress. St Leon's remarks sound like Godwin's plea:

No sooner did a man devote himself to the pursuit of discoveries which . . . would prove the highest benefit to his species, than his whole species became armed against him. (*SL* 290)

Here Godwin seemed to project himself deeply into "hermetic philosopher St Leon."<sup>92</sup> St Clair sees Godwin's search for the doctrine of universal justice in the medieval natural philosophers' quest for the philosopher's stone. Godwin, who "actually had made discoveries of greater potential benefit," then realized that "the initial research is the easiest part of the process."<sup>93</sup> The problem of diffusing truth and justice is considered as a critical factor of skepticism about human perfectibility.

Simultaneously, after 1797 Godwin reassessed his optimistic insistence that there are no inherent impediments to the progress of human reason and impartial judgement. The conservative reaction shook his faith in the attainment of impartiality and universal benevolence. Impartial judgement is one of the essential links in the chain of necessity leading to human perfectibility. Only through viewing things as they are with impartiality can individuals take a first step towards social reform. While observing the Terrors in England and France, however, he realized how difficult it is to persuade individuals to "a discarding of mutual bigotry" and induce them to "give credit to each other for their common differences of opinion." Godwin says in the *Enquirer*; "Alas! impartiality is / a virtue hung too high, to be almost ever within the reach of man!"<sup>94</sup> His wavering conviction concerning the achievement of impartial judgement necessarily leads to his reduced optimistic view on human perfectibility.

As mentioned, Godwin's philosophical shift can be attributed to his personal experience. His private relationship with Wollstonecraft and the influence of her philosophical thought led him to reassess private affection as an agent of human moral improvement. On the other hand, her premature death also led him to a pessimistic view of his political ideals. As an advocate of gradual social reform, Godwin comprehended

that the spread of truth is “sufficiently gradual in its progress.” Truth is “fully comprehended only by slow degrees by its most assiduous votaries.” Social reform should be the product of “tranquil reason” and truth spreading by “still more temperate” degrees. Thus Godwin admits that it takes a long time for truth to “pervade so considerable a portion of the community as to render them mature for a change of their common institutions.” (*PJ* 251-2) A true reformer, he says, should try to change “the principles and elements of society” by “a quiet but incessant activity, like a rill of water, to irrigate and fertilise the intellectual soil.”<sup>95</sup>

Godwin’s gradualist theory seemed to have been influenced by Wollstonecraft’s death. While considering the causes of difficulty of political progress, Godwin ascribed one of them to human mortality and deaths of all great persons, reformers, instructors and improvers who could benefit mankind, including Wollstonecraft and Joseph Gerrald. In *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809), when great and excellent persons die, he writes, “[the] use and application of [their] experience[s], the counsels [they] could give, the firmness and sagacity with which [they] could have executed what [they] might have thus counselled, are gone.” It is impossible for mankind to “calculate how much of good perishes” when they die. “It is owing to this calamity of death, that the world for ever is, and in some degree for ever must be, in its infancy.”<sup>96</sup> His idea about the correlation between human perpetual improvement and the problem of fulfilling of perfectibility is sublimated in *St Leon*’s elixir vitae and his life full of frustration.

Another factor in the shift of his philosophical thought might be discerned in his revised religious ideas. Godwin’s religious thought was subjected to gradual revision through his life, proceeding from Calvinism to deism, atheism and then to abstract theism. It is certain that the religious dimensions *St Leon* possesses derive not only from the historical background of the Protestant Reformation but from Godwin’s incomplete return to theism. While the whole system of things in *St Leon* is controlled by the same universal law of necessity that governed the world of *Caleb Williams*, *St Leon*’s

self-narration sometimes depicts a being in the universe beyond the law, while describing the system and wonders of nature “rather with the awe that inheres to a cultivated imagination, than that which consists in apprehension.” (SL 88) The law of necessity in *Political Justice* admits no such being in the universe. Godwin’s pessimistic view about human perfectibility receding in *St Leon* is possibly caused by his changing religious thought at the time.

According to the theory in *Political Justice*, Godwin could delineate the determinist chain of events successfully redirected and the goal of perfection perpetually advancing, despite the deteriorative consequences of things as they are or were. His recurring doubts on human perfectibility did not let him demonstrate his optimistic view in *St Leon*. It seems that pessimism in *St Leon* itself reveals the imperfection of his doctrine of necessity. Ironically, Wollstonecraft traveled in the Nordic countries like St Leon and had a firm belief in human and social perpetual improvement. She wrote the feelings she had when contemplating “noble ruins” in Norway. She believed that there is “some perfectible principle” in human beings, “which will not be destroyed.”

We take a retrospect of the exertions of man, the fate of empires and their rulers, and marking the grand destruction of ages, it seems the necessary change of time leading to improvement.<sup>97</sup>

She seems to have a stronger faith in human perfectibility and necessity of social progress than Godwin in St Leon’s world.

*St Leon* as well as *Caleb Williams* demonstrate that acquiring a complete understanding of the operation of necessity and applying it to the attainment of human perfectibility were, are, and will be beyond the reach of humankind. Godwin’s daughter Mary Shelley deals with the same theme of the law of necessity governing the universe in her novel *Frankenstein*. Indeed, there she boldly tries to reappraise the principal ideas of her father’s philosophy. The following chapter sees how Mary evolves her own ideas

as to the doctrine of necessity and human nature through examining her skepticism on Godwin's philosophical thought.

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## Chapter IV Influence of Godwin's Philosophy on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

### 1. Mary Shelley as the Pupil of Godwin School

While it has been common to attribute Mary Shelley's novels to the influence of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), many critics have argued that they greatly embrace Godwin's philosophical ideas. As a writer, Mary derived her intellectual drive from his philosophy and political ideas. Therefore, her awareness of the essence of his radical theories is reflected throughout her novels. She always took note of the principal object of Godwin's philosophical study and contemplation. *Political Justice* was the source of the principal object of her own study and contemplation, and his novels taught her the arts, manners and techniques that she was to follow in her works.

Through her upbringing in the Godwin household and continual reading of her parents' works including political treatises, essays and novels, Mary assimilated their philosophical views very early on. She wrote to Frances Wright: "[My mother's] greatness of soul & my father['s] high talents have perpetually reminded me that I ought to degenerate as little as I could from those from whom I derived my being . . . my chief merit must always be derived, first from the glory these wonderful beings have shed me, & then for the enthusiasm I have for excellence."<sup>1</sup> "[N]ursed and fed with a love of glory," she was a very proud and enthusiastic pupil of the Godwin school.<sup>2</sup> Mary was willing to regard herself as heir to her parents' talents and ideas. She always liked to sign her name in full, "an eponym of intellectual aristocracy: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin."<sup>3</sup>

That she was Godwin's intellectual heir did not mean that Mary shared all of his ideas and adopted them. Despite her having accepted some distinctive aspects of his progressive philosophy, she gradually came to query it through her experiences in the real world. While Godwin placed absolute reliance on the exercise of reason and

impartial judgement for the welfare of human beings and the realization of ideal society, Mary came to realize that an individual would never arrive at a state of true happiness only with reason and judgement. She came to feel some guidance of an external power beyond human reason. As has already been mentioned, in a reactionary movement against revolutionary ideas at the end of the eighteenth century, Godwin's progressive and optimistic philosophy reached a deadlock by degrees. In fact, he was bothered with the ensuing political attacks against his radical theories. In her writings Mary started to examine her doubts on some of his principal ideas and her concern about flaws in his philosophy, which in itself was becoming the hallmark of her novels.

Mary Shelley was born 30 August 1797 in London. Her parents, William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, were already celebrated as writers in London literary circles when their daughter arrived. At the same time, being advocates of the French Revolution, they had come to be regarded as perilous political thinkers and became targets of the conservatives, isolated in society. Wollstonecraft died of puerperal fever ten days after giving birth. Godwin, then in his early forties, was entrusted with the rearing of Mary and Fanny Imlay, Wollstonecraft's daughter from an earlier liaison with her American lover, Gilbert Imlay. He brought them up in a strict atmosphere with paternal care and affection. Following his own theory that a person's character begins to develop in the dawn of infancy, he gave his very young daughters an enlightening and stimulating education to develop inquiring minds in them as well as to cultivate their literary talents. As he was convinced that imagination was a powerful engine of morality, Godwin introduced his daughters to many books he thought best adapted for developing their imaginative faculties.<sup>4</sup> The upbringing and education she received led Mary to believe that "[to] be something great and good was the precept given [her] by [her] father."<sup>5</sup> They also provided her a good basic grounding in writing.

Godwin worked hard at giving his little motherless girls a "domestic scene" which was "planned and conducted solely with a view to the gratification and improvement"

of them.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, he tried to have a second marriage for his girls' sake. Powers explains that feeling himself inadequate to rear his daughters, Godwin "had been trying in his direct and blunt way to marry someone who would be a good mother to them."<sup>7</sup> He criticized matrimony publicly in the first edition of *Political Justice* because he believed that all social institutions could implant prejudices in citizens' minds and becloud their private judgement. Though Wollstonecraft had also objected to the prevailing patterns of marriage, they decided to marry after she became pregnant, in order to ensure their child's legitimacy. Godwin had to soften his position after Wollstonecraft's death. He began to modify his views on the institution of marriage in his writings. That trend was conspicuous especially in his novel, *St Leon*, in which the idea of remarriage was openly endorsed by his protagonist. Then in December 1801 Godwin remarried Mary Jane Clairmont, who was a widow with two children by a previous marriage, Charles Gaulis and Jane Clairmont.

According to Brailsford, the second Mrs. Godwin was "a vulgar and worldly woman, thoroughly feminine" and completely ignorant of philosophy. Following the pattern of the "stepmother of convention," she pampered her own children and treated Mary and Fanny with consistent unkindness. Brailsford states that it was this "womanly woman" who was the parent of the suffering and disaster in the lives of Godwin's daughters.<sup>8</sup> The relationship between young Mary and her stepmother was strained at the outset. Godwin's friends, including Charles Lamb and Robert Southey, also found his second wife offensive because of her undisciplined temper and lack of fine sensibilities. They felt sympathy for Mary and Fanny. To Godwin's friends she was a "second-rate woman" who possessed neither the grace nor the sophisticated tastes of Godwin's first wife.<sup>9</sup> Mary developed a deeper antipathy to her stepmother as she matured, coming to think of her as the "odious woman" who "plagues [her] father out of his life."<sup>10</sup> At the same time, she conceived even greater admiration for her true mother, and when feeling depressed, often visited her grave to indulge in waking dreams.

Godwin worried about his daughter's habit encouraged by loneliness.

In 1812 Mary traveled to Scotland to stay in Dundee with the Baxter family, acquaintances of Godwin. Since the awkward relationship between Mary and her stepmother strained the Godwin household, her long stay in Dundee was best for all. She stayed there for almost two years until the spring of 1814. Mary looks back on this period in the 1831 Introduction to *Frankenstein*: "I lived principally in the country as a girl, and passed a considerable time in Scotland. I made occasional visits to the more picturesque parts . . . They were the eyry of freedom, and the pleasant region where unheeded I could commune with the creatures of my fancy."<sup>11</sup> Soon after returning to London and having an unbearable reunion with her stepmother, Mary again started to go on daily walks to St. Pancras churchyard. There she spent her time alone reading and rereading her parents' works, lying beside her mother's grave. It might have been at this difficult time of her adolescence that she absorbed the ideas in *Political Justice* and the imposing system of her father's philosophy. It was also soon after her coming home from Scotland that Mary began her friendship with Percy Shelley. They spent almost every day together. By then Mary had grown into a very beautiful girl of nearly seventeen.<sup>12</sup>

Shelley opened correspondence with Godwin and introduced himself to him as a new disciple in 1812, going on to become a regular guest in the Godwin household. Having enrolled "[the] name of Godwin" on "the list of the honourable dead," Shelley was so delighted to learn that he still lived and was "still planning the welfare of humankind."<sup>13</sup> He was already married before becoming close to Mary, but their relationship deepened and soon they declared their love for each other in St. Pancras churchyard. Society judged their conduct harshly. Godwin refused to condone their relationship, and the two eloped to the Continent in July 1814, accompanied by Mary's step-sibling, Jane Clairmont. Godwin was enraged at their thoughtless conduct, firmly refusing to communicate with them. Though he had formerly defended free sexual

relations between men and women by mutual consent, the feelings of “the philosopher-father” about his own daughter could not always match the deliberations of his philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Mary and Shelley explicitly intended to follow Godwin’s ideas against the institution of marriage, which Shelley approvingly referred to as the “Godwinian anti-matrimonial system.”<sup>15</sup> They told themselves that they were following what Godwin and Wollstonecraft had done or would have done. Contrary to their expectations, Godwin’s attitude towards them was very bigoted and he required of the young couple “all that the most conventional morality could have required of [them].”

[Godwin] seems, indeed, to have forgotten his own happy experiment with Mary Wollstonecraft, and protests with a vigour hardly to be expected from so stout an individualist against the idea, that “each man for himself should supersede and trample upon the institutions of the country in which he lives. A thousand things might be found excellent and salutary if brought into general practice, which would in some cases appear ridiculous and in others attended with tragical consequences if prematurely acted upon by a solitary individual.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition to paternal anxiety for his daughter’s future, Godwin was also deeply apprehensive about her scandal adding fuel to the flames of attacks by his enemies. He refused to meet the lovers, although he could not cut his connection with Shelley, who was his financial supporter: Godwin was in a more desperate financial state than ever in the 1810s. He communicated with Mary only through intermediaries and ordered Fanny not to see her half-sister. When Mary and Shelley returned to England after their travels on the Continent, they were still not allowed to visit the Godwin household in Skinner Street. Mary suffered from her father’s harshness and indifference towards her. Furthermore, she was greatly afflicted when she lost her first daughter a few days after birth in February 1815. Even then Godwin would neither write nor talk to his deeply depressed daughter, and he also refused to see her when in January 1816 she gave birth to a son, who was named William in his honour. “Godwin’s cold injustice” staggered



both Mary and Shelley.<sup>17</sup>

The discord between Mary and Godwin was allayed at length in October 1816, when Fanny, at the age of twenty-two, committed suicide by taking an overdose of laudanum. One month later Shelley's wife, Harriet, drowned herself in the Serpentine in Hyde Park in London; her pregnant body was found in December. Harriet's tragic death permitted the legal marriage of Mary and Shelley, which Godwin immediately urged. They were married at the close of 1816 at St. Mildred's Church in London, the Godwins attending the ceremony as witnesses. It was during this period of dizzying changes in her life, which was full of disaffection and sorrow, that Mary came up with the vague conception of an abandoned monstrous creature that would be the main point of her maiden novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818). Mary wrote long after: "Until I met Shelley, I may justly say that [Godwin] was my God."<sup>18</sup> She sublimated the embarrassment caused by rejection of her father and "God" in her abandoned protagonist's hopelessness. She also tried to sublimate her grief at the deaths of her baby girl and half-sister in the horrors of deaths in the novel.

## 2. *Frankenstein* and Contemporary Reviews

When Mary began to write *Frankenstein* in 1816, she was estranged from Godwin. According to her account, it was by chance that she decided to write "a ghost story." (*F* 1831 Introduction)<sup>19</sup> Even though she was under the influence of Shelley as a lover and wife, Mary read Godwin's *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* and tried to gain an intellectual stimulus from her father and his works during her composition of *Frankenstein*.<sup>20</sup> Mary's rereading of Godwin's works in the troubled period of their estrangement might have enabled her to contemplate the nature of inconsistencies in specific aspects of his ideas and especially in the doctrine of necessity which formed the core of his philosophy. She expanded her "hideous" idea into a story while reassessing his philosophical thought.<sup>21</sup> Also their estrangement intensified Mary's desire to "prove

[herself] worthy of [her] parentage” and “enroll [herself] on the page of fame.” (*F* 1831 Introduction).

*Frankenstein* first appeared anonymously in three volumes in 1818. Contemporary critics had great interest in the dedicatory message that those volumes were “respectfully inscribed” to “William Godwin, Author of *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams*, etc.” Up until 1831, when Mary issued the third edition of the novel in her own name, critics failed to recognize her as the true author and implied that her book had been written by Shelley, Godwin’s son-in-law, who was considered as an enthusiastic adherent of Godwin.<sup>22</sup> There is no denying that Mary’s dedication and the Preface to the first edition, which Shelley wrote, gave readers a preconceived notion about the Godwinian manner and techniques on which the novel was formed.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, the three volumes of *Frankenstein* successfully called attention to the characteristics of the philosophical ideas in the Gothic romance of supernatural terrors, whether they could be regarded as faults or merits.

Of all the six novels Mary composed, *Frankenstein* is considered to be the most challenging, a work “written in the spirit of [Godwin’s] school,” showing the resonance of his philosophy and echoing its moral significance.<sup>24</sup> The shocking nature of the creation of a living being generated hostile criticism. The *Quarterly Review* writes: “Our taste and our judgement alike revolt at this kind of writing . . . it inculcates no lesson of conduct, manners, or morality.”<sup>25</sup> The *Edinburgh Magazine* discerned all the “Godwinian” faults in “[the] dark and gloomy views of nature and of man, bordering too closely on impiety,” while showing the discomfort at “[the] expression ‘Creator’” applying to “a mere human being.”<sup>26</sup> It is certain that “Godwin was in so many ways the novel’s intellectual begetter.”<sup>27</sup> Importantly, however, while Mary consistently develops her own theme in the concept set out by Godwin, she neither just models after his novels nor blindly adopts every single element of his philosophical ideas. In the novel, she attempts to reevaluate them, expressing her own thoughts on human nature, the

individual's potential for moral improvement and especially the doctrine of necessity.

As contemporary reviewers admitted, it is very difficult to describe the species to which *Frankenstein* belongs because of its great stock of literary elements. It is a Gothic novel which is intended to refer to the mysterious fears of human nature as well as awaken thrilling horror in the readers. At the same time, it is a psychological novel dealing with every human conflict which arises from the difficulty in establishing the compatibility of the demands of ego with social causes. In our times, it is more likely to be considered as science fiction developed in "a seemingly godless universe where science and technology have gone awry."<sup>28</sup> It is also considered a moral tale as a metaphor for the modern age, in which the author warns against the hubris of a human being who attempts to supplant the omnipotence of God. George Levine points out that the tale delivers "one of the first in a long tradition of over-reachers, of characters who seem to act out the myth of Faust in modern dress" but simultaneously "who transport it from the world of mystery and miracle to the commonplace."<sup>29</sup> Among those various elements contained in *Frankenstein*, the philosophical implications which make the novel a product of the spirit of the Godwinian school will be examined here.

### 3. Mary's Refutation of Godwin's Idealistic Theory

Fred Botting notes that *Frankenstein* is not "a work of literature" but "a product of criticism."<sup>30</sup> In fact, the novel is a product of the critical reappraisal of Godwin's philosophical ideas expounded in *Political Justice*. It shows both Mary's acceptance of and objection to Godwin's philosophy. She takes his many-sided ideas out, reassesses, reformulates and then weaves them into the novel. As a result, *Frankenstein* ends up as a "hideous progeny" composed of dissected Godwin's theoretical ideas. The novel itself is similar to the hideous creature, "[the] poor grotesque patchwork, [the] physical mess of seams and wrinkles," that Victor Frankenstein, a natural philosopher, creates by using various parts of the dead bodies.<sup>31</sup> While Mary has "an affection" for her progeny and

bids it “go forth and prosper,” Victor abhors his offspring and avoid it from propagating. (*F* 1831 Introduction)

With unrelaxed and breathless eagerness, Victor pursues his creation of a human being. His ambitious undertaking brings misfortune on him and his family, which is to readers the inevitable result of “any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.” (*F* 1831 Introduction) Victor finally succeeds in infusing a spark of being into the lifeless thing, but then terrified at his monstrous handiwork, rushes away from it. The creature is rejected by its creator and abandoned, never to be accepted in society because of its ugliness. In despair the resentful creature decides to take vengeance on its creator for his injustice and murders those who he loves, his family, fiancé and even his bosom friend. Victor and his creature pledge themselves to pursue and destroy each other “in mortal conflict.” (202) As Clemit points out, Mary clearly builds on Godwin’s use of the pursuit motif in *Caleb Williams* “to destabilize conventional values.” Simultaneously, she builds on his rehash of allegorical quests for forbidden knowledge in *St Leon* to show her pessimistic view about the rapid progress of science and absolute faith in human reason.<sup>32</sup>

While *Frankenstein* is characterized by Mary’s adoption of Godwin’s philosophy, it also shows her attempts to refute his several ideas. First of all, Victor’s aberrant aspiration to create a human being is a manifestation of Mary’s critical reassessment of his doctrine. In inquiry into the most abstruse secret of nature, the causes of life, Victor analyzes and traces the process of the progress of “human science,” which Godwin put forward in his doctrine of necessity. (*PJ* 337) Human perfectibility can be attained through discovering the principle of causation in human mind and using it for moral enlightenment. To find the principle requires the scientific approach; ‘observe’ the events in mind, ‘collect’ a number of those occurrence, ‘analyze’ and reduce them into ‘classes,’ ‘exclude’ the appearance of irregularity, and ‘form’ a general idea “annexed to that part of the subject which stands as the antecedent.” (337-9)

Victor observes the decay of bodies in “vaults and charnel-houses,” analyzes “all the minutiae of causation, as exemplified in the change from life to death, and death to life,” collects and classifies his materials from “[the] dissecting room and the slaughter-house,” and then combines them to form “[a] human being in perfection.” (*F* 51-5) In fact, however, the being he creates turns out “an abortion and an anomaly.”<sup>33</sup> Victor thinks back to his experiment and regards it as the result of “frantic” and “unnatural” impulse. (54) The sequence of events indicates Mary’s distrust of Godwin’s faith in human science as well as her concern about the conceited nature of attempt to discover and exploit the universal principle in the realm of human mind and morality. The hideousness of the creature is also indicative of her antipathy towards “[the] execution of a programme for the scientific understanding of man,” the attempt to consider human beings in the experiments and control them through the scientific approach of dissecting their mind.<sup>34</sup>

The creature’s history is fraught with episodes that contradict the idealistic elements of Godwin’s doctrine of necessity. One of them is the story of strange interaction between the creature and an affectionate, egalitarian family, the De Lacey. The family plays a significant role in the creature’s moral and intellectual development through unknowingly providing an upbringing and education for him. The De Lacey father, son Felix, and daughter Agatha are a good French family driven into poverty because of their efforts to save a Turkish merchant from unjust execution. In fact, the De Lacey is considered the implication of limits of the faculty of reason and impartial judgement human beings possess. They are the pure members among “reasonable and virtuous” race who are able to actively employ their “ardent mind[s] in the promotion of the general good.” (*PJ* 153) It is those dispositions that the creature detects in them and tries to appeal to for sympathy and help. He expects the family to “become acquainted with [his] admiration of their virtues,” be “compassionate [to him]” and “overlook [his] personal deformity.” (*F* 130) The De Lacey should listen to the creature’s pacific

persuasion with their perseverance and impartial judgement. Instead of doing so, however, they rebuff and leave the creature without giving him any chance of explanation.

The chain of events emphasizes that even the virtuous person who possesses cultivated understanding and impartial judgement is subject to ideological prejudices and preoccupation of exclusive social institutions. "Soundness of understanding is inconsistent with prejudice," Godwin says. It would successfully make every prejudice vincible and facilitate individuals attempting to be "uninfluenced by [their] prejudices, conceiving what would be [their] estimate of the intrinsic circumstances of [their] neighbor[s], and acting accordingly." (*PJ* 78, 174) The episode of the De Lacey's implies that kind of state is out of reach of human beings. The family cannot overcome "a fatal prejudice" which "clouds their eyes." "[W]here they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster." (*F* 134)

Despite his good dispositions derived from early education, the creature cannot overcome "the fatal effects of [his] miserable deformity." (*F* 114) His chain of necessity "instigate[s] [him] to virtue," but it does not correct his deformity. (134) Godwin states that the "defects of the human character are not derived from causes beyond the reach of ingenuity to modify and correct." (*PJ* 110) As for the creature, however, his innate defect is like "an irremediable error," in other words, "offspring of an irresistible destiny." (104, 110) Interestingly, about human physical character, Godwin insists that in the sequel after birth "there is a correspondence between the physiognomy and the intellectual and moral qualities of the mind." (105) There is no correspondence between the creature's physical deformity and the moral qualities of his mind. His fatal defect is due to the occult causes he cannot remove, and the effects will not cease.

There is another episode that destroys Godwin's idealistic theory. When the creature encounters a beautiful child, he thinks that the little boy is "unprejudiced" and has "lived too short a time" to imbibe "a horror of deformity." And therefore he can

“educate” the boy as his “companion and friend.” (*F* 142) His expectation is disappointed again. The angelic boy, who turns out to be Victor’s youngest brother William, hurls abuse at him while wielding his father’s power as “a Syndic.” (142) The creature tries to silence him and involuntarily kills him.<sup>35</sup> The series of episodes tacitly convey skepticism about the optimistic inference that the improvement of the faculty of reason and judgement enables individuals to emancipate themselves from moral weakness and ideological prejudices. (*PJ* 144)

The creature’s account of his history also voices an objection against the doctrine of justice and universal benevolence, which is represented in Godwin’s fable of Archbishop Fénelon. Godwin just requires individuals to take “benevolent action” on “the strict and universal decisions of justice” under any circumstances. An individual of justice is always bound in duty to take the course of action which is the most conducive to the general welfare and utility, even at the expense of his family if necessary. He must not lay aside his duty by any personal feelings; private affection, filial and parental attachment and gratitude. No magic in the pronoun ‘my’ can justify us in overturning “the decisions of impartial truth.” (*PJ* 170-2)

To Godwin, justice is “[the] impartial treatment of every man in matters that relate to his happiness.” Therefore, as a genuine friend of justice, we ought not to prefer particular people to others just because “they are mine,” that is, they are “my father,” “my relation,” “my companion” or “my benefactor.” (*PJ* 169-172) In theory Godwin could add “my child” to that without hesitation. Ironically, the creature sticks to the pronoun ‘my.’ He wanders about looking for his protector, his companion, and above all, his father. He insists in reason that his father’s “justice,” “clemency and affection” should be “most due” to him. (*F* 100) His appeal is persuasive enough to make Victor and readers feel what the parental duties towards his offspring are and ought to be. Here Mary paradoxically uses Godwin’s theory about justice and universal benevolence. The creature insists that, if Victor fulfills paternal duties, he shall “make peace with the

whole kind” and again be the most conducive to the happiness of the rest of humankind. (145)

In fact, the creature’s plea conveys Mary’s strong objections to Godwin’s progressive theory. In Godwin’s ideal community where individuals can act in the spirit of pure justice and benevolence, “each would lose his individual existence, in the thought of the general good.” (*PJ* 732) There philanthropy is no longer a far-fetched hope but an ordinary desire. Godwin insists that child rearing is “amicably and willingly” shared and “participated by others.” (765) There “[that] a child should know its father is no great matter.”<sup>36</sup> Cares, food and other necessary supplies equally and “spontaneously flow” to children. (765) In Godwin’s “easy-going Utopia,” “something always turns up for nobody’s child.”<sup>37</sup> The pain and misery afflicting the creature, the very figure of the fatherless, demonstrates that there is no Utopia in human society. The reality is that “nobody’s child” is abandoned, rejected and doomed to eternal namelessness, just like the creature with whom his father Victor feels no identity. To Mary, it is of real importance that the creature remains unnamed.

#### 4. The Doctrine of Necessity in *Frankenstein*

One of the most peculiar characteristics of *Frankenstein* is seen in Mary’s complex treatment of Godwin’s doctrine of necessity. A human being is an offspring of his condition. Just like the events of the material world, all the operations of the human mind and the acts following are necessary products, determined and occur according to inevitable laws. Each operation of the mind is an indispensable link in the nexus of cause and effect, and every single act at which one arrives also follows the one before “as inevitably as the links of a chain do when the first link is drawn forward.” Godwin argues that the act, “which gives the character of freedom to the whole,” can “never be discovered.” (*PJ* 347) He combines the doctrine of necessity with his belief in the progressive nature of human being to introduce his optimistic idea of human



perfectibility. If the deterministic chain in a person is directed and redirected by the proper environment, he will be “perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement” in intellect and morality. (140)

In his argument Godwin also insists that “man is in reality a passive, and not an active being,” concluding that free will is an illusion. (*PJ* 354) To him a denial of free will is an essential premise that humankind can be “perfectible.” That a human being is the offspring of environment is the presupposition of his “perpetual revisal” and progress. (128) When Godwin refers to a person as a “passive” being, he means not that we are slaves to our external circumstances but that we are rather ductile and variable beings and susceptible to everlasting change of environment. Mary takes on the challenging issue of free will v. the doctrine of necessity in *Frankenstein*. She tries to develop her ideas of necessity and human perfectibility and interweave them with Godwin’s.

In the novel Mary adopts the thesis that “the characters of men are determined in all their most essential circumstances by education.” (*PJ* 111) Victor is “by birth a Genevese” and his family is “one of the most distinguished of that republic.” His father is a man of “a sense of justice” and is revered for “his integrity and indefatigable attention to public business.” His virtuous mother is preeminent in “her soft and benevolent mind.” They give full play to “[their] benevolent disposition” in charitable work as well as in upbringing of their son. They rear Victor in the bosom of domestic affection and give him “a lesson of patience, of charity, and of self-control.” (*F* 31-4) Inheriting his parents’ dispositions and virtues, Victor is “so noble a creature” with “a beam of benevolence and sweetness.” His upbringing makes his character “so gentle, yet so wise” and his mind “so cultivated.” He can excite reverence among people he encounters for his excellence of “an intuitive discernment; a quick but never-failing power of judgment; a penetration into the causes of things, unequalled for clearness and precision.” (25-9) Interestingly, Victor’s native character is very different from the

image of a mad scientist that today's readers embrace. Actually, he is enlightened enough to become Godwin's ideal of a virtuous individual, who is "a reasonable creature, capable of perceiving what is eligible and right." (*PJ* 135)

In the narration of his history, Victor repeatedly shows his conviction that the paths he has chosen are completely regulated by the law of necessity. Brought up in "the majestic and wondrous scenes" surrounding his Swiss home, from early childhood he has innocent and wholesome curiosity about "the hidden laws of nature." (*F* 36) In his early educational environment, the determinist chain leads his young and flexible mind to an eager desire to learn "the metaphysical, or, in its highest sense, the physical secrets of the world." (37) The chain is redirected by his chance reading of the works of Cornelius Agrippa and afterwards those of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus.<sup>38</sup> The chimerical theories of the ancient system of science overheat Victor's imagination to give him "the fatal impulse" to research "the elixir of life." (39-40) His early study lays the groundwork for his later attempt at the creation of life. Victor draws a picture of his early days, retracing "those events which led, by insensible steps, to [his] after tale of misery." He insists that he can account for "the birth of that passion, which afterwards ruled [his] destiny" to himself:

I find it arise, like a mountain river, from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but, swelling as it proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all my hopes and joys. (*F* 38)

Thinking back over his experiences, Victor implies that every event in his life is inevitable. Each path he has chosen does not bear any character of freedom or free will. He hints to the readers that, as Godwin explains, human mind "cannot be, in itself considered, the source of the particular choice that is made," of whatever nature it might be. (*PJ* 348) Every choice that a person makes can be always attributed to the external circumstances in which he has found himself and through which his temper, character, opinions and habits have been generated. Victor believes that "[the] immutable laws had

decreed [his] utter and terrible destruction.” (F 42)

Attaining the age of seventeen, Victor leaves home to become a student at the University of Ingolstadt.<sup>39</sup> It is the natural working of the chain of necessity that causes him to be strongly affected by a lecture on modern chemistry by Professor Waldman. Impressed by the professor’s words, he determines to apply himself particularly to one of those branches of natural philosophy, physiology, and begins to examine the causes of life. In reminiscing on that time, Victor considers the words of Professor Waldman as “the words of fate, enounced to destroy [him]” and describes the great change they caused in his internal being:

As he went on, I felt as if my soul were grappling with a palpable enemy; one by one the various keys were touched which formed the mechanism of my being: chord after chord was sounded, and soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose . . . I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation . . . My internal being was in a state of insurrection and turmoil; I felt that order would thence arise, but I had no power to produce it. (F 48)

Interestingly, Victor likens himself to an instrument whose keys and chords are touched only by the fingers of the external existence beyond his understanding. It has a system of mechanism but no will or internal engine. He implies that a person is like “a mere automaton” operated on by external forces and that human mind is merely an automatic instrument.<sup>40</sup>

In those days, academic controversy had arisen as to “whether man was to be thought merely an instrument,” a controversy in which Shelley and Mary took great interest.<sup>41</sup> Here Victor’s words can remind the readers of Coleridge’s Eolian harp. In his poem Coleridge also uses the metaphor of a musical instrument to describe a human being and mind: “And what if all of animated nature / Be but organic Harps diversely fram’d”?<sup>42</sup> An Eolian harp is a stringed instrument that produces sound when the wind

blows across the strings. In other words, the harp can sing only when played upon by external forces. The sound it produces ceaselessly varies with the intensity of the wind. On one level, the harp represents all living things as necessary products of their conditioning.<sup>43</sup> Kathleen M. Wheeler points out that the mechanical image of the harp and wind is “expressive of the mechanism, determinism, and necessity involved in Associationism.”<sup>44</sup> What kind of instrument Victor sees in his mind’s eye is not clear. Mary might have imagined Coleridge’s wind harp while reflecting upon how passive a human being is in the decision-making process in his life.

As stated already, Godwin considers a human being a machine or a medium “through the intervention of which previously existing causes are enabled to produce certain effects.”<sup>45</sup> He also tries to liken a human being to a musical instrument. When “the bag of a pair of bagpipes” is “pressed in a certain manner,” it “utters a groan, without anything more being necessary to account for this phenomenon than the known laws of matter and motion.” If it is possible to apply the same system of mechanism to human mind, evidently he believes that it is possible, “we have then a complete scheme” of “the phenomena of human action.” (*PJ* 361) Like Godwin, Mary exploits the mechanical image of a musical instrument as a metaphor for determinism and the operation of human mind governed by necessity. Victor’s narration seems to suggest that she also sees human being as a creature of mechanism, denying free will in some similar way to Godwin.

Victor’s creature is a perfect specimen of Godwin’s theory that a human being is the creature of his condition. Mary perfectly applies his doctrine of necessity to delineate the creature’s evolution from ‘a being’ into ‘an intellectual being’ in the “vast chain of perceptions and notions.” (*PJ* 101) His life history is the tale of “a beleaguered individual surviving against the odds and an allegorical account of the progress of the human race.”<sup>46</sup> His life starts as a blank tablet “without character or decisive feature impressed upon it.” (*PJ* 105) The environment determines which either good or evil

would be written on his plain tablet. The creature gradually accumulates impressions and knowledge through experiences in the world, which mold his disposition and habits. The creature is never a monstrous being when Victor first bestows life on him, in spite of the monstrous process he followed in the “filthy creation” in which he “disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame.” (*F* 54-5)

Obviously, Mary adopts the belief of Locke and others that Godwin initially shared: The original state of human mind is “like a sheet of white paper” which is “susceptible to every impression.”<sup>47</sup> The mind is “nothing else but a faculty of perception.” It sets out from “absolute ignorance” and then builds up knowledge and wisdom through impressions, the faculty of memory and association, distinguishing a human being from a “clod of the valley.” (*PJ* 146) The creature regards its earlier life as “a blind vacancy” in retrospect. (*F* 121) The mode in which the creature attains intellectual development after being abandoned by Victor is the true Lockean and Godwinian process of a *tabula rasa*: “first confused, then distinct sensations, and developing in turn social affections, then moral and intellectual judgments.”<sup>48</sup> The creature narrates: “all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct . . . it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses . . . I presently found a great alteration in my sensations.” (102)

After his physically adjusting to life and learning of distinct sensations, the creature’s social development starts. It is the De Lacey family that provides the opportunities of upbringing and educational environment for him. The creature settles in the hovel behind the De Lacey cottage, which turns into “the only school” in which he studies “human nature.” (*F* 129) It is like the “Lyceum” to him.<sup>49</sup> It is also “the true school of humanity” where like St Leon he learns the beauty of domestic affection. (*SL* 49) He observes the family through a small chink in the wood covering the panes, learning “virtue and good feelings,” “gentle manners and amiable qualities” from them. (*F* 120) When an Arabian girl named Safie, the daughter of the Turkish merchant, enters

the family, Felix starts to instruct her in language and history. Through sharing in her education, the creature obtains “[an] knowledge of history” and “an insight into the manners, governments, and religions of the different nations of the earth.” (119) He also becomes acquainted with *Paradise Lost*, a volume of *Plutarch’s Lives* and *The Sorrows of Werther*, all which he finds on the ground in the neighboring wood. Those books exert a considerable effect on the cultivation of his character, producing in him “an infinity of new images and feelings” that sometimes raise him to “ecstasy” and also sink him into “the lowest dejection.” (128) The creature’s moral and intellectual awareness reflects Godwin’s emphasis on “the formative power of education and circumstances.”<sup>50</sup>

Following the chain of the law of necessity, the De Lacey’s are to help the creature to become a good being with good intentions. He comes to admire virtues and deprecate the vices of humankind. More importantly, the family gives the creature a desire of the happiness of others. Public affection, Godwin insists, is the criteria of morality. “No being can be either virtuous, or vicious, who has no opportunity of influencing the happiness of others.” In this sense, the “true solitaire” cannot be “a moral being.” (*PJ* 634) The creature, who is actual “solitaire” though, endeavours to connect with people and society to become a social and moral being. Under the law of necessity, the De Lacey’s allow the creature to pursue virtue, which is “the most precious boon” people can bestow upon others. (301) Godwin’s ideal theory of necessity is perfectly realized in the creature’s intellectual and ethical development.

The creature’s determinist chain is suddenly redirected in the opposite direction. His improvement in intellect and morality necessarily promotes his emotional cultivation, leading him to solicit compassion and friendship. But his desire of becoming one among the De Lacey’s is cruelly broken. He tries to introduce himself to them, immediately gets attacked and rejected, and loses them forever. The creature comes to realize that “sorrow only increase[s] with knowledge.” The accumulation of knowledge, upon which reason depends for its clearness and strength, should lead

individuals to universal benevolence and happiness and then to the attainment of human perfectibility. However, the creature becomes aware of the strange and cruel nature of knowledge. "It clings to the mind, when it has once seized on it, like a lichen on the rock." It teaches him that "there [is] but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that [is] death." (*F* 120) The creature is torn "between the ideology his education teaches and his own experience of a rejecting world."<sup>51</sup> As in the case of Victor, knowledge gives him an enlightened mind, but at the same time it causes him a great deal of misery and pain. It always arouses in his mind the question what he is, which is "answered only with groans." (121)

The creature's quest for knowledge and resulting uncertainty about his biological and spiritual origins reflect Mary's unsureness regarding the origin and destination of human beings, for which Godwin's doctrine of necessity provides no explanation. A favourable educational environment prepares the creature the ideal chain of necessity to trace. In the end, however, it brings home to him what a wretched and helpless being he has been. Symbolically, reading *Paradise Lost* makes him realize that he is the sole creature on the earth that has not come forth from the hands of God and feel doomed to be eternally cut off from His grace. No matter how much he wishes, he can pass for neither a social being nor a descendant of Adam. The reality the creature is faced with in the process of moral and intellectual improvement causes him to curse Victor as a tyrannical Maker.

The disfavor of the De Lacey's awakens feelings of revenge and hatred in the disappointed creature. The thought that he has lost "the only link" that holds him to society makes him turn to evil. (*F* 138) However, what he learned from the family lingers on, and he continues to search for sympathy and companionship, hoping to be a good member of society. According to Godwin, while environment creates temper and habits of human being, they can be reversed not accidentally but "in consequence of some strong reason persuading" or of "some extraordinary event modifying his mind."

(*PJ* 341) As far as that is concerned, there are two strong reasons for which the creature is driven into evil acts: the prejudice he encounters in society and the injustices imposed on him by his creator. “My vices are the children of a forced solitude that I abhor,” the creature states using Godwinian logic. (*F* 147)

Taking Godwin’s advice to trace back the chain of the acts as far as possible, readers can realize the necessity of every act at which the creature arrives. Godwin’s theory perfectly applies to the thoughts and acts of the creature: “[the] entire chain of the thoughts of an individual and of the resulting chain of actions—whether good or bad, wise or unwise—are the product of necessity.”<sup>52</sup> Also when the creature likens himself to Satan in *Paradise Lost*, that may remind readers of Godwin’s assertion about the cause of moral corruption. In *Political Justice* Godwin refers to “Milton’s devil” as “a being of considerable virtue”: “But why did [Lucifer] rebel against his maker? . . . After his fall, why did he still cherish the spirit of opposition?” Godwin concludes that it was because “he was hardly and injuriously treated.” He goes on: “[Lucifer] bore his torments with fortitude, because he disdained to be subdued by despotic power.” (*PJ* 309)

Shelley, who adheres to Godwin’s idea that prejudice is the worst enemy of goodness and virtue, shows sympathy towards the rejected creature. He consciously avoids using the word ‘monster’ when describing the creature. He mentions that what is truly “monstrous and uncommon” is not the creature but “the circumstances of his existence,” arguing as follows:

Nor are the crimes and malevolence of the single Being, though indeed withering and tremendous, the offspring of any unaccountable propensity to evil, but flow irresistibly from certain causes fully adequate to their production. They are the children, as it were, of Necessity and Human Nature . . . Treat a person ill, and he will become wicked. Requite affection with scorn;—let one being be selected, for whatever cause, as the refuse of his kind—divide him, a social being, from society,



and you impose upon him the irresistible obligations — malevolence and selfishness.<sup>53</sup>

The creature's history manifests social origins of his monstrosity. It demonstrates a high probability that if Victor gets free from the prejudiced view that the creature's ugly appearance must reflect his real self, and if society can treat him with justice and mercy without being deceived by his appearance, the creature should become a virtuous being. The creature insists that his heart was "fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy; and, when wrenched by misery to vice and hatred, it did not endure the violence of the change, without torture such as you cannot even imagine." (F 219-20) He feels keenly the mercilessness of necessity. The creature's determined dogging after his Maker to claim responsibility for fatherhood at all costs and the accompanying vengeful behavior are from the same necessity.

##### 5. Another Delineation of Necessity in *Frankenstein*

Mary's adoption of Godwin's doctrine of necessity is more discernible in delineation of protagonists' quest for *raison d'être*. Both Victor and his creature regret their acts and bewail their misfortunes, but they regard them to be inevitable. They are component parts of the chain of necessity. Victor and his creature consider that they cannot be accountable for what they are, what they do or what they have done because they are the offspring of their environment or external circumstances and they have no free will. The law of necessity of which they are aware exonerates themselves from blame for their deeds. Even the creature's escalating malicious crimes against those Victor loves are not "the offspring of any unaccountable propensity to evil" but that of the current of necessity against which no one can sail. Didactic moralism lapses in Frankenstein's world. There the law of necessity brings forth no chains towards the good. It continues to produce yet another chain of malevolence and misfortune, keeping people away from happiness. The similar operation of necessity is indeed found in

*Caleb Williams* and *St Leon*, both of which demonstrate Godwin's complicated treatment of his doctrine of necessity. To some degree, however, the operation of necessity governing the fates of Victor and his creature indicates the theoretical idea that Mary develops in her own way. We may discern the reworking of Godwin's theory in her delineation of her idea of necessity in the universe as well as in the minds of the protagonists.

The world of *Frankenstein* is formed by the countervailing ideas of immutability and mutability. The former is represented in the law of necessity that governs all the events in the universe and the latter is shown in nature and human beings that are governed by that law. When explaining the existence of immutable law of necessity which governs everything in the material world, Godwin urges readers to think of "innumerable events in perpetual progression" with some "apparent order" such as the motion of the sun and the regular succession of seasons. (*PJ* 337) Mary tries to describe the law on these lines in the novel. Three narrators—Victor, his nameless creature and Robert Walton—feel and talk about the changes of nature. Walton, the captain of an expedition ship, is employed on a voyage of discovery towards the North Pole, an unexplored region called "the land of mist and snow." (*F* 21) When his ship is enveloped by a thick fog and ice-bound, he is overwhelmed by the powerful law reigning over the natural world. Only remaining passive in imminent peril, he desires earnestly that some change would take place in the atmosphere and weather just as the worn and woeful protagonist of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* does. Under the circumstances, he actually feels and learns that no natural phenomenon is everlasting. He learns at last that ice is "mutable," bearing a cyclical repetition of spreading and receding. (215)

Victor also unconsciously feels the changes of seasons under the immutable law, even while shutting himself up in the laboratory and pursuing his undertaking with unremitting ardour, and even while his eyes are insensible to the charms of nature. It is

in the narration by the creature that mutability represented in nature following the law is described the best. He experiences the rotation of the seasons with every part of his body and with all the operations of his various senses. He sees with surprise and grief the constant changes of day and night as well as the apparels of the seasons. He is eloquent of the immutable law ruling the natural world, which he experiences during the process of his awaking to the senses soon after being created. In the novel, the workings of nature reflect those of the minds of the characters, and simultaneously they serve as a reminder to the characters and the readers that everything is controlled by the immutable law of the universe.

Nature reveals the external power behind its existence to the characters, exerting influence upon their minds. Victor is tormented by a quick succession of dreadful events after his rejection of his creature. His infant brother William is murdered by his creature. Justine Moritz, who is a virtuous servant loved by the Frankenstein family, is unjustly condemned for the murder of William and perishes on the scaffold just like innocent Hawkins and his son in *Caleb Williams*. Seized by acute remorse and guilt, Victor stands beside the sources of the Arveiron:

The abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me; the icy wall of the glacier overhung me; a few shattered pines were scattered around; and the solemn silence of this glorious presence-chamber of imperial Nature was broken only by the brawling waves, or the fall of some vast fragment, the thunder sound of the avalanche, or the cracking, reverberated along the mountains, of the accumulated ice, which, through the silent working of immutable laws, was ever and anon rent and torn, as if it had been but a plaything in their hands. (F 96)

The sight of the magnificent in nature fascinates Victor and fills him with “a sublime ecstasy” that gives “wings to the soul” and allows it “to soar from the obscure world to light and joy. (F 97) At the same time, it solemnizes his mind, making him realize that not only nature but he is a plaything in the hands of immutable laws. Victor has

manipulated the god-like power to bestow animation upon lifeless matter. Describing ever-changing scenes of nature, however, he cannot help feeling that a human is a powerless and passive being who is “moved by” every single surrounding event, such as “every wind that blows, and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to [him]” (97)

The emotional uplift that those grand scenes afford Victor fades in a little while, and then dark melancholy clouds his every thought. The “sublime ecstasy” he believes he has captured at last is an illusion, as is the free will a human being believes he has had. While ascending to the summit of Mt. Montanvert, Victor quotes a few lines from Shelley’s poem “On Mutability.”

We rest; a dream has power to poison sleep.

We rise; one wand’ring thought pollutes the day.

We feel, conceive, or reason; laugh or weep,

Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away;

It is the same: for, be it joy or sorrow,

The path of its departure still is free.

Man’s yesterday may ne’er be like his morrow;

Nought may endure but mutability! (*F* 98)<sup>54</sup>

The poem echoes Godwin’s doctrine of necessity. Exposed to the current of impressions and stimuli conveyed by the external world, the human mind itself continues changing. That is, the human mind is subjected to constant changes in feelings and thoughts, and human will is not allowed to intervene in the flow. Victor fully realizes that nothing is “so changeable as the feelings of human nature.” (*F* 57)

The human mind in itself never gives birth to feelings and thoughts even if one entertains some misapprehension that it does. The mind serves as a vehicle which every feeling and thought merely passes through. The poem by Shelley quoted here has the image of Coleridge’s Eolian harp recur to the readers. The harp just serves as a medium through which variable winds, gales and breezes produce various sounds.

Full many a thought uncall'd and undetain'd,  
And many idle flitting phantasies,  
Traverse my indolent and passive brain,  
As wild and various as the random gales  
That swell and flutter on this subject Lute! (39-43)<sup>55</sup>

The passivity of human mind is reflected in the subject instrument which has no internal engine. Having no internal power or free will, humans are just moved by the train of those feelings and thoughts that are the necessary products of their environment. Their actions are also nothing but the secondary products. Godwin states in *Political Justice*:

Man is in no case, strictly speaking, the beginner of any event or series of events that takes place in the universe, but only the vehicle through which certain antecedents operate, which antecedents, if he were supposed not to exist, would cease to have that operation.” (*PJ* 351)

The poem Mary has Victor quote is regarded as a poetic expression of Godwin's doctrine. It shows that human is a being incorporated in the “system of mechanism,” that is, a part of the great chain of necessity. (*PJ* 360)

Facing the questions of what he is, whence he comes, and what his destination is, the creature states his opinion quoting the same line in this way: “I was dependent on none, and related to none. ‘The path of my departure was free;’ and there was none to lament my annihilation.” (*F* 128) He projects his existence on one of the feelings and thoughts passing through the mind to never come back. He realizes how his being is uncertain and transient in this world and that all he can predicate is his eventual departure, his annihilation.

Nature is also the symbol of mutability, described as a part of “system of mechanism” according to the immutable law of necessity. Unlike human beings, on the other hand, it sometimes serves as an agent of the law ruling the elements. When nature speaks of “a power mighty as Omnipotence,” human beings are struck by the feelings of

incompetence. (*F* 94) Anne K. Mellor indicates that Mary portrays nature which Victor and his creature see as “a mighty machine, a juggernaut, impelled by pure force.” Presenting nature as swayed by the “inexorable” law, Mary “foreswears the positive sublime” of nature “for the negative sublime.” Subordinating to the immutable law, nature displays “the omnipotent, death-dealing power” before Victor and his creature.<sup>56</sup> Both all visible phenomena that nature shows and the feelings and thoughts that occur to the protagonists who witness them mechanically manifest the imperative external forces of immutable law of necessity.

Mary’s concept of the contrast of immutability and mutability originates in Godwin’s ideas of necessity and free will, which she gradually reformulates in the novel. Godwin denies the existence of free will logically, affording the argument in favour of the doctrine of necessity. He demonstrates the absurdity of the “idea which belongs to the hypothesis of free will” on the grounds that “every act of the mind [has] been preceded and produced by an act of the mind” and therefore “the ultimate act” results completely from the determination that is “its precursor.” (*PJ* 346-7) Mary is indebted to Godwin’s theory for her idea of the human being as a machine.

Like Godwin, she certainly admits that there is a conjunction between antecedents and consequents of acts of the human mind. Also she entertains the idea of “[the] original and essential conjunction between motives and actions” as well as that “between men’s past and future actions.” (*PJ* 341) Unlike Godwin, who offers the possibility of reducing “the multiplied phenomena of mind” to some “certain standard of reasoning” and of supplying the acts of mind with some regularity, Mary obviously tries to emphasize the difficulty of gaining the standard and regularity. (340) She attempts to lay stress on the workings of human mind that we cannot predict or deduce logically, which Godwin refers to as “the interference of chance and irregularity.” (343) That is demonstrated in her description of the confusing forces of motives of each protagonist.

Victor singles out human welfare as his motive from which he attempts the creation of a human being. He tries to break down the conceptual and physical boundaries between life and death to bring forth “many happy and excellent natures.” (F 54) Mary seems to adopt Godwin’s optimistic idea which is supported by his unbounded faith in human reason: any rational being with knowledge and sound judgement necessarily intends to contribute to human welfare. According to Levine, Victor’s attempt to create a new species that would bless him as its creator and benefactor reflects “the great Romantic dream [of] a rebirth of mankind [which was] concretized for a moment in the French Revolution.”<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, it also reflects Godwin’s philosophical theory in which he refers to necessary social reform by a new race with reason.

In his narration Victor makes his attempt bear an aspect of disinterested benevolence, which Godwin explains a rational being comes to possess in the natural course towards perfectibility. However, the disinterested benevolence which Victor mentions as his motive is only a pretext for hiding his excessive ambition. Therefore, his attempt never hauls the chains of the good or of happiness. The point is that Victor’s ardent ambition to become a father of a new species seems to come beyond any predictability. Although his upbringing and experiences at university successfully arouse a keen interest in natural philosophy as well as in study of the causes of death, they clearly fail in accounting for the source of his uncontrollable ambition. In that point, Mary confronts Godwin’s doctrine of necessity with the reality in which the workings of human mind can frequently be swept away by inexplicable, strong emotion and passion. Katherine C. Hill-Miller regards those emotions and passions as the offspring of “the realities of human unpredictability.”<sup>58</sup> They can relatively easily be off the way towards the proper destination that the compass of human reason guides him toward. There is no explaining the source of such emotions entirely by “the interference of chance and irregularity.”

In order to describe the reality of “human unpredictability,” Mary also exploits a similar violent emotion, surpassing the control of Godwin’s law of necessity. It is discernible in the scene where Victor goes back on the word he has given his creature. His creature demands “one benefit” from Victor, requesting him to create Eve to him, a female creature that is deformed and horrible. (*F* 146) In spite of the grotesqueness of his demand, the creature is “the most pathetically modest in its claims.”<sup>59</sup> Victor is moved and feels that there is “some justice in his argument,” promising to comply with the requisition. (146) The creature swears that if his request is granted, he would never harm anyone anymore: he would give up all contact with the world and live in isolation with the female creature. For Victor, who has lost his younger brother and Justine because of his creature’s misdeeds, it is imperative to consent to his demand even if it is disgusting. Only by doing so can he prevent another series of misfortunes that his family would have in future. Then he comes to realize that creating a female companion for his creature means the possibility that “a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth, who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror.” He doubts whether he has a right to “inflict this curse upon everlasting generations” for his own benefit. (165) Therefore he considers with Godwinian utilitarian logic of justice that he should avoid an act of selfishness which tempts him to “buy its own peace at the price . . . of the existence of the whole human race.” (166)

Reason always teaches a human being to get rid of his selfishness, leading him to benevolent motivation. Perfectibility seems to be embodied in the chain of Victor’s thinking. However, his motive for benevolence is dispelled by a fit of rage, the unpredictable working of his mind. It is not his motive for disinterested benevolence or philanthropy but violent passion and hatred that drives Victor to break his promise. Seeing the creature gaze on him to check his work, Victor flies into a blind rage and tears to pieces the creature on which he has been engaged. Emitting sounds of



resentment, the creature disappears. After that, he murders Victor's best friend, Henry Clerval, and also his fiancée, Elizabeth Lavenza.

Under the immutable law of necessity working behind the line of Victor's thinking and acts, he is a necessary being with no free will. Every time he is overwhelmed by passion, however, the law seems to cease to operate on his mind in a moment. In that instant, he seems to be operated on by some different external forces. In fact, similar signs are discerned in the creature's impulsive murder of Victor's infant brother and in his cruel conduct towards Justine. Unlike the law of necessity in Godwin's strict theory, the law described by Mary allows human passion to have a hold on stronger power over some events in the world of mortals. In this point, human potential for rational improvement is subject to restriction. "[The] astonishing combinations of motives and incidents" Mary delineates indicate her critical view towards Godwin's theory. In the novel, his doctrine of necessity is overturned in the end by the reality of the unpredictable "working of passion out of passion" which denies the way towards human perfectibility.<sup>60</sup>

#### 6. Twist of Fate and Necessity in *Frankenstein*

The world of *Frankenstein* assumes a distinctive atmosphere. Mary reorganizes some of the principal elements of Godwin's philosophy in her way to delineate her interpretation of his ideas into the atmosphere. The novel shows the greatest magnetism when her interpretation of the law of necessity in a different light from Godwin is taken into due consideration. As discussed above, every event in the world of *Frankenstein* demonstrates that a human is a passive being that has no option but to think and act following the invisible mechanism of necessity. Every person is described as a struck ball on the billiard table. Each of the protagonists is constantly pushed around by preceding continuous events like the ball. That kind of description in the novel, where humans and nature are alike passive, seems consistent with Godwin's doctrine of

necessity outlined in *Political Justice*. Actually, however, the essence of necessity which governs the life of human beings in *Frankenstein* shows different aspects from that in Godwin's philosophy.

Godwin's doctrine of necessity originally has an optimistic nature. An individual's disposition and character are determined by the influence of education, religion and social machinery, and his habits as well as his opinions or ideas on every matter conceivable are produced by a necessary process. This means that the more the social environment gets improved by social reform, the better humankind can get. Such optimism allows Godwin to hold the conviction that prejudiced and partial views originate in social machinery and the wheels of government which poison the human mind before one can "resist, or so much suspect their malignity" and lead one to become a victim of ignorance and vice. (*PJ* 114) His assertions are based on his view of human nature as fundamentally good. Improvement in reason and judgement necessarily produces a chain reaction of the good. The enlightenment of a single person leads to the reformation of society, and vice versa, forging a chain of a perpetual change of the whole for the better.

Mary, however, shows no such optimism in her novel. The law of necessity she delineates forces individuals into tragedy, misery and misanthropy with irresistible power. In fact, in *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* Godwin reveals similar contradictions to his own original optimism expressed in *Political Justice*. Mary seems to sympathize with those contradictions, extending them in arresting ways. Her delineation of the protagonists as mere victims of the irresistible power of necessity clashes with the essence of Godwin's original theory, in which he consistently insists that a rational being is capable of reforming his external environment and making steady progress with intellect and morality to realize the greater happiness of all. Mary denies the capability that Godwin believes resides in fundamental human tendencies towards modifying the environment. Mary's gloomy view of human life and her growing skepticism regarding

Godwin's idea lead to her fatalism in the novel.

Mary's idea of necessity takes on the character of fatalism. Her fatalism seems to bear a close parallel to Godwin's doctrine of necessity, but in fact they differ considerably in nature. Fatalism teaches that every event which a person goes through is determined beforehand, and what happens happens with total disregard for the person's will or intention. It is impossible for anyone to change the inevitable course things will take, whatever efforts anyone makes. Every effort to modify the environment is fruitless. That is essentially incompatible with Godwin's theory, which teaches that every cause leads to its necessary effect under the law of necessity. Godwin's necessity is conducive to individual's efforts to produce improvement. The true "necessarian," Godwin believes, "employs real antecedents, and has a right to expect real effects." (*PJ* 355) Therefore, the necessarian can insist with great ardour that social reform and the march of human progress are inevitable effects. Though quite different in nature, Godwin's optimistic doctrine of necessity and Mary's pessimistic fatalism combined in the world of *Frankenstein*. The combination of some events in the story shows that her depressed fatalism often suspends the operation of necessity to govern the world and human beings.

The characters, especially Victor, refer to their "fate" and "destiny" over and over again. To Victor, natural philosophy is "the genius that has regulated [his] fate." (*F* 38) The train of his ideas continually receives "the fatal impulse" to lead him to examine the causes of life and death. (39) Carrying on his "latterly tormenting studies," he is subconsciously "taught to associate evil with their prosecution, happiness with their disregard." However, "Destiny was too potent" for him to resist it. (42) At the University of Ingolstadt "Chance—or rather the evil influence, the Angel of Destruction, which asserted omnipotent sway" over Victor leads him to pay Professor Waldman a visit. (45) Also, in his mind, William and Justine, "the first hapless victims to [his] unhallowed arts" are the victims of inexorable fate. (89) Clerval and Elizabeth are

murdered to fulfill the “destiny of the most horrible kind [that] hangs over [him].” (181) Even the desire of his soul to destroy his creature appears to Victor “the mechanical impulse of some power of which [he is] unconscious.” (204) He gradually comes to understand that he has been “chained in an eternal hell” since his fatal experiment and that “delirium or death [has] been [his] portion,” while the creature realizing that “hatred and vice must be [his] portion.” (147, 201, 211) As Mellor points out, Victor is the helpless pawn of imperative forces beyond his control.<sup>61</sup> Those forces work on the victims murdered by the creature as well as on Walton.

The creature also shares Victor’s despair, deploring his hard fate which he cannot escape. To the creature, however, it is his creator, Victor, who sways and seals his inevitable fate. He acquires knowledge of the world through reading the books which chance to fall into his hands. Among them is *Paradise Lost*, which has a far-reaching influence on him. Since he reads the volume “as a true history,” he thinks that Victor should be God the Father and regards himself as Adam as well as Satan. (F 129) Taking recognition of forces of immutable law of necessity operating on his thought and act, he believes that it is Victor, the Creator, who is able and bound to reverse and modify his offspring’s fate. He says to Victor, “I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam.” (100) His words indicate that he sees in Victor God who catches hold of “the chain of existence and events” and has his creations on a string. (147) But Victor is only a helpless being who is also governed by the same forces working on his creature. Far from changing the creature’s destiny, Victor can hardly control his own. Therefore, the creature can seek no salvation from his God.

Both Victor and his creature are described as victims of a persecuting, insupportable destiny. In the same way as determinism, fatalism absolves them from blame for their thoughts and acts, even if they have their own intentions and motives. They are unable to choose among motives for their acts, which are attributed to the forces of destiny. Levine argues that Victor is “removed from direct personal

responsibility even for his own ambitions”: for the most part he is depicted “as passively consumed by energies larger than himself or as quite literally unconscious and ill when his being conscious might have changed the course of the narrative.”<sup>62</sup> Every event an individual gets involved in seems to be “decided not by personal choice or free will but by material forces” beyond the control of his agency.<sup>63</sup> All the misfortunes that befall Victor and his beloved people are traceable to those external forces. They are not the outcomes of Victor’s decisions and acts: his initial attempt to manufacture a sensitive and rational being, his subsequent complete failure to assume paternal duty, and his oath of eternal vengeance on his creature. Victor examines his past conduct until the last moments of his existence, but at last he does not find it blamable, though giving the conventional speeches about the dangers of hubris and accusing himself of overreaching. (217) Victor is the slave, not the master, of his own fate. The same reasoning applies to the creature, who insists that insupportable, miserable fate compels him to declare everlasting war against his creator and his creator’s innocent family.

As Mellor mentions, it seems that in the novel, Mary intentionally assigns human decisions and actions to fate or destiny. She seemed to set her mind on fatalism when composing the story. The repetition of the words, “immutable fate” and “destiny” import a mood of fatalism, allowing readers to see Victor as “a tragic hero suffering for an understandable hubris.”<sup>64</sup> Although the serious defect of his incapability to properly raise his creature should not be extenuated, Mary allows her agonized protagonist to elicit his audience’s profound sympathy. Victor can excite his listener Walton’s affection and pity “to an astonishing degree.” (*F* 27) To Walton’s eyes he remains the divine tragic hero throughout.<sup>65</sup> A mechanistic being who is set in the necessary chain of cause and effect in Godwin’s theory gradually transforms into a victim of inexorable fate in Mary’s fatalism.

Denying the individuals’ potential to modify their circumstances by themselves, which Godwin believes devoutly in, Mary delineates only immutable fate which bears

heavily on them. At the same time, repeatedly stressing the forces of fate and destiny, she blurs the significance of the existence of a human being. The protagonists completely fail to find *raison d'être* in their lives, because they are merely passive beings in the hands of irrevocable fate. Godwin argues that every person, led by the law of necessity, can perpetually improve and become the embodiment of human perfectibility, in the process finding the significance of existence as a rational being. The forces of fate that Mary delineates thoroughly deny that possibility, obscure the purpose of humanity and the meaning of life, conveying her conviction that nothing but mutability and departure is certain in anyone's life.

Fatalism in *Frankenstein* derives from Mary's critical reevaluation of Godwin's progressive philosophy and her life experience through which she developed a pessimistic view of her own destiny. When Mary started to compose *Frankenstein*, Godwin's reputation from *Political Justice* had already fallen. He had "sunk below the horizon" and gone through "sad necessity" and "fatal reverse" in his career.<sup>66</sup> His philosophy enthusiastically welcomed by the public as gospel had been reduced to a fanatical theory. Mary watched as not only her father but his doctrine of necessity promising an improved society became a target of criticism among the intelligentsia. In addition to that, Mary traveled with Shelley through French countryside in 1814 and witnessed the very end of the Napoleonic imperial regime. Clemit states:

Just as Godwin and Wollstonecraft felt the events of the French Revolution on their pulses, so too the Shelleys bore witness to the impact the 'great and extraordinary events' of Napoleon's meteoric career, culminating in his defeat and the restoration of despotical governments in Europe.<sup>67</sup>

In fact, Godwin revered Napoleon at all events until he named himself Emperor. He referred to Napoleon as "an auspicious and beneficent genius" who "without violence to the principles of the French revolution," suspended "their morbid activity" of Robespierre's successors in Terror, and gave "time for the fever which threatened to

consume the human race, to subside.”<sup>68</sup> In the end, however, he was completely disillusioned by the war between Britain and Napoleon troops. Mary was reduced to deliberate how the progressive ideals of those two great Revolutions in France had degenerated into Terror, despotism and wars. The French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, each of which eventually caused devastation and tragedy, gave Mary a pessimistic view on “a period of unnerving revolution in politics and society.”<sup>69</sup>

The subtitle of *Frankenstein*, “the Modern Prometheus,” indicates that the novel is deeply associated with revolutionary ideas and their degeneration. In Greek mythology, Prometheus was one of the Titans, who stole the fire Jupiter monopolized and gave it to humankind. Victor, who tries to steal “a spark of being” from God, is a modern Prometheus and at the same time is regarded as a revolutionary leader with an ambition to promote human progress. Victor could be easily associated with Napoleon in the early part of the nineteenth century, an age of revolutionary upheavals. Napoleon seemed to see himself as a mythical being. It is said that in the midst of misery flight he noted: “A new Prometheus, I am nailed to a rock to be gnawed by a vulture. Yes, I have stolen the fire of Heaven and made a gift of it to France. The fire has returned to its source, and I am here!”<sup>70</sup> The fire of Heaven Victor and Napoleon steal results in producing a series of public calamities rather than enduring benefits to humankind.

Mary’s continuous speculation about the aftermath of the Revolutions in France seemed to make her suffer mounting apprehension that the ideal of perpetual melioration in human society would prove unattainable. Her skepticism is reflected in the tragedy which Victor’s creation of life ends in as well as the setback that Walton has in his expedition. Even witnessing the dreadful convulsions of the whole country that resulted from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars following, Godwin never abandoned his hope for human society reaching “the stage at which an enlightened public opinion will introduce justice.”<sup>71</sup> Unlike him, Mary seemed to conclude that every endeavour at social reformation would just “sentence whole classes of men to

wretchedness.” (PJ 721)<sup>72</sup> Her growing skepticism about the coming social reform resulted in an extraordinary mixture of Godwin’s radical determinism and her pessimistic fatalism, producing the stupendous mechanism of Frankenstein’s world.

The tragic fates of Victor and his creature reflect not only the decline in the revolutionary ideas and movement but Mary’s life experience. Most of the delineations of the force of irresistible fate were added to the third and final edition of *Frankenstein*, which was published in 1831 after revisions by Mary. She referred to the time when she was working on the first edition as a time “when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in [her] heart.” (F 1831 Introduction) By the publication of the third edition, as she looked back with yearning for the old days, Mary had passed through painful experiences. She revised the novel after suffering the death of her husband in 1822, preceded by the loss of her daughter Clara in 1818 and her son William in 1819. Furthermore, Lord Byron, who was her and Shelley’s friend and who played an important part in the composition of *Frankenstein*, died in Greece in 1824. Clemit points out that Mary’s pessimistic view as to life in the novel derives from “her private experience of bereavement and loss.”<sup>73</sup> Mary’s letter to Jane Williams Hogg conveys her desperate feelings in those days.

The power of Destiny I feel every day pressing more & more on me, & I yield myself a slave to it, in all except my moods of mind, which I endeavour to make independent of her, & thus to wreath a chaplet, where all is not cypress, in spite of the Eumenides.<sup>74</sup>

Mary’s pessimistic view of life and social change, the necessary result of her experience, links itself to Godwin’s doctrine of necessity, to which she had access since childhood. Consequently, that combination produces the concept of the countervailing power of immutability and mutability as well as the idea of the law of necessity which is subject to interference of fatalism. Mary embraced Godwin’s conviction that a human was a necessary and in reality a passive being. She revised its meaning and



interpretation to delineate a human being who was helplessly and passively toyed with by every event in his life. On that point, the necessity governing Frankenstein's world is by no means a real echo of Godwin's determinism. Those elements mark *Frankenstein* as more than a pure product of the Godwinian school.

In her attempt to delineate of the emotional turmoil and anguish that Victor and his creature go through, Mary confronts the many difficulties in her life so that she can have a better understanding of them. Simultaneously, she tries to figure out how to redirect the chain of necessary misfortunes, which seems to be irrevocably determined, towards a chain leading to happiness. Her protagonists totally fail to do so and cannot dismiss the idea of their being a plaything in the hands of irrevocable fate. Through describing "a strong desire to ameliorate" the fate of Victor and his creature, Mary succeeds in sublimating her strong desire to handle the necessary chain, into an encouragement of a never-ending quest for meaning in human life, meaning which seemed difficult for her to find in her life. (*F* 30)

While Mary presents her resignation to the chain determined by a fate reckless of desires and efforts, on the other hand, she tries to resist it and confirm every human effort at accepting and surviving difficulties in life. The contradiction in her attempts, which seemed "gross" and "monstrous" to some of her contemporary critics though, makes the novel more magnetic. The philosophical monstrosity actually demonstrates that *Frankenstein* is not by any means "a feeble imitation" of Godwin's novels, while exhibiting many evident characteristics of his school.<sup>75</sup> It can be said that the literary excellence of *Frankenstein* finds its basis in Mary's reformulation of Godwin's doctrine, which contains a noticeable conflict over whether she ought to accept the chain determined by an irrevocable destiny, or dare resist it.

## 7. Quest for the First Link in the Chain of Necessity

All the acts, *except the first*, were necessary, and followed each other as inevitably as the links of a chain do when *the first link* is drawn forward . . . Trace back the chain as far as you please, every act at which you arrive is necessary. (*PJ* 347; emphasis added)

Despite the fundamental critical difference between them, the ideas of the law of necessity that Mary and Godwin present seem to pose the same question about the determinist chain. Mary struggles for an answer in the novel, while Godwin does not dare to pursue the question. Godwin insists that all the events in a person's mind and all following acts, "except the first," are necessary. Mary also adopts this theory in her philosophy. The question is what "the first" is. What is the first link in the chain of necessity? As Godwin says, if a human being is like a ball upon a billiard-board whose thoughts and acts are determined by how it is impinged on by the other balls racing on the board, what is "the mace" which produces the first impinging? Whose hand holds the mace? When and where is the chain of necessity started? Like Victor and his creature, Mary might have asked herself: "Whence . . . did the principle of life proceed?" (*F* 51) Mary cannot find a satisfying answer to those questions in her father's theory. *Frankenstein* can offer no answer to them.

Symbolically, Victor never narrates the fatal moment of life coming into being. What "a spark of being" is remains unrevealed throughout. In fact, Mary had knowledge of various experiments to explore the spark of life and "the nature of the principle of life" including "the experiments of Dr. Darwin" and the life-restoring experiments using "galvanism" and electricity. (*F* 1831 Introduction)<sup>76</sup> However, she only "skips the science" in her account of Victor animating a lifeless thing. James Rieger dismissed Victor's science as "switched-on magic, souped-up alchemy, the electrification of Agrippa and Paracelsus."<sup>77</sup> Mary seems to intentionally skip the scientific details. By doing so, she avoids allotting to Victor the role as a genuine holder of the mace which

produces the first impinging on the billiard-board of necessity. Simultaneously, she obscures the first link in the creature's determinist chain, making him constantly seek the link.

When tracing back to the beginnings of the tragedies the protagonists suffer, everything seems to lead to Victor's uncompromisable passion to find out the secret of nature. In fact, however, his passion, the initial cause of all their misfortunes, is also only a link in the chain of necessity. The secondary cause might be the creature's ugliness and deformity, which also is a link in the whole chain connecting every event in their world. It is easy to discern the necessary result of every event, but it seems impossible to find the first link in the chain of causation in the novel. The creature continues to ask his creator and himself the same questions: "Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" Every calamity and pain he suffers always bring him back to those questions that "continually recurred, but [he is] unable to solve." (*F* 128) Interestingly, David Hume, one of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers, who has traditionally been assumed to be an atheist as well as a determinist, engaged in self-questioning and suffered an apprehension similar to the creatures:

Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? . . . . What beings surround me? and on whom have I any influence, or who have any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environ'd with the deepest darkness, and utterly depriv'd of the use of every member and faculty.<sup>78</sup>

The deplorable condition in which the creature finds himself seems to result from his deep apprehension about the lack of his origins, the missing first link in his chain of necessity.

The imperfection in the creature's chain of necessity is attributed to that in

Godwin's theory: "All the acts, *except the first*, [are] necessary, and [follow] each other as inevitably as the links of a chain do when *the first link* is drawn forward." (PJ 347) Strictly speaking, the determinist chain he presents is not eternal one because Godwin refers to the first link. While admitting the existence of the first link, he avoids defining it in any way. He refers to the mace that sets in motion a chain of events upon the billiard-board of necessity, though offering no explanation of the mace holder. Importantly, his doctrine of necessity shows the atheistic and deistic character. Furthermore, it could be said that his doctrine is agnostic. As mentioned earlier, Godwin was an atheist when he wrote his *Political Justice* and then in 1800 dismissed his atheism under the influence of Coleridge and Wollstonecraft. There was a time he was a deist during the transitional period.

Deism is essentially the belief that there is a supreme Being who created the universe, but that after the motions of the universe were set in place He left it to operate under the natural and rational laws He devised. He does not intervene in the created universe or the beings within it. Deism likens Him to the cosmic clockmaker who created the great clock, wound it up and then let it go. To deists the first link in the determinist chain is God, and He holds the mace of necessity. Though assuming the essential character of deism, the universal law of necessity in Godwin's theory makes no reference to Him. Therefore, his chain of necessity is theoretically imperfect, with the first link missing. The imperfection causes endless suffering to the creature who is abandoned by Victor, his creator.

As Hindle mentions, Mary could arguably be regarded as a deist, because she believed, not in a conventional Christian God, but in an active universal principle governing the workings of the universe and human beings and a deity who created the principle.<sup>79</sup> Though embracing Godwin's doctrine of necessity, she saw the imperfection in it. She might have felt a lurking anxiety about the determinist chain which dispenses with the idea of a deity. Godwin's doctrine of necessity introduced her

to the essentially secular scientific notion that a human being is a creature of mechanism operated on by external forces. The notion liberated human beings from the need to seek the protection of a deity and eternal salvation. It also granted them perfectibility, the ability to perpetually ameliorate their social conditioning and themselves. On the other hand, it obscured the meaning of life and made a human being “a creature of reduced significance” in the universe.<sup>80</sup> A human is no longer a being created in the image of God the Almighty.

Through her painful experiences in real life, Mary intensified concern about the secular doctrine of necessity which made her feel herself “insignificant and uncared for.”<sup>81</sup> Her concern, which is clearly projected on the creature’s agony, was shared with not only her contemporary Enlightenment thinker Hume but one as long ago as the seventeenth century. Blaise Pascal, one of the natural philosophers of the early Enlightenment, was bewildered by the rapid progress of secular enlightenment science and wrote:<sup>82</sup>

WHEN I see the blindness and the wretchedness of man, when I regard the whole silent universe, and man without light, left to himself, [. . .] lost in this corner of the universe, without knowing who has put him there, what he has come to do, what will become of him at death, and incapable of all knowledge, I become terrified, like a man who should be carried in his sleep to a dreadful desert island, and should awake without knowing where he is, and without means of escape. And thereupon I wonder how people in a condition so wretched do not fall into despair.<sup>83</sup>

In despair Pascal tried to examine whether “God has not left some sign of Himself.”<sup>84</sup> Feeling his existence so wretched, uncared-for and unhappy, the creature of Victor and Mary, a figure of “man without light,” also seeks the same sign.

A human is a passive being who has no free will, subject to the immutable law of necessity. Though inclining to fatalism, Mary might have hoped that the law governing

human beings would be a benevolent one devised by a deity. She might have wanted to believe that the original divine plan of the creation of the universe and human beings would be full of tender mercies. Her hope is reflected in the creature's endless quest for the missing first link in his chain of necessity and the meaning in his life. Also it is seen in the *joie de vivre* the creature occasionally feels in his lonely wandering life. Even in his isolated predicament, he naturally sees the beauty of life in the universe. Observing the workings of nature and human beings, he certainly realizes the invisible powerful law behind them. The law sometimes shows not automatic but merciful nature to him.

The pleasant showers and genial warmth of spring greatly altered the aspect of the earth . . . The birds sang in more cheerful notes, and the leaves began to bud forth on the trees. Happy, happy earth! fit habitation for gods, which, so short a time before, was bleak, damp, and unwholesome. My spirits were elevated by the enchanting appearance of nature; the past was blotted from my memory, the present was tranquil, and the future gilded by bright rays of hope, and anticipations of joy. (*F* 115)

The loveliness and balminess of nature "revive" within him "[the] emotions of gentleness and pleasure" that "appeared dead" to him again and again. Those sensations allow him to forget "[his] solitude and deformity" and "[dare] to be happy." Every time he feels the benevolent tendency of the law governing nature, his heart is replete with "thankfulness" towards the blessed system "which bestow[s] such joy upon [him]." (*F* 140) Mary's longing for the merciful tendency of the law of necessity, which could encourage her to celebrate life again, is sublimated into "the buoyancy of [the creature's] life-loving faculty."<sup>85</sup> He displays his faculty to value life even in his last speech hinting at ending his own life.

Some years ago, . . . when I felt the cheering warmth of summer, and heard the rustling of the leaves and the warbling of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation.

I shall die, . . . Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace; or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell. (*F* 222-3)

He cannot find the first link in his determinist chain in “[the] seemingly godless universe.” However, his speech demonstrates that he is satisfied with his self-annihilation like “a heroic martyr of old.”<sup>86</sup> His satisfaction comes from his endeavour to perfect his chain of necessity and to seek the meaning of his existence through his whole life. Only through the quest for the meaning of life can a human being find it. The imperfection in Godwin’s doctrine of necessity brings great pain and tragedy on the creature, but at the same time it arouses and cultivates his faculty for loving and celebrating life. The notable fruits of Mary’s critical reevaluation of Godwin’s doctrine are seen in the benevolent tendency of the law of necessity the creature conveys as well as the satisfaction he expresses “with sad and solemn enthusiasm” on parting from the earth. (*F* 223)

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## Conclusion

The principal object in the novels of Godwin and Mary comes from his philosophical ideas in *Political Justice*, especially his doctrine of necessity. His philosophy, which established his contemporary reputation, was one of the most influential and controversial in the 1790s. In his treatise he introduced the lofty idea of human perfectibility, conveying his conviction that since human beings have no innate characters or ideas, if their social conditioning is properly favourable for enlightenment, they are all perfectible, that is, susceptible of perpetual improvement in morality and intellect. He also presented an incisive critique of all the accepted dogmas and existing political institutions which were obstacles to human improvement, indicating the possibility and validity of the gradual abolition of government and his alternative vision of a future society composed of autonomous rational individuals of impartial judgement and universal benevolence.

In England in the struggle for social reform and expansion of individual liberty, Godwin's philosophical ideas were the great oracles for progressive enlightenment thinkers as well as "explosives capable of destroying the whole fabric of government."<sup>1</sup> On one level or another, all his works shed light on his basic philosophical and political ideas and position. In particular, his novels written in the 1790s, *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon*, are closely related to *Political Justice*. His principal theoretical thoughts were adopted and developed in his fictional works as well as in his collection of essays, bringing forth many literary works by the so-called Godwinian school writers. Distinguished among them are Mary's novels, especially her *Frankenstein*.

After the great success of *Political Justice*, Godwin attempted to exploit his novels as an agent for conveying his original and revised thoughts in the treatise. On the other hand, after his radical philosophy lost its reputation because of conservative reaction, Mary tried to reevaluate his ideas in her novels. In the light of literary studies, the

father's and daughter's novels mutually enhance the value of one another. They are also very important as offspring of Godwinian philosophy, which exerted a profound influence not only on British society and intellectuals including Enlightenment thinkers and Romantic poets in the period of the pre-post French Revolution but on American philosophers and writers such as Orestes Augustus Brownson, Amos Bronson Alcott and Charles Brockden Brown.<sup>2</sup>

That Godwin's novels are the offspring of *Political Justice* does not necessarily mean that they are perfect fictional translations of philosophical theories the treatise puts forward. Similarly, while regarded as one of the most important Godwinian novels, Mary's *Frankenstein* is never loyal to his philosophy. In fact, *Frankenstein* shows her disagreement with some of her father's principal tenets. The reader would expect Godwin's novels to explore the probability of human faculty for perpetual self-enlightening and the possibility of the inevitable progress of society; they do not. One of his contemporary critics presents his objective view of the crucial characteristics of Godwin's vision of human being and society as expounded in his novels: "The principle object of his study and contemplation is man the enemy of man . . . Life seems to have been but the instrument to burn this truth into the soul of [him]."<sup>3</sup>

Carrying on the spirit of the author of *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* successfully convey the essence of the criticism against all the forms of political institution and social convention. Unlike *Political Justice*, however, they reveal Godwin's ambivalent attitude towards aristocratic principles and utilitarianism as genuine virtue. Also *St Leon* manifests his confusing treatment of his revised view of the method for reforming society. Furthermore, both novels introduce the reader to the vision of the individual not as a being endowed with perfectibility, but as one who has no capability to redirect his determinist chain towards perpetual improvement and true happiness. They seem to underline Godwin's anarchical notion overshooting his original intention: The spirit and character of political institutions intrude themselves into every

rank of society and poison the minds of people before they can resist, rendering them quite incapable of the exercise of reason and impartial judgement. As a result, his protagonists fail to counteract the effects of the poison of ideological prejudices deeply rooted in society and destroy their own chances for happiness. In his novels Godwin unintentionally refutes his optimistic assumptions about the law of necessity and human perfectibility. *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* show neither the promise of a rational order to come nor the hope for human perfectibility.

Mary's re-reading of Godwin's *Political Justice*, *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon* during her composition of *Frankenstein* demonstrates her great debt of intellectual and philosophical dimensions to his works and ideas. In her literary originality, on the other hand, Mary casts a sharply critical eye on her father's ideas in her novel. While adopting Godwin's philosophy in *Political Justice*, she intentionally refutes some of his ideal thoughts, casting them into the real world where they must inevitably fail. Like the creature who is an amalgam of different regions of decayed human bodies, her novel itself would be reconstructed as a product of the mixture of anatomized Godwinian ideas, the mixture of her acceptance and rejection of his theories and also her veneration and defiance of her father.

*Frankenstein* holds many things common to and many different from Godwin's works. As to the educational, epistemological and metaphysical concerns in the novel, it is certainly a product of the Godwinian school, as Percy Shelley indicates in the Preface of the 1818 text on Mary's behalf. Espousing the epigrammatic manner and the themes in *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon* such as the pursuit of forbidden knowledge, revenge, isolation and alienation as curses to human beings, she portrays her protagonists under the influence of Godwinian ideas. As with his novels, *Frankenstein* shows a strong desire of the author to know the motivations behind human actions, and it also deplors all of person's inhumanities to his species in a very similar way to them. Mary has his unshakable conviction run through her novel: Every vice of humankind, every defect in

human morality and character stems from evil practices in political institutions.

In reference to a point of difference, Godwin and Mary did not agree in their notions about progress in science. Godwin believes that science, whose fundamental principle is human reason, is a great instrument of enlightenment. Scientific progress presents evidence for the validity of his doctrine of necessity and human perfectibility. Knowledge gleaned from rational reflection and scientific investigation into the workings of nature enables humankind to establish a scientifically formulated law of necessity by which a continually increasing proportion of natural phenomena would be explained. In his human science Godwin ventures to apply the law of necessity to the workings of the human mind, trying to exploit it for a comprehensive understanding of human beings and moral world. In *Caleb Williams* the principle of human science is referred to by his necessitarian protagonist, Collins, who employs it to discern the person's character. *St Leon* uses the motif of science (it assumes a disguise of old natural philosophy though) as a possible instrument for enlightenment and social reformation.

In contrast to Godwin, Mary assumes a critical and conservative attitude towards scientific progress. *Frankenstein* actually diminishes the enlightening faculty of science. Her distrust of human science and her fears of seeking to apply the scientific physical methods to the study of humankind are evident in Victor's appalling experiment which results in a great calamity. Her apprehension about the uncontrollability of scientific technology is also clearly reflected in the creature's increasingly acrimonious rebellion against his creator. Mary seemed to feel prescient concern about human moral improvement lagging behind the rapid progress in science, especially in biology and technology. On that point, *Frankenstein* is regarded as a product of Mary's analysis of "the horrifying but predictable consequences of an uncontrolled technological exploitation" of nature and human beings.<sup>4</sup> Ludmilla Jordanova argues that Mary's depiction of Victor's development and inner life in his scientific endeavour to unveil nature is "an unambiguously critical portrayal of perverted science."<sup>5</sup>

It is the adoption of the doctrine of necessity which allows *Frankenstein* to be labeled as a Godwinian novel. The doctrine of necessity central to the whole theory in *Political Justice* consists of some principal ideas: A human being is an offspring of his circumstances; human free will is an illusion; the workings of material universe are subject to the law of necessity and therefore inevitable, as are the operations of human mind and all following acts; under the law of necessity, the amelioration and progress of society lead to the perpetual improvement of humankind. The doctrine of necessity forms the foundation of the theory of human perfectibility.

There are some intrinsic similarities as well as dissimilarities between Godwin's and Mary's treatment of the law of necessity in their novels. Both of them never delineate the operations of the law of necessity which produce the chain reaction of human improvement followed by social progress, and vice versa. In fact, the law of necessity described in their novels mechanistically makes bad repetitions. No protagonists are given the faculty to modify their social conditioning, and no one can direct or redirect their determinist chain towards good repetitions. In this respect, the law of necessity governing their world seems to take on a fatalistic character. Every protagonist is described as a machine with no internal engine under the strict law of necessity, and at the same time, each one seems like a helpless victim who is threatened by the shadow of depressed fatalism. Each is inwardly disturbed by the idea of the inevitability of unhappiness. The determinism-fatalism border is blurred in their novels, especially in *Frankenstein*. Godwin seems to get away from his own optimistic theory of necessity in this regard.

Through emphasizing the protagonists as human beings of passion, *Frankenstein* delineates the fatalistic necessity more explicitly than *Caleb Williams* and *St Leon*. In *Political Justice* Godwin insists that a human is by nature a rational being. Therefore, even in battles between reason and passion, "the contending forces assume a rational form" in the end, leading persons to rational decisions and conducts. It is actually

“opinion contending with opinion and judgment with judgment.” He optimistically believes that their “internal struggles” gradually and necessarily “assume a rational form” through the faculty of reason to compare, balance and regulate their feelings.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the improvement of reason is the necessary basis of any improvement of human beings and social condition.

In *Frankenstein*, Mary clearly stresses that Godwin’s theory is out of touch with reality. All the chain reactions of events in human mind have not a rational tendency towards rational decisions and judgements. The fact is that on many occasions in their lives human beings have moments of uncontrollable passion which appear to be difficult for them to anticipate or explain. Victor and the creature are enlightened rational beings, as Godwin’s protagonists are. In battles between reason and passion, however, their internal struggles never acquire rational forms or consequences. In moments of passion they are so driven by a particular sudden feeling such as hate and anger that they forget the rational considerations by which they are commonly guided. The chase between Victor and his creature is the product of a chain of events in a whirl of uncompromisable feelings and passions, and in fact, so is that between Falkland and Caleb.

Mary is also emphatic about the unpredictable working of human minds, as which Godwin regards as “the interference of chance and irregularity.” Unpredictable emotions and passions repeatedly compel the workings of minds of Victor and his creature to deviate from their orbits of determinist chains. The law of necessity governing them is eventually overturned by the interference of this unpredictable working of passion out of passion. The reality of human unpredictability Mary delineates in the inner motives behind her protagonists’ acts makes them look like the slaves of a fatal impulse, accentuating fatalism or inevitability in *Frankenstein*. Actually, Godwin’s protagonists also experience similar unpredictable passions and often fail to establish their underlying motives for their acts. Hence, they also often feel tossed about by a compelling fate. Concerning the unpredictability of human passions, true



Godwinian necessity might demand another interpretation. The reason why their protagonists consider their passions unpredictable and therefore uncontrollable is just because they are not enlightened enough. The more their reason and judgement get improved, the less they are subject to the interference of unpredictability or irregularity. Then they should no longer be victims of fatalistic necessity. Compared to *Caleb Williams*, *Frankenstein* seems to leave much less place for the Godwinian interpretation because of the stronger sense of fatalism.

Godwin and Mary shared the underlying assumption that a human is a being who has no free will and is governed by the law of necessity. Their protagonists are acutely conscious of the passiveness of their beings. The description of protagonists as machines without internal engines arouses a question in the reader's mind: When human beings find themselves in a sequence of unexpected calamities whose real causes they cannot understand, how can they accept the fact without feeling that life is empty of meaning? If they are mere automations operated on by external forces, how can they value life and carry on living? Those could be serious problems for every human being under the law of necessity. No clear answer is offered in the novels of both Godwin and Mary. However, the reader might find one possible answer in the common theme that runs through their novels. It is emotional support and guidance.

When a person meets with a calamity, if he cannot understand or accept the causation of the unexpected event as inevitable, an emotional mainstay becomes necessary for him. Their novels seem most consistent and persuasive in this point. While repeating a story of exclusion, loneliness and loss, their novels demonstrate that a human being essentially has the need for emotional support. The characters continue to seek it in their respective adventures. In particular, *St Leon* and *Frankenstein* emphasize the importance of emotional support as a touchstone of morality. To a person who cannot overlook the whole determinist chain of his life, affection, sympathy and friendship will act as his shield and can be a moral anchor and a substantial source of

happiness and forgiveness. Victor totally disregards domestic affection in pursuit of his ambition. His creature is denied the right to have a familial bond and friendship from his birth and loses hope for them forever in consequence of his cruel, vengeful acts. Their tragedy demands an appreciation of the importance of gaining an emotional anchor for the attainment of moral improvement and true happiness.

In fact, Godwin assigns a much less important role to such emotional support or guidance in *Political Justice*. Hazlitt states critically: "Mr. Godwin gives no quarter to the amiable weaknesses of our nature, nor does he stoop to avail himself of the supplementary aids of an imperfect virtue." Affection and friendship give way in his doctrine, and "the void" is "filled up by the disinterested love of good" and "the dictates of inflexible justice, which is 'the law of laws, and sovereign of sovereigns.'" <sup>7</sup> *St Leon* is a product of his hard-won modifications in his theories about human nature. *Frankenstein* manifests Mary's appreciation of the emotional aids available to a person of imperfect nature.

It seems that Mary also presents the necessity of guidance from something behind the law of necessity, that is, from the creator of the chain of necessity, a deity. That is reflected in the creature's quest for his creator and the first link in the determinist chain of his existence. Mary seems to want to believe in the law of necessity devised by a merciful being. The law should be according to the benevolent divine intention to lead humankind to salvation in the end. Her desire finds expression in the merciful tendency of the operations of necessity through which the creature could learn the beauty of life and in which he could feel the meaning of life. The benevolent tendency marks Mary's law of necessity different in essence from Godwin's. The law of necessity in Godwin's doctrine takes on no such tendency, because it ought to mechanistically work upon the universe and human beings. The law delineated in his novels basically displays mechanistic, unemotional and heartless operations upon the protagonists.

While composing *Frankenstein*, Mary might have sought divine salvation in the

chain of sorrows her life proved to be: her mother's death, the domestic troubles in life with her step-mother, her father's rejection and coldness, the death of her first baby and suicide of her sister, Fanny Imlay. As with her creature, it was natural for her to yearn for some spiritual guidance that would reveal steps to take and help her overcome many difficulties and misfortunes in life. Mary's longing for salvation reminds us Coleridge's letter to his friend, Charles Lamb, who was in extreme grief over a family tragedy. It suggests how misfortune can be understood beyond any rational attempt to interpret it:

Heaven knows that in the easiest fortunes there is much dissatisfaction and weariness of spirit; much that calls for the exercise of patience and resignation; but in storms like these, that shake the dwelling and make the heart tremble, there is no middle way between despair and the yielding up of the whole spirit unto the guidance of faith . . . I look upon you as a man called by sorrow and anguish and a strange desolation of hopes into quietness, and a soul set apart and made peculiar to God! We cannot arrive at any portion of heavenly bliss without in some measure imitating Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Like Lamb, Mary was "a temporary sharer in human miseries" in those days. She might have wanted to believe that her misery would make her "an eternal partaker of the Divine nature."<sup>9</sup> Mary's depression and severe anxiety concerning her life lead her to develop her own doctrine of necessity in *Frankenstein*.

Mary admired the values of Godwin's philosophy and his works, even though *Frankenstein* could be regarded as a subversion of his philosophical theories in several ways. The influence Godwin and his philosophy exercised on Mary and her literary development cannot be emphasized enough. At the same time, Godwin was also greatly influenced by his daughter and her ideas. Godwin rated her novels highly, especially *Frankenstein*. He wrote to Mary: "Your talents are truly extraordinary: Frankenstein is universally known, and . . . [it] is everywhere respected."<sup>10</sup> Actually her philosophical thoughts play a significant role in Godwin's altering conviction about the deistic

doctrine of necessity.

Godwin did not refer to a deity as the creator of the determinist chain in his doctrine. As he and Mary supported and encouraged one another after Shelley's death, however, his doctrine of necessity took on a similar tendency to hers. Just like her mother, Wollstonecraft, Mary was not a skeptic and occasionally attended church. As Powers points out, Godwin's references to the creator of the universe and a divine being increased as their mutually supportive relationship continued through the years.<sup>1 1</sup> Mary's doctrine introduced Godwin to the law of necessity with a benevolent tendency. Any intervention of the divine will is eliminated in the workings of the law of necessity in *Political Justice*. On the other hand, Godwin indeed comes to feel some divine workings in the universe:

As the system of the universe presents us with a wonderful spectacle of harmony, where a thousand complicated movements all lead to one beneficial result, so in the progress and succession of events we perpetually observe the same salutary and beneficent tendency.<sup>1 2</sup>

Now he sees everything in the universe "under the guidance of a power for ever vigilant and for ever active." The salutary and beneficent tendency in the system of the universe is very similar to that which Victor's creature feels. Godwin's law of necessity which mechanically works on the universe gradually changes into "a principle" which "in a vast sum of instances works for good and operates beneficially for us," i.e. human beings. And in those instances he can see "a Providence."<sup>1 3</sup> Godwin's and Mary's works are the products of their respective life-long struggles to find the principle of necessity upon which they and fellow citizens of the world can repose with confidence in every single situation of their life. Deepening understanding of the doctrine of necessity, which they attempted to inquire into through their life, would be connected to an appreciation of the true value of their literary works.

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## Notes

### Introduction

1. B. J. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist*, 29-30.
2. George Gilfillan, "Mrs Shelley," *A Second Gallery of Literary Portraits*, 284.

### Chapter I

1. Calvinism is the Protestant theological system developed by John Calvin (1509-64) and his successors. The system emphasizes the grace of God and advances the doctrine of predestination. It teaches that God elects, based solely upon the counsel of His own will, some people for eternal glory and others for eternal damnation.

2. Joseph Priestley (1733-1804) was a British scientist, theologian and political reformer. He was one of the most influential Dissenters of the eighteenth century, and his theological and educational works had a great influence on Godwin and his philosophical thoughts.

3. C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 1: 26.

4. Richard Price (1723-91) was a Dissenting minister and moral philosopher. As one of the intellectual leaders of rational Dissent, he staunchly defended the American and French Revolutions.

5. Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country, delivered on Nov. 4, 1789, at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry, to the Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain*, 50. Edmund Burke (1729-97) wrote his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) as an objection to the discourse.

6. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness* (1798) edited with an introduction by Isaac Kramnick. This is the third and final edition of *Political Justice*.

7. They include *An Account of the Seminary* (1783), *The Herald of Literature* (1784), *Instructions to a Statesman* (1784), and *History of the Internal Affairs of the United Provinces* (1787). *An Account of the Seminary* was a significant treatise in which Godwin's early liberal ideas as to education were dealt with. *History of the Internal Affairs* treated of the revolutionary war in Holland and America and predicted the French Revolution.

8. John Horn Tooke (1736-1812), John Thelwall (1764-1834) and Joseph Gerrald (1763-1796) were members of the London Corresponding Society. See Chapter II. Thomas Holcroft (1745-1809) was a dramatist, novelist and journalist.

9. Paul, 1: 64-5.

10. Mary Hays wrote that in the *Monthly Magazine*. *Monthly Magazine* 4 (September 1797), 181. Quoted in Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period: 1789-1830*, 30.

11. John Haggitt noted that in the Preface to his 1794 loyalist play *The Count de Villeroi; or, The Fate of Patriotism*. Quoted in David O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, 89.

12. *Ibid.*, 3.

13. Godwin gives his own account of his mode of life while composing *Political Justice*. Paul, 1: 77-8.

14. Louis Cazamian, *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850: Routledge Library Editions: Charles Dickens*, 36.

15. Paul, 1: 61.

16. Allene Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel*, 119.

17. Paul, 1: 67.

18. Coleridge, "To William Godwin—Author of 'Political Justice.'" *Coleridge: Poetical Works*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge, 86.

19. William Hazlitt, "William Godwin," *Lectures on the English Poets and The Spirit of the Age: or Contemporary Portraits*, 183.

20. Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) published *An Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798. In the essay, he used the fear of overpopulation to refute revolutionary optimism. While Godwin insisted that the vices and miseries of humankind are the offspring of political institutions and not invincible, Malthus argued that they originate in fixed natural laws: the necessity of food and of reproduction of human beings.

21. Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 1: 238. Gregory, *The French Revolution and the English Novel*, 119.

22. Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793). This is the first edition of *Political Justice* published in 2 volumes from G. G. J. and J. Robinson.

23. Godwin admits that government can sometimes serve some functions in maintaining order in society and protecting people. He also states that democracy is the best form of government possible, despite the fact that its system has a lot of faults. See John P. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*, 296-7.

24. F. E. L. Priestley, "Platonism in William Godwin's *Political Justice*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 4 (March 1934), 63. Quoted in Elton Edward Smith and Esther Greenwell Smith, *William Godwin*, 33.

25. There is a very famous fable of Archbishop Fénelon and the fire in *Political Justice*. (PJ 169-172) François Fénelon (1651-1715) was an Archbishop of Cambrai and the author of *The Adventures of Telemachus* (1699) known as a bitter satire of Louis XIV's reign. Here in the chapter "Justice," we see Godwin's ground that individuals should postpone self-interest to the welfare of the public. Godwin let us suppose that the house of "the illustrious archbishop of Cambrai" is in flames and the life of only one, archbishop Fénelon or his valet, could be preserved. Which of the two ought to be



preferred? Godwin asserts that undoubtedly Fénelon should be saved, for his life is more valuable and more conducive to the general good than the other. Saving the life of Fénelon could be saving “the benefit of thousands who have been cured by the perusal” of “his immortal Telemachus.” If Godwin himself were the valet, he ought to choose to die because of justice. Justice requires that he should be content to die. “To have done otherwise would have been a breach of justice.” Furthermore he continues: “Suppose the valet had been my brother, my father or my benefactor. This would not alter the truth of the proposition . . . Justice would have taught me to save the life of Fénelon at the expense of the other.” (*PJ* 170)

In the first edition (1793), Godwin used “wife” or “mother” in lieu of “brother” or “father,” “the chambermaid” in lieu of “the valet.” In the second and third editions (1796 and 1798), Godwin watered the tone down by altering the sex of the immediate family and the servant. See Chapter III.

26. *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 1: 3. Quoted in Pamela Clemit, “Godwin, *Political Justice*,” *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, 98.

27. Godwin, *Thoughts on Man, His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries*, Preface. Mark Philp, ed. *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 6: 36.

28. Hazlitt, “William Godwin,” 184.

29. D. H. Monro, *Godwin’s Moral Philosophy: An Interpretation of William Godwin*, 7.

30. “*Cloudesley: a Tale*. By the Author of *Caleb Williams*,” *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 51 (April 1830), 155.

31. Charles Macfarlane, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, 98. Quoted in O’Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, 94.

32. Edmund Burke was a parliamentarian, orator and political writer. He played an important part in major political issues between the 1760s and the 1790s.

33. R. W. Harris, *Romanticism and the Social Order: 1780-1830*, 9.

34. Henry Brooke's *The Fool of Quality; or The History of Henry Earl of Moreland* (1772), Frances Burney's *Evelina, or the History of a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778), Thomas Day's *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1783-89), John Moore's *Zeluco: Various Views of Human Nature* (1789), Robert Bage's *Mount Henneth* (1782), *Barham Downs* (1784), *The Fair Syrian* (1787), *James Wallace* (1788), *Man as he is* (1792) and *Hermesprong or Man as he is not* (1796). Brooke and Day were in general far more conservative than those in the Godwin circle. See Mona Scheuermann, *The Novels of William Godwin and Those of His Contemporaries*, Chapter 3.

35. Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821) was a novelist, playwright and one of Godwin's close friends. According to O'Shaughnessy, Godwin was actively involved in her drama writing. Holcroft and Inchbald were "the principal beneficiaries of [Godwin's] criticism." O'Shaughnessy, ed. *The Plays of William Godwin*, xv.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) was a moral and political philosopher and writer. Through her best-known work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), she made a significant contribution to feminism in Britain and also had an impact on the Romantic movement. In 1797, she married Godwin and died shortly after giving birth to their daughter Mary Shelley.

36. Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, 26.

37. Scheuermann, *Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, 2.

38. *The Novels and Selected Plays of Thomas Holcroft*, ed. W. M. Verhoeven, 1: xi. Quoted in O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, 44.

39. Scheuermann, *The Novels of William Godwin*, 88-9.

40. Katherine Binhammer, "The Political Novel and the Seduction Plot: Thomas Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 11.2 (1999), 206.

41. Holcroft, *Anna St. Ives* edited by Peter Faulkner. Quoted in Scheuermann, *The*

*Novels of William Godwin*, 91-3.

42. Scheuermann, *The Novels of William Godwin*, 88.

43. *Ibid.*, 81.

44. Kelly, *The English Jacobin Novel: 1780-1805*, 119.

45. Paul, 1: 78.

46. Mary Wollstonecraft stated in her mixed critique of Holcroft's *Anna St. Ives* that the title character, "in her leading features," is "a child of imagination, of which we may venture to assert that no archetype exists in nature," and her behavior is "so remote from everything that we observe in real life, that we must pronounce it highly improbable, if not wholly unnatural." "*Anna St. Ives: a Novel*. By Thomas Holcroft," *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal* 8 (1792), 151-2.

## Chapter II

1. Godwin states that there are three principal causes of moral improvement: "literature, or the diffusion of knowledge through the medium of discussion, whether written or oral; education, or a scheme for the early impression of right principles upon the hitherto unprejudiced mind; and political justice, or the adoption of any principle of morality and truth into the practice of a community."

2. Mary Shelley reported later that she had frequently heard her father say that "Political Justice escaped prosecution" in spite of its radicalism because of the high price. "Pitt observed, when the question was debated in the Privy Council, that 'a three guinea book could never do much harm among those who had not three shillings to spare.'" Paul, 1: 80.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Godwin, *Caleb Williams* edited with an introduction by David McCracken.

5. Paul, 1: 116.

6. This preface to the first edition, dated May 12, 1794, was withdrawn in compliance with the alarms of booksellers. Godwin explains that situation in the second preface, dated October 29, 1795. According to that, *Caleb Williams* was first published “in the same month in which the sanguinary plot broke out against the liberties of Englishmen.” The government carried out wholesale arrests of leading radical thinkers on a charge of sedition. Because “it was feared that even the humble novelist might be shown to be constructively a traitor,” Godwin’s booksellers decided to withdraw the too outspoken preface. (CW 1795 Preface) After all, it first appeared with the 1795 Preface in the second edition of the novel in 1797. The letter written by Inchbald conveys the then circumstances. Prior to the publication of *Caleb Williams*, Inchbald wrote to Godwin with concern: “. . . still there are lines I wish erased. I shudder lest for the sake of a few sentences, (and these particularly marked for the reader’s attention by the purport of your preface) a certain set of people should hastily condemn the whole work as of immoral tendency, and rob it of a popularity which no other failing it has could I think endanger.” Paul, 1:139.

7. William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family*, 119.

8. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin*, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley, 41.

9. Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, 4. Godwin attended the Revolution Society in November 1789, where Price preached the sermon.

10. The novel’s main title in its early editions, *Things As They Are*, is cut to avert the potential anti-Jacobin animosities in the 1790s. Although there are editions entitled *The Adventures of Caleb Williams; or, Things As They Are*, today, the original subtitle, *The Adventures of Caleb Williams* or just *Caleb Williams* is more familiar to readers.

11. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 41.

12. *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine*, ed. Philip S. Foner, 413-4.

13. Kenneth Graham, "The Gothic Unity of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," *Gothic Literature: A Gale Critical Companion*, 2: 331.

14. Amanda Goodrich, *Debating England's Aristocracy in the 1790s: Pamphlets, Polemics and Political Ideas*, 113-4. According to her, popular societies of radicals and loyalists eagerly participated in "the intellectual debate and contributed pamphlets, broadsides and publications of their addresses and resolutions."

15. In response to a request from publisher Richard Bentley, Godwin wrote a new account of *Caleb Williams* to append to the 'Stanford Novels' edition of his novel *Fleetwood; or, The New Man of Feeling* in 1832. *Fleetwood* was first published in 1805. In the account he referred to *Caleb Williams* as "the concoction," explaining the "mode of writing" of it at full length.

16. Godwin attempts to stress his political purpose by placing the motto on the title page of the first edition of *Caleb Williams*. The aphorism also reminds the readers of Wollstonecraft's remarks in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Wollstonecraft, who was indignant with Burke for his "mortal antipathy to reason" in *Reflections*, condemned his position and stated: "*Man preys on man; and you mourn for the idle tapestry that decorated a gothic pile, and the dronish bell that summoned the fat priest to prayer. You mourn for the empty pageant of a name, when slavery flaps her wing, and the sick heart retires to die in lonely wilds, far from the abodes of men.*" *A Vindication of the Rights of Men, in a Letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 9, 152.

17. According to the account of the novel, Godwin recognized a certain similitude between *Caleb Williams* and the tale of Bluebeard written by Charles Perrault in 1697, admitting that he rather amused himself with tracing it: "Falkland was my Bluebeard . . . Caleb Williams was the wife." (CW Appendix II)

18. "Criticism on the Novels of Godwin," *Caleb Williams*, xv. It is a famous essay of Godwin's day by an anonym.

19. Ibid.

20. Godwin states that the game-laws forbid the industrious rustic “to destroy the animal that preys upon the hopes of his future subsistence, or to supply himself with the food that unsought thrusts itself in his path.” Also he points out that in England “the land-tax at this moment produces half a million less than it did a century ago,” while “the taxes on consumption” which fall exclusively upon “the humble and industrious” have “experienced an addition of thirteen millions per annum during the same period.” “Upon the same principle robbery and other offences, which the wealthier part of the community have no temptation to commit, are treated as capital crimes, and attended with the most rigorous, often the most inhuman punishments.” The existing criminal law tries to “exclude the impoverished claimant from the faintest hope of redress.” (*PJ* 93-5)

21. Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin*, 71.

22. H. N. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 144.

23. Ibid., 145.

24. Godwin began to write *Caleb Williams* 24 February 1793 and completed it 8 May 1794. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 37.

25. Paul, 1: 126-7. Joseph Gerrald (1763-1796) was a political reformer who worked with the LCS, arguing the need for universal suffrage and annual parliaments. In the account of *Caleb Williams*, Godwin refers to “the unfortunate Joseph Gerrald” as “one of the most accomplished readers and excellent critics that any author could have fallen in with.” (*CW* Appendix II)

26. Thomas Hardy (1752-1832) was a Scottish shoemaker. He founded a parliamentary reform group, London Corresponding Society in 1792. He served as the first Secretary of the organization. Hardy made a speech in July 1793 as an address to the Nation from the LCS, in which he argued: “Gloomy as is the prospect now before us

and unpleasing as is the task to bring forth into open day the calamitous situation of our Country: We conceive it necessary to direct the public eye, to the cause of our misfortunes, and to awaken the sleeping reason of our Countrymen, to the pursuit of the only remedy which can ever prove effectual, namely; — A thorough Reform in Parliament, by the adoption of an equal Representation obtained by Annual Elections and Universal Suffrage.” *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society 1792-1799* edited with an introduction and notes by Mary Thale, 75.

John Horne Tooke (1736-1812), originally a clergyman, was an agitator for parliamentary reform and a philologist. He was one of the leading members of the LCS. John Thelwall (1764-1834) was a silk merchant, successful political orator, journalist and founder of the original *Tribune* (1795-6). He helped Hardy to ground the LCS in 1792, becoming one of the most passionate activists in the LCS.

Soon after those radical leaders were charged with high treason, Godwin contributed to the *Morning Chronicle* a pamphlet, *Cursory Strictures on the Charge delivered by Lord Chief Judge Eyre to the Grand Jury* (1794). It effectively demolished the charge against them, checking the excesses of the reactionary government. Hazlitt writes later that it “possibly saved the lives of twelve innocent individuals, marked out as political victims to the Moloch of Legitimacy, which then skulked behind a British throne, and had not yet dared to stalk forth (as it has done since) from its lurking-place, in the face of day, to brave the opinion of the world.” Hazlitt, “William Godwin,” 192.

27. Paul, 1: 117.

28. Scheuermann, *Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, 143.

29. His diary records his reading of the trial transcripts of Horne Tooke (December 1793); Thomas Muir (December 1793); and, Daniel Isaac Eaton (April 1794). O’Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, 73.

30. O’Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre*, 80-1.

31. Godwin wrote Gerrald a long noble letter to animate him and advised him about his defence in the trial. The letter, written in January 1794, shows Godwin's affectionate admiration for him: "I cannot recollect the situation in which you are in a few days to be placed without emotions of respect, and I had almost said of envy . . . Your trial, if you so please, may be a day such as England, and I believe the world, never saw. It may be the means of converting thousands, and, progressively, millions, to the cause of reason and public justice . . . you are actuated by pure philanthropy and benevolence, and have no selfish motives, . . . your projects lead to general happiness, and are the only means of averting the scene of confusion which is impending over us." According to the notes in reference to political trials, Gerrald was "sentenced to be transported for fifteen years, which, in his precarious state of health, was considered, as it proved to be, equivalent to a sentence of death." (Paul, 1:125-8) Following are recorded words of him while awaiting the sentence:

Moral light is as irresistible by the mind as physical by the eye. All attempts to impede its progress are vain. It will roll rapidly along, and as well may tyrants imagine that by placing their feet upon the earth they can stop its diurnal motion, as that they shall be able by efforts the most virulent and pertinacious to extinguish the light of reason and philosophy, which happily for mankind is everywhere spreading around us. (Brailsford 89)

After spending about a year in Newgate, in May 1795 he was sent to Botany Bay, and in the following year died at the age of 33.

32. Paul, 1: 124-5.

33. Scheuermann, *Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, 156, 186. For the vivid description of the prisons and criminal lives, Godwin also consulted Henry Fielding's *Jonathan Wild* (1743) and Daniel Defoe's *Colonel Jack* (1722) and *Roxana* (1724).



John Howard (1726-90) was a philanthropist and prison reformer. He studied English and European prisons and hospitals to write numerous books about them. Godwin refers to Howard in *Political Justice*: “An active observer of mankind, with the purest intentions, and who had paid a singular attention to this subject, was struck with the mischievous tendency of the reigning system, and called the attention of the public to a scheme of solitary imprisonment.” (PJ 676)

34. Godwin, “Essay on a State of Future Retribution,” in *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled: In a Series of Essays. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 115. This collection of essays is Godwin’s last work, which first appeared in 1873, more than thirty years after his death.

35. Godwin, *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* edited with a foreword by Devendra P. Varma.

36. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist*, 37.

37. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 63.

38. *The Adventures of Caleb Williams or Things As They Are* edited with an introduction by George Sherburn. Introduction.

39. David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre*, 134.

40. According to Duff, influenced by Godwin’s claim, Percy Shelley resists the idea of chivalry, believing that the chivalric code produces the poisonous spirit of obedience. He also criticizes the heroic tenor of the chivalric age such as putting “honor” before “virtue” and warns of its destructive consequences. Duff, *Romance and Revolution*, 134-5.

41. Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, 33.

42. Burke, *Reflections on the French Revolution* with an introduction by A. J. Grieve.

43. Duff, *Romance and Revolution*, 135. Because Godwin’s attitude to the system of chivalry and honour altered in certain way as he grew older, the complexity of the

characterization of Falkland offers more scope for analysis. As Duff explains, this change is deeply connected with the change of his view as to the value of domestic affection and marriage. In his *Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* (1803), Godwin praises the system of chivalry, whose traditional ideals have given the sexual relationship “a refinement, and a spirit of sanctity and honour.” He also acknowledges that “the great chain of subordination in the feudal law” has generated among people “a continual respect to the combinations and affections which bind man to man, and neighbor to neighbor”:

The feudal system was the nurse of chivalry, and the parent of romance; and out of these have sprung the principle of modern honour in the best sense of that term, the generosity of disinterested adventure, and the more persevering and successful cultivation of the private affections. (*Life of Geoffrey Chaucer, the Early English Poet*, 1: 360-1)

Duff states that it is “‘honour’ in the latter sense which had been so strikingly exemplified, with disastrous consequences, by the character of Falkland.” We can see the further development of Godwin’s view of chivalry in his *Thoughts on Man* (1831).

44. “Memoirs of William Godwin,” *Caleb Williams*, xiii. This essay was written by Mary Shelley in 1831 for the reissue of *Caleb Williams*. She states that through the characterization of Falkland the novel added to Godwin’s reputation: “He has bestowed on us a whole creation of imaginary existences, among whom when we name Falkland, we select the being of fancy which is at once the most real and the most grand that has appeared since Shakespeare gave a ‘local habitation’ to the name of Hamlet.”

45. Scheuermann, *Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, 184. Here is one of the most impressive scenes in *Nature and Art*. When a Lady gives “a hundred pounds” to the poor in the frost, the protagonist considers her act to be a “prudent” one, not “benevolent.” Then he says, “I think it was prudent in you to give a little; lest the poor, driven to despair, should take all.” (NA 433) To Inchbald, it is most

repugnant that “what the poor receive to keep them from perishing, should pass under the name of *gifts* and *bounty*. Health, strength, and the will to earn a moderate subsistence, ought to be every man’s security from obligation.” (NA 433-4) *A Simple Story and Nature and Art* edited by William Bell Scott.

46. Scheuermann, *Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, 184.

47. *Ibid.*, 169.

48. Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason*, 72.

49. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 40.

50. Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason*. 73.

51. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist*, 47.

52. Godwin, “On the Present Life of Man Considered as a State of Probation for a Future World,” in *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 127.

53. Hazlitt, “William Godwin,” 183. Wordsworth reputedly said that to a young man and a student in the Temple in 1795.

54. St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 73.

55. Godwin, *An Account of the Seminary, &c. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 5: 19.

56. Godwin, “Essay on a State of Future Retribution.” *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 114.

57. St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 72.

58. Godwin, “Essay on a State of Future Retribution.” *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 114.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Godwin, “On the Present Life of Man Considered as a State of Probation for a Future World.” *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 127.

61. Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, 34.

62. *Thoughts on Man. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 6: 170.

63. Ibid.

64. Katherine Richardson Powers, *The Influence of William Godwin on the Novels of Mary Shelley*, 116. Caleb appears in the Hebrew Bible as an Israelite man. He is selected as a spy by Moses to explore the Promised Land. Unlike Godwin's Caleb, Caleb in the Bible offers an example of faithful commitment to his master, the Lord.

65. Graham, "The Gothic Unity of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*," 2: 333.

66. Ibid.

67. A. D. Harvey, "The Nightmare of *Caleb Williams*," *Essays in Criticism* 26, 243.

68. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 16.

69. Godwin's three novels appeared anonymously in 1784, and all got little attention: *Italian Letters*, *Damon and Delia* and *Imogen*.

70. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 59.

71. Scheuermann, *Social Protest in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*, 144.

72. Ibid.

73. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist*, 45.

74. Godwin, *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 5: 85.

75. *Thoughts on Man. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 6: 45.

### Chapter III

1. Godwin, *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, Preached at Christ Church, April 15, 1800: Being a Reply to the Attacks of Dr. Parr*,

*Mr. Mackintosh, the Author of an Essay on Population, and Others. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin, 2: 177.*

2. Hazlitt, "William Godwin," 182.

3. Cazamian, *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850*, 37.

4. The Preface to the second edition of *Political Justice* (1796).

5. The latter was an epistolary travel journal to which Godwin was especially attracted. He noted that "If ever there was a book calculated to make a man in love with its author, this appears to me the book." Quoted in Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics & the Fiction of Letters*, 177. Godwin first met Wollstonecraft in 1791 and met again in 1796.

6. Godwin's letter to an unknown correspondent, dated September 19, 1797. Quoted in St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 180.

7. Godwin, *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin, 2: 182.*

8. Paul, 1: 361, 275-6.

9. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 148.

10. Paul, 1: 294.

11. In his diary, Godwin notes the same corrected principle in the third edition of *Political Justice*. Paul, 1: 294.

The voluntary actions of men are under the direction of their feelings: nothing can have a tendency to produce this species of action, except so far as it is connected with ideas of future pleasure or pain to ourselves or others. Reason, accurately speaking, has not the smallest degree of power to put any one limb or articulation of our bodies into motion. Its province, in a practical view, is wholly confined to adjusting the comparison between different objects of desire, and investigating the most successful mode of attaining those objects.

12. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 161.

13. *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, 1: 83. According to Monro, in Godwin's own lifetime, this passage was apparently what most people remembered from *Political Justice*. Monro, *Godwin's Moral Philosophy*, 9.

14. Monro, *Godwin's Moral Philosophy*, 9.

15. Louise Joy, "St. Leon and the Culture of the Heart," *History of European Ideas* 33, 41.

16. Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Wollstonecraft had an illegitimate daughter, Fanny Imlay (1793-1816), who was born between her and an American, Gilbert Imlay.

17. Thomas De Quincey, "William Godwin," *Biographical and Historical Essays*, 337. "In the *quarto* (that is, the original) edition of his 'Political Justice,' Mr. Godwin advanced against thrones and dominations, powers and principalities, with the air of some Titan slinger or monarchist from Thebes and Troy, saying, 'Come hither, ye wretches, that I may give your flesh to the fowls of the air.' But, in the second, or octavo edition, . . . he recoiled, absolutely, from the sound himself had made: everybody else was appalled by the fury of the challenge; and, through the strangest of accidents, Mr. Godwin also was appalled."

18. Godwin systematizes the theory that "Justice is a principle which proposes to itself the production of the greatest sum of pleasure or happiness" more in the third edition than the first. (*PJ* 76) On that point, the tendency toward utilitarianism is strengthened.

19. Considering "the most important thrust" of Godwin's revisions as rendering the text more unified and coherent, Kramnick insists that the alterations are minimal and the anarchist political doctrines are by no means changed from one edition to another. (*PJ* 57-8). Monro correctly points out that Godwin did not recant his ethical philosophy, in which he claims that when affection or "the promptings of the heart" really conflict with

reason, a virtuous man should decide in favour of reason. Monro, *Godwin's Moral Philosophy*, 10. David Fleisher, *William Godwin: A Study in Liberalism*, 59. James Bonar, *Malthus and His Work*, 11.

20. At the same time, Godwin started to edit Wollstonecraft's works and letters which were gathered in four volumes of *Posthumous Works of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798).

21. Joy, "St. Leon and the Culture of the Heart," 42.

22. The Dissenting minister Robert Hall attacked Godwin and his *Memoirs* in his sermons preached at Bristol and Cambridge in November and December 1799. *The Works of Robert Hall, A. M.*, 1: 49.

23. Emily W. Sunstein, *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality*, 37.

24. Joy, "St. Leon and the Culture of the Heart," 42.

25. More precisely, Godwin wrote *St Leon* between 31 December 1797 and 23 November 1799. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 88.

26. Varma, "Foreword," *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, i-ii. Gary Handwerk, "History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin's Historical Fiction," *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming Literature 1789-1837*, 71. Hazlitt also hailed *St Leon* as one of "the most splendid and impressive works of the imagination that have appeared in our times." "William Godwin," 190.

27. In his diary, Godwin refers to the novel as 'The Adept,' 'Opus Magnum,' and 'Natural Magic.' Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason*, 146.

28. Each of the essays focuses on the internal formation of human beings, discussing human perfectibility in an inductive or experiential way. *The Enquirer*, which is based upon a construction totally different from *Political Justice*, is intended as a new contribution towards intellectual enlightenment, showing an important development in Godwin's philosophical ideas and literary approach.

29. St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 210, 212.

30. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 153.

31. Scheuermann, *The Novels of William Godwin*, 148.

32. Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, 323-4, 373.

33. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 162. This expression is borrowed from Burke's phrase in his *Reflections*. Burke lays emphasis on the continuity between the principle of the formation of a nation and that of a family in his political theory. Referring to a familial unit as a "portion of social arrangement," he states that "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country, and to mankind." (RF 44)

34. Coleridge scribbled in the margin of his copy: "I remember few passages in ancient or modern Authors that contain more just philosophy in appropriate, chaste, & beautiful diction [than Godwin's reply to Dr. Parr]. [Those passages] reflect equal Honour on Godwin's Head and Heart. [Though] I did it only in the Zenith of his Reputation, yet I feel remorse *ever* to have spoken unkindly of such a man." *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Friend I*, ed. Barbara E. Rooke, 108.

35. Dr. Samuel Parr's harsh hostility against Godwin and his philosophy might be the result of severe critical assault on the clergy in "Of Trades and Professions" in *The Enquirer*.

36. James Mackintosh, *Discourse on the Law of Nature and Nations* (1799) and Samuel Parr, *A Spital Sermon preached at Christ Church, upon Easter Tuesday, April 1800* (1800). Godwin quoted those Parr's biting remarks about him in *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr's Spital Sermon. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 2: 178, 181.



37. St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 219. In the essay inquiring into the ratios of population and subsistence, whose initial targets were Condorcet and Godwin, Malthus discredited the utopian ideas concerning human perfectibility, that is, the progressive nature of human beings in knowledge and in virtuous propensities. Godwin suggested that human progress would lead to the attenuation of the reproductive instinct and that one of the great operative checks upon an increasing population would arise from “virtue, prudence or pride.” Malthus considered Godwin’s theory naïvely optimistic. He argued that human nature and the propensity to procreate are constant and the only preventative and sufficient checks to population growth are the vices and miseries of mankind such as famine or wars. In 1820, Godwin again answered Malthus in his elaborate pamphlet *Of Population: an Enquiry Concerning the Power of Increase in the Numbers of Mankind; being an Answer to Mr Malthus’s Essay*. David Fallon, “Philoprogenitive Blake,” *Blake, Gender and Culture*, 103.

38. *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr’s Spital Sermon. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 2: 180-1.

39. Godwin’s diary for 1798 shows very similar views. Paul, 1: 294-5.

40. “Godwin’s Reply to Parr,” *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* 1 (October 1802), 25. Quoted in *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 2: 163.

41. *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr’s Spital Sermon. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 2: 182-5.

42. Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, 90.

43. *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. Mark Philp, 1: 53-4.

44. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, 95-6.

45. Godwin, “Of Religion.” *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 63. Godwin also explains Sandemanian beliefs: After the Calvinists “had

damned ninety-nine in a hundred of mankind,” the Sandemanians “contrived a scheme for damning ninety-nine in a hundred of the followers of Calvin.” Paul, 1: 10-11.

46. Abinger Mss. Quoted in Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason*, 145. Godwin became acquainted with Fawcett in his twenty-third year at Ware. He states: “Mr Fawcett’s modes of thinking made a great impression upon me, as he was almost the first man I had ever been acquainted with, who carried with him the semblance of original genius.” According to Paul, Godwin was not the only one in his literary circle who esteemed Fawcett highly. Hazlitt writes: “The late Rev. Joseph Fawcett, author of the ‘Art of War,’ &c. . . He was the first person of literary eminence whom I had then known, and the conversations I then had with him on subjects of taste and philosophy, for his taste was as refined as his powers of reasoning were profound and subtle, gave me a delight such as I can never feel again.” Paul, 1: 17-8.

47. “Of Religion.” *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 64. Godwin wrote in his notes: “. . . [after] reading at Beaconsfield the Institutes of Dr Priestley, Socinianism appeared to relieve so many of the difficulties I had hitherto sustained from the Calvinistic theology, that my mind rested in that theory, to which I remained a sincere adherent till the year 1788.” Paul, 1: 19-20.

48. Paul, 1: 26. Also see *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, 1: 53.

49. Coleridge also described Holcroft as a man who “hates God with all his heart, with all his mind, with all his soul & with all his strength.” Quoted in Maurice Hindle, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Critical Studies), 131.

Godwin’s atheistic thought, however, is often colored by a notion that could be characterized as deistic. In the note of 1795, Godwin writes: “God is a being, who is himself the cause of his own existence . . . I believe in this being, not because I have any proper or direct knowledge of His existence, [but], I am at a loss to account for the existence and arrangement of the visible universe, [and], being left in the wide sea of conjecture without clue from analogy or experience, I find the conjecture of a God easy,

obvious, and irresistible. I perceive my understanding to be so commensurate to His nature, and His attributes to be so much like what I know and have observed [as] instantly to convert mystery into reason, and contradictions into certainty.” Paul, 1: 27-8.

50. Ibid., 1: 357-8.

51. Wollstonecraft was bred in the principles of the Church of England. In her twenties, she became acquainted with Richard Price, and was not a little influenced by his Dissenting creed. According to Godwin’s accounts in *Memoirs*, however, “[her] religion was, in reality, little allied to any system of forms,” and “was founded rather in taste, than in the niceties of polemical discussion.” (*Memoirs* 33)

*Letters from Norway* shows that with her great sensitivity Wollstonecraft finds “the Deity” in everything that soothes human hearts, in “the beauties of nature, where all that charm them are spread around with a lavish hand, force even the sorrowing heart to acknowledge that existence is a blessing.” *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, 124.

Godwin concludes that “[her] religion” is “the pure result of feeling and taste.” (*Memoirs* 197)

52. B. Sprague Allen, “William Godwin as a Sentimentalist,” *PMLA* 33.1(1918), 18.

53. One of Anna Seward’s correspondents wrote to her on what he felt about *St Leon*. Seward quoted it in the letter she wrote in June, 1800. *Letters of Anna Seward: Written between the Years 1784 and 1807*, 5: 289. Anna Seward (1742-1809) was an English poet and author of a sentimental novel *Louisa* (1784).

54. Zaheer Kazmi, *Polite Anarchy in International Relations Theory*, 114.

55. *The Enquirer. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 5: 79.

56. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 88.

57. James T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke*, 230-1. About Burkean character of *St Leon*, Holcroft wrote to Godwin that he was “but the counterpart of your Ferdinando Count Falkland.” “Review of *St Leon*,” *British Critic* 15 (January 1800), 52. Quoted in Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 90.

58. The meeting hosted from 7 to 24 June 1520, near Calais between Ardres and Guines, is known to history as “The Field of the Cloth of Gold.” Under the guidance of English Cardinal Thomas Wolsey (1475-1530), in opposition to the increasing threat of Ottoman Empire and the Holy Roman Empire, it was arranged to increase the bond of friendship between the two chief Christian nations of Europe. In attempting to impress and outshine each other, the two kings arrived at the meeting with large gorgeous retinues and vast displays of wealth. During the meeting, they vied with one another to erect luxurious golden pavilions, hold lavish banquets and organize jousts and competitions of skill and strength.

59. Handwerk, “History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin’s Historical Fiction,” 80.

60. Paul, 2: 25.

61. *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, 124, 128, 186. Wollstonecraft looks into the pernicious effects of the endless pursuit of wealth on the individual character and on domestic relationships. She is also severe on the cunning of merchants and traders.

62. Here Marguerite reckons the peasantry she sees in Swiss to be “erect, independent” and “less oppressed than perhaps any other tract of the earth can exhibit.” (SL 85) The peaceful peasantry that Marguerite describes reminds us of the Norwegian peasantry and farmers in *Letters from Norway*. Wollstonecraft admired the attributes of “the simplicity of the golden age” in which they lived: “independence and virtue; affluence without vice; cultivation of mind, without depravity of heart; with “ever

smiling Liberty;” the nymph of the mountain.” *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, 16, 127.

The term “golden age” denotes the Greek mythological age during which primordial peace and harmony prevailed, and humans lived without every species of fraud and dishonesty. Yet, Wollstonecraft never praised the age in a Rousseauian way. Admiring the simplicity of the age and its virtue, she believed it contained the seeds of enlightenment. As will be seen below, Wollstonecraft thought that the age was part of the necessary process of perpetual progress and improvement:

It is very fortunate that men are a long time but just above the brute creation, or the greater part of the earth would never have been rendered habitable, because it is the patient labour of men, who are only seeking for a subsistence, which produces whatever embellishes existence, affording leisure for the cultivation of the arts and sciences that lift man so far above his first state. I never, my friend, thought so deeply of the advantages obtained by human industry as since I have been in Norway. The world requires, I see, the hand of man to perfect it, and as this task naturally unfolds the faculties he exercises, it is physically impossible that he should have remained in Rousseau’s golden age of stupidity. (*Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* 90-1)

63. *Letters of Anna Seward*, 5: 289.

64. St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 211.

65. Scheuermann, *The Novels of William Godwin*, 149.

66. Joy also points out that St Leon’s “immersion in his memories” of his family and domestic pleasures “directly impedes his capacity to fulfill the functions of narration.” Indeed, his accounts of domestic scenes are “fixed as static, inaccessible tableaux” that readers have “no power or incentive to probe further.” Joy, “St. Leon and the Culture of the Heart,” 45, 48.

67. Juliet Beckett, “Introduction,” *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, xxiii.

68. Ibid. A sort of internal conflict St Leon experiences between what he indeed aches for and what he seemingly eulogizes seems to echo Godwin's own struggle. After his wife's death Godwin had to bear all responsibility for two little daughters and expressed his anxiety in some letters. He wavered between his paternal duty and his aspiration for a successful position as a social thinker and writer.

69. Ibid.

70. The description of Marguerite on her deathbed does remind one of the sorrowful scene of the death of Wollstonecraft in *Memoirs*.

71. To a certain degree St Leon's ideal of individualism ties in his deep anxiety concerning his paternal obligation: "[Marguerite] had formed the chain and link of connection between me and my girls; perhaps it was better that we should burst our fetters and be free." (*SL* 293, 296) Godwin evinces a similar anxiety in his letter to Mrs Cotton in October 1797:

I am still here, in the same situation in which you saw me, surrounded by the children . . . The poor children! I am myself totally unfitted to educate them. The skepticism which perhaps sometimes leads me right in matters of speculation, is torment to me when I would attempt to direct the infant mind. I am the most unfit person for this office; [Wollstonecraft] was the best qualified in the world. What a change. (Paul 1: 281)

In order to solve this predicament, Godwin gives a thought to contracting another marriage and St Leon determines to part with his daughters. According to Locke, in the year after the death of Wollstonecraft Godwin actually began his "pursuit of a mother for his children" in real earnest. Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason*, 150.

St Leon contemplates to endure this "complete and dreadful separation" from his daughters as "the noblest and most virtuous effort of [his] life." (*SL* 300, 301) Congratulating himself that he has the courage to achieve his purpose, he insists on the

justice and wholesome judgement in his decision, which might reflect Godwin's inner desire to "burst [his] fetters and be free."

72. *The Enquirer. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 5: 198-9. In *Enquirer*, Godwin points out that in spite of its dangerous temptation to pursue, there is a kind of reputation which is valuable because of its benevolent efficacy. Quoted in Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist*, 87.

73. "St. Leon—A Tale of the 16th Century," *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor* 5 (February 1800), 152.

74. Scheuermann, *The Novels of William Godwin*, 150.

75. *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness*, 1: 177.

76. St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 72.

77. Handwerk, "History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin's Historical Fiction," 71-2.

78. Scheuermann, *The Novels of William Godwin*, 143.

79. St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 214. The mob burnt Priestley's library and laboratory for no better reason than because he was supposed to have attended a Reform dinner. See Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 39.

80. Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period*, 195.

81. Wallace A. Flanders, "Godwin and Gothicism: St. Leon," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 536. Flanders states that Godwin tries to demonstrate that "the power which divides man from man is a curse."

82. Handwerk, "History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin's Historical Fiction," 72.

83. *Ibid.*, 73. Handwerk considers St Leon's psychological trauma which originates in national, religious and ethnic ideology of age. He argues that St Leon's "failure to recall and work through his trauma" produces "an unconscious displacement of his

desire, subjecting him to a symptomatic blindness in his self-perception and a symptomatic repetition of his fate.”

84. Paul, 1: 331.

85. Handwerk, “History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin’s Historical Fiction,” 75.

86. Flanders, “Godwin and Gothicism: St. Leon,” 540.

87. According to Powers, the Spanish Inquisition was not officially abolished until 1820. Indeed, the system existed down till the 20th century. The “*auto da fê*” was “frequently held in Spain, but it was virtually unknown in other countries during the sixteenth century.” *The Influence of William Godwin on the Novels of Mary Shelley*, 109-10.

88. Solomon says: “All things are wearisome, more than one can say. What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.” *Zondervan NIV Study Bible*, Eccles. 1. 8-9.

89. *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, 24-5.

90. *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr’s Spital Sermon. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 2: 190.

91. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 93.

92. Hazlitt, *Lectures on the English Comic Writers*, 272.

93. St Clair, St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 213-4.

94. *The Enquirer. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 5: 211-2.

95. Godwin’s letter to Percy Shelley in March 1812. At the time Shelley devoted himself to the cause of Irish Patriotism. Godwin tried to dissuade Shelley from direct political action. Paul, 2: 207. Quoted in Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 71.



96. Godwin, *Essay on Sepulchres. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 6: 8.

97. *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, 73-4.

#### Chapter IV

1. *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett, 2: 4.

2. *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert, 2: 554.

3. Sunstein, *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality*, 37.

4. For comments about Godwin's emphasis on the importance of cultivating the imaginative faculties in children's education, see St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, 280-2, and Katherine C. Hill-Miller, "My Hideous Progeny": *Mary Shelley, William Godwin, and the Father-Daughter Relationship*, 26-7.

5. *The Journals of Mary Shelley 1814-1844*, 2: 554.

6. Paul, 2: 74.

7. Powers, *The Influence of William Godwin on the Novels of Mary Shelley*, 17.

8. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 169-70.

9. James Marshal, one of Godwin's oldest friends, describes Mary Jane Godwin as "a clever, bustling, second-rate woman," and Lamb also refers to her as "a damn'd disagreeable woman." Quoted in Hill-Miller, "My Hideous Progeny," 23.

10. *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 1: 34.

11. Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1831) edited with an introduction and notes by M. K. Joseph, 5-6.

12. Godwin's letter describes Mary's character as she was at fifteen years of age: "She is singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire of

knowledge is great, and her perseverance in everything she undertakes almost invincible. My own daughter is, I believe, very pretty.” Paul, 2: 214.

13. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. Frederick L. Jones, 1: 220. Quoted in Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, 17.

14. Elton Edward Smith and Esther Greenwell Smith, *William Godwin*, 73.

15. Hill-Miller, “*My Hideous Progeny*,” 22.

16. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 176-7.

17. Shelley’s letter to Mary, dated October 24, 1814. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 1: 408. Quoted in Hill-Miller, “*My Hideous Progeny*,” 39. Expressing his dissatisfaction at Godwin’s hostile reaction to him, Shelley wrote to him in March 1816: “In my judgment neither I nor your daughter nor her offspring ought to receive the treatment which we encounter on every side. It has perpetually appeared to me to have been your especial duty to see that so far as mankind value your good opinion, we were dealt justly by, and that a young family innocent and benevolent and united should not be confounded with prostitutes and seducers. My astonishment, and I will confess, when I have been treated with most harshness and cruelty by you, my indignation, has been extreme, that knowing as you do my nature, any considerations should have prevailed on you to have been thus harsh and cruel.” *Letters from Percy Bysshe Shelley to William Godwin*, 2: 34-5.

18. *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 1: 296.

19. According to the 1831 Introduction to *Frankenstein*, Mary, Shelley and Jane Clairmont visited Switzerland in the summer of 1816 and became the neighbors of Lord Byron who was at the zenith of his fame as a poet from the publication of *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* (1812-18). They visited Byron frequently and joined the literary and philosophical discussions among a small circle of writers and intellectuals. On stormy days in June, the group, confined to the house by incessant rain, began reading some volumes of ghost stories translated from German into French, and the proposal by

Byron that they each write “a ghost story” was assented to readily. Mary, Shelley, Byron and his personal doctor, Polidori, participated in the pact later abandoned by everyone except Mary. (*F* 1831 Introduction)

20. Powers insists that Mary re-read particularly those three works among many others in 1816. *The Influence of William Godwin on the Novels of Mary Shelley*, 50-1.

21. She calls her novel “my hideous progeny” and admits that she has “an affection” for it. (*F* 1831 Introduction)

22. Walter Scott writes: “*Frankenstein* is a novel upon the same plan with *Saint Leon*; it is said to be written by Mr Percy Bysshe Shelley, who, if we are rightly informed, is son-in-law to Mr Godwin; and it is inscribed to that ingenious author.” “Remarks on *Frankenstein*, or the Modern Prometheus; a Novel,” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 2 (March 1818), 614.

23. The Preface to the first edition of *Frankenstein*, dated September 1817, was entirely written by Shelley. Mary’s own account of the novel was published as the Introduction for the third edition of 1831. The novel was reprinted in 1823 and 1831, and the latter edition was heavily revised.

24. John Wilson Croker, *The Quarterly Review* 18 (January 1818), 382.

25. *Ibid.*, 385.

26. *The Edinburgh [Scots] Magazine, and Literary Miscellany*, second series, 2 (March 1818), 249, 252.

27. Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein’s Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing*, 29.

28. *Gothic Literature: A Gale Critical Companion*, ed. Jessica Bomarito, 3: 319.

29. George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*, 26.

30. *Frankenstein: Mary Shelley*, ed. Fred Botting, 1.

31. Robert Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*, 161.

32. Clemit, “*Frankenstein, Matilda, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft*,” *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Esther Schor, 32. Also see Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 158.

33. Percy Shelley, “On *Frankenstein*.” Shelley wrote the review in 1817. It was published posthumously in *The Athenaeum Journal of Literature, Science and the Fine Arts* (November 1832). Quoted in *Frankenstein: The 1818 Text, Contexts, Nineteenth-Century Responses, Modern Criticism* (A Norton Critical Edition), ed. J. Paul Hunter, 186.

According to Graham Allen, Shelley uses the words ‘abortion’ and ‘anomaly’ to describe the creature in relation to Godwin’s theory. In Godwinian terms, an abortion means “an anomalous man” who “cannot hear and cannot respond to the call of reason.” All human beings are born with the faculty of reason. To Godwin, those people who “apparently lack that faculty or have it in a faulty or malformed manner” are “not entirely, properly men.” Graham Allen, *Mary Shelley*, 31.

34. Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment*, 18. Quoted in Hindle, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Critical Studies), 178.

35. U. C. Knoepflmacher regards the creature’s first murder as an act of fratricide. Mary’s younger brother, the first son of Godwin and Mary Jane Godwin, was named William. Knoepflmacher suggests that Mary killed off William as the creature’s first victim and thus triumphed imaginatively over one of the younger siblings with whom she competed for Godwin’s affection. U. C. Knoepflmacher, “Thoughts on the Aggression of Daughters,” *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley’s Novel*, 100-103.

36. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 140.

37. *Ibid.*

38. Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) is a German cabbalist and occultist. Paracelsus (1493-1541) is a Swiss physician and alchemist. Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) is a German Aristotelian and chemist.

39. Ingolstadt is famed as the birthplace of Illuminati, a Bavarian secret society “pledged to spread egalitarian principles and infidelity.” Clemit, “*Frankenstein, Matilda, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft*,” 33.

40. Robert Miles, “Romanticism, Enlightenment, and Mediation: The Case of the Inner Stranger,” *This Is Enlightenment*, 180.

41. In his diary entry for June 15, 1816, Polidori reported that he and Shelley, having “a conversation about principles,” discussed “whether man was to be thought merely an instrument.” Quoted in James Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Biography: Youth’s Unextinguished Fire, 1792-1816*, 377. According to Bieri, this conversation might have been “the impetus to the ghost story competition and *Frankenstein*.”

42. Coleridge, “The Eolian Harp,” *Coleridge: Poetical Works*, 102. The poem was written in 1795 and published in 1796. It underwent many revisions before reaching its final form.

And what if all of animated nature  
Be but organic Harps diversely fram’d,  
That tremble into thought, as o’er them sweeps  
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,  
At once the Soul of each, and God of all? (44-48)

43. In one interpretation, the wind harp represents the poet whose creative power always comes from outside him in some divine way, with the wind symbolizing God’s breath that gives inspiration to the poet.

44. Kathleen M. Wheeler, *The Creative Mind in Coleridge’s Poetry*, 3. She also states that indirectly the image is “expressive of materialism.”

45. *Thoughts on Man. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 6: 170.
46. Clemit, “*Frankenstein, Matilda, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft*,” 35.
47. *An Account of the Seminary, &c. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 5: 19.
48. M. A. Goldberg, “Moral and Myth in Mrs. Shelley’s *Frankenstein*,” *Keats-Shelley Journal* 8 (1959), 27.
49. Scott, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 2, 617.
50. Clemit, “*Frankenstein, Matilda, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft*,” 35.
51. Anne McWhir, “Teaching the Monster to Read: Mary Shelley, Education and *Frankenstein*,” *The Educational Legacy of Romanticism*, ed. John Willinsky, 73.
52. Powers, *The Influence of William Godwin and the Novels of Mary Shelley*, 68.
53. Shelley, “On *Frankenstein*,” *Frankenstein*, 185-6.
54. “On Mutability” was published with *Alastor, or, The Spirit of Solitude* in 1816. Here Mary uses the last two of four stanzas of the poem. Scott quotes the same stanzas in his review and praised the author of the novel for “a high idea” of his “original genius and happy power of expression.” *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* 2, 620.
55. “The Eolian Harp,” *Coleridge: Poetical Works*, 101-2.
56. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, 172.
57. Levine, “The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*,” *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley’s Novel*, 9.
58. Hill-Miller, “*My Hideous Progeny*,” 61.
59. Kiely, *The Romantic Novel in England*, 167.
60. Shelley, “On *Frankenstein*,” 185.

61. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, 171. Mellor has discussed the part of fatalism in the revisions made on the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*. (170-6)

62. Levine, "The Ambiguous Heritage of *Frankenstein*," 10.

63. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, 170.

64. Mellor, "Making a "monster": an introduction to *Frankenstein*," *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Esther Schor, 17.

65. Granting Victor "his divine attributes," the nobility and sublimity of his mind, Kiely regards him as one of tragic Romantic heroes. *The Romantic Novel in England*, 155-73.

66. Hazlitt, "William Godwin," 183

67. Clemit, "*Frankenstein, Matilda, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft*," 30.

68. Godwin, *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 2: 168.

69. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 146.

70. Napoleon wrote those lines in his own hand on a scrap of paper which is said to have been discovered after his death. Quoted in Melvin J. Lasky, *Utopia & Revolution: On the Origins of a Metaphor*, 481 and in Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 156. Clemit argues that Mary projects not only Napoleon but Rousseau on Victor as a modern Prometheus.

71. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*, 284.

72. Godwin also pointed out that the attempt to abruptly abolish social systems such as feudal rights and the privileges of rank, which was made in the French Revolution, would result in public wretchedness and calamities.

73. Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, 145.

74. Mary wrote the letter in August 1827. *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, 1: 572. Quoted in Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, 170. According to Mellor, the influence of what Mary calls “Destiny” is more prominent in the 1831 text than the first edition.

75. “Review of *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*,” *The Literary Panorama and National Register*, n.s., 8 (June 1818), 411-4.

76. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, concerns for the principle of life and disputes about the spark of being were thrown up by scientific endeavour, producing the mood of much excitement in England. Mary wrote *Frankenstein* at “[the] exciting period when a mushroom growth of scientific experimentation and discovery was taking place,” while enjoying the excitement under the influence of Godwin and especially Shelley. There were several “distinguished scientific visitors” who regularly visited Godwin’s household during Mary’s girlhood. In the 1810s when the controversy about the relation between the origins of life and electricity and about the ‘electrical fluid’ theory of life-energy rapidly heated up, Shelley took her to see experiments using electricity. Hindle, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Critical Studies), 166-72.

77. James Rieger, “Introduction,” *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*, xxvii. Quoted in Hindle, *Frankenstein*, 166. Rieger states that Mary knew “Sir Humphry Davy’s chemistry, Erasmus Darwin’s botany, and . . . Galvani’s physics, but little of this got into her book.”

78. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1: 269. David Hume (1711-76) was a Scottish philosopher and economist. He is known especially for his philosophical empiricism and skepticism, which influenced Godwin.

79. Hindle, *Frankenstein*, 173, 175. Hindle regards Mary as one of Romantic deists including Wordsworth and Coleridge.

80. *Ibid.*, 181.

81. *Ibid.*, 182.



82. Blaise Pascal (1623-62) was a French philosopher, mathematician and physicist, known as an early pioneer in existentialism. In theology he was a defender of Christianity.

83. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées* (Dover Philosophical Classics) translated by W. F. Trotter, with an introduction by T. S. Eliot, 198.

84. Ibid.

85. Hindle, *Frankenstein*, 185.

86. Ibid., 186.

### Conclusion

1. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 105.

2. Elton Edward Smith and Esther Greenwell Smith, *William Godwin*, 145.

3. "Criticism on the Novels of Godwin," xiv-v.

4. Mellor, "Making a 'monster': an introduction to *Frankenstein*," 9.

5. Ludmilla Jordanova, "Melancholy Reflection: Constructing an Identity for Unveilers of Nature," *Frankenstein, Creation and Monstrosity*, ed. Stephen Bann, 63.

6. Brailsford, *Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle*, 103.

7. Hazlitt, "William Godwin," 185.

8. Coleridge wrote the letter on 28 September 1796 in response to a request made by Charles Lamb after his sister killed his mother. *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, 1: 143.

9. Ibid.

10. Paul, 2: 282.

11. Powers, *The Influence of William Godwin on the Novels of Mary Shelley*, 145.

12. Godwin, "On Nature," in *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled: In a Series of Essays. Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, 7: 226-7.

13. Ibid., 7: 227

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