PHILOSOPHY INTO FICTION: THE NOVELS OF WILLIAM GODWIN

by

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Contents

Preface

William Godwin (1756-1836) was one of the most prominent men in English thought and literature at the end of the eighteenth century. He was prominent both through his own works and through his significant influence on Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Romantic poetry as a whole, as well as on political and philosophical radicals of the time. Godwin was a prolific writer whose many works include essays, pamphlets, biographies, histories, English grammars, books for children, philosophic enquiries, novels, and plays. During the last decade of the eighteenth century he was famous and highly respected, although extremely controversial; nevertheless, before the nineteenth century was fifteen years old, his fame was diminished considerably and he had to produce what was often hack work in order to provide for his family. In fact, Godwin had so disappeared from the public eye that his future son-in-law, Shelley, had written him in January, 1811, that "I had enrolled your name on the list of the honourable dead."[1] Even today he is often remembered merely as the husband of

1 C. Kegan Paul, William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1876), II, 202.

Mary Wollstonecraft, the father of Mary Shelley, the father-in-law of Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the stepfather of Byron's mistress, Claire Clairmont. If he is remembered for any of his own works, it is almost invariably for the Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Caleb Williams. Undoubtedly, Political Justice is indispensable for understanding Godwin, and Caleb Williams is his most important and successful novel; but there is also value in many of his other works which it might be profitable to uncover and examine.

Early criticism of Godwin tended to be negative, portraying, for the most part, a worn-out and foolish leech of a man who sucked the economic life's blood from an innocent and all too generous Shelley. Even those works which were a bit more unbiased often presented Godwin as little more than a footnote to his more illustrious wife, daughter, and son-in-law. Both Leslie Stephen and Ford K. Brown give this sort of an account of Godwin. Recently, however, since the late 1940's, Godwin scholars have begun to resurrect his reputation. Works by George Woodcock, David Fleisher, Rosalyn Grylls, D.H. Monro, K.N. Cameron, and Burton Pollin have presented Godwin in a much more favorable light, without disregarding his shortcomings. Nevertheless, although Godwin's reputation is slowly

being enhanced by such studies, there is still only scant attention paid to his novels. For example, Woodcock's work is a biography; Grylls's and Cameron's are studies of Godwin and his time; and those of Fleisher, Monro, and Pollin are basically studies of Godwin's philosophy. Pollin's book comes closest to presenting a systematic, although short, examination of Godwin's novels.[2] It should be noted that since the publication of these works, two of Godwin's early novels (one since Pollin's book) have been found and published. We now have access to eight of Godwin's nine novels, and perhaps a copy of the ninth will one day be found.

I perceive William Godwin's novels, even the well-written and justly admired Caleb Williams, as attempts to humanize through fiction the theories of Political Justice. True, Godwin is concerned with entertaining his audience, and no doubt also with earning a living; but a close examination of his novels, and their prefaces, particularly the prefaces to Caleb Williams and Fleetwood, makes it clear that Godwin decided to write novels primarily because he realized

2 An article by Joann Cobb, "Godwin's Novels and Political Justice," Enlightenment Essays, IV (Spring, 1973), 15-28, examines Godwin's novels in connection with the philosophy of Political Justice, but does not do so extensively.

that a novel would probably reach a much wider audience than a philosophical treatise, the theories of which are "highly worthy to be communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach."[3] He also believed that even those who had read the Enquiry Concerning Political Justice could be further enlightened by seeing abstact principles brought to life by what he felt were true and vivid representations of human beings.

Political Justice is central to Godwin's oeuvre. It is the work in which Godwin presents his philosophy not only of political justice but of life in general. Three of Godwin's novels were written before its publication: Damon and Delia, Italian Letters, and Imogen, 1783 to 1784; and the remaining six novels after: Caleb Williams in 1794, St. Leon in 1799, Fleetwood in 1805, Mandeville in 1817, Cloudesley in 1830, and Deloraine in 1833. What is most striking is that the ideas in the non-fictional Political Justice are usually consistent with those found in the novels, which were written over a span of fifty years, and of which three were written close to ten years prior to its appearance. Godwin's novels

3 William Godwin, Caleb Williams, ed. David McCracken (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 1.

can thus be seen as fictional presentations of the ideas in his philosophic work. In this dissertation, I should like to compare the ideas found in Political Justice with those found in the novels. There are, of course, numerous ideas in this treatise, but for convenience sake I have categorized them into four main areas. Even though many scholars object to the use of "The Age of Reason" for the eighteenth century, which I agree with in principle, Godwin's works are so imbued with his concept of Reason that he alone appears to justify its use. Although I examine ideas such as "Justice," "Virtue," and "Understanding," one should realize that "Reason" underlies all of these principles. Thus in my discussion of Godwin's novels, I have attempted to stress the role of Reason in human lives as seen through Godwin's characters.

Chapter I

Introduction

Enquiry Concerning Political Justice

William Godwin's comprehensive Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness, published in 1793 and conscientiously revised in 1796 and 1798, is a basically speculative work which has as its central concern morality as it could, or should, be. This moral-philosophical discourse, which met with immediate and widespread success, was written at a time when the ideas and ideals of the French Revolution, and of the American Revolution, were exerting a strong influence on thought in England. Political Justice may be seen as Godwin's affirmation of faith in the future of man and in man's potential perfectibility. Godwin's primary aim in this work, therefore, is to discover the basis on which society ought to be organized and which would be most conducive to the perfectibility of man and his social institutions. His answer, a somewhat traditional one, appears ultimately to center on the word "Justice," which he calls "a general appellation for all moral duty."[1] For Godwin, it was the goal which man should strive for in his interaction with other men.

1 William Godwin, Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness, ed. F.E.L. Priestley (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946), I, 125.

When Political Justice first appeared, Godwin was thirty-seven. England had recently come to terms with American colonists in one revolution and was now witnessing the French struggle in theirs. Obviously, the time was a volatile one, politically and philosophically. For many years Godwin had been writing works which clearly demonstrated his versatility, some appearing as early as 1782; but no work had seized the attention of the public so thoroughly as Political Justice would, and none had established his reputation as a major figure. When this treatise was published, after two years in the writing beginning in 1791, Godwin rapidly became a famous and highly respected political philosopher. His fame was not the kind that is won through agreement with commonly held opinions, which are simply expressed in a felicitous, easy-going, and salable manner. His was the kind that is rarely won because the public does not like to be criticized, challenged, or presented with ideas which if perhaps not entirely novel are nevertheless neither widely known nor understood. As William Hazlitt observed, "No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as the celebrated Enquiry concerning Political Justice."[2]

2 William Hazlitt, "Godwin," The Spirit of the Age, in The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, ed. P.P. Howe (New York: AMS Press, 1967 [1825]), XI, 18.

His immediate success can also be ascertained through articles which appeared shortly after publication. For example, John Fenwick's admiration is clear: "He was not merely made known to the public, but was ranked at once among men of the highest genius and attainments."[3]

The popularity and controversy surrounding Godwin's two-volume philosophical work caused him to write the cheaper and much revised second edition and subsequently the third, which was not significantly different from the second, and which, by the way, will be used exclusively in this dissertation. Godwin did not think that his revisions were a retreat from the radical positions of the first edition in reaction to critical and political opposition, as some critics feel; instead, he believed that he was correcting, clarifying, sharpening, and unifying the points he had made in the first edition, which he called "a crude and unequal performance." The changes are expertly covered and well-documented in F.E.L. Priestley's three-volume edition of Political Justice.

With his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, Godwin

3 Public Characters of 1799-1800 (London: Richard Phillips, 1799), p. 370. In manuscript notes, Godwin ascribes the article on him signed by K to John Fenwick, according to Burton R. Pollin, Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin (New York: Las Americas, 1962), p. xxiii.

hoped to teach human beings that the course of action open to them does not have to be characterized by distrust, ignorance, and violence. He wished to point out an alternate route that man might travel. If his ideas are impractical, he asks, how much more impractical is it to persist in following a system that has always shown itself a failure? The world, Godwin speculates, can be improved if we act reasonably and benevolently. It could be a world we would all prefer to the one we now live in, a veritable paradise on earth for breathing human beings as opposed to a heavenly paradise for disembodied spirits. The human being will not have to look to a next world for perfection; he can find it here on earth: "There will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice, as it is called, and no government. Beside this, there will be neither disease, anguish, melancholy, nor resentment. Every man will seek, with ineffable ardour, the good of all. Mind will be active and eager, yet never disappointed" (PJ,II,528).

Anticipating the objections of those who accuse him of being blind to reality for proposing that such a world might ever exist, Godwin makes it clear that he is not presenting a strictly historical account of mankind, nor even a fictionalized one as he does in his novels, but a purely theoretical blueprint

of how we might conduct ourselves in order to improve our behavior and, possibly, subsequently perfect ourselves and our world. Godwin believes that we must have in mind a way to do so: "he who proposes perfection to himself, though he will inevitably fall short of what he pursues, will make a more rapid progress, than he who is contented to aim only at what is imperfect" (PJ, II, 554). His idea of perfection, in fact, is not much different from that found in another work of the eighteenth century, the United States Constitution, which hopes "to form a more perfect Union"; but, of course, Godwin would disagree with the idea of any form of government. How the human race can approach perfection is Godwin's concern in Political Justice.

In the Essay on Man, Alexander Pope states that "The proper study of Mankind is Man." Godwin would wholeheartedly agree, for man and his institutions are the study of Political Justice. Such a vast subject would require an enormous number of sources of information, but a tracing of Godwin's sources will not be attempted here. He has been influenced by a variety of philosophers--d'Holbach, Rousseau, Helvétius, Montesquieu, Locke, Bentham, Hume, and others. In fact, Priestley is correct in tracing Godwin's sources as far back as Plato, for

Godwin's thought basically is Platonic, with its emphasis on the eternal nature and inevitable triumph of idealistic truths. For example, virtue, for him, is usually arrived at through knowledge, and vice is the result of ignorance and error. Of course, Godwin does not merely repeat what others have already written; instead, he modifies and synthesizes their various positions, arriving finally at a stance which is characteristically Godwinian.

A lengthy discussion of the ideas of Political Justice will not be undertaken in this dissertation.[4] But a brief analysis of four prominent ideas--Reason, Understanding, Virtue, and Justice--should help us to appreciate better Godwin's philosophy and fiction.

Godwin believes reason to be the most distinctive characteristic of man, the faculty that separates men from brutes. When we act contrary to our reason, we no longer act like men: "In reality, by as many instances as I act contrary to the unbiassed dictate of my own judgment, by so much I abdicate the most valuable part of the character of man" (I, 176). The rational being should always act justly, and the way to ascertain what is just is by conscientiously using the reasoning faculty. An improvement of the reason will result in greater virtue and

4 Priestley and Pollin have excellent discussions of Godwin's philosophy.

happiness. Indeed, Godwin's faith in man's reason, which he saw exemplified by the excessively rational nature of the Houyhnhnm society, led him to express admiration for Jonathan Swift, "the author of Gulliver's Travels [Part IV], a man who appears to have had a more profound insight into the true principles of political justice, than any preceding or contemporary author" (II, 209).

Godwin understands reason to be both intuitive and discursive, but he considers the latter more important. He believes our intellectual ability is a result of a history replete with experience. In addition, an early taste for reading and discursive conversation is crucial for man's intellectual development. Our reason must be constantly trained from infancy. This training is accomplished by a continuous exposure to our environment and our society. Thus man learns through impression, or experience, and, by extension, through contact with other men: "All our knowledge, all our ideas, every thing we possess as intelligent beings, comes from impression....As the impressions became more numerous... so the experience increased, and with the experience the knowledge, the wisdom, every thing that distinguishes man from what we understand by a 'clod of the valley'" (I, 94-95).

Godwin basically judges reason to be more important than feelings in determining our actions, but he recognizes that feelings play their role. Feelings incite us to action, but reason decides how we should act. Reason must predominate or we will be no better than beasts, incapable of improvement. Rational motives should outweigh sensuous ones, for, as F.E.L. Priestley observes in his introduction to Political Justice, "There can be no enlightenment of the senses; if reason is not stronger than direct sensual appeal, the future condition of man is hopeless."[5]

An important aspect of reason is that it is open to communication; therefore, man can be educated and consequently improved. Any conduct that is reasonable can be shown to be so, and, conversely, any conduct that is unreasonable, thus in error, can be demonstrated to be so to the understanding. In addition, reasonable conduct when communicated will be infallibly adopted. We should convince others of the desirability of actions, institutions, or political systems by appealing to their reason. It is in this manner that citizens should be educated, made concerned and informed. In fact, political imposture is a refusal on the governors' part to do this, relying instead on misinformation, mystery, and superstition. Moreover, Godwin believes

5 Political Justice, III, Priestley's intro., p. 12.

that since reason and truth must always vanquish ignorance and error, man is "susceptible of perpetual improvement." He does have an escape clause, however, for when discussing reason he considers man in general, the majority of mankind, and not the exception: "Man is a rational being. If there be any man who is incapable of making inferences for himself, or of understanding, when stated in the most explicit terms, the inferences of another, him we consider as an abortive production, and not in strictness belonging to the human species" (I, 88). But happily, he feels, most men will recognize the rightness of the rule of reason and conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the standards of their understanding and of society.

Godwin defines "understanding" as "the percipient of truth" (I, 174). It is the sum total of our knowledge, but only that knowledge which is valid and true; it excludes mistake. It is our intellectual power, which is distinguished from reason in the sense that understanding is a product whereas reason is a process. Godwin asserts that it is to our understanding that we must listen when determining our conduct: "There is but one power to which I can yield a heartfelt obedience, the decision of my own understanding, the dictate of my own conscience" (I, 212). Only when we listen

to our understanding will we be useful to others and happy in ourselves. It is both our duty and right to think as individuals, but we should recognize societal responsibilities, for our understanding judges and determines the rightness of our conduct towards others. Virtue, in effect, is seen as the offspring of the understanding, and conversely vice is believed to be founded in mistake.

Godwin considers how the understanding is formed and decides that it is basically a product of experience aided by judicious instruction. He is an empiricist in concluding that we are neither virtuous nor vicious at birth but learn to be one or the other. Our understanding is the result of an evaluation of impressions conveyed by our senses. Our actions are determined by events which we experience and not by pre-established ideas or innate principles or instincts that we come into the world with, except our human frame with its particular modes of sense: "All human knowledge is the result of perception" (I, 365). He includes even time spent in our mother's womb as part of our conscious experience. The implication of such a belief is that we can all be taught to be virtuous, given the correct and desired experiences. In short, what makes one individual differ from another is the

way he has been treated by his environment and not any intrinsic propensity for good or evil.

Our differences originate in our opinions, which in turn are controlled by our individual circumstances. Nevertheless, there are standards of conduct on which we all can agree. A proper education will teach us these standards. Once we realize what is correct, we will choose to do it. It is therefore possible for mis-education to be corrected. Even though our opinions are formed by our experiences, they are not unchangeable. We can be taught to be virtuous because "the characters of men are determined in all their most essential circumstances by education" (I, 45). Thus the individual must be socialized in order to become virtuous.

"Virtue," an important word in Godwin's philosophy, characterizes his "man of benevolence." Godwin defines virtue as "any action or actions of an intelligent being, proceeding from kind and benevolent intention, and having a tendency to contribute to general happiness" (I, 149). Crucial for understanding Godwin's philosophy is the interaction he sees among virtue, benevolence, and happiness. If the "intention" or "tendency" is missing, the action is not virtuous. Men's motives do not alone determine the virtue of

their actions, but are of value only if they lead to happiness. The virtuous man should always keep this in mind, for even a virtuous man can mistakenly perform a vicious action, although this is usually not the case.

Godwin believes, in turn, that society should treat men according to their virtue: "That country would not be the seat of wisdom and reason, where the benefactor of his species was regarded with no greater degree of complacence than their enemy" (I, 147). He recognizes, unhappily, that this is seldom true. Still, what leads to our greatest pleasure is self-approbation, brought on by virtuous actions, which, since they are the actions of a benevolent man, contribute to the general good. In addition, virtue entails active participation rather than denial or withdrawal. His concept of virtue reminds one of Milton's rejection of a "cloistered virtue" in Areopagitica: "Innocence is not virtue. Virtue demands the active employment of an ardent mind in the promotion of the general good" (I, 105).

The conduct of man interacting with man is the central concern of Godwin's theory of justice, which he defines as "a rule of conduct originating in the connection of one percipient being with another" (I, 126). We should all enjoy justice equally, depending on our merits. But justice has quite distinct meanings for the rich and the poor. It is almost

invariably denied the poor, whereas the rich simply purchase it: "In many countries justice is avowedly made a subject of solicitation, and the man of the highest rank and the most splendid connections almost infallibly carries his cause against the unprotected and friendless" (I, 18). This fact, he goes on to say, makes the rich tyrannical, seldom concerned with treating the poor justly. When the rich do act fairly to the poor, they believe that they are magnanimously doing the poor a favor rather than acting as justice requires. Ideally, justice should be determined by the individual case; he who has right on his side should carry the point. The way in which this ideal can be reached is through enlightenment of the society, an equitable distribution of wealth and property, and the elimination of legislation and administration of law, which favor the rich.

But Godwin's justice is not an ultimate value unto itself: he connects it to utility. We should receive justice according to our individual merit and usefulness to society. Everything else being equal, we would receive equal justice, but there are those among us who are more important to society. Here Godwin gives his often cited example of saving the life of Archbishop Fénelon or that of his valet. We should put the

common good above private interest and act reasonably rather than emotionally. This example provides a prime target for anti-Godwinians, who attack his ignoring of emotions and personal ties. Godwin does not ignore these ties; he recognizes their value and their power. Nevertheless, he believes that we must act with disinterest when the need arises.

Godwin understands justice to result in "the greatest good for the greatest number." The individual should serve the whole, and thus justice may require that the individual suffer. But this suffering is only relative to the general good, for the welfare of the society takes precedence. Indeed, a greater sum of good accrues to the individual because with his sacrifice he prevents others from suffering. Of course, such cases will be rare; nevertheless, it would be wrong to prefer the one to the many: "If, while I confer a benefit upon one man, it appear, in striking an equitable balance, that I am injuring the whole, my action ceases to be right, and becomes absolutely wrong" (I, 133). Godwin's concept of justice, then, is strongly utilitarian, emphasizing the individual's rights and duties.

Such, briefly, are the basic ideas of William Godwin's

Enquiry Concerning Political Justice. Its philosophy is clearly a highly moral one, always concerned with man's conduct towards other men. The format of Political Justice is speculative, but it is worthwhile to keep its ideas in mind when reading and studying Godwin's novels, which obviously deal with man and his institutions on a fictional rather than theoretical level. As P.N. Furbank cogently writes, "To understand Godwin it is necessary to take both his political writings and his novels into account....For the novels are not reflections of the political writings; they are the complement of them."[6]

6 P.N. Furbank, "Godwin's Novels," Essays in Criticism (July, 1955), p. 214.

Chapter II

The Adventures of Caleb Williams

Caleb Williams is William Godwin's best and most popular novel.[1] The first novel that he wrote after Political Justice, it originally appeared in 1794 under the title Things As They Are; Or, The Adventures Of Caleb Williams. In an account of his composition of this novel from the preface of an 1832 edition of Fleetwood, Godwin makes it clear that Political Justice and Caleb Williams are the works he would have his fame rest on. He refers to his philosophical work as "the first work which may be considered as written by me in a certain degree in the maturity of my intellectual powers, and bearing my name."[2] His pride in Caleb Williams is obvious when he states that he wished 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!'" (p. 338). The reader must decide whether or not Godwin succeeds.

Caleb Williams is much more than a presentation of Godwin's

1 Godwin's anonymous earlier novels are examined in the appendix of this dissertation.

2 Godwin, Caleb Williams, ed. McCracken, p. 335. All quotations from the novel will be from this edition.

philosophy. It is a complex fiction that combines theme, plot, and characterization into a work which George Sherburn calls "the first impressive tragic novel since Richardson's Clarissa,"[3] and Van Wyck Brooks judges "a very impressive document of the Age of Revolution."[4] Recognizing that the intuitive, irrational, psychologically subtle quality of the novel is more significant than its carry-over of ideas, I am somewhat hesitant to present merely a back-and-forth comparison of Political Justice and Caleb Williams; consequently, for this novel I will attempt to examine more extensively what happens when Godwin translates his philosophy into fiction. But although it is tempting to spend even more time on this infinitely richer novel, I would have to do so at the expense of the others. For those who wish to dip further into criticism on Caleb Williams, there is an abundance; for those who wish to read more about his other novels, there is precious little.

If the Enquiry Concerning Political Justice is a speculative work in which Godwin dreams of a new, and better, societal structure, his novel The Adventures of Caleb Williams is an attempt to present

3 Introduction, The Adventures of Caleb Williams: or Things As They Are (San Francisco: Rinehart Press, 1960), p. viii.

4 Introduction, The Adventures of Caleb Williams (New York: Greenburg, 1926), p. vi.

Things As They Are: "What is now presented to the public is no refined and abstract speculation; it is a study and delineation of things passing in the moral world" (CW, p. 1). Yet in Caleb Williams one sees reflected many of the ideas covered in Political Justice; it is a narrative embodiment of much of Godwin's moral, philosophical, and political thought. In the account of its composition, he tells us that he had originally begun with third-person narration but switched to first-person because:

> It was infinitely the best adapted, at least, to my vein of delineation, where the thing in which my imagination revelled the most freely, was the analysis of the private and internal operations of the mind, employing my metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive, and recording the gradually accumulating impulses, which led the personages I had to describe primarily to adopt the particular way of proceeding in which they afterwards embarked. (p. 339)

This quotation shows an author who is seriously concerned with both the psychological and philosophical aspects of characterization. The clarity of depiction of the characters' minds which can be achieved by first-person narration enabled Godwin to present his ideas more accurately than if he had used third-person. Many of the ideas which he expounds in Political Justice are found in the theme and sub-themes of Caleb Williams, appearing in various ways; but I should like to consider primarily how they are reflected

in two minor characters, Grimes and Mr. Tyrrel, and in the two main characters, Mr. Falkland and Caleb Williams.

Godwin erects a "scale of happiness" in Political Justice, which is composed of four successively higher stages represented by four types of persons: the "peasant," the "man of wealth," the "man of taste," and the "man of benevolence." D.H. Monro correctly cites Grimes in Caleb Williams (the loutish farmer to whom Tyrrel spitefully tries to marry his cousin, Emily Melville) as an example of the peasant, who is essentially concerned with the bare necessities of existence, having little time or desire for anything more. He is described in the novel as an "uncouth and half-civilized animal" (p. 47), and by Monro as nothing more than "raw human material."[5] In fact, Grimes is described as merely an object, an instrument in the hands of his squire, with which Tyrrel can persecute his cousin. Since he is little more than an animal-like passive instrument rather than an active agent, Godwin considers him amoral rather than immoral, and thus less open to censure than Tyrrel: "He found in Grimes an instrument sufficiently adapted to his purpose. This fellow, without an atom of intentional malice, was fitted

5 D.H. Monro, Godwin's Moral Philosophy (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 93.

by the mere coarseness of his perceptions for the perpetration of the greatest injuries" (p. 58). Although a human being, Grimes has never been lifted out of his bestial morass by the refining education that Godwin so fervently favored.

Barnabas Tyrrel, who exemplifies the second stage, the man of wealth, is of greater importance. The man of wealth is concerned almost totally with the pleasures of the senses. He is not separated from the peasant because of any superior quality such as a greater propensity to use reason or higher moral standards, even though he is usually somewhat educated, but simply because of his greater wealth. Mr. Tyrrel is on a social level with his neighbor, Mr. Falkland; but unlike that cultured, well-educated, and basically virtuous gentleman, he is a boor, concerned more with physical than with mental activities, who has had an indulgent mother and a poor education. Without his money, in fact, Tyrrel would be much like Grimes, with whom he forms a double character much as Caleb and Falkland do. But with his money, and without any higher redeeming qualities, Tyrrel is able to indulge himself as he wishes, without regard to others. This selfishness makes him, as Monro observes, "the spirit of Despotism."[6] As such, he is

6 Monro, p. 90.

a natural rival to Falkland.

Tyrrel's despotism provides Godwin an opportunity to expound several ideas which he set forth earlier in Political Justice, one of the most important of which is that "a distribution of property extremely unequal, is adverse to the most desirable state of man" (I, xxvii). Tyrrel has been brought up by his mother to indulge himself. His treatment of the persons who surround him is tyrannical, for he believes that since they are poor they have no rights of their own, only duties to him. In the same vein, he sees himself as having only rights and no responsibilities to others. His unfair treatment of the poor even extends to a poor relation who lives with him, Emily Melville, who ultimately dies because of his brutality.

Tyrrel's one good point is his affection for his cousin and his fondness for her piano playing, and this attribute among all his defects makes him more true to life. Nevertheless, his abhorrence of Falkland, whom Emily innocently praises, soon drives the hate-filled squire to persecute even her. With the arrogance of wealth and social position, he feels justified in forcing Emily to marry Grimes; and when she refuses, he denies her right to do so. Eventually, he even goes so far as to have her forcibly confined to her room. In this episode

we see two important ideas of Political Justice: involuntary confinement is never justified and the individual always has a right to free choice, ideas which both Richardson and Fielding had written about earlier in the century, but for neither of these great writers can we use the words "never" and "always." Emily cogently comments on both ideas: "I prefer liberty to wealth....You may imprison my body, but you cannot conquer my mind" (pp. 56-57). Despite her protests, Tyrrel's wealth and position enable him to pursue his plan. When she finally succeeds in escaping a detested marriage, partly through Falkland's intervention, Tyrrel petulantly brings a suit against her for not paying for her support while under his protection (fittingly, the lawyer's name is Swineard). She is taken to jail, although sick, and eventually dies. Upon hearing of her death, Tyrrel is momentarily taken aback but soon reverts to his callous nature and excuses his behavior by citing his rights under the law: "I did nothing but what the law allows. If she be dead, nobody can say that I am to blame!" (p. 91). It is true that Tyrrel has legal right, but his strict and slavish adherence to the law results in the death of a cousin whom he once loved. In his mind, the law is superior to reasonable behavior and common human decency, a belief that Godwin strongly criticizes both

here and in Political Justice. Indeed, as Joann Cobb points out in her article on Godwin's novels, the iniquity of the law is the major theme of Caleb Williams.

The injustice of an unequal distribution of wealth is more clearly shown by Tyrrel's persecution of the Hawkins family, his tenant farmers. Hawkins, who previously had been persecuted because of his refusal to follow his earlier squire's lead in a local election, thinks he is fortunate in being allowed to work for Tyrrel. This confidence proves to be misplaced when Tyrrel, a devotee of hunting, is impressed by the hunting ability of Hawkins' son and expresses the desire to take him into his household. When Hawkins politely refuses, preferring his son to be a free man rather than a servant, he falls from his selfish squire's favor. Godwin is critical not only of Tyrrel's subsequent actions, which include economic intimidation, social sanctions, and legal prosecution on trumped-up charges against Hawkins' son, but also of a legal system that enables a man of wealth (Hawkins' first squire) to influence, in fact buy, the vote of a person who is dependent on him for his livelihood.

Godwin uses the tyranny of both squires to comment on the injustice of a system of law which most definitely favors the rich. Caleb is obviously a spokesman for Godwin when he observes:

"it was of no avail for him to have right on his side, when his adversary had influence and wealth....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" (p. 72). Godwin obviously had very strong feelings on this subject, for the same idea may also be found in Political Justice:

> In many countries justice is avowedly made a subject of solicitation, and the man of the highest rank and most splendid connections almost infallibly carries his cause against the unprotected and friendless.... A consciousness of these facts must be expected to render the rich little cautious of offence in his dealings with the poor, and to inspire him with a temper overbearing, dictatorial and tyrannical. (I, 18-19)

Tyrrel, "overbearing, dictatorial and tyrannical," succeeds in his unjust persecution of Hawkins and his son simply because he is wealthy. In Political Justice, Godwin outlines the role of government, which he believes should be essentially negative, protecting us, rich and poor alike, against the occasional hostility of others. But in Caleb Williams, or Things As They Are, the reverse holds true. Law favors the rich at the expense of the poor and is basically iniquitous both in application and in spirit. Sounding more like a political philosopher than a

tenant farmer, Hawkins proceeds with legal action against Tyrrel despite his misgivings, and he is confirmed in his belief that "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" (p. 73). This idea is the same as that found in the following maxims in Political Justice: "Legislation is in almost every country grossly the favourer of the rich against the poor" (I, 21), and "the inequality of conditions usually maintained by political institutions, is calculated greatly to enhance the imagined excellence of wealth" (I, 23). Tyrrel is clearly a case in point, for his wealth enables him to persecute an innocent man, demonstrating to the reader that he is emphatically, in the Godwinian sense of the word, a tyrant.

Mr. Falkland, Caleb's master, is also wealthy; but he is not tyrannical, showing us that Godwin is far less dogmatic in his novels than he is in his philosophical treatise. Nevertheless, Falkland does persecute Caleb and on occasion does express distinctly aristocratic views: "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" (pp. 76-77).

In this comment on the distinction of ranks, we see the views of a benevolent aristocrat--whose usual moral views and behavior make him distinct from and more believable than some other aristocrats in Godwin's fiction such as Pescara in Italian Letters and Roderic in Imogen--but an aristocrat all the same. On occasion, however, Falkland is not so benevolent. In fact, his attitude necessarily leads to unmistakable callousness: "The death of a hundred thousand men is at first sight very shocking; but what in reality are a hundred thousand such men more than a hundred thousand sheep?" (p. 111). But there is a distinction to be made between Tyrrel and Falkland in that Tyrrel acts despotically throughout his life, whereas Falkland, whose life has been essentially virtuous, only resorts to vicious actions because of trying circumstances. Tyrrel enjoys being despotic; Falkland does not. Falkland, in fact, may be seen as exemplifying the man of taste. Monro observes that the man of taste is distinguished by his preference for "the pleasures of the imagination proper,"[7] which is characteristic of Falkland. Despite being wealthy, Falkland has redeeming qualities which offset his wealth; for example, he is interested in esthetic and intellectual pursuits, and he has a highly developed moral sense, trying, for the most part, to consider

7 Monro, p. 93.

other persons before taking any particular course of action. His finest attribute in Godwin's eyes is that his actions, before he murders Tyrrel, are controlled by his reason.

Even though Falkland is essentially a virtuous character, he does have one major fault, one which is a characteristic aristocratic failing--the pride of reputation. As David Fleisher perspicaciously observes, "Falkland worshipped a false aristocratic ideal of honour."[8] Monro views him in the same light: "Falkland is a kind of incarnation of the whole ideal of Honour."[9] That both are correct is made evident by the numerous occasions when Falkland expresses sentiments such as the following: "I am sure things will never be as they ought, till honour and not law be the dictator of mankind, till vice is taught to shrink before the resistless might of inborn dignity, and not before the cold formality of statutes" (p. 175). Being a man of honor is not in itself morally wrong--if one does not carry the concept of honor to an extreme, as Falkland does, and allow it to drive one to immoral actions such as dueling, which Godwin had also deprecated earlier in Italian Letters. Godwin observes in

8 David Fleisher, William Godwin: A Study in Liberalism (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1951), p. 26.

9 Monro, p. 88.

Political Justice that dueling is engaged in either to gain revenge or to protect one's reputation. He goes on to condemn it in either case, believing that a more reasonable recourse can always be had. Falkland's affair of honor with Count Malvesi while in Italy in his youth shows us a mind obsessed with the idea of honor and foreshadows the disastrous incident with Tyrrel.

Falkland's obsession with honor is his only serious fault. He is respected and loved by all who know him, except Tyrrel, and does all that he can to help others, as one plainly sees when he tries to help Emily Melville. In this respect Falkland achieves the fourth stage on the scale of happiness and becomes the man of benevolence. But Falkland is not able to maintain this level, for he is an imperfect man with a false sense of honor who lives in an imperfect world. Godwin comments on the near impossibility of a person's being totally virtuous in a corrupting society when he has Caleb, while praising Falkland at the end of the novel, sorrowfully exclaim: "But of what use are talents and sentiments in the corrupt wilderness of human society? It is a rank and rotten soil from which every finer shrub draws poison as it grows" (p. 325). Corrupt societal institutions and the false expectations they inspire in the

individual have "blasted" the life of this flower of the aristocracy.

The man of benevolence of Political Justice is an ideal; he is a projection of what man might be. One can only reach this stage when one always relies on reason, which Falkland at times is not able to do because he is a character in a novel rather than a philosophic ideal. Nevertheless, whenever he is at this level, he completely overcomes the mere man of wealth, Tyrrel. In every confrontation between the two, Falkland emerges the victor. Even in the incident in which he is beaten by his brawny adversary, he would be victorious if he were to act as a man of benevolence. But his sense of honor sadly leads him to a mistaken understanding of the incident. He fails to realize that the attack by Tyrrel reveals the moral shortcoming of the attacker and not of the victim. His reaction, to murder Tyrrel, is dictated by shame and revenge instead of by reason. An alternate and desired reaction based on reason which entails no physical retaliation is supplied by Godwin when he has the "uncommonly judicious" Mr. Collins observe: "Can that circumstance [being beaten by a larger adversary] dishonour me? No; I can only be dishonoured by perpetrating an unjust action. My honour is in my own keeping,

beyond the reach of all mankind. Strike! I am passive. No injury that you can inflict shall provoke me to expose you or myself to unnecessary evil" (p. 98). But this is not the reaction of Falkland; thus an excessive concern with honor leads this otherwise virtuous man to become a murderer and ultimately a tyrant. Angus Wilson recognizes that the disparity between the actions of Falkland (as well as of other Godwin characters) and the actions of the ideal man of Political Justice shows Godwin to be not so naive as he is often thought to be: "There is a frightening chasm, a nightmare dissociation between the gloomy tortured lives of Godwin's heroes and the sweet reasonableness, the universal good sense of Political Justice, though the horror of the novels gives full answer to the facile criticism of Godwin's anarchism on the grounds of psychological naiveté and failure to consider the problem of evil."[10]

In a chapter of his philosophical treatise, "Of Personal Virtue and Duty," Godwin distinguishes between virtuous actions and virtuous men, as well as between evil actions and evil men. One evil action does not make a virtuous man evil; thus a virtuous man such as Falkland may perform an evil action if

10 Angus Wilson, "The Novels of William Godwin," World Review (June, 1951), p. 37.

that action is an exception to his usual way of conducting himself. Then where does the fault lie? David Fleisher seems correct when he explains that Godwin would place the blame on society: "Falkland, the criminal, is, as Godwin conceives him, a tragic example of the manner in which the evil spirit of a corrupt society will taint, discolour, and blight the fairest flower of its culture."[11] Falkland is a victim of society, for he is victimized by Tyrrel, who is a creation, and a representative, of the society they live in. He is also a victim of society by virtue of being a victim of his own ruling passion, which has been formed in a society which is overly concerned with revenge and with defending one's reputation. The pressures of a society which is still far from perfection determine Falkland's actions.

In Political Justice Godwin states that all actions are performed either in order to produce pleasure or to avoid pain. Godwin equates pleasure with good and pain with evil; therefore the performance of moral acts produces pleasure, while the performance of immoral acts produces pain: "Good is a general name, including pleasure, and the means by which pleasure is procured. Evil is a general name, including pain,

11 Fleisher, p. 26.

and the means by which pain is produced" (I, 440). The idea of pleasure and pain is also obvious in Caleb Williams when Mr. Clare, the most idealized character, expresses the following sentiments to Falkland:

> I do not know anyone whose future usefulness I contemplate with greater hope. Take care of yourself. Do not let the world be defrauded of your virtues. I am acquainted with your weakness as well as your strength. You have an impetuosity and an impatience of imagined dishonour, that, if once set wrong, may make you as eminently mischievous, as you will otherwise be useful. (p. 34)

Unfortunately, the weakness that Clare sees in Falkland finally surfaces, and the result is a tortured man who procures pleasure neither for himself nor his society.

Godwin further differentiates between primary and secondary pleasures in Political Justice, considering secondary (intellectual) pleasures superior to primary (sensuous) ones. In Caleb Williams, Tyrrel, merely a man of wealth, is a character of primary pleasures, whereas Falkland and Caleb, men of taste, are characters of secondary pleasures, which Godwin gives examples of when he states that "man is susceptible of certain secondary pleasures, as the pleasures of intellectual feeling, the pleasures of sympathy, and the pleasures of self-approbation" (PJ, I, xxiii). Both Caleb and Falkland enjoy

the pleasures of intellectual feeling and the pleasures of sympathy, but, realistically, neither enjoys the pleasures of self-approbation through the whole of the novel. Caleb comes closer to doing so, disapproving of his own actions only towards the end. Falkland, on the other hand, disapproves of himself from the moment that he is beaten by Tyrrel. He is mistaken in his self-disapprobation simply because he was unable to defend himself, but he is unable to think otherwise due to his overwhelming but human concern with honor. Of course, once he commits murder, self-disapprobation becomes valid. With the murder of Tyrrel, Falkland no longer takes into consideration the pleasures of others; thus his actions become unjust. Since they are unjust, and he, a man who acts by reason, realizes they are, he no longer is able to enjoy life; for as Godwin observes, "that which gives the last zest to our enjoyments, is the approbation of our own minds" (PJ, I, 76).

In addition, a sensitive and virtuous man such as Falkland would be hard-pressed to approve of himself after allowing innocent persons (the Hawkinses) to be convicted and executed for a murder which he, in fact, has committed, and after his calumny and subsequent relentless persecution of his servant, Caleb. In order to satisfy his personal pleasure,

maintaining his reputation, he sacrifices the pleasures of others. That Godwin, like most of us, sees these actions as immoral is evident in his statement that "all should form their plan of personal pleasure with a spirit of deference and accommodation to the pleasure of each other" (PJ, I, 443).

In Political Justice Godwin classifies actions as involuntary, imperfectly voluntary, and voluntary. He opts for voluntary actions, which are reasoned ones. F.E.L. Priestley correctly observes that "Godwin...is concerned with asserting the rational nature of voluntary actions."[12] The question which now arises is what kind of action Falkland's murder of Tyrrel is. Obviously, it is not an involuntary action; otherwise one would have to believe Falkland insane, and there is no reason to think that he is at the time. The choice between imperfectly voluntary and voluntary, however, is harder to make. If one considers the definition given by Godwin, it would appear at first glance that the action is a voluntary one: "it appears that the voluntary actions of men in all cases originate in their opinions....It may happen that the opinion may be exceedingly fugitive; it may have been preceded by aversion and followed by remorse; but it was unquestionably the opinion of the mind at the instant

12 Priestley, Political Justice, III, intro., 14.

in which the action commenced" (PJ, I, 58). Falkland's action most definitely originates in opinion; he is of the opinion that he will derive pleasure by eliminating Tyrrel, the source of his pain and the cause of his imagined disgrace.

But Godwin later observes that "every voluntary action has in it a mixture of involuntary" (I, 58). If one keeps this in mind, one sees the murder in a different light. Falkland commits his crime while ruled by passion; therefore, his decision is not ruled by reason. He is accustomed to think of himself as a man of honor and feels that he must act according to a code which he has been taught since his youth and which has been reenforced by his reading of romantic and chivalric literature:

> Among the favourite authors of his early years were the heroic poets of Italy. From them he imbibed the love of chivalry and romance. He had too much good sense to regret the times of Charlemagne and Arthur. But, while his imagination was purged by a certain infusion of philosophy, he conceived that there was in the manners depicted by these celebrated poets, something to imitate, as well as something to avoid. He believed that nothing was so well calculated to make men delicate, gallant and humane, as a temper perpetually alive to the sentiments of birth and honour. (p. 10)

Since Falkland's action is a direct result of opinions he

formed in early life, rather than of a reasoned approach to his problem at the moment, it is influenced by habit and custom and therefore has "a mixture of involuntary." As such, Falkland's behavior is somewhat mitigated by the circumstances of his history. Because of his background, his behavior becomes a combination of amoral and immoral; for as Godwin states, except in voluntary action, "there can be no moral conduct...we can be neither virtuous nor vicious, except in instances where our actions flow from intention, and are directed by foresight, or where they might have been so directed; and this is the definition of voluntary actions" (PJ, I, 422).

It is probable that if Falkland's action were entirely voluntary (his overwhelming concern with honor since childhood makes it imperfectly voluntary), whether virtuous or vicious, he would not feel the guilt which he so obviously does. This guilt leads him to fear for his reputation, and the result is the execution of the Hawkinses and the persecution of Caleb. One now sees that where Falkland was once a benevolent human being who enjoyed self-approbation, he becomes, instead, a tyrannical human being. Having overthrown a tyrant, Tyrrel, Falkland becomes one himself. Fleisher

describes this phenomenon when he writes that "Falkland was the victim of society, but in another way society gave him the power to victimize others."[13] His tyranny is most obvious in his victimizing of Caleb.

Caleb's dilemma stems from the fact that he, like Godwin, believes in the independence of the individual, regardless of his social or economic position: "I am an Englishman; and it is the privilege of an Englishman to be the sole judge and master of his own actions" (p. 159). His values are absolute, ideal ones, whereas Falkland's values after the murder have been altered by the situation he finds himself in, have been corrupted by his crime. Falkland believes that Caleb owes him allegiance despite the fact that he has confessed to Caleb that he is a murderer. He does not take into account Caleb's right to independent judgment when making a decision, just as Tyrrel had not considered Hawkins' right to refuse to let his son become Tyrrel's servant or his cousin's right to refuse his choice of husband for her. It is clear in the latter incident that Emily does not speak realistically but idealistically when she expresses virtually the same idea that

13 Fleisher, p. 26.

Caleb does: "He knows very well that I am right to have a will of my own in such a thing as this, and nobody is punished for doing what is right" (p. 49). In fact, neither Tyrrel nor Falkland knows any such thing, and as a result both Emily and Caleb are indeed punished when they dare to act independently.

Later in the novel, one again notices the same idea of individual independence in Caleb's letter informing Mr. Falkland that he intends to leave him: "I shall then be, what it is my duty to be, master of my own actions" (p. 152). But Caleb's subservient position makes him effectively a subject of Falkland, who denies Caleb's rights and innocence because he is in the social position to do so: "Your innocence shall be of no service to you: I laugh at so feeble a defence.... cease to contend with unsurmountable power!" (p. 154). Now a tyrant, Falkland may be seen as representative of government and Caleb as representative of the individual citizen. Caleb should be able to look, and once did, to Falkland for guidance and protection; he should be able to go to him with his problems. Instead, he finds that he is oppressed. Falkland does not fulfill the role which Godwin thinks government at best ought to fulfill; he persecutes rather than corrects. The role of government is outlined clearly by Godwin when he

states that "Government was intended to suppress injustice, but it offers new occasions and temptations for the commission of it" (PJ, I, xxiv). The first part of the quotation is Godwin's idea of government as it was meant to be; the second part is his idea of government as it is, the type that one encounters in Caleb Williams and in life.

Falkland's oppression of Caleb progressively leads to Caleb's separation from his society, which in turn leads Caleb to reject its institutions, in particular its judicial system. More and more Caleb's comments begin to show his (and Godwin's) dissatisfaction with the existing system of justice. Now that he is persecuted, he comes to the same conclusion that Hawkins had earlier. He questions the poor man's chances of getting a fair trial even if innocent: "Six thousand a year shall protect a man from accusation; and the validity of an impeachment shall be superseded, because the author of it is a servant!" (p. 277). The poor man in the world of Caleb Williams, and in the world as it is, is not believed when he accuses a rich man of a crime; instead of being vindicated, he is punished.

Caleb's imprisonment reflects the idea of punishment

found in Political Justice. Godwin believes that restraint is essentially a pernicious practice, as one sees when he states that "Jails are, to a proverb, seminaries of vice" (II, 385). Where he differs from others who also object to punishment is that he believes that all types of capital and corporal punishments are unjust in all cases. His detestation of imprisonment is also seen in the following condemnation of prisons in particular and the English judicial system in general. Imprisoned falsely as a result of Falkland's accusation, Caleb indignantly criticizes imprisonment regardless of guilt or innocence:

> Thank God, exclaims the Englishman, we have no Bastille! Thank God, with us no man can be punished without a crime! Unthinking wretch! Is that a country of liberty where thousands languish in dungeons and fetters? Go, go, ignorant fool! and visit the scenes of our prisons! witness their unwholesomeness, their filth, the tyranny of their governors, the misery of their inmates! After that show me the man shameless enough to triumph, and say, England has no Bastille! (p. 181)

Interestingly enough, the Bastille had in reality been stormed and demolished in 1789, only a few years before Godwin wrote this, a fact which to some degree must have justified the French Revolution in Godwin's eyes. George Woodcock probably

had passages like the above in mind when he wrote: "it is certainly impossible to find any work in prose fiction... that so faithfully projects the mood of revolutionary romanticism in England for a whole generation after the French Revolution."[14]

Godwin believes that punishment is used as a result of the government's not knowing what to do, how to teach the defendant, when the case against him is weak or unclear. If the case is a stong one, the criminal can be shown how he was wrong. The desired way to reform a criminal, therefore, is through instruction, never through punishment. Instruction, in fact, is the means of correcting all misunderstandings of truth: "There can be no doubt, that the proper way of conveying to my understanding a truth of which I am ignorant, or of impressing upon me a firmer persuasion of truth with which I am acquainted, is by an appeal to my reason" (PJ, I, 179). Once again we see the emphasis that Godwin places on reason. If Caleb's judges and jailers think him guilty, they should instruct rather than punish him. Since they do not, and since Caleb is in fact innocent, Godwin's criticism of the English judicial system is all the more telling.

14 George Woodcock, "Things As They Might Be: Things As They Are--Notes on the Novels of William Godwin," Dalhousie Review, 54 (Winter, 1974), p. 689.

Both Caleb and Mr. Falkland could be men of benevolence; both are men of taste. Caleb differs from Falkland in not being wealthy. But wealth is a disadvantage for Falkland as it turns out; for it is his wealth which enables him to impose his will on others and which, in the end, leaves him a wretched, dilapidated shadow. Caleb, on the other hand, commits no true crime in the legal sense of the word. At worst, he betrays a trust; but the secret with which he is intrusted perhaps is not worthy of being kept. Although we can understand his emotions in a psychological context, it appears that philosophically he has no valid reason for guilt; for he acts out of motives of defense and not through malice. His fault is that he does not use his reason in judging his own conduct and the conduct of Falkland; his actions on the surface appear to display reason, but in reality they do not.

Caleb's interpretation of truth is too rigid, hardly tempered by mercy. Truth is a human value which involves an interplay between individuals and is "capable of being adequately communicated by one man to another" (PJ, I, 87). Caleb has not exerted himself as much as is necessary to communicate the truth to Falkland, so he must share in his

tragedy. Falkland realizes that truth is not an ultimate value unto itself, removed from human beings, when he berates Caleb for accusing him of murder despite promising not to:

> Perhaps you may scruple out of a regard to truth. Is truth then entitled to adoration for its own sake, and not for the sake of the happiness it is calculated to produce? Will a reasonable man sacrifice to barren truth, when benevolence, humanity and every consideration that is dear to the human heart require that it should be superseded? (p. 282)

He recognizes that truth is sterile if we do not take into consideration its consequences. Not until the end of the novel does Caleb finally arrive at the same understanding, admitting that he should have reasonably discussed the situation with Falkland, or at least should have tried harder to do so. He is extremely penitent:

> I now see that mistake in all its enormity. I am sure that, if I had opened my heart to Mr. Falkland, if I had told him privately the tale that I have now been telling, he could not have resisted my reasonable demand....It is...impossible that he could have resisted a frank and fervent expostulation, the frankness and the fervour in which the whole soul was poured out. I despaired, while it was yet time to have made the just experiment; but my despair was criminal, was treason against the sovereignty of truth. (p. 323)

Caleb has made the same mistake that Tyrrel in his persecution

of his cousin had been guilty of earlier; he has put his trust in an institution, the law, rather than in individual reason. This causes him to lose the self-approbation that he previously enjoyed, one of the distinguishing pleasures of a man of benevolence.

Two additional characters who provide insight into Godwin's philosophy are Captain Raymond, a thief of principles, and Mr. Collins, a virtuous man who refuses to listen to Caleb's accusations against Falkland. After being attacked and almost killed by bandits, Caleb is found and cared for by Captain Raymond, the leader of an outlaw band. Although he is a thief, Raymond has a sense of morality that is totally missing in Tyrrel, a legally honest but morally corrupt individual. Raymond recognizes what he is but believes that his profession is just when compared to persons who use the law for their own ends: "Our profession is the profession of justice,... We, who are thieves without a licence, are at open war with another set of men, who are thieves according to law" (p. 216). Godwin is not approving of crime here; he is merely trying to explain it by attacking a social and legal system that favors a few, the rich, over many, the poor. Caleb speaks for Godwin when after praising some aspects of the outlaws' society he emphatically condemns it: "But the energy of these

men, such as I beheld it, was in the highest degree misapplied, unassisted by liberal and enlightened views, and directed only to the most narrow and contemptible purposes" (p. 219).

According to Godwinian thought, Captain Raymond and his band are wrong not because what they do is illegal but because it is self-serving and devoid of true benevolence. Nevertheless, Raymond does come off much better than his fellow thieves and is, in fact, one of the few people who recognize the truth of Caleb's story. He is not misled by a man's station; he calls Falkland's treatment of Caleb "one fresh instance of the tyranny and perfidiousness exercised by the powerful members of the community against those who were less privileged than themselves" (p. 220). Raymond has also suffered this tyranny and thus has been forced into a life of crime. Similarly, in Political Justice Godwin tells us that men like Captain Raymond, criminals, exist because of their enforced poverty: "A numerous class of mankind are held down in a state of abject penury, and are continually prompted by disappointment and distress to commit violence upon their more fortunate neighbors" (I, 12). If Captain Raymond had not been taken advantage of by those above him on the social ladder, he would not have resorted to the profession that he has.

Ironically, although a thief listens to and believes

Caleb, an honest man, Mr. Collins, does not. Like the rest of the society that he is a part of (instead of separated from as is Raymond), Collins believes the word of the aristocratic Falkland rather than the low-born Caleb. But public opinion is not the only thing that determines his position; he pragmatically bases his position also on personal considerations and on the fact that Falkland has always lived an exemplary life:

> Of what would you convince me? That Mr. Falkland is a suborner and murderer?...And what benefit will result from this conviction?...I have known Mr. Falkland in his maturer years, and have always admired him as the living model of liberality and goodness....If you could change all my ideas... what benefit would arise from that? I must part with all my interior consolation, and all my external connections. (pp. 309-10)

Just as Godwin believes in Political Justice that one vicious action does not make a virtuous man vicious, Collins refuses to judge Falkland solely on a few grievous mistakes in an otherwise benevolent life. And on the practical side, he does not wish to lose his personal connections, a view which is perhaps not eminently virtuous in a theoretical sense but is most definitely human in a novelistic one. Even Caleb, the object of persecution, accepts Collins' position, and after their meeting calls him an "Amiable, incomparable man!" (p. 311).

Caleb complies with his old friend's request and does not press his story upon him. Collins will not learn the truth, in fact, until he receives the story (the novel) that Caleb has written for his benefit and which in the end will reveal Caleb's innocence and Falkland's guilt.

Godwin originally wrote a different ending for Caleb Williams, one in which Falkland is never exposed as a murderer, improves in health, and flourishes, whereas Caleb goes insane, unable to accept the iniquity of his country's legal system. Godwin's artistry is revealed, I believe, by his decision to revise the ending, with Falkland pining away through guilt and loss of honor, and Caleb being legally excused for his actions but in the process disapproving his own behavior in deciding Falkland's fate. Although the first ending may be considered a more dramatically ironic one, the second is didactically superior because it conveys two of Godwin's prime themes: truth will eventually out, no matter how circuitously, and the just man should rely on individual reason and expostulation rather than on social institutions. The psychological subtlety of Caleb Williams is seen when Godwin has these two ideas conflict without denying the validity of either one. Caleb is successful in getting the truth

known, but he does so by appealing to law rather than to individual reason. If the first ending had been kept, truth would not have triumphed, for Falkland would have still been thought innocent and Caleb guilty by the general public. In the revised ending, Caleb's innocence is established, but he is effectively a destroyed man because he has lost his self-approbation by resorting to law instead of reason.

The vision which Godwin presents in Enquiry Concerning Political Justice is one of a world where all men will become unselfish and benevolent; where government, laws, and punishment will disappear, for crime will cease to exist; where wealth will be equally distributed, resulting in all men working for the common good; and where everyone will have time to enjoy esthetic and intellectual pursuits. This is not the world we now live in nor the world of Caleb Williams, which only attempts to present Things As They Are; both of these worlds are merely intermediary points between complete savagery and Godwin's visionary, and basically democratic, utopia. For Godwin, morality entails the exercise of reason in all actions, which only then can be just. Justice leads to virtue, which he sees as being necessarily social, favoring a balance of the individuality of man and social cohesion. Whether or not Godwin's optimism in

Political Justice is misguided is open to question. In the world of Caleb Williams, utopia has not yet come. In his philosophical treatise, Godwin says that it will. The Godwinian vision is attractive, and it is, I think, necessary if man hopes to progress morally.

Chapter III

St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century

William Godwin's fifth novel, St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century, is perhaps his most entertaining and least didactic one. It is not in any way a great novel, but according to George Woodcock St. Leon "was regarded in its time as a fine novel; Byron and Keats admired it, and Shelley paid it the compliment of imitation when he wrote his own vastly inferior novel, St. Irvyne."[1] Godwin's penchant for philosophical, political, and moral proselytizing is relatively subdued, so that the novel is more readable as fiction than his others. In his preface to Fleetwood (published six years after St. Leon), Godwin states that in order to reach a larger audience with his ideas, he has chosen to write in a more entertaining, therefore popular, mode. He goes on to inform us that "The story of St. Leon is of the miraculous class; and its design to 'mix human feelings and passions with incredible situations,' and thus render them impressive and interesting."[2]

Although St. Leon may best be classified as a novel of

1 Woodcock, "Things As They Might Be....," p. 692.

2 William Godwin, Fleetwood; Or, The New Man of Feeling (New York: I. Riley, 1805), I, v.

ideas, Godwin emphasizes characterization and personal relationships in order to capture his readers' interest and then subtly impress them with his ideas. He has devised a plot which will sharply separate a good man from his family, in order to show the necessarily awful consequences of such separation; and in order to emphasize this separation, he has made this plot an entirely fantastic one. Of course, since fantasy ordinarily implies allegory, and allegory a strong moral or ideational component, Godwin clearly is not sacrificing idea to plot, as might appear at first glance.

Reginald St. Leon, a French count whose parents died while he was young, leads a loose life until he is rescued from his libertine ways by the Marquis de Damville. St. Leon marries Damville's daughter (the beautiful, virtuous, and intellectual Marguerite), and their marriage at first has a salutary effect on the young man's behavior. But eventually St. Leon surrenders to his ruling vice, gambling, which causes him to lose his money and his estate. Now poor, the St. Leon family moves to Switzerland, where they live a frugal but happy life (with some difficult periods) for six years.

The St. Leons' family life is marked by openness and sincerity, but the appearance of an old beggar changes this

drastically. The dying beggar entrusts St. Leon with the secrets of the philosopher's stone (exhaustless wealth)[3] and the elixir vitae (immortality) on the condition that St. Leon reveal these secrets to no one, not even to his wife. Admitting that he is a slave to an aristocratic concern with magnificence and station, St. Leon accepts the beggar's "gift." The secrets hardly prove a blessing. St. Leon loves his wife and children, and he realizes that his newly acquired art will effectively separate him from them; but his passion for wealth and his all-too-human desire to live forever prove too strong to be denied. The remainder of the novel shows the misfortunes that St. Leon and his family suffer because of the separation of St. Leon from his family and his fellow man.

By resorting to this fantastic plot and making the novel historical to a degree (dates of actual battles, references to

3 In his article previously referred to, George Woodcock speculates that Godwin's knowledge of occultism was demonstrated by his The Lives of the Necromancers, so he probably would have known that in the hermetic philosophy gold represents wisdom and the power it confers. Thus St. Leon's possession of the philosopher's stone would have enabled him to attain wisdom. Woodcock states that "in this light St. Leon conveys the teaching that a man who gains power through wisdom and seeks to use it for the general good must expect to forego the comforts of ordinary life....Every hand will be against him, and men will misunderstand and hate the good he seeks to bestow on them" (p. 691). Woodcock's idea is plausible, but a close examination of the novel reveals St. Leon's foolishness rather than his wisdom.

the Inquisition, mention of historical persons), Godwin is able to cover a long span of time and a large area. (This combination of the factual and the marvelous also adds to our enjoyment of the novel.) The various misadventures that St. Leon encounters enable Godwin to comment on a variety of topics--such as war, imprisonment, religious persecution, greed--and to advance his dominant idea that in order to be truly happy, a man must enjoy the approbation of his fellows, in particular that of his family. In fact, contrary to Godwin's position in Political Justice, a man must think first of his family when determining his course of action. Joann Cobb agrees that the role of private affections is one of the main themes of St. Leon: "It is evident in St. Leon...that man needs sympathy and understanding, and the private affections of a wife, family, and friends in addition to his rational benevolence toward mankind in general."[4]

Two years before the publication of St. Leon in 1799, Godwin, who was thought to epitomize cool reason, married the celebrated Mary Wollstonecraft (March 29, 1797), only to endure the hardship of her death after childbirth on September 10, 1797. Ralph Wardle's collection of their letters reveals

4 Cobb, "Godwin's Novels and Political Justice," p. 21.

a loving and mutually satisfied couple; apparently Godwin's happy relationship with Mary modified his stand on feelings, in particular that on family attachments. With St. Leon, Godwin clearly changes his position in Political Justice that although man in actuality almost always favors his own family over strangers, reason through an unbiased judgment of the happiness of society in general should dictate one's behavior. On reading the novel, it becomes apparent that Godwin is indeed attempting "to modify some of the earlier chapters of that work [Political Justice] in conformity to the sentiments inculcated in this."[5] His elevation of personal affection is apparent when he observes: "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" (p. x).

Godwin's last revision of Political Justice (1798), however, incorporates a similar modification of doctrine. We see in the "Summary of Principles" that "The voluntary actions of men," originally directed by their opinions,

5 William Godwin, St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century (London: Colburn and Bently, 1831), pp. ix-x.

are now "under the direction of their feelings." Reason "cannot excite us to action" but "is calculated to regulate our conduct, according to the comparative worth it ascribes to different excitements" (I, xxvi). Emotions are now put on an equal footing with reason. Godwin no longer views man as a mere reasoning machine, a computerized being that can erase any trace of personal attachment in order to better serve his species as a whole. Being composed of both emotions and reason, a man should, in fact must, consider his family and his society. Godwin is concerned here, clearly, with the "self-love versus social love" conflict that was so prominent with eighteenth-century writers such as Shaftesbury, Pope, and Johnson. The well-balanced individual should use his reason when deciding how he may best help his society (general benevolence); but he must rely foremost on his emotions when dealing with loved ones (family affection).

The central theme of this novel is revealed primarily through Reginald St. Leon, who almost invariably sacrifices either reason to emotion or emotion to reason, never quite achieving the balance that Godwin believes is preferable. We see the importance, even primacy, of personal attachments in this novel when St. Leon, after being given the Marquis de

Damville's daughter in marriage, extols the institution of marriage:

> I should say, that nature has atoned for all the disasters and miseries she so copiously and incessantly pours upon her sons, by this one gift, the transcendent enjoyment and nameless delights which, whenever the heart is pure and the soul is refined, wait on the attachment of two persons of opposite sexes....I must have someone to sympathize with; I cannot bear to be cut off from all relations; I desire to experience a confidence, a concord, an attachment, that cannot rise between common acquaintance. (pp. 38-39)

These words are high praise indeed for an institution which Godwin had forcefully condemned in Political Justice six years earlier. In his treatise, he objects to cohabitation in general because it intrudes on an individual's independence of thought and results in "bickering and unhappiness." Speaking of marriage in particular, Godwin observes that it is usually the result of romantic delusion and gives rise to the individual's trying to make the best of a situation that is fraught with deception and so ultimately leads to a faulty understanding. But in St. Leon, Godwin chooses to depict a loving marriage rather than an unhappy one.

Godwin cannot present the marriage as a perfect one, however, given the separation of the family that is demanded by the fantastic nature of the plot (an immortal can hardly

be expected to live on equal terms with mortals). Thus the author is forced to show the gradual disintegration of St. Leon's marriage, a disintegration which is a major source of all his troubles. Although St. Leon wants to agree, in fact does agree, with Damville's advice to concern himself essentially with his family, his personal frailties render him incapable of acting in accordance with his beliefs. St. Leon recognizes how important, necessary, and pleasant personal attachments are; in fact, he considers them the highest good a man can hope for; yet he carelessly, even masochistically, denies himself the blessing of a happy family life. He "cannot bear to be cut off from all relations," but his self-consuming insistence on practicing his black magic destroys the "confidence" which once characterized his marriage, and by the end of the novel he has no true personal relationships.

A large part of the novel is taken up by St. Leon's narration of how he and Marguerite enjoyed married life--sharing ideas, sentiments, and enjoyments--and how they were blessed by the experience of raising a family (four children). The reader is constantly reminded, however, of St. Leon's coming ruin and disgrace, which are a result of placing external considerations such as wealth and glory

above personal domestic ones. All of their troubles can be traced directly to St. Leon's inability, because of his mistaken aristocratic concern with fame, to live according to the prudent Marquis de Damville's counsel: "Live in the midst of your family; cultivate domestic affection; be the solace and joy of your wife; watch for the present and future welfare of your children; and be assured that you will then be found no contemptible member of the community at large!" (p. 48). Whenever St. Leon follows this advice, he is happy; whenever he does not, his life is "blighted." St. Leon may have good intentions, for he does wish to benefit society as a whole; but he goes about trying to do so in the wrong way, and in the process neglects his family's welfare. According to Damville, one is beneficial to one's society by being beneficial to one's family. St. Leon's failure in this respect is tragic. He sacrifices his family to a concept of general philanthropy, a concept which is a cornerstone of Political Justice but one which leads to misery in this novel.

St. Leon does not consciously reject Damville's advice: intellectually he accepts it and, for the most part, tries to live his life accordingly. When a terrible hailstorm

destroys the surrounding area and all that he and Marguerite have been able to build up in their new but humble circumstances, St. Leon reacts the way the average man would while running to see if his family is safe: "I stayed not to enquire whether they [other people] were yet in a state to require assistance; the idea that had taken possession of me left no room for the sentiment of general humanity" (p. 91). Here is a man who is obviously concerned with the welfare of others but who places the safety of his own family first. We do not condemn his behavior but see it as quite human. Such behavior, however, would have been strongly condemned by the Godwin of Political Justice.

Throughout the novel, St. Leon extols domestic bliss. At one point after moving to a new residence on Lake Constance (the family was forced to leave its previous home by the prejudice of neighbors and the injustice of local laws), St. Leon professes his preference of domestic happiness to wealth: "I will sit in the midst of my children, and revel in the luxury of domestic affections; pleasures these, that may be incumbered, but cannot be heightened, by all that wealth has in its power to bestow! Wealth serves no other purpose than to deprave the soul, and adulterate the fountains of genuine

delight" (p. 101). These words are prophetic for St. Leon because he and his family live an idyllic life, despite some initial problems, during the next six years. It is idyllic, in fact, because of their lack of wealth and their mutual attachments. As long as they have shelter, food, and each other they are happy.

St. Leon's greed profoundly weakens what Godwin considers one of the pillars of a successful marriage, in fact of any relationship, mutual confidence. Since he is enjoined by the old beggar from revealing the secrets entrusted to him, St. Leon cannot even tell his wife how he has acquired wealth and must consequently hide it from her. Discerning his reticence, Marguerite suffers silently; but her love for her family finally compels her to complain to St. Leon that their relationship and the cohesion of the family are slowly being destroyed because he no longer confides in her. Marguerite's patient, long-suffering behavior has virtually no effect on her husband. Although he recognizes the truth of what his wife says, his thirst for riches and position outweighs his love for his family. He weakly assures Marguerite that he still loves her, and indeed he does, but he does not reveal his secret. Instead of insisting that St. Leon immediately

change, Marguerite accepts his explanation and in so doing contributes to the family's unhappiness. Believing that their relationship has irreversibly changed for the worse, Marguerite sheepishly abandons herself to a martyred acquiescence to St. Leon's selfish behavior and dies prematurely.

St. Leon also realizes that this new lack of mutual confidence is harming their marriage yet does not, or is unable to, act upon this knowledge: "There was no more opening of the heart between us, no more infantine guilelessness and sincerity, no more of that unapprehensive exposure of every thought of the soul, that adds the purest zest to the pleasures of domestic life" (p. 179). He understands intellectually that his failure to be open with his own wife is ruining what was once a happy marriage and a happy family; but like an addict--in his case he is addicted to wealth and station--he is unable to reject his "drug," even though the happiness and well-being of the family depend on his doing so. Just as he had gambled earlier with his money, he now gambles with the happiness of his family. St. Leon's weakness results in the estrangement of his son, contributes to the death of Marguerite, and ultimately breaks up the entire family.

St. Leon is not so much an immoral as a weak man. For

example, he clearly admires the relationship between parents and children: "In their early years we are attached to our offspring, merely because they are ours, and in a way that has led superficial speculators to consider the attachment, less as the necessary operation of a sensible and conscious mind, than as a wise provision of nature for the perpetuation of the species." Nevertheless, "They are not puppets, moved with wires, and to be played on at will. Almost from the hour of their birth they have a will of their own, to be consulted and negotiated with" (pp. 133-34). One wonders whether the pre-Mary Wollstonecraft William Godwin is included in these "superficial speculators." In any case, he made St. Leon recognize that children are not just extensions of their parents, mere possessions to be displayed, but human beings with their own individuality and will.

But sadly, although St. Leon expresses these beliefs, he is unable to live up to them. He does not consult or negotiate with his son, for example, concerning Charles's place in society. Instead, he tries to impose, perhaps unconsciously, his own aristocratic aspirations on his young son, without realizing that Charles would rather be good than great. The result is that Charles is disgraced by having his father's

honor questioned (and rightly so), strongly denounces St. Leon for causing this disgrace, and determines to lead his own life, bereft of his family and devoid of the family name. Marguerite will see her son no more, and St. Leon will only see him when both are living under assumed identities, Charles through choice and St. Leon by necessity. This perversion of the way things ought to be is heightened by the fact that when they do meet again, the father appears to be much younger than the son (because of the elixir vitae) and is often mistaken for Charles's younger brother. This reversal of natural order also nearly causes the death of one at the hands of the other, for Charles challenges to a duel the young man who he does not realize is his father, because St. Leon, under the guise of the Sieur de Chatillon, has unwittingly estranged Charles from his prospective bride. All of this misunderstanding, of course, is a direct result of St. Leon's possession of the secret of immortality, a contradiction of nature that separates him from his fellow man.

Godwin's characters in St. Leon reinforce or modify the ideas of Political Justice, but as fictional creations they somewhat distort them. For example, Marguerite (who several critics believe is an idealized portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft)

acts as a spokesman for Godwin through her egaltarian views. After being reduced to the level of a peasant because of St. Leon's indiscriminate gambling, she philosophically accepts their loss of status--expressing sentiments about class distinction that are common in Political Justice:

> I fear, too true, that the splendour in which we lately lived has its basis in oppression; and that the superfluities of the rich are a boon extorted from the hunger and misery of the poor!...How cumbrous is magnificence! The moderate man is the only free. He who reduces all beneath him to a state of servitude becomes himself the slave of his establishment, and of his domestics. (p. 85)

Liberal sentiments, indeed! But why has Marguerite waited until she no longer enjoys the advantages of the aristocracy to express herself in such a manner? She may be humbled by her new circumstances, but this change of heart would require the fortitude of a saint--and Marguerite is merely human. Practically speaking, a woman who has lost as much as she has, and one who has seen her children virtually impoverished because of her husband's gambling, would hardly accept these misfortunes so philosophically. At no time does she rant and rave at her husband's stupidity. Instead, she gently, almost timidly, attempts to enlighten St. Leon by timely Godwinian expostulation. She acts the way Godwin says we should rationally act in Political Justice, but clearly she is unbelievable as a

character in a novel. Obviously, she steps out of character (a sixteenth-century aristocratic lady) and merely provides Godwin with a convenient outlet for his didacticism. Yes, she is a somewhat conventional idealized heroine; but in light of her duty to her family, her constant acceptance of St. Leon's unwise behavior and her philosophical discourses are hard to accept as real.

Regardless of Marguerite's lack of believability, it is interesting that Godwin's strong attack on the aristocracy, which runs throughout his works, is delivered by a woman. Hers is not an emotional position, as would be expected from a conventional heroine of this time, but a purely intellectual one. Although Godwin's belief in the equality of the sexes is not overtly stated, his firm belief that all human beings are equal and deserve equal treatment transcends sexual distinctions: "I shall assiduously cultivate the intercourse of that woman, whose moral and intellectual accomplishments strike me in the most powerful manner" (PJ, II, 511). Marguerite is praised only incidentally for her beauty, primarily for her morality and intellectuality. Godwin has depicted a virtuous character and sees no reason why she should not be the one to expound his theories of the perniciousness of aristocracy. We are unwilling

to accept the fact that she expresses egalitarian views not so much because we distrust a woman's ability to do so in the sixteenth century (especially when we remember that Marguerite has had an excellent education, being acquainted with and taught by such illustrious figures as da Vinci, Rabelais, Scaliger, and Erasmus), but because we find it hard to believe that a fallen aristocrat would believe as she does.

The fact that Marguerite, an aristocrat, expresses such views shows a definite modification of Godwin's philosophy. The Godwin of Political Justice would have us believe that being an aristocrat excludes one from being virtuous. Marguerite's sentiments in St. Leon, then, can only be reconciled with Godwin's position in his theoretical treatise if we remember that she is a fictional character, and as such not merely a mouthpiece for Godwin. Marguerite is an aristocrat; nevertheless she is virtuous just as her father is. The reason is that she combines just principles of behavior with devotion to her family. She sincerely cares for her society, but she acts as most humans would when she sticks by her husband, who she realizes is mistaken, simply because she loves him. Except in Political Justice, being an aristocrat will not prevent one from acting as a human being.

According to Political Justice, the happy man is one who lives in harmony with his society and the unhappy man is one who lives in conflict with or outside of his society; thus the aristocrat or the wealthy man cannot be truly happy because he is automatically separated from the mass of mankind by his station or wealth. A similar belief (St. Leon's separation from his society because of his marvelous secrets is an extreme case of an aristocrat's separation from the common man) is expressed by Marguerite, who guesses that St. Leon must possess the philosopher's stone: "A generous spirit, Reginald, delights to live upon equal terms with his associates and fellows. He would disdain, when offered to him, excessive and clandestine advantages. Equality is the soul of real and cordial society" (pp. 210-11). The key word here is "equality." Happiness is found in equality, and by extension happiness of the proletariat, general happiness, would be also. But equality is inimical to a society which has an aristocracy and to one where some members possess magical powers, and thus so is true happiness to such a society. St. Leon is unhappy because he is separated from his fellow men by his marvelous secrets, just as Roderic is separated from them by his magic, Rinaldo by his aristocratic education, Tyrrel by his position, Falkland by

his guilt, and Caleb by the general belief that he is a criminal. St. Leon is happiest when he lives as the majority of his society in Switzerland live, without the advantages of aristocracy and without the secrets that he learns from the beggar.

We see by his own words that St. Leon realizes that he is separated from his society by his "advantages"; we see that he wishes to share his wealth, to be part of his society. But his inordinate desire for wealth and station makes him unable in the end to control his own behavior. Although he chooses inexhaustible wealth and immortality, St. Leon's natural human desire to be like others of his species is obvious when he states:

> There was something however in this part of my speculation that did not entirely please me. Methought the race of mankind looked too insignificant in my eyes. I felt a degree of uneasiness at the immeasurable distance that was put between me and the rest of my species. I found myself alone in the world....I could have been well content to be partaker with a race of immortals, but I was not satisfied to be single in this respect. (p. 164)

Of course the prospect of living eternally is attractive to him, but St. Leon realizes that there is hardly a brotherhood of immortals. His very immortality, seemingly an advantage, turns out to be a disadvantage: it forces him to view his fellow man

as "insignificant"--obviously, this description would also include his family--and it leaves him "alone in the world." In effect, he is no longer part of a society; he is an outcast from it. In Godwin's eyes (and in the eyes of most of us), living apart from society would be a major cause of unhappiness (as it turns out to be for St. Leon); for as Godwin states: "Man is a social animal. How far he is necessarily so, will appear, if we consider the sum of advantages resulting from the social, and of which he would be deprived in the solitary state" (PJ, II, 386).

Godwin makes it quite clear to the reader that St. Leon recognizes man's need for society and its approval. But since St. Leon's behavior is contrary to his philosophical understanding, we are led to see him either as hypocritical or so confused that he is almost a split personality. One side of St. Leon wishes to enjoy the happiness that friends and a family provide, but the other side is so captivated by wealth and position that he sacrifices those he loves to greed. One would think that his own experiences, as well as the fact that the person from whom he learns his secrets is an old beggar who dies shortly after, would be enough to show St. Leon which path he should choose--the path to riches or the path to happiness--but he constantly chooses wrongly, and almost everyone suffers

as a result.

At one point, despite having already suffered a great deal because of the secrets that the old man has told him, St. Leon foolishly persists in resorting to his magical knowledge. He arouses the intense hatred and distrust of the town in which the family now lives--he calls the people superstitious, but they are correct in believing that he possesses magical knowledge--yet instead of discarding his magic, he lamely but philosophically laments their antipathy:

> There is no pleasure more congenial to the human heart, than the approbation and affection of our fellows....Man was not born to live alone. He is linked to his brethren by a thousand ties; and, when those ties are broken, he ceases from all genuine existence. Their complacence is a food more invigorating than ambrosia; their aversion is a torment worse than that of the damned. (p. 282)

If he truly believes this, and it appears that he does, why does he not match his actions to his words? He does not because he is in a sense two separate personalities. The intellectual side of the character is speaking, the Godwinian side. The emotional side, the side that acts contrary to the idea expressed in the passage, in effect the character of the novel, can have no approbation of his fellows because he has

no equals. He is immortal and thus, in a way, no longer human.

In reality, St. Leon lives alone by choice, for he broke the ties he speaks of when he decided to assume unfair advantages (eternal life and limitless wealth) over other human beings. He is no longer a human being, for he does not live under the same natural laws, and thus in effect "ceases from all genuine existence." Obviously, he cannot expect to have the approbation of others (he expects it simply on the basis that he is a count), for he is not telling them the truth about himself; he is living insincerely. His son, Charles, (sounding more like a moral philosopher than a youth of sixteen), sums up St. Leon's problem before striking out on his own because he feels disgraced by his father's behavior: "A just and brave man acts fearlessly and with explicitness; he does not shun, but court, the scrutiny of mankind; he lives in the face of day, and the whole world confesses the clearness of his spirit and the rectitude of his conduct" (p. 189). St. Leon is seriously at fault for acting contrary to how his young son says a good man should act; but given the temptation of the secrets his is a human failing, and even though he may lose the approbation of his family, he does not lose their love.

The character of St. Leon, a man who professes that he wishes to help mankind, is also revealed by his relationship to the thoroughly misanthropic Bethlem Gabor, a Hungarian warlord who seems more suited to a gothic novel than a novel of ideas. Admirably persistent in his efforts to be a philanthropist despite the constant hostility of those he tries to help, St. Leon, now deprived of his family as is Bethlem, travels to a war-torn area in an attempt to alleviate the suffering of its inhabitants. As usual, his initial success soon turns to failure, for St. Leon has no real expertise in economics or government because his aristocratic background ensured that others would work for him rather than the reverse. As a result of his ineptitude, the hostility of the people is aroused because they are now effectively in a worse position because of his "aid." In order to protect himself (he now lives alone, a seeming youth of twenty-two possessed of immense wealth), St. Leon mistakenly allies himself to Bethlem Gabor by purchasing his favor. It should come as no surprise that an alliance based on money rather than true friendship should break down; yet St. Leon, who since he is actually fifty-two years old should be able to judge more accurately Bethlem's character, is quite surprised and in-

dignant at being imprisoned by his ally. Bethlem acts entirely in character, hating St. Leon simply because he cannot stand to see an individual help others, interpreting philanthropy as a sign of weakness. Such an individual, he believes, ought to be despised. But instead of recognizing their irreconcilable natures, St. Leon foolishly relies on his limitless wealth to buy Bethlem's protection and friendship.

Godwin gives a basis for Bethlem's hatred of his fellow man, and in the process reaffirms his own environmentalist position. Because Bethlem's family was murdered by a rival warlord, he has become misanthropic: "I have no longer delight but in human misery....I cannot view the human figure without a torture the most dreadful" (pp. 415-16). Living alone, apart from what may be termed a civilized society (he does have warriors under him), Bethlem is an exquisitely bitter and hate-filled character. He is, in fact, Godwin's first depiction of a thorough misanthrope, a type of individual that we will encounter in several of his later works, in particular Mandeville. The difference between Bethlem and St. Leon speaks well for the latter, even though Bethlem apparently understands his own nature better than St. Leon does his. Despite his constant suffering at the hands of society, St. Leon still maintains

his altruistic desire to be philanthropic. Although his ruling passions have separated him from his fellow man, he still loves him. Both he and Bethlem are outcasts of society, but St. Leon loves mankind and wishes to help it; Bethlem Gabor hates mankind and wishes to destroy it. Indeed, according to George Woodcock, who sees an autobiographical aspect in the novel, "St. Leon's guilt lies not in doing evil but in doing good. This shift of emphasis is linked undoubtedly to Godwin's own experience as a result of telling men how they can become happy and free."[6] Regardless, in the end both fail to do what they wish; and tellingly both are now men deprived of their families.

Actually, the real tension in the novel is provided by the three-way pull on St. Leon of domestic responsibility, general philanthropy, and false aristocratic ideals. St. Leon's enduring unhappiness is the result of his tendency to neglect the welfare of his family for the welfare of his society, and ultimately of his selfish desire to live the life of and expect the praise due to an excessively rich

6 Woodcock, p. 691. P.N. Furbank agrees with Woodcock that Godwin's novels are autobiographical, or "confessional."

aristocrat. The benevolent man of Political Justice may find his greatest pleasure in general philanthropy; but St. Leon and his family almost invariably suffer when he attempts to be philanthropical, primarily because his actions are motivated more by his wish to be praised than by his wish to be helpful. Certainly St. Leon commends philanthropy quite often, but in his commendations we usually see a disquieting self-interest. Having just received the secrets from the beggar, St. Leon, sounding like Gulliver among the Struldbruggs, is ecstatic with expectations of the good a philanthropist can do:

> He can assign to every individual in a nation the task he pleases, can improve agriculture, and establish manufactures, can found schools, and hospitals, and infirmaries, and universities. He can study the genius of every man, and enable every man to pursue the bent of his mind. Poets and philosophers will be fostered, the sublimest flights of genius be produced, and the most admirable discoveries effected, under his auspicious patronage. (p. 162)

These are benevolent thoughts for sure, but St. Leon's dictatorial wish to assign tasks to individuals and his words shortly after his remarks above show that he is even more concerned with glorying in his own goodness and receiving the praise, adulation, and subservience owed to a superior being: "The whole

world are his servants, and he, if his temper be whole and upright, will be the servant of the whole world....He has as few temptations to obliquity as omnipotence itself. Weakness and want are the parents of vice. But he possesses everything; he cannot better his situation; no man can come into rivalship or competition with him" (p. 163). In short, St. Leon is more concerned with being served than with serving; he is more proud than benevolent. He states that weakness and want lead to vice, but he fails to realize that so do weakness and riches. "Weakness" is the key word, not "want."

St. Leon would benefit mankind not by being rich or poor, but by being morally strong; and he would be morally strong by following Damville's advice to "Live in the midst of [his] family." Caring first for one's family would have a salutary effect on one's character, according to Damville, for familial love leads to societal love; and loving one's family and one's society prevents one from thinking primarily of oneself. But despite his protestations to the contrary, St. Leon almost invariably thinks first of himself. He clearly does not believe that "virtue is its own reward." St. Leon's professions of philanthropy appear to be merely a soothing psychological balm for his extreme desire for riches and recognition. Indeed, as can

be seen earlier in the novel, he is more afraid of being poor and unknown than he is concerned with being benevolent: "The poor man is denied every advantage of education, and wears out his life in labour and ignorance. From offices of trust, from opportunities of distinction, he is ignominously thrust aside; and though he should sacrifice his life for the public cause, he dies unhonoured and unknown" (p. 138).

All of St. Leon's ostensibly philanthropical actions must be seen in the light of his desire for recognition. When he determines to return to France in order to help supply the king's treasury and thus contribute to the general well-being of his countrymen, he is actually more concerned with appearing wealthy and receiving their thanks--as well as with securing a position for his son and noble husbands for his daughters. When he goes to Hungary in order "to pour the entire stream of [his] riches, like a mighty river, to fertilise these wasted plains" (p. 369), his duality of motivation is still present. Yes, he sincerely wishes to help the "fainting inhabitants," but he wishes even more to be lauded for his generosity. His weakness, his excessive concern with wealth and station, constantly occasions suffering for himself and others.

St. Leon's aristocratic yearnings thus effectively

destroy his family life and frustrate his philanthropical tendencies. Since there is more praise to be gleaned from the masses than from the members of his own family, St. Leon is more concerned with making a show for the former than with providing happiness for the latter, and as a consequence sacrifices the welfare of his family to that of his society. He ultimately appears to come to a more enlightened understanding of human nature when he comments on the respective places of general and personal affections:

> Philanthropy is a godlike virtue, and can never be too loudly commended, or too ardently enjoined; but natural affection winds itself in so many folds about the heart, and is the parent of so complicated, so various and exquisite emotions, that he who should attempt to divest himself of it, will find that he is divesting himself of all that is most to be coveted in existence. (p. 433)

But we see that he is not merely recognizing the proper limits of general philanthropy; he is actually rejecting it: "My latest trials in attempting to be the benefactor of nations and mankind, not only had been themselves abortive, but contained in them shrewd indications that no similar plan could ever succeed" (p.434). In fact, St. Leon makes no more attempts at general philanthropy. But his new method of behaving, in particular his attempts to benefit Charles, meets with not much more success than his

attempts at general philanthropy. Charles does not need or want a rich benefactor, or even a helpful brother (which St. Leon now appears to be)--instead, he would want St. Leon to be a father and an honest man. In essence, St. Leon can be neither a father nor an honest man, and herein lies his enduring unhappiness. Nevertheless, St. Leon succeeds, circuitously, in enriching the poor Pandora, thus removing the last obstacle to her marrying Charles. In the end, St. Leon is not sufficiently successful at personal benevolence that he can be a true father to Charles.

Despite the many hardships suffered by St. Leon and his family, the novel ends on an optimistic note with the marriage of Charles and Pandora, revealing the faith in mankind and their respective worlds of both St. Leon and Godwin. Godwin's desire is to instill a similar faith in the reader, regardless of the hardships the reader may personally endure. But although this and several other ideas are Godwin's main concern, the philosophical and psychological delving that is so prominent in Caleb Williams is for the most part subdued in St. Leon. Instead, the reader encounters a novel that he enjoys more for its adventure and sentiment than for its ideas.

Chapter IV

Fleetwood; Or, The New Man of Feeling

William Godwin's Fleetwood; Or, The New Man of Feeling (1805) may readily be classed as a sentimental novel, as its subtitle suggests, which obviously owes a debt to Henry Mackenzie's The Man of Feeling. George Woodcock believes that "Godwin's imaginative powers show a marked weakening" in Fleetwood; but he recognizes that "old themes reappear with no sign that Godwin's passion for social justice has diminished."[1] Its main theme is the importance of man's emotions as a socializing influence. In one sense, Fleetwood may be seen as a sequel to St. Leon, for both stress the emotional side rather than the rational side of man--apparently in contrast to Godwin's position in Political Justice. But whereas in St. Leon the reader also finds other elements such as adventure and marvelous occurrences, Fleetwood is entirely a novel of sentiment--or lack of it, ironically, since its hero is not, as we would expect, a man of feeling, but instead a self-confessed misanthrope who shuns deep emotions for the first forty-five

1 Woodcock, "Things As They Might Be....," p. 692.

years of his life. When he finally does open himself to sentiments, he is unable to handle them effectively, with almost disastrous results. Godwin's aim in the novel is to demonstrate that man reaches his highest level when he admits sentiment into his life and joins himself to his society. As with St. Leon, it is quite clear that Fleetwood was written by the post-Wollstonecraft William Godwin.

Although at first glance Fleetwood may appear to be a direct contradiction of Political Justice, when examined in more depth the two are found to be compatible. It is true that some positions have been modified, but for the most part Godwin's philosophy is basically the same in both works. For example, although Fleetwood stresses the importance of emotions, as opposed to Political Justice which places them in a secondary position to the intellect, both works emphasize, as does St. Leon, the necessity of man's being part of his society, contributing to its happiness and enjoying its approval. Godwin's philosophy is fundamentally a rational one; but we should not make the mistake of accusing him (as his contemporaries and so many of his critics have done) of denying the emotional side of the human being. In reality, what he favors in Political Justice is man's intellect controlling his emotions when the

two are in conflict. He recognizes that man has emotions and thinks it good that he does. Like Pope and many others before him, he criticizes unbridled emotions, not reasonable ones. Both St. Leon and Fleetwood essentially are attempts to clarify and tone down Godwin's ideas of the relationship between the intellectual and emotional sides of man as seen in Political Justice. Whereas the intellectual side is emphasized in the philosophical work, the emotional side is emphasized in the novels. His choice of genre for presenting both positions appears to be appropriate.

Early in life, Casimir Fleetwood, an only child, learns to love solitude and shun the company of others. When he is sent to Oxford, he is reluctant to mix socially but soon joins with some other students. However, his group has a loose rather than moral lifestyle. When he goes to Paris after graduation from Oxford, he continues his libertine ways and has a few love affairs, the second of which, he tells us, turns him into a confirmed misanthrope. After his father's death, Fleetwood returns to England, where with the help of the moral and benevolent Ruffigny he improves both emotionally and morally. But as he grows older, his misanthropic melancholy gradually reappears.

At the age of forty-five, Fleetwood courts and marries Mary, the youngest daughter of the philanthropic Macneil. She at first has a positive effect on him, but his ingrained love of solitude and its resultant selfishness do not allow him to accommodate himself to her needs and habits. Fleetwood becomes increasingly suspicious and jealous of his wife, and at the goading of his Iago-like nephew, Gifford, he divorces Mary, convinced that she is having an affair with his other nephew, a typically Godwinian virtuous individual, Kenrick, and has their child declared illegitimate. After almost being murdered by Gifford for his estate, Fleetwood is slowly convinced by Kenrick and Mr. Scarborough, a hardhearted individual who has been reformed by Kenrick's natural goodness, that Mary has never had an affair. Finally, in one of Godwin's few happy endings, Mary forgives Fleetwood at the urging of Kenrick and Scarborough, and the two are reconciled.

As we have seen in his other novels, one of Godwin's favorite techniques is to isolate a character or several characters in order to present philosophical comment. Early in the novel we see Fleetwood separate himself from his fellow man, admitting that he was a spoiled child who could not abide contradiction:

> The jarring passions of men, their loud contentions, their gross pursuits, their crafty delusions, their boisterous mirth, were objects which, even in idea, my mind shrunk from with horror. I was a spoiled child. I had been little used to contradiction, and felt like a tender flower of the garden, which the blast of the east wind nips, and impresses with the tokens of a sure decay. 2

In Godwinian thought a spoiled childhood is a sure sign of later difficulties, as it was with Rinaldo, Roderic, and Tyrrel. We also discern a negative aspect of young Fleetwood's character in his not being "used to contradiction," since Godwin believes that criticism is helpful as a corrective and that one should readily accept it. This idea closely coincides with Godwin's discussion of sincerity in Political Justice.

Stressing his isolation in (and love of) nature, and informing us that his only true companion when young was a pet dog, Fleetwood presents himself as a daydreaming lover of solitude with a "propensity to despotism" which "determined the color of my riper years" (I, 7). Being shut off from his fellow man in his early years seriously affects Fleetwood, for his isolation prevents him from becoming properly socialized through a constant interaction with a variety of human beings.

2 William Godwin, Fleetwood; Or, The New Man of Feeling (New York: I. Riley, 1805), I, 3.

Although he loves his father and believes that this love is reciprocated, Fleetwood mentions on more than one occasion that his father was not his companion. In fact, at all times the youth enjoys isolating himself from his society. He does find pleasure in performing benevolent acts, but primarily because they put him in a superior position. His propensity towards solitude and despotism is inculcated early in life and affects his entire existence, most dramatically his tyrannical treatment of his wife.

The university is presented as a "seminary of vice" which turns a basically virtuous (albeit anti-social) youth into a libertine: "The day on which I quitted the university was an important era in my life, and might have been expected to redeem me from the vices which I had there contracted. The necessities...which had rendered me dissolute, were now removed" (I, 66-67). Once again we see Godwin emphasize the important role that environment plays in our lives. Because Fleetwood falls in with rather unsavory characters, he is adversely affected by their immoral behavior. We learn from our companions. But what is more important is that we learn better to judge others if we are exposed to a wider range of human beings. If Fleetwood had not lived in virtual solitude

through most of his life, he probably would have learned to judge better the character of others. As it is, he cannot be expected to be too perspicacious in choosing his college friends, for effectively they are the only friends he has ever known. One needs a standard to judge by, but Fleetwood has acquired none. To live in a society is one of man's great needs; to live in a moral and just society is one of man's hopes and, more important, one of his rights.

The environment is more influential as it is less varied. For all practical purposes, upon leaving college Fleetwood has been taught on a societal level by only one experience--that of his years at Oxford. It necessarily follows, in line with Godwin's belief in the theory of necessity, that the young man will continue to act immorally upon leaving college until he is taught or shown otherwise. Sent by his father on the "Grand Tour," he soon finds himself leading a thoroughly dissipated life, observing (with hindsight) that "my experience at the university had killed the purity and delicacy of my moral discrimination" (I, 79). His mind was contaminated by his experiences (environment) at Oxford, so now he is not appalled by the debauchery and immorality that he encounters in the court of Louis XV. In fact, he too is soon having intrigues with aristo-

cratic but loose ladies.

Fleetwood leads an immoral life because his actions as a young man have been dictated by his immoral society. This fits in nicely with Godwin's idea in Political Justice that our voluntary actions originate in our opinions, which are formed by our experiences. If we have learned only one particular mode of behavior, we will necessarily act according to that mode. Choice, or free will, can only come into play when we have available to us more than one option, which would be based on more than one set of experiences. Only then will we be able to judge what is right and what is wrong. Of course, considering Godwin's belief in the ultimate triumph of truth, man will choose right over wrong when both are clearly seen: "truth, when adequately communicated, is, so far as relates to the conviction of the understanding, irresistible" (PJ, I, 91). Fleetwood's immoral behavior at the university and in Europe is necessitated by the knowledge he gained from his immoral associates. A similar necessitarian view can also be seen in Political Justice. Godwin is conveniently able to demonstrate his theory of necessity in this novel by confronting Fleetwood with a series of impressions and then predicting his conduct. In fact, a major fault of

Fleetwood, his inability to trust women, is exposed by having him experience three unhappy (and immoral) love affairs. One result of this distrust is the almost calamitous breakup of his marriage much later in the novel.

Fleetwood's unhappy experiences at Oxford and in France, along with his natural inclination to isolation, render him a misanthrope, even though he is able to recognize the virtue of men such as his ancestors and the man who will prove to be one of his chief mentors, Ruffigny. Unlike Bethlem Gabor in St. Leon, however, he does not revel in his misanthropy, recognizing it as a personal fault: "Perhaps this is the most incorrigible species of misanthropy, which, as Swift expresses it, loves John and Matthew and Alexander, but hates mankind" (I, 276). It is not until he comes into intimate contact with benevolent philanthropists such as Ruffigny and Macneil, another of his mentors, that misanthropy's hold on him is somewhat loosened. Macneil tells Fleetwood that there is good in all of us--we simply must see it--and expounds on his own philanthropy:

> I feel my heart swell within me, when I recollect that I belong to a species, almost every individual of which is endowed with angelic virtues. I am a philanthropist in the plain sense of the word. Wherever I see a man, I see something to love,--not with a love of compassion, but a love of approbation. (II, 31)

Macneil is clearly a spokesman for Godwin here, his beliefs coinciding with his author's faith in man's "angelic virtues" (compare Godwin's theory of perfectibility) and position that our fellow man's approbation is one of the highest goods we can enjoy.

The difference between the misanthropy of Fleetwood and the philanthropy of Ruffigny and Macneil provides Godwin the opportunity to stress further the importance of the feelings. He is a man of reason; they are men of feeling. Gradually through the novel their philanthropy is inexorably forced on Fleetwood, who learns by their histories and by their examples. Ruffigny's story of his childhood, for example, basically instructs Fleetwood how to feel rather than think. At the same time it enables Godwin to comment (Dickens-like) on the inequities suffered by children, with which a man of feeling will surely agree. In fact, Burton Pollin believes that we find in Fleetwood "the first treatment in fiction of the sufferings of child laborers...another of Godwin's extraordinary innovations."[3]

Orphaned at an early age, Ruffigny is taken advantage of by an uncle who usurps his inheritance and sends him off to live in another town with a manufacturer of silk. The business-

3 Pollin, Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin, p. 179.

man lamely praises the practice of employing children as young as four years old to work in his mills, but Ruffigny (and Godwin) vehemently disagree with him. In Political Justice the author states that human beings, children in particular, must have the time and opportunity to cultivate knowledge. Taking the same position as that found in Godwin's treatise, Ruffigny decries the "slavery, body and soul" that a factory imposes on children: "You will not suppose there was any thing very cheerful or exhilarating in the paradise we had entered. The idea of a mill is the antipathy of this. One perpetual, dull, flagging sound pervaded the whole. The walls were bare; the inhabitants were poor" (I, 162-63). He goes on to describe at some length the dreary, hopeless conditions of the mill. Godwin believes that leisure is needed in order to educate and improve one's mind; he believes that education is a natural right of all human beings, not only rich ones. We cannot learn to improve ourselves and our society unless we are free a large part of the day to cultivate the understanding. As Ruffigny observes, "Liberty is the school of understanding....Every boy learns more in his hours of play than in his hours of labour" (I, 166).

Besides retarding children intellectually, their labor damages them physically because of the unhealthy atmosphere they must work in. Ruffigny observes that the children of

the factory were all sallow, underdeveloped and sickly. Godwin is condemning the then emerging industrial revolution, which deprived children of their right to play, to be carefree, and to be happy. His indictment is all the more telling when he observes that in a more natural state of society children are healthy and vivacious: "This is the case in no state of society but in manufacturing towns. The children of gipsies and savages have ruddy cheeks and a sturdy form, can run like lapwings, and climb trees with the squirrel" (I, 168).

Any man of feeling, Godwin hopes, will condemn the stultifying effects, on body and mind and emotions, that early and constant labor has on children. But not only manufacturers take advantage of children; they are at the mercy of adults, who ought to treat them benevolently. Often they are treated callously, however, and even institutional law (a favorite target of Godwin's in Political Justice) takes advantage of rather than protects them. We see this when Ruffigny, only eight years old, is imprisoned by a magistrate for not accounting for money which is rightfully his. Law takes no pity on the youth, locking him in a jail with experienced thieves. One Fagin-like thief volunteers to teach Ruffigny the "tricks of the trade," and even though rebuffed is eventually successful

in stealing all of the boy's money.

The heartlessness of law is further depicted by Ruffigny's being turned away at the King's court, where he naively (but then he is only a child) attempts to see the King in order to get assistance. In his being denied access to his monarch, we again encounter one of Godwin's favorite criticisms of government in general and monarchy in particular--the fact that it is too separated from the governed. Much older and wiser when he relates his experiences to Fleetwood, Ruffigny, despite his philanthropic outlook, bitterly comments on the practically insurmountable barriers that are established between a prince and his subjects: "I understood very imperfectly the distinctions of rank in artificial society. I was wholly ignorant of the forms and fences which are set up to separate one man from the rest of his brethren" (I, 219-20). He tries to see the King yet another time but is locked up. In fact, he receives only frustration rather than assistance from the government. Instead, it is a benevolent, loving individual, Fleetwood's grandfather, who finally helps the disconsolate and hungry youth, which demonstrates the idea in Political Justice that we must put our faith in the benevolence of individuals rather than of governments.

Yet another of the many benevolent gentlemen that are strewn throughout Godwin's fiction, Fleetwood's grandfather treats children the way they ought to be treated. He assists Ruffigny because the child is entitled to assistance, not merely as a child but as a human being:

> This is the great distribution of human society; every one who stands in need of assistance appertains to some one individual, upon whom he has a stronger claim than upon any other of his fellow-creatures. My son belongs to me, because I was the occasion of his coming into existence; you belong to me, because you were hungry and I fed you, because you wanted education and a protector and have found them in me. (I, 239)

Here we see not only a man who is kind to a particular child, but a man who espouses and lives by Godwin's theory of rights and duties. One has a right to that which another person possesses if one needs it more than the other person does. Conversely, one has a duty to give to another that which one has but the other needs more.

Perhaps Godwin believed that he had written a heart-rending episode--one that men of feeling would naturally respond to and silently shed a few tears over in the process. If so, he overestimated his talent for writing sentimental fiction. It is hard to believe that any reader, much less

one in the twentieth century, would react emotionally to this maudlin, drawn-out section of the novel. One reads it with the same cool dispatch that must have characterized the actions of young Ruffigny's persecutors.

Godwin's primary aim in giving the histories of Fleetwood and Ruffigny is to show the reader that Fleetwood is a man who is intellectually sophisticated but emotionally naive. Fleetwood's relationship with Mary, his wife, forms the crux of the novel; and Godwin aims to show by it how an individual who is untrained emotionally, or who denies his emotions, can seriously harm his own happiness as well as the happiness of others. Like St. Leon, Fleetwood is to a great degree concerned with the institution of marriage, in particular the relationship of husband and wife, so much so that Burton Pollin believes that "the neglect of feeling in his [Godwin's] former works of the 1790's is redressed in the entire tendency of this novel in praise of marriage and fidelity."[4]

Fleetwood's early experiences at the university and in Europe not only turn him into a misanthrope but also make him wary of marriage. He realizes that his "affairs of the heart" were licentious and therefore criminal. Being a moral person, despite his misanthropic bent, Fleetwood also realizes that he has never known true love:

4 Pollin, p. 45.

> I had not loved innocence; I had not loved the chaste simplicity of the female character.... Unfortunately my initiation had been in the polluted tracts of adulterous commerce....What true sympathy and affection can arise between persons of opposite sexes, when the basis upon which their intimacy is founded, is crime? (I, 108-09)

Here we see again Godwin's attraction to truth and innocence, an attraction that is prominently displayed in earlier novels such as Italian Letters, Imogen, and St. Leon, as well as in Political Justice.

Fleetwood's immoral behavior when young, a direct result of his environment, has determined his approach to marriage, both intellectually and emotionally. At the age of forty-five he is still unmarried, having little faith in the morality of women and even less in their intellectuality. His misogyny is obvious when he states: "I cannot be blind enough to credit what some have maintained, probably more from the love of paradox than any other cause, that there is any parity between the sexes. Till the softer sex has produced a Bacon, a Newton, a Homer, or a Shakespeare, I never will believe it" (II, 37). Since this comes from the mouth of a mistaken character, we can safely assume that Godwin's position is the opposite.

Political Justice's great trust in the power of education[5]

5 Joann Cobb, in "Godwin's Novels and Political Justice," believes that Fleetwood is essentially an evaluation of various forms of education.

is reflected in Fleetwood by Mr. Macneil's instructions to the misogynist hero about the bliss of being a husband, a father, and a friend. Fleetwood slowly but inexorably falls in love with Macneil's daughter Mary (yet another idealization of Mary Wollstonecraft), primarily because of her personal qualities but also as a result of her father's frequent recommendations of marriage:

> Every man has in him the seeds of a good husband, a good father, and a sincere friend. (II, 29)
>
> Marry, Fleetwood! If you live, marry! You know nothing of happiness, if you do not! (II, 42)
>
> Believe me, too much independence is not good for man. It conduces neither to his virtue, nor his happiness. The discipline which arises out of the domestic charities, has an admirable tendency to make man, individually considered, what man ought to be. (II, 49)

These statements commend marriage in particular and the need for society in general.

In attempting to convince Fleetwood of the merits of marriage, Macneil must first whittle away at Fleetwood's misanthropy. He tells Fleetwood that "There is a principle in the heart of man, which demands the society of his like. He that has no society, is in a state but one degree removed from insanity" (II, 34). Clearly, this is the same idea about

the need for society that is found in Political Justice.

Godwin's position on marriage in his philosophical work, however, is quite different from Macneil's. In Political Justice Godwin stresses the importance of society, but he goes on to distinguish between fellowship and dependence. The individual, he believes, will lose his independence if he allows himself to be too much influenced by another human being. Marriage does just that: "The evils attendant on this practice [cohabitation], are obvious. In order to [sic] the human understanding's being successfully cultivated, it is necessary, that the intellectual operations of men should be independent of each other. We should avoid such practices as are calculated to melt our opinions into a common mould" (II, 506). Godwin is obviously considering cohabitation in a wider sense than just marriage, but it is not long before he focuses on marriage itself. His words are explicit, emphatic, and without reservation: "marriage, as now understood, is a monopoly, and the worst of monopolies....The abolition of the present system of marriage, appears to involve no evils" (II, 507-08). He does not spend much time discussing this institution, but what time he does spend clearly shows a position opposite to the one he expresses, through Macneil, in Fleetwood--in fact,

in all his novels from St. Leon to his last, Deloraine. What is especially interesting about Godwin's presentation of marriage in this novel, I think, is that Mary bridges the gap, so to speak, between the positions of his treatise and his novels when she makes it clear to Fleetwood that she will not be merely an appendage of him. She insists on retaining her individuality: "Mistake me not, my dear Fleetwood. I am not idle and thoughtless enough, to promise to sink my being and individuality in yours" (II, 87). This statement, worthy of more liberated later nineteenth-century heroines, is an implicit indication that Godwin respected the individuality of women as much as that of men. In fact, Godwin emphatically condemns Fleetwood's intolerance for Mary's individuality when he has Fleetwood childishly resent her innocent request for "his" room and her desire to examine a rare plant while he is reading aloud. "The discipline which arises out of the domestic charities" which Macneil spoke of is clearly missing in Fleetwood.

Much of the remainder of the novel is a rather melodramatic presentation of various problems of Fleetwood's marriage and an intrusive sub-plot involving his two nephews--one, Kenrick, good and the other, Gifford, bad. Basically, however, the ideas

behind these interwoven plots are merely development of Godwin's thesis that denying one's emotional side will seriously harm both one's personal happiness and the happiness of one's acquaintances. Examining them, I believe, will not add significantly to what has already been discussed.

As with all of his novels, in Fleetwood Godwin wishes to convey his ideas by making them more interesting and enjoyable through the use of fiction. In this particular novel he focuses primarily on emotions, around which he develops four main ideas: 1) our environment determines our behavior; 2) the emotional side of man is extremely important; 3) human beings need leisure in order to cultivate their intellect as well as their emotions; and 4) marriage is desirable, but it should not restrict one's individuality. It is to Godwin's credit that he is able to accomplish what he intends--to instruct while pleasing--for Fleetwood is a readable novel that definitely presents its author's philosophy.

Chapter V

Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England

In 1817, at the age of sixty-one and after a lapse of twelve years, William Godwin wrote his seventh novel, Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England. But although twelve years is a long interval between novels, we see several ideas in Mandeville that appear in his earlier novels and in Political Justice. The major theme of this work is that of misanthropy, which we have encountered earlier in St. Leon and Fleetwood. Indeed, despair is so pervasive in Mandeville that George Woodcock calls it "a novel of extraordinary pessimism, permeated from beginning to end with a misanthropic gloom whose consistency of texture is alone impressive."[1] Godwin again makes it clear that the misanthropist is what he is because of his experiences: how history, parental treatment, physical environment, and education form the human being. Of course, as with all of his novels, there are statements scattered throughout on some of Godwin's pet subjects: class distinction, war, lawyers, flattery, sincerity, and the Understanding.

1 Woodcock, "Things As They Might Be....," p. 694.

Starting with Caleb Williams, misanthropy appears to be one of the favorite topics of Godwin's novels, being somewhat covered there and in St. Leon, more so in Fleetwood, and extensively in Mandeville. The misanthropic man is essentially the opposite of the philanthropic, or benevolent, man that Godwin places at the highest level on his "scale of happiness" in Political Justice. According to Godwin, the man of benevolence is what man ought to be. If we are benevolent, we benefit society as a whole and ourselves as well. Through this improvement we can perfect our species--hence the theory of perfectibility. Godwin believes that we find our greatest pleasure in acting benevolently; since it is the aim of man "to avoid pain and acquire pleasure," to act otherwise is the sign of a disordered intellect. Thus it is the very nature of misanthropy to be aberrant. When Mandeville says, therefore, that he is "of a gloomy and saturnine cast," and "no friend to light laughter and merriment,"[2] we should understand this to mean that he is of no real value to society and harmful to himself. He knows little happiness, mostly unhappiness; he hardly experiences pleasure, mostly pain.

One of Godwin's major concerns is to depict the formation

2 William Godwin, Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England (New York: W.B. Gilley and C. Wiley, 1818), I, 66.

of a personality. In doing so, he concentrates on the title character, an individual of aristocratic birth who by the end of the novel is no older than a young adult. Ever the environmentalist, Godwin shows how one's personality is the result of one's experiences. Although not a historical novel, Mandeville is set during Cromwell's time and, until the main character is three, during an Irish rebellion against English rule. The Irish rebellion enables Godwin to make short statements on a variety of subjects (such as the suppression of one people by another, intemperate revenge, religious conflict); but more important it provides a nascent reason for Mandeville's becoming what he is--a melancholy misanthrope.

Mandeville tells us that he was born in Ireland in 1638, the son of a military man stationed there. In 1641, the rebellion, led by the bloodthirsty and deceitful O'Neile, results in an Irish massacre of the English, including Mandeville's parents. His memory of this experience causes Mandeville to hate Catholics as a whole, a passion which is harmful enough in itself but especially in Mandeville's case since it will eventually increase his hatred of a virtuous character, Clifford, who falls in love with his sister. But more important, the death of his parents deprives the child

of the love and guidance that parents give. Instead, he is raised by Hilkiah Bradford, a stern religious zealot hardly given to expressions of love. Like Fleetwood before him (who did have a father, but one who was essentially uncommunicative), Mandeville does not receive the affection of parents, and as a result his childhood is tainted and he becomes a misanthrope. As Joann Cobb astutely observes, Mandeville's "mature madness is a direct result of his abnormal childhood, and Godwin presents in this novel a case-study of the effects upon the human mind of bigotry and prejudice, horror and cruelty."[3]

Although Godwin does not stress the importance of parental love in Political Justice as he does in several of his novels (a definite change in his views), he does state that the individual is formed by the impressions that he receives throughout life--one's experiences form one's character: "In fine, it is impression that makes the man" (I, 40). Mandeville has personally experienced the hatred of the Irish Catholics; he in turn hates them. From three years on, he has not experienced parental love; he, consequently, does not know how to love. In fact, not until his sister teaches him how to love is he capable of it. In the meantime, he grows

3 Cobb, "Godwin's Novels and Political Justice," p. 23.

up an unloved and unloving child. Thus a historical event, the massacre of the English by the Irish, greatly influences Mandeville's life, helping to form his personality.

As a result of his parents' death, Mandeville is sent to live with his uncle, Audley Mandeville, a melancholy recluse who provides neither love nor companionship, merely room and board in a somber shell of a home; consequently, the boy is pushed deeper into misanthropy. Audley is a small, deformed man who was constantly persecuted by his father, a robust ex-sailor who despised his son's physical stature, scholarly interests, and elegant taste. Because he was despised, Audley "learned, from the inhumanity of his father, to detest the sentiments and manners of his species in general" (I, 33). Even in his choice of a wife Audley is defeated by his bullying father. He reluctantly accepts the fact that he cannot marry his poor cousin, Amelia Montfort; but "No smile from that day ever lighted his countenance.... he had a preference for looking on desolation. All within him was blank....There never perhaps was an example of a human being so completely destroyed at once" (I, 50). It is no wonder, according to Godwinian necessitarianism, that Audley winds up a melancholy recluse, a sure sign of a dis-

ordered intellect. And it is no wonder that Audley's withdrawal from society, particularly from his young nephew who will one day inherit the Mandeville estate, harms not only him but the youth as well. At every turn, Godwin confronts young Mandeville with oppressive sadness, and by doing so shows the gradual but inevitable formation of a misanthropic personality.

Because of a mistaken desire to live apart from society, Audley has chosen to live in a somber, desolate house, one which Mandeville is taken to and raised in. Here we see the physical environment determining to some extent the youth's character. Its isolation and heaviness cause him to act in a melancholy way: "The sort of intercourse in which I thus lived with my fellow beings, formed me early to a habit of reverie. I delighted to wander; but I was not delighted with objects of cheerfulness....I loved a hazy day, better than a sunshiny one....I loved to listen to the pattering of the rain, the roaring of the waves, and the pelting of the storm" (I, 55). These are hardly sentiments we usually associate with a child; thus, we are made to agree with Mandeville that as a result of his circumstances he was never truly a child.

In order more strikingly to emphasize the importance of one's physical environment, Godwin contrasts that of Henrietta, Mandeville's sister, with Audley's monastery-like estate. She lives in a beautiful cottage with Mr. and Mrs. Willis, friends of her mother who were taking care of her when her parents died in the massacre. They raise Henrietta in a pleasant, loving atmosphere, and she is exposed to polished society. Mandeville himself recognizes that if he had lived under such favorable conditions, he would have grown up more gracious and social instead of reserved, suspicious, and hostile. But the atmosphere in which he grew up was unpleasant, so the result is a gloomy human being: "But my fate was determined, and my character was fixed. The effects of living under such a master of a household as my uncle, with such a preceptor as Mr. Bradford, and in the midst of such an establishment as that of Mandeville House, will never be obliterated" (I, 96). Compare this with the scene Mandeville later describes of Beaulieu, where Henrietta lives, after he has sufficiently recovered from a sickness occasioned by a misunderstanding at school! Even though he is a self-confessed misanthrope, he extols the goodness and soothing quality of Henrietta's environment:

> She told me tales of her own daily experience, and the earthly paradise of Beaulieu....The being that passes through this tranquil scene, hears nothing of kings, and ministers, and the intrigues of a court, sits him down quietly by the margin of the rippling brook, and is never told of the factions and wars to the right and the left, in which men tear one another to pieces with a thousand barbarities. (I, 186)

Such an idyllic scene is almost the direct opposite of the sad and isolated existence that Mandeville is accustomed to. In fact, the rural life of Beaulieu with its attendant happiness has an immediate soothing effect on Mandeville, making him less severe, more sportive, and more good natured--so much so that Mrs. Willis and Lord Montagu, a friend, decide that Mandeville should be reconciled with Clifford, whom he had previously considered his deadly enemy and the cause of much of his despair. In a new spirit of love that he has acquired at Beaulieu, Mandeville agrees and greets Clifford cordially. Unfortunately, this new spirit does not last.

Although there is no definitive, systematic statement on the physical environment per se in Political Justice, primarily because descriptions of physical scenes are more appropriate to a novel than to a philosophical treatise, it would appear that Godwin's position on the importance of the environment in general is reflected accurately by his treatment of physical

environment in Mandeville. What we do see in Political Justice is Godwin's emphatic belief that man is a social being who fulfills himself best when integrally a part of his society. The difference is that in his treatise Godwin emphasizes what man ought to be; in Mandeville, on the other hand, Godwin demonstrates what man becomes as a result of either positive or adverse environmental conditions. In this novel, the rural social atmosphere of Beaulieu is clearly more conducive to emotional health than is the secluded, gothic-mansion atmosphere of Mandeville House.

The type and quality of education is another element of the environment that determines one's character. Parental guidance as discussed earlier, of course, may be seen as a form of education; but I would like to restrict education (for this novel) to precepts rather than emotions. In Mandeville, there are basically three forms of education: Mandeville is taught by a private tutor, Hilkiah Bradford; he is educated at a public school, Winchester; and he learns through discussions with his sister.

Hilkiah Bradford takes great care to initiate the young boy in the controversy between the Church of England and that of Rome. Bradford despises the Catholic Church and the Pope,

and thus impresses on Mandeville what he considers the atrocities of Catholicism. Bradford is also a stern authoritarian (something of a literary forerunner of Dickens's Gradgrind), and as a result he is disliked by Mandeville despite winning the youth's respect. Authoritarian teaching is clearly inferior to voluntary learning in Mandeville's eyes:

> An accountable and voluntary being cannot be made better, but by enlightening his understanding. Morality has nothing to do, but with actions chosen by their performer. Where there is absolute command on one side, and unconditional submission on the other, a useful result as to external circumstances may be achieved; but there cannot be a particle of good moral sense implanted by what is thus done under the bare influence of authority. (I, 72)

Godwin's essentially moral philosophy is apparent here, for although he recognizes that knowledge may be conveyed by authoritarian methods, he believes that moral sense is not. Morality must be judged, according to Godwin, solely on the basis of voluntary actions. Thus volition is essential to one's education and consequently to one's morality. Godwin clearly agrees with Mandeville's comment on authoritarian education when he observes in Political Justice that "We mistake compulsion for persuasion, and delude ourselves into the belief that despotism is the road to the heart" (I, 44). Mandeville,

sounding more like an eighteenth-century philosopher than a seventeenth-century youth, expresses virtually the same idea: "the attempt to correct the mistaken judgments of the young by violent and summary dealing, can never be the true method of fostering a generous nature" (I, 75). Although Bradford's methods have not been violent, they have been summary; the result is the ungenerous nature of his pupil, Mandeville.

Public institutions of education fare no better than authoritarian tutors in Political Justice, where Godwin affirms that public establishments teach permanence of opinion and thus inhibit the mind and perpetuate error. In accordance with this opinion, Mandeville describes Winchester School as an institution that manages, controls, and restricts its students instead of teaching them. His description of its graduates would more appropriately fit ex-inmates than ex-students: "They were prisoners, dismissed indeed, but with some links of the chain still adhering to them. Their motions had not the ease and the grace of a creature in the state of nature....They had felt the weight of the yoke upon their own necks; and they were resolved to retaliate their sufferings at the expense of the first victim they met" (I, 100). We see here that the individual is not the only one that suffers from

such public education: the society as a whole is also its victim.

The oppressive nature of Winchester makes most of the students petty, aggressive, and malicious. Some students, Mandeville included, become objects of scorn by pure whim of others, and this exacerbates the already sullen nature of the youth. In fact, because he gets into so many arguments, Mandeville becomes quite proficient at fighting but is humiliated by the fact that he, an aristocrat, must stoop to a common action like a physical fight. As a result, he learns eventually to dislike the school intensely, informing us that his "misanthropic spirit" increased daily there, so much so that he develops an unreasonable hatred for the one student that is light-spirited and benevolent, Clifford, despite the fact that Clifford never tries to fight or argue with Mandeville and despite the fact that he recognizes Clifford's virtues. Indeed, it is for Clifford's virtues that Mandeville detests him.

What, then, does Godwin consider the proper method of education? Obviously an education that is voluntary and enjoyed, one which results in a benevolent human being! Recognizing that Mandeville's disease is misanthropy, Henrietta advises him to read Shakespeare, Shaftesbury, and other writers

where benevolence may be found. Mandeville enjoys learning from her because he enjoys her company. Her teaching is accomplished through suggesting rather than through dictating. Emphasizing a philosophy of benevolence and necessity, Henrietta counsels her brother that a person must be loved and love in return; if he is hated, he will hate. Her following statement is pure Godwinian necessitarianism; but whereas the kind of language employed is appropriate for a theoretical treatise, it hardly suits a teen-aged girl. Clearly, Henrietta is stepping out of character in order to convey Godwin's philosophy:

> Consider, that man is but a machine! He is just what his nature and his circumstances have made him: he obeys the necessities which he cannot resist. If he is corrupt, it is because he has been corrupted. If he is unamiable, it is because he has been "mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spit upon." Give him a different education, place him under other circumstances... and he would be altogether a different creature. (I, 192)

Henrietta is an excellent example of Godwin's tendency to twist character in order to bring out the ideas of Political Justice. The fact that someone quite regularly steps out of character for didactic purposes most definitely detracts from Godwin's fiction, for by doing so the character appears

untrue to life. But although Godwin is writing fiction, apparently he is more concerned with proving his point than with creating character. Henrietta (and all of Godwin's characters) exists not so much to show how a seventeenth-century teen-ager acts, but rather to provide a contrast to Mandeville and to reveal why he is mistaken and how he can be improved.

Mandeville's dreary, unloving environment has made him what he is, and Henrietta's pleasant, loving environment has made her what she is. Although sister and brother, they are opposites in nature. Much as an experimental behavioral scientist might do, Godwin confronts siblings (who have inherited similar sets of genes) with contrasting environments. By doing so, he hopes to demonstrate that a human being is the result of his environmental factors. But Henrietta is not merely a demonstration, so to speak, of Godwin's theory; she also serves as teacher and guide of her older brother, an unconventional position for a younger sister in any age.

Recognizing that Mandeville has been seriously harmed by his circumstances, Henrietta sagaciously counsels him that he must stand up to life--that he must philosophically accept both the "pleasurable and painful": "we have the source of our satis-

faction or unhappiness within us, and are the masters of our own fortune" (I, 192). She tells him that man must be fearless in the face of opposition. If something annoys a person, he should put forth all his powers and remove it: "How shall I do this? By the exercise of my understanding. Wherein does my power emphatically reside? In the rational part of my nature....the moment I am the slave of passion, my powers are lost; I am turned into a beast" (I, 195). Henrietta, with powers of observation beyond her age, has precisely discerned the cause and effect relationship in Mandeville's character: he has had an unhappy, emotionally debilitating childhood, so he is now a "slave of passion." But despite her discernment and her powers of persuasion, Mandeville's emotional slavery will endure to the end of the novel, with only brief respites of happiness.

Mandeville recognizes the superiority of Henrietta's teaching because hers is a philosophy of benevolence (and, according to Godwin, of truth): "How different were the sermons of Henrietta, from the homilies of Hilkiah....Hers was a religion of love: his was a religion of hatred" (I, 195). Sadly, the time he spends learning from her is infinitely less than the time over which other environmental factors

have operated on him. The result is that although she is able to assuage his misanthropy, she is not able to cure it.

Mandeville's misanthropy is shown in a variety of ways. For example, at Winchester he prefers the company of Waller, a student whose "sullen nature would not admit of a friend" (I, 122), to that of Clifford, whose goodness is universally applauded. Even Mandeville recognizes that Clifford is superior to Waller, but he says that is exactly the reason why he befriends the latter--clearly indicating a faulty understanding. His misanthropy is also shown when he forms a bond with Lisle, a fellow misanthrope who joins Mandeville in their favorite pastime--cursing. They even go so far as to plan a club of misanthropes, but they cannot follow it through because their anti-social nature renders them unable to approve of any other members. By shutting themselves off from society, they are violating one of Godwin's major tenets: the highest state of man is a state of society. Mandeville's feeble rationalization of his behavior, ironically, further impresses the reader with the ridiculousness of his position: "Human nature is so constituted, that...man seeks the society of his like....We found a social pleasure in looking in each other's faces, and silently whispering to our own hearts, Thank God, I have a companion that

hates the world as much as I do!" (I, 159). If we substitute "loves" for "hates," this sounds like Godwin in Political Justice. Here, such a belief is yet another indication of a disordered mind. How different is Mandeville's mistaken position: "What a happiness it is to be alone!...to move as I please, and think what I please! to be in a world of my own, in the midst of a moral desert, and independent of my fellow men!" (I, 155-56) from Godwin's position in Political Justice: "The love of our neighbour, is the great ornament of a moral nature: the perception of truth, is the most solid improvement of an intellectual nature" (II, 307)! Mandeville does not perceive truth; his statement is mere sophistry. At times he does see through his false reasoning, but only when he recognizes the value of Henrietta's philosophy of benevolence: "it is my function and my task to forgive. Magnanimity is the crown of a man, is the befitting ornament of a gentleman" (I, 205). It is no accident that the same word, "ornament," used here is also found in Godwin's statement. But for the most part, both Mandeville's actions and words are those of a confirmed misanthrope. Nevertheless, the times that he deviates from his usual behavior add a complexity to his character which is appropriate to a novel.

The effects of Mandeville's misanthropy are debilitating to himself and harmful to others. His intense hatred of Clifford literally drives him insane at one point, and he awakens to find himself in a lunatic asylum. Another time we find him foaming at the mouth at the mere mention of Clifford's name. Mandeville's self-consuming hatred also enables Holloway, a scheming lawyer, to take advantage of him since the youth is more concerned with hating Clifford than with managing the affairs of his own estate. And ultimately his misanthropy is even physically deforming, for he is wounded on the face by Clifford in the abrupt ending of the novel, with the result that he loses the sight of one eye and is left with a disfiguring scar that gives him, fittingly, a "deadly grin."

Because of his misanthropy, Mandeville wishes to be separated from other men: "I might use the persons that approached me, as mere machines. I neither knew, nor desired to know, any thing about their history, their occupations, or their feelings. They were to me like a dumb waiter... they did what I required, and I was no further concerned with them" (II, 84). By using others as machines, he is harming them to a degree because he is denying their individuality as human beings. And by withdrawing from their society, he

is denying them the benefits they would receive from him as an individual if he were philanthropic (as his position would enable him to be) rather than misanthropic. In addition, as we see towards the end of the novel, his unreasoning hatred of Clifford almost succeeds in preventing the marriage of Henrietta and Clifford because she feels that she has a duty to him as a sister. Happily, saner heads prevail, and the two are finally married--but not before Mandeville drives away this sole remaining loved one, his sister, vowing to hate her and her children if she marries Clifford. On Godwin's scale of happiness, he reaches no higher than the man of wealth--and then only when he is happy, which is seldom.

Mandeville also deals, although less prominently, with class distinction. Most of the comment on this comes from Clifford, neither titled nor as rich as Mandeville, but hardly poverty-stricken. This puts him in the position which Godwin opts for--having enough leisure and means to cultivate the understanding, but not so much as to take advantage of others. There are also comments by other characters, however, such as Mandeville, Hilkiah Bradford, and Henrietta. Mandeville, for example, objects to Bradford's Christian teaching that all men are equal, feeling, pompously aristocratic at even so early

an age, that he is better than most others because he is heir to a renowned name and great fortune. This belief brings to mind Godwin's deprecation of the rich, who feel that a man's worth is measured by the antiquity of his name and "the length of his pursestrings." Mandeville objects to Bradford's egalitarian observation that: "I was a man, before I was a gentleman; it was good therefore, that I should not be wholly ignorant of the true condition of man on this sublunary stage, that I should be somewhat acquainted with his plain and genuine state, and not only with the refinements of artificial society" (I, 71). With his usual reversed way of seeing things, Mandeville sees himself as a gentleman first and a man second, partly, of course, because Bradford is an ineffective teacher, but primarily because of his own aristocratic upbringing.

In Political Justice, Godwin observes that wealth which is ostentatiously enjoyed merely for its own sake rather than benevolently employed for improving one's society is in its essence pernicious. Since wealth is a result of the labor of others, it should be used for their benefit. In a statement which might have come directly from Godwin's treatise, we see that this belief is shared by Henrietta:

> the proprietor of a large estate was merely a

> steward for the benefit of others. All wealth, when accurately examined, resolved itself into a certain quantity of human labour....The proper office of every landed proprietor was to make them [those who performed the labor] easy and to make them happy....He was therefore called upon to study for the general advantage of the whole state. He was bound to encourage among them arts, and sciences, and knowledge, and virtue and liberty, and good government. (I, 188)

This is the way Godwin would have it, but he realizes that such is not the case. The rich are pensioners rather than stewards: "Hereditary wealth is in reality a premium paid to idleness, an immense annuity expended to retain mankind in brutality and ignorance" (PJ, II, 459-60). Instead of helping the poor, the rich abuse and live off them. One of Mandeville's greatest faults is that he never helps others to improve themselves in the ways that Henrietta says a rich person should. He is far too self-centered to think of the welfare of others; instead, like a spoiled child, he constantly wants others to think of him.

In Political Justice, Godwin takes an anti-luxury (and anti-poverty) stance, viewing kings, aristocrats, and the rich in general as slaves of their wealth. Evidently, Clifford is Godwin's spokesman on this subject; for example, at one point while still a student at Winchester he comments:

> I know, some will tell me, riches are the genuine means of independence and liberty. But it is all a cheat. The rich man is the only slave. He cannot move without scores of menials to attend to him....He calls himself the master of all these, and he is the slave of all....He is not only the neighbour of misery; but he is the author of innumerable instances of it. (I, 108-09)

Clifford's comments are consistent with his character, not wealthy himself but innately superior to others around him, even though his characterization is not consistent with Godwin's rejection of natural superiority. Regardless, we see in his statement, as well as others, that Clifford believes as Godwin does that wealth is not only the source of misery for the possessor, but also for others. Clifford's eloquence on the evils of wealth is so great, indeed, that it even causes his schoolmates (except, of course, Mandeville) to disdain their own wealth and wish to be poor.

Mandeville informs us that he alone was not converted by Clifford's discourse, although even he recognizes that "wealth was pregnant with mischief" (I, 114), believing that poverty restricted man, making him unable to fulfill his potential: "I saw that poverty was environed on all sides with temptations, urging and impelling a man to sell his soul, to sacrifice his integrity: to debase the clearness

of his spirit, and to become the bond slave of a thousand vices" (I, 115). How true! Godwin would say; but Mandeville has the means to help the poverty-stricken and yet never does. His argument becomes meaningless in the face of his actions. Mandeville does not recognize that wealth is not merely evil because of the outright abusive actions of the wealthy, but also because of their lack of action in alleviating the suffering of the poor and the consequent proclivity to crime of the poor that he so readily comments on. It is one's duty to help one's fellow man; it is Mandeville's tragedy that he never does, despite having the means to do so. He is more concerned with peevishly hating the generous Clifford than with using his wealth benevolently. He demands the respect of others as his due, but he never earns it; and he remains a misanthrope.

Yet another didactic novel, Mandeville is more important for the ideas it conveys than for its characterizations or plot. But like Caleb Williams in particular, and several other novels to a lesser degree, there is a psychological delving into the main character, accomplished by Godwin's social scientific technique, which keeps it from being merely a treatise and makes it a novel. It is interesting to see the

development of Mandeville, his reasons for being what he is as well as the final product--a complex misanthropic human being. The result is a skillful (although at times stilted) interweaving of idea and story.

Chapter VI

Cloudesley: A Tale

In 1830, thirteen years after writing Mandeville and at the age of seventy-four, William Godwin wrote his penultimate novel, Cloudesley: A Tale. Like several of its predecessors, Cloudesley has historical elements and, according to Godwin in his preface, "is built upon a fact that occurred about the middle of last century."[1] He goes on to comment on the value of the historical novel, observing that, while history does not concern itself very much with the characters of individuals, "fictitious history" serves just this purpose: it is more capable of character development because the author is not limited to the characters' words but can comment more extensively on them than can the historian. In addition, he believes fictitious history to be truer than history: "however paradoxical it may seem, fictitious history is more true [than history] and to be depended upon, when it has the fortune to be executed by a masterly hand, than that which is to be drawn from state-papers, documents, and letters written by those who

1 William Godwin, Cloudesley: A Tale (New York: J.J. Harper, 1830), I, iii.

were actually engaged in the scene" (I, v). It is no wonder that he believes so when we consider his antipathy to government and its officials, the very people who would write the state papers and documents.

This "tale" is narrated by William Meadows, who goes to Russia when young, becomes a clerk, but is forced to flee Russia and return to England because of his friendship for Alexis, who is out of favor with Biren, the right-hand man of the Empress. Returning to England after sixteen years, Meadows stays with his sister, the wife of a tenant farmer of Lord Danvers. Danvers tells Meadows that he has gained his title and fortune through fraud, having arranged that his older brother's son, Julian, be brought up without realizing that he is the true heir to the Danvers' estate. Danvers' accomplice, Cloudesley, raises Julian as his own son; but when Julian reaches maturity, Cloudesley has a change of heart and threatens to expose Danvers. After a great deal of intrigue and misfortune, including the death of Cloudesley, Julian finally learns of his birthright. Danvers reluctantly admits he is guilty of usurping the estate and dies a destroyed man.

Cloudesley is yet another of Godwin's didactic novels,

concentrating on man's duties and rights--in personal relationships, particularly concerning love, and under law. Burton Pollin asserts that Godwin's "last three novels are more concerned with individual moral reform, while the earlier include a greater stress on the reform of the institutions of society....quite in accord with the spirit of the age, and with the age of the author."[2] Perhaps Pollin is correct, for Cloudesley closely examines the interaction of love and morality.

Love includes romantic love, familial love, friendship, and, of course, disinterested benevolence. Godwin's concern with romantic love, evident since St. Leon, can be seen when he has several characters comment on it, one of the earliest being Meadows, who makes an observation on his friend Alexis' love for his fiancee: "Love is a disinterested passion, for the true lover would not fail to sacrifice his gratification, and in extreme cases his life, rather than be the cause or the witness of serious calamity inflicted on the object of his affections" (I, 33). Meadows apparently believes that self-love is not all-powerful in the human being (a belief that is shared by Godwin in Political Justice), that an individual in love will sacrifice his own desires for the

2 Pollin, Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin, p. 218.

well-being of his loved one. But in Political Justice Godwin does not restrict disinterested behavior to lovers; instead, he feels that such behavior should be expected of all individuals and should be directed to our fellow man in general. In fact, as we see in his celebrated example of Fénelon's valet and his own parent, an individual should go one step further in his disinterested behavior by not showing favoritism even for a loved one.

A modification of the philosophical doctrine of Political Justice is seen in Meadows' comment on the difference between friendship and romantic love: "I had belonged to nobody. I had pleased myself with the image of friendship; I had attached myself to Alexis. But, oh what a difference! It is only in woman, woman lovely and affectionate, that the dawn and enthusiasm of opening life finds itself satisfied. I am no longer solitary" (I, 36). In Political Justice, in contrast, romantic love is thought so little of that it is hardly mentioned. Friendship is placed in the foreground, regardless of sex. In fact, romantic love is thought to be rife with deception and "full of delusion." What is more, Godwin adds, it is friendship that actually adds worth to one aspect and one end of romantic love, sexual intercourse, because it will

"refine its grossness, and increase its delight" (II, 507-09). Instead of being a "disinterested passion," as Meadows calls it, romantic love is in reality a limiting emotion since it often distorts the rational thought of the lover, thereby deceiving him, and leads him to favor the person he loves (which is self-interest in Godwinian thought) at the expense of others. Thus romantic love actually inhibits true benevolence.

We have already seen that the importance of romantic love is stressed first in St. Leon and is referred to, in varying degrees, in subsequent novels. Whereas Godwin had basically ignored or deprecated romantic love in Political Justice, he now praises it. Although we still see a pragmatic, somewhat cynical appreciation of it in Cloudesley when Godwin has Meadows observe that "If we are in love, we deceive ourselves; we ascribe to the favoured she the most unparalleled and superhuman excellences" (I, 59); for the most part romantic love (and marriage) is seen as having a salutary influence on the individual rather than a restricting one. For example, the central romance in the novel, that of Arthur and Irene, in no way lessens Arthur's benevolence. Moreover, their love is beneficial to Irene's health, which has been affected by her

father's death, and conducive to intellectual improvement for both since the two lovingly discuss subjects such as art and poetry, she teaching him some things and he teaching her others. The beneficial effect that love has is also seen in the case of the guilt-ridden Danvers when he observes: "It became necessary for me to love another as the instrument of my own happiness....The more I knew her, the more I loved her. All this had an extremely favourable effect on my tranquility" (I, 156). Knowing that he is guilty of what he considers a heinous crime and realizing that he is living a false life, Danvers counts on his wife's love to soothe his troubled mind. And it works, for although he becomes dejected and even ferocious at times, she is able to make him compliant and tender. Even though love may not solve all problems, in this novel (and in others) Godwin views it in a positive rather than a negative light.

An important familial relationship in Cloudesley is that of Julian, Arthur's son, and the couple he believes are his parents, Cloudesley and his wife, Eudocia. Although he has had a hand in Danvers' crime against Julian, Cloudesley learns to love the boy as a father would. Julian in turn, because of being loved, grows up to be a wonderful, loving

human being. Familial affection is here shown to have extremely beneficial effects on the human being both morally and emotionally. Even the misanthropic Cloudesley, who had earlier been softened by Arthur's kind treatment, becomes a benevolent person because of loving and being loved in his duties of husband and father. The behavior of this family has been determined and tempered, so to speak, by mutual love.

Danvers sees his parents' lack of a demonstrated affection for him and a clear preference for his older brother, Arthur, as determining factors in the formation of his character and his future actions, in particular his usurpation of the estate. He is constantly made aware of the fact, even by the servants, that he will grow up to be a poor younger son, at the mercy of his brother, while Arthur will inherit everything, illustrating the evil of primogeniture (characteristic of aristocracy) which Godwin had condemned earlier in <u>Political Justice</u>. What he views as prejudiced behavior on his parents' part is considered by him to have been the major reason for his immoral behavior, so much so that he insists that when he has children he will love them equally, remembering his own parents' shortcomings, and indeed he does. His family lives

a harmonious and loving life, despite the premature deaths of all the children; in this sense Danvers is successful in spite of his crime. In addition, notwithstanding the favored treatment that his brother had received when the two were young, Danvers learns to love his brother and is loved in turn. Danvers' fault, therefore, does not lie in his loving too much, but rather in his not being loved enough by his parents. He is at his best, in fact, when he realizes that he is loved by his brother, his wife, and his children. Godwin seems to be saying that by learning love in our family we can extend it to our general life. Unfortunately, Danvers is not able to do this successfully, for he has been too adversely affected by the lack of demonstrated parental love in his childhood; and as a result he neglects his duties to Arthur's son and denies him his rights.

Great importance is attached to friendship in Political Justice, but there is only a cursory treatment of it in Cloudesley. Julian has friends such as Francesco and Federico, Meadows has a friend in Alexis, and Cloudesley has one in Borromeo; but their friendships serve primarily as a vehicle for furthering the plot and for commenting on general benevolence, rather than for making didactic comments on friendship in particular. For example, when Julian saves his former

tutor, Giuseppe, before he does his friend, Francesco, we are presented a statement on benevolence based on reason as opposed to friendship based on emotion. It is true that Julian is a loving son and a worthy friend, but it is more important that he is a good human being--a man of benevolence as was his real father.

One of the ways, in fact the major way, we can judge Godwin's characters is by their benevolence. From the title character, a man who has moved from being generous to being misanthropic and back, we learn that the benevolent man has "a temper full of philanthropical propensities, happy itself, and disposed to make all others happy" (I, 172). Here we see that such a man benefits himself as well as others--all others. This description most nearly fits Arthur and Julian. Both men are warm, just, and willing to help others in distress. For example, Arthur's coming to the aid of Irene and her family and his kindness towards the mistreated Cloudesley are obviously the acts of a benevolent individual, one who recognizes his duties to others. In the same vein, Julian's rescue of Giuseppe clearly indicates that he, like his father, is one also. But strangely enough, most of Godwin's comments on this idea are made through two characters who combine misanthropy and

benevolence, Cloudesley and his friend, Borromeo.

As a result of environmental factors, Cloudesley has been changed from an intrinsically benevolent person into a misanthrope. Having been imprisoned when younger because of a debt owed by a fellow for whom he had generously stood as security, Cloudesley emerges from jail (through the help of Arthur) an altered man. He is no longer good-natured, kind, and tender: "As, before, he had loved all men, so it seemed now that it was sufficient to present any thing in human shape, to excite his antipathy" (I, 100). Prison has turned a philanthrope into a misanthrope. Using this incident to advantage, Godwin now presents a clearer idea of what benevolence is. It does not merely entail well-meaning natural emotions; reason and understanding improved by education, as we are told in Political Justice, are integral elements in the character of a man of benevolence, because man is a harmonious combination of both the intellect and the emotions. Cloudesley demonstrates this idea:

> Recollecting the excellent qualities with which he had been originally endowed, we may safely pronounce that, if his mind had been unfolded in the climate of even a slight degree of literature, the treachery of a friend, or even a six months' initiation in the mysteries of a jail,

> could not in so great a degree have changed his principles, and made him consider the species whom he had hitherto regarded as his brothers, as worthy only of his hatred, and engaged in a general conspiracy against him. (I, 100)

Benevolence is an active virtue: one must strive to attain it by learning what it is and acting accordingly. Cloudesley at first is too passive to be truly benevolent. It is true that he reacts to Arthur's kindness with love, loyalty, and admiration; but a short time before he had reacted to adverse treatment with hatred and contempt, and a short time later he will betray Arthur's trust because of self-interest. A man of benevolence would philosophically accept misfortune and then try to change those responsible by educating them rather than hating them. Moreover, the virtuous man must act intentionally, which entails knowledge, as we see in Political Justice: "I would define virtue to be any action or actions of an intelligent being, proceeding from kind and benevolent intention, and having a tendency to contribute to general happiness" (I, 149).

We can view Cloudesley at this stage as a potentially virtuous individual; but his lack of education, his lack of "principles" inculcated by "even a slight degree of literature," prevents him from being one in actuality. Cloudesley has not

had the time to develop his intellect, one reason why despite loving Arthur he agrees to join Danvers in a plot to disinherit Julian. But with the leisure that is afforded him by his annuity of five hundred pounds from Danvers, he is able to learn principles of justice and benevolence that, because of a lack of opportunity, he was not able to learn earlier in life. The subsequent improvement of his understanding, hand in hand with the positive emotions elicited by Arthur's memory and Julian's presence, turns him into an actively benevolent person who attempts to right the wrong which he was party to by exposing Danvers. As a result, this former misanthrope is praised for his virtuous life (since his one base act) by both Meadows and Julian, two characters whose judgment can be relied on. From a man who betrays the son of his own benefactor, Cloudesley becomes one who willingly sacrifices his own life for love.

Borromeo, an Italian who had been a slave for twenty years, is another misanthrope who learns the lessons of benevolence. Thoroughly hardened by his many years of persecution, "he viewed his fellow mortals with ineffable contempt" (II, 73). He is moral in a sense because of his absolute love of justice, but admirable emotions do not complement his understanding.

Borromeo reminds us somewhat of Cloudesley--"They agreed in their creed of misanthropy" (II, 75)--but his actions are guided purely by cold reason and Cloudesley's by emotions. If these two attributes were combined, or rather if they were to modify each other, we would have a benevolent individual. Borromeo's unemotional and somber behavior, indeed, prevents his even being able to express sympathy for Julian when the youth learns of Cloudesley's death: "He wished to express sympathy; but he wanted the organ. He could not find words to convey the feelings of his mind" (II, 134). But by the end of the novel, the virtues of Julian have softened even the heart of stone of this rugged Italian, and in a paean to benevolence he tearfully embraces Julian and thanks him for a new life and a new way of seeing things:

> My darling child...this is a memorable day to me; the first day of my life, of a new and better life, The scales are fallen from my eyes; God has "taken from me the heart of stone, and given me a heart of flesh...." The true key of the universe is love....The one thing that most exalts and illustrates man is disinterested affection. We are never so truly what we are capable of being, as when we are ready to sacrifice ourselves for others, and immolate our self-love on the altar of beneficence. (II, 205-6)

Political Justice stresses the role of the understanding

in forming a generous character. Cloudesley (as well as the other novels), with the advantage of the novel form, serves to humanize Godwin's theory of benevolence by showing the need for emotions. When both are taken into consideration, it is clear that Godwin saw man as complex rather than one-sided, with the reason and the emotions complementing each other in order to produce a virtuous human being: like Pope, Godwin believed that the emotions excite us to action, and reason regulates this action.

In Political Justice Godwin says truth is omnipotent and will ultimately prevail if it is adequately conveyed to the understanding, and in Cloudesley he demonstrates this to be so. Joann Cobb comments on Godwin's strong faith in truth: "The disparity among the characters who are ultimately overcome by truth and reason in Cloudesley emphasizes Godwin's continuing belief in its power. In this novel, truth conquers an English nobleman and an English servant, an Italian nobleman, and a Turkish military leader."[3] At one point, for example, Irene pleads successfully to a Turkish overlord for the life of her unjustly accused father. At first Achmet tells her that he can do nothing for her, but when she persists

3 Cobb, "Godwin's Novels and Political Justice," p. 26.

he relents: "It was not pity that moved him; it was not the power of beauty....It was the voice of truth; it was the tone of deep-felt and entire conviction" (I, 86).

The character who most tellingly demonstrates the importance of truth and the suffering caused by a lack of it is Danvers, who reminds us somewhat of Falkland in Caleb Williams. Both men try to hide a crime which they realize will dishonor them if known, and both share this secret with a servant (Caleb) or ex-servant (Cloudesley). Like Falkland, Danvers is consumed by guilt, which shows itself in a variety of ways. While listening to Danvers' story, for example, Meadows notices that Danvers' mind often strays and that he becomes disturbed emotionally and physically--an indication of a person with some dark secret. It is clear that Danvers feels responsible and extremely guilty for what he has done to Julian: "Their child was not dead. But he was, by my sole means, civilly dead to his property, his rank, and his country. I had determined that he should be an outcast, belonging to no one, an uncertain and solitary wanderer on the face of nature" (I, 145). Drawing an even darker picture of Julian's condition than is actually the case, Danvers believes himself to be eternally damned for his action; he loses his appetite, his eyes become

bloodshot, and he begins to hallucinate. He has a title, an estate, and public esteem; but he does not enjoy self-approbation because all this is based on falsehood: "But was I happy? No. The worm within gnawed at my heart. I was a lord; but I was also a villain--so my conscience whispered me. I was a foul usurper. That I should become what I was had been effected by lying, forgery, and fraud" (I, 151).

In the eyes of the unknowing public, Danvers has everything--but he does not have peace of mind. His guilt is compounded by his belief that he is even cursed by God for his immoral behavior, believing, almost superstitiously, that the deaths of his children from what to a more rational mind would appear to be a hereditary sickness are actually the vengeance of God: "Heaven has decreed to make me a monument of its vengeance against broken vows and violated equity" (II, 139). Danvers does not think reasonably because he has not acted truthfully. When he finally does tell the truth to an individual who was not involved in the crime, Meadows, he gains his respect and sympathy: "There is something which can scarcely be resisted in the whole effect of a man, who tells you all, and speaks to you as ingenuously as he is bound to speak in the presence of his creator" (II, 151). But truth has been denied too

long in Danvers' case; and at the end of the novel when he dies, he is buried without a title, without an estate, and outside of his country without so much as a tombstone to mark his grave. Truth triumphs, but not before Danvers' false life has caused suffering for himself, his family, Cloudesley, and Julian. As Godwin observes in Political Justice: "truth is more powerful than any champion that can be brought into the field against it; consequently truth has the faculty of expelling weakness and vice" (I, 92). Such is the case in Cloudesley: Richard, Earl of Danvers, a man who has lived a lie, is replaced by Julian, the rightful heir to the title.

Law is one of Godwin's prime targets in Political Justice, and we again see his distrust of it in this novel. Even though in the end law comes to the aid of Julian, more important in restoring him to his birthright are individual benevolence and truth. Godwin's position in his treatise is that there should be no law/government.[4] He recognizes, however, that practically speaking governments will exist for quite some time. If they must exist, he believes, they should only protect us against the "occasional hostility" of others; they should never pre-

4 "Law" is used here as an all inclusive term to cover government, individuals in government, institutions of government, and legal statutes.

scribe how we ought to behave. And since hostile or vicious action is the result of a faulty understanding, government's influence will decrease as knowledge increases. But government is forever striving to increase its influence and as a result has the tendency to restrict our individuality. Instead of solving problems, government occasions them. We must rely on proper education to show individuals how to act justly and benevolently, not on government and its laws.

Godwin's adverse criticism of government appears on several occasions in Cloudesley. For example, although Achmet recognizes the truth of Irene's defense of her father, he also recognizes the politics of the situation and is thus forced to banish him from Greece. Achmet sacrifices justice to practical considerations. Since this is usually the case, it is no wonder that men will often determine their course of behavior not by what is moral but by what is legal, which often results, as in Cloudesley's case, in a cynical and misanthropic view of mankind.

Government's harmful influence is also demonstrated by Julian's friend, Federico, who without Julian's knowledge is actually a famous robber, St. Elmo. Federico reminds us of Captain Raymond in Caleb Williams; he has a noble soul and

a sense of morality, so much so that Julian feels he should be his model of excellence and best friend. Originally a highborn Corsican, he becomes a freedom fighter against Genoa's occupation of his country. His capture and imprisonment causes him to become anti-government but not any less moral. In fact, he sees himself as a sort of Robin Hood who must fight against government suppression in order to protect his rights as a man: "he swore upon the altars of immutable justice an everlasting war against all governments, and an open defiance to all law. He regarded what is called civilized society as a conspiracy against the inherent rights of man, and determined to pay no attention to its regulators" (II, 98). Federico is basically a virtuous individual who has been forced to live outside the law in order to act morally but as a consequence has been labeled a criminal and cut off from his fellow man. Julian sees his natural virtues, and even after he learns that Federico is a criminal decides to stick by him, which almost results in his own execution as a criminal, in spite of his innocence, alongside his friends Federico and Francesco.

Godwin's distaste for government is further shown when

Meadows condemns the execution of Julian's friends: "Of all the various acts of the human community, this is the most audacious--I had nearly said the most impious--that in cold blood we take the being whom we have subdued, and, making a show of him to the gaping crowd, in an instant convert this machine whose price is above rubies, into a moveless clod" (II, 184). Similarly, in Political Justice Godwin criticizes all forms of legalized punishment, believing instead that man should be corrected through education. Obviously, one does not educate a person by killing him. His rather cool, almost understated comment on this idea contrasts sharply in tone with Meadows' impassioned condemnation, but the idea is the same:

> To deprive an offender of his life in any manner, will appear to be unjust, as it seems always sufficiently practicable, without this, to prevent him from further offence. Privation of life...must always be considered as a very serious injury; since it puts a perpetual close upon the prospects of the sufferer, as to all the enjoyments, the virtues and the excellence of a human being. (II, 379-80)

Federico's prospects have indeed been perpetually closed by the law.

Godwin's condemnation of law is also evidenced by the struggle between Cloudesley and Danvers over restoring Julian

to his inheritance. Throughout their confrontation Danvers reminds Cloudesley that Julian will not be able to claim legally what is rightfully his--and Cloudesley realizes that Danvers is correct in his assumption. Danvers is rich whereas Julian is not, and as we see in Cloudesley: "in a court of law, money is every thing. It is no trifle undertaking, to thrust from his place a nobleman, whose title is already authentically recorded, and who has been admitted to the possession of the estates and the income annexed to that title" (I, 190). The idea that legal "justice" is bought also appears in Political Justice: "In many countries justice is avowedly made a subject of solicitation, and the man of the highest rank and most splendid connections almost infallibly carries his cause against the unprotected and friendless" (I, 18). Instead of relying on the legal system, Cloudesley must rely on his own idea of what is just, his own perseverance in fighting for Julian's rights, and, ultimately, Danvers' voluntary (although reluctant) surrender of all that he has usurped. Julian is restored to his birthright not because he has law on his side, but because he has truth on his side. In fact, instead of protecting Julian, the law has been used to deny him his rights.

In earlier novels such as Italian Letters and Caleb Williams, suffering has been caused by the aristocratic practice of dueling, which Godwin informs us in Political Justice "was originally invented by barbarians for the gratification of revenge" (I, 140). Its condemnation is no less severe in Cloudesley. By resorting to such barbaric behavior, the otherwise virtuous Arthur runs the risk of murdering another human being and/or committing suicide. As it turns out, his duel with an Italian nobleman results in his own death, his wife's loss of her husband and, subsequently, premature death, Danvers' temptation and ultimate usurpation, and Julian's disinheritance. Arthur recognizes how unreasonable his behavior is: "Oh, how faulty, how unpardonable my conduct has been! A Briton, a noble, and a soldier, to have had his passions no more under control!" (I, 126); but his aristocratic code of honor prevents him from acting otherwise. What is more, Arthur's action is not only extremely deleterious to all concerned, but, contrary to the popular belief that a duel is an act of bravery, actually cowardly. True courage, Godwin tells us, is demonstrated by refusing to duel and resorting to a reasoned discussion in order to settle differences. Instead of worrying about his honor,

Arthur should have remembered his duties to others. But he indulges himself, and the result is disastrous to him, to his loved ones, and ultimately to society as a whole.

Cloudesley effectively conveys the distinguishing morality that is found in all of William Godwin's works. Godwin again uses the novel to reinforce in his reader's mind the necessity of a reasoned approach to everyday life. By dramatizing his concepts of love, truth, and law in this "fictitious history," he believes that he can more convincingly impress on his audience the same basic moral philosophy that he had earlier set forth in the Enquiry Concerning Political Justice. If he cannot instruct people through a philosophical treatise (which he realizes is limited in its appeal), he will instruct them by means of a more entertaining and accessible form of writing. Perhaps we may not accept his philosophy, and perhaps we may not be impressed by his ability to write novels; but we are hard pressed to disagree with the logic of his double-pronged method of disseminating his ideas.

Chapter VII

Deloraine

William Godwin's last novel, written at the age of seventy-seven, three years before his death in 1836, is Deloraine. He has taken up his pen again at so late an age, he tells us, because the "Great Unknown,"[1] Walter Scott, had demonstrated that a man of advanced years is still capable of writing effective fiction. But as fiction, Deloraine can hardly be compared to any of Scott's novels. Nevertheless, Godwin's last novel considers once again certain ideas that he had presented some forty years earlier in his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice; and although there has been some modification of doctrine in the process of adapting philosophy to fiction, the philosopher of the 1790's is remarkably close to the elderly novelist of the 1830's.

Deloraine, the main character, is born into a good family and receives a good education. He grows up well,

1 William Godwin, Deloraine (London: Richard Bentley, 1833), I, v.

becomes a member of Parliament, and marries Emilia Fitzcharles, who bears him a daughter. He describes their marriage glowingly, but four years after their marriage Emilia dies when they are caught in a storm while boating. Deloraine is almost completely broken by her death, so he sends their daughter, Catherine, to live with a friend and does not see her again for eighteen years.

When he is forty-two, Deloraine meets Margaret Borradale, twenty-three. Three years earlier she was in love with a young farmer, William, but her socially ambitious father opposed their marriage. A short time later Margaret learned that William had drowned. Deloraine marries Margaret with her father's blessing, but he soon learns that she still loves William. Six months after their marriage, Deloraine finds out that William is still alive, but he does not tell Margaret for fear of losing her. As one easily suspects, one day William comes upon Margaret suddenly; she faints, awakens, and the two helplessly embrace. Unhappily, however, Deloraine arrives on the scene and in a jealous rage kills William. Margaret dies a short time later.

Deloraine is forced to flee England and is accompanied by Catherine, who has recently come to live with him. But

William's best friend, the virtuous but now vengeful Travers, vows to track down Deloraine. After various not too suspenseful narrow escapes, Deloraine decides to turn himself in. But Catherine persuades him to wait twenty-four hours, then visits and convinces Travers to relent in his pursuit of her father. Impressed by her defense of Deloraine, Travers agrees; however, the legal system still wants to prosecute Deloraine, so he and Catherine go to Holland to live with a young friend, Thornton, whom Catherine eventually marries. The ending is not altogether happy, however; for Deloraine tells us that he can never forgive himself for murdering William.

Godwin's main concern in this melodramatic and sentimentalized novel is with how the individual is related to his society and what part reason and passion play in the relationship. The ideal man of Political Justice is one who is sufficiently individualistic to decide despite external pressure what his course of action should be, but concurrently he must be considerate enough to make his decisions with the general good in mind. This combination of individuality and social awareness produces Godwin's "man of benevolence." Such a man would have to be educated, considerate, and self-respecting. Deloraine appears to be

all of these. Born of a well-to-do family, he has been afforded the leisure to obtain a good education and thus become a good human being: "My understanding was of no common order; my taste was pure, vivid and refined; my application and learning worthy of the education I had received; and my dispositions noble and generous, full of affection, and formed for the reception and cultivation of friendship" (I, 9). Deloraine apparently enjoys the secondary pleasures (intellectual and emotional) outlined by Godwin in Political Justice (even though only until his fortieth year, as he tells us later).

Once an individual neglects to consider the happiness of others, he becomes at best inconsiderate and at worst pernicious. Although we must maintain our individuality, we must not do so by disregarding the rights and happiness of others. We have freedom, but not freedom which fails to be modified by sympathy. The human being is an individual, but he ought to remember that he is still a part of a whole--with duties owed to his fellow man. This same idea is expressed when Deloraine states that "We are members of a community, and can be scarcely said, any one of us, to have a rational existence independent of our fellows" (III, 216).

Neglecting to remember that we are part of a whole is not merely exercising our right to do as we please; instead, we are essentially acting selfishly and therefore immorally. As Godwin observes, "Morality is nothing else but that system, which teaches us to contribute upon all occasions, to the extent of our power, to the well-being and happiness of every intellectual and sensitive existence" (PJ, I, 159).

Since it is the individual's duty to be a part of his society, a person who withdraws from it is mistaken. But recognizing that man must also have the opportunity to be alone at times, Godwin clarifies his position by distinguishing between solitude, which if not excessive is desirable, and isolation, which is always undesirable. As we have seen, Deloraine considers himself a social being; yet he realizes that solitude is pleasurable if it is not immoderate: "Solitude is one of the highest enjoyments of which our nature is susceptible. Solitude is also, when too long continued, capable of being made the most severe, indescribable, unendurable source of anguish" (I, 36). This excessive solitude, whether voluntary or not, is isolation. Because of his isolation from society as a result of his murdering William, Deloraine compares himself to Cain, the epitome

of the outcast, and finally observes that "It is a dreary thing to be cut off from the society of our fellows and the accommodations of civilised life" (I, 87). Having committed a murder and consequently being forced to flee, Deloraine realizes that his isolation from society diminishes his value to it. Isolation, in fact, is both a cause and result of self-interest, as we see later in the case of Mr. Jerome, a selfish recluse of whom Deloraine observes: "There was nothing elevated in any of his notions. Every thing in his system of thinking had reference to himself" (III, 137). Deloraine judges the recluse correctly, for Jerome apparently will deal with anyone, ignoring moral principles and common decency towards his fellow man, as long as the person is willing to pay for Jerome's services. Perhaps he is pragmatic, but he is far from admirable.

The main unit of society discussed in this essentially sentimental novel is that of husband and wife, which enables Godwin to comment on both marriage and women yet again. Deloraine's first marriage is extremely happy; his second is disastrous. Unlike Political Justice, where marriage is thought of as simply another relationship which should be based on reason, Deloraine reveals, as does St. Leon, a

definite modification in Godwin's doctrine--although it is more sentimental and conventional than St. Leon. He now distinguishes relationships between men from those between men and women: "In the graver and more sentimental communications of man and man the head still bears the superior sway; in the unreserved intimacies of man and woman the heart is uppermost. Feeling is the main thing; and judgment passes for little" (I, 21). Godwin emphasizes that marriage plays an extremely important role in society, even placing it on a higher level than mere friendship as we see when Deloraine observes that "No society is comparable to that of an accomplished wife" (I, 30).

But with this modification of doctrine comes the all too conventional belief that the female is basically intuitive in contrast to the male who is basically reasonable--although it passes as praise: "In the female bosom in particular, there is a quickness, a truth, an intuition of feeling and taste, by which I was specially the gainer, and with which no individual of the sterner sex may ever hope to compete" (I, 38). Such a statement may have softened the criticism that Godwin was excessively rationalistic, but it can hardly enhance his reputation today. His main

character is obviously too male oriented, stating in a Miltonic manner that "Man is the substantive thing in the terrestrial creation: woman is but the adjective, that cannot stand by itself" (I, 70). Woman is seen as little more than an adjunct to man, a conventional view of sentimental fiction, indeed all fiction, of this time.

Deloraine's marriage to Emilia serves as little more than a counterpoint to his marriage to Margaret. Taken together they provide Godwin the opportunity to comment both on compatibility of the partners in a marriage and free choice in selecting one's mate. To a great extent, compatibility is based upon sincerity. Describing his first marriage, Deloraine tells us that "The hearts of Emilia and myself were set to the same key, tuned to each other. We anticipated each other's desires almost before they were formed. We had no concealments and no reserves" (II, 120). The two are compatible because they are truthful with one another; they love each other because they have not allowed false romantic notions to disguise their respective value in each other's eyes. It is exactly this romantic, unreasoned approach to most marriages that Godwin objects to in Political Justice. A wife is also a friend, and a friend must be truly

known. Sadly, according to Godwin, most marriages are based instead on lack of knowledge. Deloraine and Emilia do not close their eyes to reality; each knows the other, for they are "tuned to each other."

The exact opposite may be seen in the marriage of Deloraine and Margaret. They are dissimilar even in age, he being forty-two (Emilia had died fifteen years earlier) and she twenty-three. What is more, she marries him while still in love with the memory of another. It is clear to even Deloraine that Margaret has never stopped loving William, despite thinking him dead; but he falls in love with her (against his own better judgment based on reason) and hopes eventually to be loved by her as William had been. Deloraine and Margaret are not "set to the same key." Instead, the two are incompatible, mainly because she is not able to reveal herself entirely to him. Deloraine recognizes this but continues in his folly: "I would find in no time that I had taken the shadow only, where I had expected the reality of a wife. Her affections were blasted; her heart in the grave" (I, 287). What is lacking in their relationship is sincerity with one another and honesty with themselves.

Deloraine consults his emotions but not his reason,

Margaret her reason but not her emotions. He truly loves her, but he should be reasonable enough to realize that since she does not love him their marriage will not succeed. Similarly, even though she reasons that she can be a dutiful wife (which she is), she should not marry him because she does not love him. Only after they are married does Deloraine recognize this to be the case: "It was that the soul was not there. All that Margaret did, was in the spirit of discharging a duty" (II, 15). Neither one is capable of being frank with the other. Commenting on his first marriage by way of comparison, he says that it was based on sincerity whereas his second is not: "our frankness was unbounded; neither of us had even a thought that was a secret from the other" (II, 17).

Truth is one of the keystones of the philosophy of Political Justice: truth is the basis of knowledge, knowledge of sound judgment, and sound judgment of happiness. As long as Deloraine and Margaret are untruthful, their marriage will not succeed. And in fact it does not: his constant doubt, his tempestuous murder of William, her deathlike behavior, and her death are all direct results of their refusal to recognize truth. Their mistaken judgment of their com-

patibility, in short, leads to their unhappiness.

Deloraine and Margaret are not the only ones to blame for the disasters that attend their ill-advised marriage; her father and society must share the responsibility. Godwin tells us in his philosophical treatise that error will eventually always give way to truth which is adequately conveyed; but in order for this to happen, the individual must be free to decide for himself. The root of all the evils that result from Margaret's marriage to Deloraine is that she has been denied freedom of choice by her father. Being the younger brother of Lord Borradale, the father has suffered the fate of most younger brothers of aristocratic families--he has been forced to live beneath what he considers his proper station because his older brother has inherited everything, which is the same problem Danvers faces in Cloudesley. Basically he is not a vicious person, but his ambition to live among the rich clearly should be seen, in Godwinian thought, as a serious fault.

Even Borradale's own wife criticizes him for being "a slave to the pride of birth, and the trappings of nobility" (I, 215), an aristocratic trait that is severely condemned in Political Justice. Believing that he "had married im-

prudently," for love rather than for money and station, he does not wish his daughter to do the same so does his best to prevent her marriage to the poor but virtuous William and to promote her marriage to the coxcombical son of Lord Borradale. The artificial superiority of young Borradale, his aristocratic heritage, is preferred to the natural superiority of William. Obviously, the hand that wrote Political Justice can still be seen in this novel, for the father's preference for the trappings of nobility, with all their ostentatious glitter, to the intrinsic worth of the individual is soundly condemned in that work, which depicts the aristocracy as substandard human beings. Godwin says that personal merit instead of station should be the basis for judging an individual. The father's shortcoming is that he does not realize this; Margaret's is that she allows his mistaken judgment to undermine what is rightfully her choice--whom to marry.

According to Godwin, truth adequately conveyed will eventually be successful in correcting error. Such is the case in Deloraine when Margaret's mother, described as a woman possessed because she is speaking the truth, finally convinces the father that he is mistaken. Recognizing his

error and now acting on knowledge, the father writes to William "in the frankness of his new-found liberty, intreating to be forgiven for his injustice" (I, 231). But the returning youth apparently drowns, and three years later Margaret reluctantly marries Deloraine. If she had listened to the dictates of her own mind originally, the inauspicious marriage would never have taken place.

Deloraine, hitherto very close to a man of benevolence because of his reasoned actions, degenerates into a murderer when he allows his passions, uncontrollable in large part because of his unsatisfactory marriage, to override his reason, contrary to Godwin's position that reason should guide although not suppress the emotions. Immediately after killing William in passion, he recognizes the enormity of his mistake: "The deed I thus perpetrated was of terrific violence....I interposed not a moment for deliberation and the sifting of evidence" (II, 141). Justice is based on reason, and Deloraine has acted unreasonably. Like Falkland, who has also murdered because of unbridled passion, Deloraine in effect removes himself from benevolence. His education should have made him act differently, but it has not. Once he gives in to immoderate passion, he is no

longer a free man; he becomes instead a veritable slave--to his passions for the moment: "I had shewn myself the slave of passion, incapable of moderation and restraint, hurried into the last excesses, which are usually committed only by creatures without education, without discipline, and accustomed to listen to no suggestions but those of unlicensed passion" (II, 189); but more important he becomes a slave of his society, which seeks to exact punishment for his crime through the remainder of the novel. Deloraine's passionate rather than reasonable behavior results in the death of another human being, ends his marriage, and causes him to lose self-approbation: "I regarded myself with inexpressible self-abasement" (III, 78).

Quite clearly Godwin condemns Deloraine for his passion-controlled act, but he attempts to explain it through his theory of necessity. In Political Justice we are told that man acts according to his opinions; his actions, however, are influenced by his understanding, or lack of understanding, at the moment they occur. If actions are controlled by understanding based on reason, they are voluntary; if they are not, they are either imperfectly voluntary or involuntary. In Godwin's analogy of the assassin and the dagger, the one being no

more at fault than the other, we see that man is not always morally to blame for his actions: often he cannot help but act the way that he does. In light of this theory, Deloraine's murder of William is involuntary, and as such moral blame is removed from him. Deloraine clearly expresses necessitarian views when he explains his behavior to his servants: "I have done only what it was impossible for me not to do" (II, 147). And later he tries to justify his behavior: "Nor could I perceive how I could have acted, otherwise than I had acted. My fate drove me on. I had seen that which it was impossible to see, and remain inactive" (III, 153). Given the situation of his finding Margaret in the arms of the man whom he knew she loved more than she loved him, we are led to believe that since his act is ruled by passion rather than reason, he acts involuntarily and thus neither morally nor immorally.

Despite his philosophical justification of his behavior, Deloraine still feels guilty. At one point, for example, the admirable Thornton, who appears to be a spokesman for Godwin, tries to console Deloraine by using the doctrine of necessity in order to explain, if not excuse, the murder: "There was nc time for deliberation, not an inch of place given for the exercise of the freedom of will. The act was

an irresistible necessity" (III, 231). But Deloraine refuses to accept his young friend's argument, and by extension Godwin's argument, when he observes: "It was not that I was for a moment deceived by the generous sophistry of Thornton....I knew that the state of a moral being admits not of an excuse founded on the idea of his being hurried into an act pernicious and destructive, without the power of resistance" (III, 234). Which position, then, are we to believe is Godwin's in 1833? I would think that of Thornton and the Godwin of Political Justice. Of course, Godwin does not altogether absolve people of moral responsibility, but he does absolve of moral responsibility those who have acted while ruled by passion. The fact that he engages our sympathy for Deloraine, something he clearly would not do for a cold-blooded murderer, reinforces the position of his treatise. Obviously, Deloraine's reasoning is not to be trusted because it fluctuates between two positions: at first he accepts the idea of necessity, and then he rejects it. We must look to more reasonable minds for an answer.

Regardless, Deloraine correctly recognizes that his action will be seen as a punishable crime in the eyes of

the law and society, so he flees from prosecution--even though he believes that his crime was only an "offense of an instant. In all that went before, and all that followed, I was guiltless" (III, 315). What should society's reaction be to such a crime, one that is definitely harmful but not premeditated nor representative of the offender's life as a whole? Godwin makes it clear that we should try to teach the individual that what he has done is wrong--no more, no less. Punishment in any form ought never to be used, for it cannot enlighten the understanding: "the proper way of conveying to my understanding a truth of which I am ignorant...is by an appeal to my reason....An appeal to force must appear to both parties, in proportion to the soundness of their understanding, to be a confession of imbecility" (PJ, I, 179-80). But society, according to Godwin, often does not act reasonably, usually desiring some form of punishment for a crime. Representative of society in this novel is William's good friend, Travers, whose unrelenting pursuit of the penitent Deloraine is clearly based on passion rather than reason.

The importance that Godwin attaches to one's background is seen when he devotes a chapter to Travers' history in

order to explain his overly dedicated pursuit of his prey. The son of a virtuous man who died after being forced to leave Jamaica for opposing its iniquitous government, Travers is further saddened by the loss of his sweetheart. As a result, this previously benevolent individual becomes bitter. He is somewhat cured of his bitterness by William's friendship and generous nature, and the two become inseparable companions. Considering his history, then, it is little wonder that Travers takes it upon himself to become an avenging angel for the death of his best friend. His behavior, however, is controlled by his emotions; if he were reasonable, he would not desire to hound an essentially virtuous man for a crime that the man could not help but commit. Perhaps his intentions are legal, but they are hardly benevolent. The very words Travers uses in his vow to find Deloraine and bring him to answer to the law reveal a vengeful rather than generous mind:

> The slow and tormenting process of law, which takes no account of any human feelings, but delights in the sternness of its march and the unaltered steadiness of its pace, and causes its victim with slow respirations to drain off the last drop from its cup of woe, shall be reserved for the offender. The longer shall be the pursuit, the more bitter shall be its sensations. (II, 282)

He has been embittered by society's injustice (contrary to his basic nature), so he turns into a blood-hungry hunter. His mistake, above all else, is that he relies on law, an unfeeling and inhuman institution, instead of on individual benevolence. This, to a degree, is the same mistake that Caleb Williams makes.

Travers' persistent persecution of Deloraine harms not only Deloraine but also Catherine, who insists on accompanying her father in his attempts to escape, and ultimately even Travers himself, for he is effectively chained to the object of his chase by having to follow him constantly. As in Caleb Williams, the pursued and the relentless pursuer share the common misfortune of having to leave their homes and become slaves to the chase. Travers is no more free than Deloraine--no more than Falkland is freer than Caleb.

Godwin's trust in the inevitable triumph of truth is evident when he has Catherine visit Travers in order to plead for her father, who has decided to surrender to the law. So Godwinian are Catherine's ideas that Burton Pollin contends "Her concluding remarks show that she is a child of Political Justice believing in the power of 'truth and Justice' when it is applied to 'an ingenuous spirit.'"[2]

2 Pollin, Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin, p. 228.

She implores and then upbraids Travers, trying to appeal to his reason and sense of justice, in hope of eventually overcoming his prejudice: "Oh, why have not human creatures a confidence in the force of truth and justice? Why do they not believe that there is a power in these, which, addressed to an ingenuous spirit, cannot fail to overcome every obstacle?" (III, 303). Happily for Deloraine and Catherine, as well as for Travers, the young man has an "ingenuous spirit." Travers is impressed by her defense of her father and relents, changing back to the benevolent individual that he once was. Once his understanding is enlightened, his conduct changes. Obviously, this change is consistent with the philosophy of Godwin, who states in Political Justice "that whatever is brought home to the conviction of the understanding, so long as it is present to the mind, possesses an undisputed empire over the conduct" (I, 92).

A distinguishing feature of all of Godwin's novels, with the exception of Imogen, is that the endings can hardly be said to be happy. It is true that Travers no longer pursues Deloraine and that Catherine marries Thornton, but Deloraine is still wanted by the law at the end of the novel and is forced to flee to Holland--with Travers' generous

help. We also see that Deloraine, mistakenly, still is unable to forgive himself, apparently judging himself much more harshly than Godwin does. By having Deloraine pardoned by Travers but not by the law, Godwin once more is able to express his opinion that we must place our trust in the individual rather than in the law. Truth, thus, is found in reasonable human beings and not in their social institutions.

In this his last novel, Godwin again presents the moral philosophy that forms the basis of his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice. He creates a tension between the human being and his society, and in so doing shows how one must try to establish a needed balance between one's individuality and one's relationship to others. One should act with both the good of oneself and the good of others in mind, the two ultimately being the same. In order to accomplish this, the individual must base his actions on the principle that reason must guide the emotions rather than the reverse. His position is rationalistic, but it does not deny the need for emotions in human behavior.

Chapter VIII

Conclusion

William Godwin's total literary output is voluminous and varied, yet in its entirety it is distinguished by a moral and intellectual sense. In most of his works can be seen an impressive and profound mind which is firmly rooted in the eighteenth-century tradition of the public man. Although Godwin's philosophy may not always be practical, it is always thought out. His belief that man will eventually outgrow his moral deficiencies and emerge a perfected being may occasion the disbelieving smiles of those who think him inordinately naive, but how many utopian philosophies will not do the same? Perhaps he may indeed have been impractical, especially in light of our own century, which has witnessed two catastrophic wars and the development of extremely sophisticated technological weapons capable of fantastic destruction, the power of which would have been unimaginable in Godwin's time; yet it would seem that a world without the particular kind of hope that this eighteenth-century man held out might be in a much more emotionally and intellectually desperate shape than it is in now.

With his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, Godwin hoped to teach human beings that the only course of action open to them is not one characterized by distrust, ignorance, and violence. He wished to point out an alternate route that man may travel. If his ideas are impractical, he asks, how much more impractical is it to persist in following a system that has always been distinguished by all three and thus has always shown itself a failure? The world, Godwin speculates, can be improved if we act reasonably and benevolently. It could be a world we would all prefer to the one we now live in, a veritable paradise on earth for breathing human beings as opposed to a heavenly paradise for disembodied spirits. The human being will not have to look to a next world for perfection; he can find it here on earth: "There will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice, as it is called, and no government. Beside this, there will be neither disease, anguish, melancholy, nor resentment. Every man will seek, with ineffable ardour, the good of all. Mind will be active and eager, yet never disappointed" (PJ, II, 528).

Anticipating the objections of those who accuse him of being blind to reality for proposing that such a world might

ever exist, Godwin makes it clear that he is not presenting a strictly historical account of mankind, nor even a fictionalized one as he does in his novels, but a purely theoretical blueprint of how we might conduct ourselves in order to improve our behavior and, possibly, subsequently perfect ourselves and our world. Godwin believes that we must have in mind a way to do so: "he who proposes perfection to himself, though he will inevitably fall short of what he pursues, will make a more rapid progress, than he who is contented to aim only at what is imperfect" (PJ, II, 554). His idea of perfection, in fact, is not much different from that found in another work of the eighteenth century, the United States Constitution, which hopes "to form a more perfect Union"; but, of course, Godwin would disagree with having any form of government.

I perceive William Godwin's novels, even the well-written and justly admired Caleb Williams, as attempts to humanize through fiction many of the theories of Political Justice. True, Godwin is concerned with entertaining his audience, and no doubt also with earning a living; but a close examination of his novels, and their prefaces, particularly the preface to Fleetwood, makes it clear that Godwin decided to write novels primarily because he

realized that a novel would probably reach a much larger audience than a philosophical treatise. He also believed that even those who had read his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice could be further enlightened by seeing abstract principles brought to life by what he felt were true and vivid representations of human beings.

Perhaps I am flirting with the "intentional fallacy"; nevertheless, Godwin's novels probably would have been better if he had concerned himself more with writing novels and less with presenting his philosophy. Clearly, many faults may be found with Godwin's fiction, but none is so obvious as his having virtually all of his characters--male, female, old, young, rich, poor, educated, uneducated--speak as if they are eighteenth-century philosophers. Everything considered, Godwin was much less effective, important, and influential as a novelist than as a philosopher known for advanced and radical ideas.

Although he was considered a radical in his own time, and would most likely still be considered one by the majority of people today, William Godwin should be seen not so much as a man of radical and unrealistic ideas, but rather as a man who had the intelligence to formulate and the courage

to express his beliefs in the face of possible, even probable, persecution. He should also be seen as a man of imagination, so much so, in fact, that several poets (a profession known for imagination)--William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Percy Bysshe Shelley among them--at one time during their lives considered themselves his philosophical followers, and in several of their works this can be seen to be true.

It is difficult, however, to show the influence of one writer upon another to be definite unless the writer who has been influenced acknowledges his debt or unless the textual evidence is so overwhelming that the influence cannot be reasonably denied. On the question of Godwin's influencing William Wordsworth, there is neither clear acknowledgment nor overwhelming textual evidence; as a result a controversy has arisen as to whether or not such influence actually existed. In The Spirit of the Age, William Hazlitt contends that Wordsworth told a young law student to "Throw aside your books of chemistry and read Godwin upon Necessity."[1] Such a statement, if it in fact were made, does not necessarily indicate influence, but it does demonstrate a certain

1 William Hazlitt, "Godwin," in The Spirit of the Age in The Complete Works of William Hazlitt, vol. XI, ed. P.P. Howe (New York: AMS Press, 1967 [1825]), p. 16.

admiration--however short-lived.

When we examine works by Wordsworth such as The Borderers or "Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," there is a definite similarity of subject matter if not position to Political Justice. For example, C.W. Roberts attempts to show that there are parallels in diction, structure, and didacticism in Wordsworth's letter and Godwin's treatise. He believes that both writers thought that the inequities imposed on the poor by the rich result in the terrors of revolution and that education is needed to lessen or eliminate the terrors, observing that "the words of Godwin were ringing in his [Wordsworth's] ear when he took up his pen."[2] But although the two writers agreed on some very important issues, and although Wordsworth apparently was at one time enamored of Godwinian perfectionism, Alan Grob[3] has a point when he asserts that almost any English radical of the period would have had similar ideas. Perhaps so, but William Godwin was the leading exponent of these views, and Enquiry Concerning Political Justice was the most popular political work of the

2 C.W. Roberts, "Influence of Godwin on Wordsworth's Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff," Studies in Philology, XXIX (1932), p.606.

3 Alan Grob, "Wordsworth and Godwin: A Reassessment," Studies in Romanticism, VI (Winter, 1967), 98-119.

time.

Influence, of course, may also be shown by the repudiation of a philosophy, much as in our own century the immense influence of Catholicism can be seen on the writings of James Joyce, who apparently tried to free himself of what he considered restricting beliefs. In a similar vein, B. Sprague Allen, writing about The Borderers, observes that "The play reveals Wordsworth as a disillusioned disciple of William Godwin, exposing the perilous fallacies of the system of rationalistic philosophy that could not fulfill its high promise."[4] I think that we cannot in fact demonstrate Godwin's influence on Wordsworth, and perhaps it is a moot question as some critics feel; nevertheless, I side with those who believe that an influence, although not a great one, does exist.

There is not so much debate about Godwin's influence on Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who praised the author of Political Justice in 1794 but after having examined that work the following year condemned its ideas in his Bristol lectures and in The Watchman in 1796. One can hardly disagree with Lucyle Werkmeister that "some passages from the Enquiry appeared in

4 B. Sprague Allen, "Analogues of Wordsworth's The Borderers," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, XXXVIII (1923), pp. 267-68.

a long essay, 'On the Communication of Truth'."[5] Coleridge clearly follows Godwin's lead in discussing the evils of deception. For example, Werkmeister notes, Coleridge evaluates three kinds of "truth"--"verbal truth," "veracity," and "simplicity." In Political Justice (I, 339-40), Godwin similarly evaluates "three degrees of sincerity." She astutely observes, though, that Godwin was an optimist whereas Coleridge was a pessimist: "Godwin needed no God, just as he needed no institutions. Coleridge needed both, and, in particular, he needed a Christ, who would do for man what he could not do for himself" (p. 177).

Whereas there is a question as to whether or not Godwin influenced Wordsworth, it is rather commonplace to comment on the decided influence that Godwin had on Percy Bysshe Shelley. But even here one can argue that Godwin's influence may very well be once removed. Arguing with H.N. Brailsford's assertion that "Queen Mab is nothing but Godwin in verse, with prose notes which quote or summarize him,"[6] Frank Evans contends that the doctrine of necessity which is so important

5 Lucyle Werkmeister, "Coleridge and Godwin on the Communication of Truth," Modern Philology, LV (1958), p. 170.

6 H.N. Brailsford, Shelley, Godwin, and Their Circle (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1913), p. 175.

in Queen Mab is not original with Godwin and that Shelley drew as much from Godwin's source, David Hume, as from Political Justice.[7] Perhaps Evans is right, but a close examination of Queen Mab most definitely demonstrates Godwin's influence, no matter what the original source, and a reading of The Cenci leads one to agree with William Marshall and Rolf P. Lessenich that Godwin's influence on the young Shelley was a strong one.

Marshall contends that Caleb Williams and The Cenci are similar didactically, each concerned with the way a person [Falkland and Beatrice Cenci] "subscribing to a system of belief that supports a particular code of behavior comes into conflict with an individual [Tyrrel and Beatrice's father] possessed by a seemingly unconquerable form of evil."[8] Lessenich agrees that Shelley was following the necessitarian philosophy of Caleb Williams when he wrote The Cenci: "The tragic fates of Caleb Williams and Beatrice Cenci reveal Godwin's and Shelley's firm trust in the redemptive power of words as a substitute for the destructive power of revolu-

7 Frank B. Evans, "Shelley, Godwin, Hume, and the Doctrine of Necessity," Studies in Philology, XXXVII (1940), 632-40.

8 William H. Marshall, "Caleb Williams and The Cenci," Notes and Queries, n.s., VII (1960), p.261.

tion."[9] It is clear that both Godwin and his young disciple were confident in the power of truth, if it is "adequately conveyed."

Just how strong Godwin's influence was on Shelley (and on other poets) most likely will never be agreed on, but I believe that his influence can be seen if the poets' works are examined with Political Justice in mind. Perhaps William Kingsland sums up the question best when he observes about Shelley that "though probably Godwin's influence was even then [1811] on the wane among his contemporaries, he seemed to the young reformer of the new age not only a profound philosopher, but a teacher whose opinions carried prophetic weight."[10] Such a statement would be flattering about any writer.

9 Rolf P. Lessenich, "Godwin and Shelley: Rhetoric versus Revolution," Studia Neophilologica, XLVII (1975), p. 52.

10 William G. Kingsland, "Shelley and Godwin," Poet Lore, X (1898), p. 389.

Appendix

Italian Letters: or The History of the Count de St. Julian

and

Imogen: A Pastoral Romance From the Ancient British

Even though Godwin had written his life of William Pitt in 1782, it was 1783 that actually marked the turning point in his life. In that year he wrote An Account of the Seminary (a pamphlet on education), A Defence of the Rockingham Party (a political pamphlet), Instructions to a Statesman (a satirical, Machiavellian political pamphlet), The Herald of Literature (a playful imitation of several writers), and Sketches of History (a collection of six sermons that he had delivered from 1779 to 1783). Further demonstrating his literary versatility, he produced two novels: "in the latter end of 1783, I wrote in ten days a novel, entitled Damon and Delia, for which Hookham gave me five guineas, and a novel in three weeks, called Italian Letters, purchased by Robinson for twenty guineas."[1] And in the first four months of 1784 he wrote a third novel, Imogen. Of these first three novels, all of which were

1 Professor Jack Marken quotes Godwin from papers in Lord Abinger's possession. William Godwin, Imogen: A Pastoral Romance, ed. Jack W. Marken (New York: The New York Public Library, 1963), p. 9.

lost until Jack Marken published Imogen in 1963 and Burton Pollin published Italian Letters in 1965, only Damon and Delia has yet to be found.

I

Italian Letters, Godwin's second novel (first of the surviving ones), revolves around the young Count de St. Julian, who is betrayed by his best friend, Rinaldo, when the latter callously "steals" the former's fiancée, Matilda. This short epistolary novel demonstrates well Godwin's penchant for didacticism. The plot of betrayal forms the core of the work, but there are also comments on several ideas that will appear ten years later in Political Justice, such as sincerity, passions and reason, and dueling. But the most prominent idea, I believe, is that of education and environment.

In his philosophical treatise, one of Godwin's major concerns is with how an individual is affected by his environment (which essentially includes education). Godwin discusses how a person should and should not be educated, singling out the aristocracy as examples of individuals who, contrary to popular belief, have been poorly educated.

Indulgent parents and fawning servants effectively keep them isolated from the actual world of the mass of men, a world that is fraught with obstacles that must be faced and personally overcome. Additionally, instead of being taught to consider the needs of others, they are taught both by word and by action to prefer satisfying their own desires. As a matter of course, they expect to be addressed by their titles (which usually express a superior/inferior relationship) and accept without question their right to property which is actually based on the labor of others. Thus their education and environment render them selfish, spoiled, dictatorial, and immoral.

Italian Letters demonstrates that Godwin was concerned with education and environment at least ten years before the publication of Political Justice. There are five letter writers in the novel, three of whom are major characters. The Count de St. Julian, Matilda della Colonna, and the Marquis of Pescara form the triangle which results in betrayal. All three are members of the aristocracy, but only the Marquis (Rinaldo) is fundamentally an immoral individual. St. Julian and Matilda have faults, but both are good at heart. In the first letter of the novel, St.

Julian writes to Rinaldo, whose father has recently died: "Never did the noble marquis refuse a single request of this son, or frustrate one of the wishes of his heart."[2] At first glance, these are not inauspicious words--they are words any person might address to a friend whose father has recently died--but their inherent irony soon becomes clear when we realize that throughout his career Godwin criticized indulgent parents who do not allow their offspring to learn the hard realities of life, and who by doing so teach them always to expect their every desire to be gratified. This becomes clear also as the plot unfolds, for Rinaldo seems invariably to give in to temptation even though he recognizes that he is doing wrong.

In a sense, the first letter sets the scene for the rest of the novel. St. Julian advises Rinaldo how to act, and Rinaldo admits that he knows that he should follow the advice but ends not doing so. Further in the letter, St. Julian reminds the young marquis that he is well born and with the passing of his father has certain responsibilities to uphold, observing that Rinaldo is generous and benevolent but young. Rinaldo's potential vicious behavior, occasioned by his inability to resist temptation, has yet

2 William Godwin, Italian Letters: or The History of the Count de St. Julian, ed. Burton R. Pollin (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), p. 3.

to be realized. But Godwin has St. Julian recognize his friend's propensity to be gulled by flatterers, a propensity shared by all persons in power: "But remember, my lord, you will, from your situation, be inevitably surrounded with flatterers. You are naturally fond of commendation. Do not let this generous instinct be the means of disgracing you" (p. 5). We immediately recognize one of Godwin's favorite ideas, one which he will devote some time to in Political Justice: the aristocracy are easily taken in by sycophants who play on their natural desire to hear themselves spoken well of. Since flatterers will lie whenever they think it is to their advantage, those who accept flattery readily usually act on false knowledge rather than truth. In the case of Rinaldo, it is especially important that his actions be based on truth, for he has responsibilities, St. Julian reminds him, as the head of a great household, which includes many people. It is a sad state of affairs, Godwin believes, that those people who are in the most responsible positions should be the ones who are most susceptible to the designs of flatterers. Having been taught to accept as natural all fawning behavior, the aristocrat will seldom distinguish flattery from what he

considers his due. Rinaldo proves to be no exception.

Godwin's strong belief in environmental influence can be seen in the fundamentally opposite effects on Rinaldo's character of rural, simple Palermo and urban, elegant Naples. At the start of the novel, we are presented with a virtuous, although untested, Rinaldo; he has not yet fallen into vice by yielding to temptation. Because of his father's death, he must leave the university life at Palermo and move to Naples, which will prove to be his ultimate destruction both morally and physically. Before his fall, the still innocent young man comments on the two cities: "But I am removed to the metropolis of the kingdom, to the city in which the court of my master resides, to the seat of elegance and pleasure. And yet, amidst all that it offers, I sigh for the rural haunts of Palermo, its pleasant hills, its fruitful vales, its simplicity and innocence" (p. 7). It is not just the physical environment of Palermo that he prefers; the physical environment mirrors the human environment: "I behold many equals; but they are strangers to me, their faces are dressed in studied smiles, they appear all suppleness, complaisance and courtliness. A countenance, fraught with art, and that carries nothing of the soul in

it, is uninteresting, and even forbidding in my eye" (p. 7). Rinaldo, acting as his author's spokesman, criticizes courtly Naples and its dissimulating denizens much as Godwin will criticize all courts in Political Justice some ten years later. Further in the same letter, he says that he recognizes that simple Palermo does not offer comparable temptations to sophisticated Naples. We will remember that Godwin also condemns the temptation of ostentatious display of wealth in his philosophical work.

Godwin does not believe that we are taken in by wealth and magnificence by encountering it only once or twice. The power of the environment lies in our living in it, not merely seeing it. At first glance, therefore, Rinaldo is able to reject the dissipation of Naples; but by his second letter he praises the good nature, friendship, and politeness of Naples, contrasting it to "cold, uncivil and inattentive" (p. 9) Palermo. Realistically, the change in Rinaldo seems too rapid to be true to life (since, unfortunately, we do not know how much time has elapsed), and thus Godwin apparently sacrifices fictional verisimilitude to the conveying of his philosophy. Nevertheless, the environment of Naples has already begun to exercise its morally debilitating

control over the previously innocent young marquis. This control is further strengthened by the "bad company" Rinaldo falls in with, particularly the hedonistic, foppish lady's man (described by Rinaldo as sweet and gentle but easily led astray), the Marquis of San Severino, who joins with Rinaldo in a malevolent symbiosis that carries them through the novel. San Severino acts as Rinaldo's tutor and companion in evil: he teaches him where to find vice, joins him in immoral activities, and encourages him in them by letter even when he is not present. He provides the temptation (along with the entire environment) that leads the young innocent into evil.

Rinaldo is an innocent who can be led astray; St. Julian, on the other hand, is a virtuous individual who is able to reject vice. Godwin distinguishes, therefore, between innocence and virtue, an idea that is more prominent in Imogen. Since St. Julian is virtuous, and since he is Rinaldo's friend, most of the didacticism of the novel is found in his letters. He tries to warn Rinaldo about San Severino, telling him that a fair façade often hides an evil nature and that the debauched marquis has even "not scrupled to ruin innocence, and practice all the

arts of seduction" (p. 12). This warning is especially portentous because not only will San Severino debauch Rinaldo, but he will also play a major role in Rinaldo's ultimate betrayal of St. Julian and, in effect, his seduction of Matilda, the intended of St. Julian. St. Julian recognizes San Severino's kind of hypocrisy: "It is not barefaced degeneracy that can seduce you. She must be introduced under a specious name." This specious name is the friendship and pleasure that San Severino offers Rinaldo. "She [degeneracy] must disguise herself like something that nature taught us to approve, and she must steal away the heart at unawares" (p. 12). St. Julian is obviously moralizing here, to such an extent that he seems far too mature for his age, and Rinaldo breaks with him for doing so too often; but the fact remains that what he warns against is exactly what happens to Rinaldo--his heart in the form of his innocence is corrupted by San Severino's insidious counsel.

William Godwin's penchant for didacticism is evident in Italian Letters as it is in all of his novels. In this early fiction, he has woven various ideas into a dramatic whole by focusing first on the education and environment of Rinaldo and then on the insincerity which results from them.

Skillfully, he next shows the reader how Rinaldo's hypocrisy leads to the seduction and the betrayal that arouse the passions of otherwise virtuous characters, Matilda and St. Julian. This sequence of ideas artistically culminates in yet another, the immorality of dueling, when St. Julian kills his former friend. The novel can be useful for those who are interested in tracing the development of ideas in a mind which was both influential and respected in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

II

In language he believes appropriate to an imitation Celtic pastoral, Godwin immediately informs us of the central theme of his third novel, Imogen: A Pastoral Romance--true virtue must be tested: "Listen, O man! to the voice of wisdom....False and treacherous is that happiness, which has been preceded by no trial, and is connected with no desert....Virtue, for such is the decree of the Most High, is evermore obliged to pass through the ordeal of temptation, and the thorny paths of adversity."[3] The whole of Imogen (like its model, Milton's Comus, before it) revolves around

3 William Godwin, Imogen: A Pastoral Romance From the Ancient British, ed. Jack W. Marken (New York: The New York Public Library, 1963), p. 25.

the testing of a virtuous young maiden by a superficially comely but evidently evil man, Roderic, who uses black magic in his attempt to seduce her. Attempts at sexual seduction are prominent in the work, but attempts to undermine Imogen's virtue in its totality, and not merely her chastity, also occur. Needless to say, there is never any real doubt in the reader's mind that Imogen will survive so terrible an onslaught and be saved. If Imogen is truly virtuous, and we constantly are reminded that she is, Roderic will have no chance of being successful; for virtue is ever victorious in its confrontation with evil because it has truth on its side, according to Godwin, and truth will always triumph.

It is one thing to say that virtue must confront and overcome vice; it is another thing to show how it must do so. Basically, fiction can do both. We may believe, to a certain degree, what we are told; but the knowledge is often reinforced when we see other persons, even though they are fictional characters, demonstrate in action the beliefs of the author. The pastoral form that Godwin has chosen provides a convenient "black-and-white" separation of vice and virtue because it enables the author to depict an ideal situation.

On several occasions the narrator interrupts his tale with comment. Godwin may use apostrophe to do so, as he does in the opening passage (LISTEN, O man!); he may subtly switch from narrative to comment, which is usually the case; or he may address the narrator's comment to one of the characters. In each case, regardless of the method used, the result is the same--didacticism. At one point, for example, after having tried other stratagems of seduction, Roderic decides to resort to flattery. He has Imogen placed on a beautiful throne and has paeans of praise sung to her by a group of musicians, among whom are supernatural beings that provide supernaturally beautiful music. After several pages of this praise, the narrator breaks in: "Alas, Imogen, be not deceived with airy shadows! The reasoning may be plausible, but it is no better than sophistry. Thou must be taught, fair and unsuspecting virgin, under a beautiful outside to apprehend deceit; and to guard against the thorn which closely environs the flower. Thou must learn, loveliest of thy sex, to dread the poison of flattery" (p. 71). Apparently, even though the narrator cautions the maiden not to fall prey to flattery no matter how pleasant it is to hear, he unconsciously has been influenced by the magnificence of

the performance and resorts to flattery himself ("loveliest of thy sex"). Nevertheless, here we clearly see Godwin denouncing flattery, which he will do even more vehemently in Political Justice.

It is significant that Godwin has chosen to place Imogen on a throne at this moment. In his philosophical treatise, he vigorously criticizes monarchs for being ever susceptible to the flattery of their ministers. This, in fact, is seen as one of the major faults of monarchy. Sycophants are more likely to surround and influence kings because they constantly utter what is "music to their ears." The monarch, having been raised in this environment of flattery, readily accepts it and is usually unable to distinguish the truth. Indeed, when the truth is told him, he becomes irritated and treats the truthteller harshly. As a result, truth is sacrificed to the goddess Flattery. Because of their upbringing, kings are unable to reject flattery; because of her upbringing, Imogen is.

Roderic is a sort of allegory of an aristocrat, his main characteristic being his "love of pleasure, an attachment to sensuality" (p. 50). After describing this character's hedonistic lifestyle, the narrator suddenly moves to a com-

ment on man in general: "But man was not born for the indolence of pleasure and the uniformity of fruition....We need something to awaken our attention, to whet our appetite, and to contrast our joys. Happiness in this sublunary state can scarcely be felt, but by a comparison with misery" (p. 50). Again we see Godwin's belief that unlike aristocrats who live in a world of luxury cut off from their fellow man, average men must live in the world as it is, with all its problems, instead of choosing to be recluses, whether this be accomplished by actual isolation, as in the case of a hermit, or by using one's riches to isolate oneself from mankind. Despite his riches, lands, servile retinue, and magic, Roderic is effectively isolated. He constantly tries to divert himself by indulging in various pleasures of the senses. Here the narrator is saying that in order to know pleasure truly, man must also know adversity. Roderic has gained his pleasures too easily, simply by waving his wand, so there is no foil to set off the jewel. In fact, Roderic's pleasure is actually a lesser form of pleasure--a mistaken pleasure, if you will.

Because of his magic Roderic is an extremely wealthy man who is used to having his every wish immediately and totally satisfied. But since his world and his wealth are

based on magic, there is no real basis for them except in superstition--and of course in romance. A similar idea is found in Political Justice, where Godwin firmly condemns the uneven distribution of wealth. The wealthy man buys what he thinks is happiness at the expense of others, who are forced into subservient positions. Roderic is able to turn men into animals by waving his wand; the wealthy man effectively does the same thing by waving his money. But as with magic, there is no true basis for the uneven distribution of wealth in a just world, only in a mistaken one. The happiness of the wealthy man, like the happiness of Roderic, is illusory, for wealth isolates a person from the true world. In addition, one cannot be truly happy when others are unhappy. A refusal to see misery and unhappiness in the world is equivalent to an ostrich's sticking his head in the sand in order to hide from the truth, an image Godwin uses in a 1783 political pamphlet, Instructions to a Statesman. Roderic acts as a symbol for all men who misuse their wealth and power, while the attribution of one of man's general vices to Roderic concretizes, so to speak, his characterization.

The confrontation of virtue and vice, with the ultimate

triumph of virtue, is also presented through setting. It has been pointed out that Godwin was an environmentalist in that he believed that our surroundings are the primary influence in our acquisition of knowledge and determine our actions to a great degree. The environment, or setting, of Imogen conveys this idea in various ways. Imogen and Edwin, her fiancé, live in the Eden-like valley of Clwyd in North Wales in a pre-Christian Druid era. It is fundamentally a pre-lapsarian world where a primitive pastoral society has yet to develop agriculture (although Roderic has done so). The inhabitants of this "happy valley" are noble innocents who live in a world of peace, justice, and equality. This society, in fact, can boast with justification that its citizens enjoy "liberté, egalité, fraternité":

> In this valley all was rectitude and guileless truth. The hoarse din of war had never reached its happy bosom; its river had never been impurpled with the stain of human blood. Its willows had not wept over the crimes of its inhabitants, nor had the iron hand of tyranny taught care and apprehension to seat themselves upon the brow of its shepherds. They were strangers to riches, and to ambition, for they all lived in a happy equality. (p. 25)

Here Godwin depicts early man living under the ideal conditions that nine years later in Political Justice he theorizes

will prevail in man's future as a result of his perpetual improvement. This is not to say, however, that Godwin has necessarily changed his position radically during this time. His problem is to present fictionally an ideal society; the pastoral is an excellent way to do so.

In contrast, we are presented quite a different picture of Roderic's surroundings. To good effect, Godwin gives Roderic a double setting. Fitting his hypocritical nature, the area surrounding his estate is wild, dark, rugged, mountainous, and dangerous; whereas the grounds of his castle are scrupulously cultivated and the castle is magnificent and ornate, with a staff that is beautiful, although depraved, and splendidly attired. This dual setting very effectively presents the idea that evil often hides behind a seemingly beautiful façade. The richness of this evil character's home, which Martha England correctly observes is described in terms of a great eighteenth-century house,[4] is also an implicit condemnation of the wealthy, and reminds us of Godwin's endless criticism of the rich and their ostentatious behavior in Political Justice, as when he contends that "There is nothing more pernicious to the human mind, than the love of opulence....The ostentation of the rich, per-

4 Martha Winburn England, "Felix Culpa" in Imogen, ed. Marken, p. 109.

petually goads the spectator to the desire of opulence" (II, 456).

After imprisoning Imogen in his castle, first without her knowledge and then against her will, Roderic recognizes that rich attire would alarm her and appears to Imogen, who has awakened from a swoon, as a country swain whose only wish is to help her. In the castle, the virtuous but innocent maiden's battle against seduction, both physical and moral, forms the crux of the work. Abandoning his appeal to her aversion to sumptuousness and preference for simplicity, Roderic appeals to her senses by bombarding Imogen with endless displays of wealth. Godwin skillfully accomplishes his didactic ends through setting by contrasting the simplicity of Imogen with the lavishness of her surroundings. On several occasions, for example, she recoils at the luxury of Roderic's castle, while praising the simple pastoral life. Upon viewing a sumptuous feast laid out for her, which her attendants have called "grateful refreshment," she exclaims: "And is such the grateful refreshment, and such the simple and unaffected relaxation that your minds suggested?...A feast like this is an object foreign and unpleasing to my eyes....I am not weary of the simplicity

of the pastoral life. I hug it to my bosom closer, more fondly than ever" (pp. 94-5).

When Edwin arrives to rescue Imogen, after a long and laborious journey through the seemingly impregnable wild surrounding the magician's grounds, he too rejects the castle's tempting magnificence, even though impressed by it. The virtuous pair see through the pretense of splendor, just as good sees through evil. Imogen and Edwin are fascinated by Roderic's dazzling environment (much as we are all fascinated by the ostentation of wealth), but both have an intuitive dislike for it, preferring the simple setting and natural beauty of their pastoral valley to the supernatural luxury of the castle. There is no real basis for its magnificence, and the crowning moment in Godwin's use of setting comes when Edwin seizes Roderic's wand and smashes it. Immediately, the castle crashes to the ground, leaving no trace of Roderic, his depraved retinue, or any of his possessions. Evil is depicted as superficial, although tantalizing, and easily destroyed when readily confronted by virtue.

Imogen is far inferior to Milton's Comus (Godwin's reference to the masque may have been a tactical mistake).

Nevertheless, it is enjoyable and exhibits a distinctive charm, which might be attributed to its pretending to be a Welsh pastoral. But whatever esthetic reasons there may be for enjoying Godwin's romance, more important, I think, is the chance we are afforded, as with Italian Letters, to observe presented rather early in his career ideas which become prominent in Political Justice.

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