RADICAL RELATIONS: QUEER(ING) DESIRE, LOVE, AND KINSHIP IN THE WRITING OF WILLIAM GODWIN AND HIS CIRCLE

by

SIMON CLEWES

A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English Literature

School of English, Drama, and Creative Studies

College of Arts and Law

University of Birmingham

October 2022

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

This unpublished thesis/dissertation is copyright of the author and/or third parties. The intellectual property rights of the author or third parties in respect of this work are as defined by The Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988 or as modified by any successor legislation.

Any use made of information contained in this thesis/dissertation must be in accordance with that legislation and must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the permission of the copyright holder.

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a queer re-evaluation of the portrayal of desire, love, and kinship within the writing of William Godwin and his circle. With Godwin having repeatedly been labelled by critics as a deliberately 'homophobic' novelist who portrayed same-sex passion and gender non-conformity only as intrinsically ruinous threats from which civilised society must be continually protected, my study argues for a much needed about-turn in how we interpret and understand these thematics within his writing. I argue that, instead of portraying transgressive same-sex bonds as intrinsically and unchangeably ruinous, Godwin presents male-male desire as having manifested as such because of its inability to be expressed and explored within the virulently antisodomitical and antieffeminate post-Revolutionary socio-political climate under which his protagonists are desperately trying — but relentlessly failing — to live and to love. Moving attention beyond the author's most famous novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), a work which critics have repeatedly prioritised, I conduct close analyses of his later and comparatively understudied novels *St. Leon* (1799), *Fleetwood* (1805), *Mandeville* (1817), and *Cloudesley* (1830) in order to examine the complex, detailed, and nuanced ways in which Godwin addresses and readdresses the thematics of same-sex passion and gender non-conformity across his long career. His protagonists' perceptions of themselves and their desires take on myriad forms, from self-hatred and despair, to agonising cravings and sensations of intolerable incompleteness, to glimpses of hope, and even utopian imaginings. I argue these can be grouped as one: they each scrutinise the experience of having a deep-rooted desire that falls far beyond the boundaries of familial, social, moral, and gendered acceptability — and beyond the boundaries of that which was defined as normal or natural within the political regimes of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Through analysing Godwin's presentation of same-sex desire and gender non-conformity in communication with his broader philosophical writings upon the body, the mind, human relationality, materiality, kinship, love, and domesticity, I argue that Godwin's advocacy for same-sex desire signals the broader and more pervasive political project at work within and running throughout the five-decade span of his writing: exploring the fluidity, multiplicity, and capability of sexualities, genders, and ways of loving and living otherwise beyond the ideological boundaries of the marital and familial units. Through this, I uncover how Godwin's novels connected with and/or inspired his fellow writers who similarly challenged and destabilised gendered boundaries of normativity and acceptability, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Joanna Baillie, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, William Godwin Jr., and Edward Bulwer-Lytton. My project expands beyond the Romantic era to argue that Godwin's radical interrelated rethinking of desire, love, and kinship anticipates — and, moreover, may guide us to expand and/or reconsider — queer thinking and theorisation in our present moment, tracing connections between Godwinian thought and queer theorists including Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, Lee Edelman, and José Esteban Muñoz. This thesis builds upon existing work within Romantic studies focused upon constructions of sexuality and gender, as well as upon the emerging work on queer Romanticisms, to argue for Godwin's integral place within a broader genealogy of queer, counter-cultural thinking. In doing so, my study responds to the recent calls within queer studies to uncover queer histories and expand the queer archive in order to formulate new ways of understanding queer, as well as to the recent calls within Romantic studies to diversify, rewrite commonplaces about, and consider the relevance of the Romantic period to the socio-political issues within our present moment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you first of all to the AHRC Midlands4Cities Doctoral Training Partnership for the full funding of this PhD. To my lead supervisor Professor Rebecca N. Mitchell, I am so grateful for the wonderful support and ongoing encouragement you've given since I first began to pursue the idea of this research project during my time as a Master's student back in 2015. Dr Matthew Ward, Dr Charlotte Ross, Dr Louise Curran, and Dr Kate Rumbold — I've been lucky enough to have had each of you on my supervisory team at various stages throughout my doctoral studies, and your guidance has been invaluable. Professor Kate Singer, Dr Andrew McInnes, and Dr David Sigler, thank you so much for your kind enthusiasm and cheers of support over these past couple of years! To my fellow M4Cers Stacey Kennedy and Lizzie Hardy, my RomReps partner in crime Amy Wilcockson, my fellow queer Gothic (and queer Godwin!) enthusiasts Dr Sam Hirst and Colin Harker, and to Annise Rogers, I feel truly lucky to have had the chance to meet and work with all of you. Finally, thank you to Mum and Dad, to Paul, and, last but most certainly not least, to Charlie — for providing much-needed woofs of encouragement along the way.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

1. Between Men: Re-Evaluating Godwinian Male-Male Passion 1
2. The Question of (Same-Sex) Sexuality 12
3. Queer Godwin 23

PART ONE: QUEER DESIRE

CHAPTER ONE: A Queer (Un)Being: William Godwin and the Productive Failure to Perform Masculinity 40

1. Fashionably Masculine or Defiantly Feminine? 45
2. Transgression and Queer Potentialities 52
3. Performing Gender: Becoming the 'New Man' 56
4. 'Essence': The Body, the Mind, and Embodied Femininity 60
5. Pleasure and the 'Undescribable' 65
6. Queer Negativity: Emotions, Passivity, Masochism 70

CHAPTER TWO: 'His Closet': Godwin, Joanna Baillie, and the (Un)Knowability of Same-Sex Desire 80

1. Stimulation and (Dis)Pleasure 87
2. Intellectual Rationalism / Animal Desire 95
3. A Natural Desire for the Unnatural 101
4. The Child 108
5. The Monstrous Child 112
6. Deathly Desires 119

PART TWO: QUEER LOVE

CHAPTER THREE: Beyond the (Gendered) Body: Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Romantic Love 125

1. The Masculine Woman 133
2. Bodily Connection(s): Beyond the Sensual 143
3. 'The substance of what was seen': The Man of (Mis)Perception 148
4. Male/Masculine Romantic Companionship: (Un)Free Love 157

CHAPTER FOUR: Godwin, Percy Shelley, and Queer Utopia 162

1. The Human Puppet 167
2. Queer Love and Social Reparation 176
3. *Jouissance* and Utopia 185

PART THREE: QUEER KINSHIP

CHAPTER FIVE: 'Mere Material Ligament': Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, William Godwin Jr., and (Un)Doing Blood Kin 199

1. 'Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come?' 211
2. (Un)Doing Family, (Un)Doing Gender 221
3. (Pro)Creating 'Ties' and 'Chains' 230
4. Killing the Child: Queer Fury 241

CHAPTER SIX: 'More than' Blood: Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Renewal of the Godwinian Same-Sex Dyad 248

1. 'Feminine' Sibling, 'Masculine' Sibling 256
2. 'Mechanical' Masculinity, 'Faultless' Femininity 260
3. The 'Female Heart' 266
4. 'Disease' and the 'Demon': Internalised Monstrosity 271

Conclusion 283

Bibliography 293

INTRODUCTION

BETWEEN MEN: RE-EVALUATING GODWINIAN MALE-MALE PASSION

William Godwin 'participates in a homophobic discourse'.[1] William Godwin employs the 'mechanisms of homophobia'.[2] William Godwin presents male-male passion 'as a regressive, disruptive, and pathogenic distemper'.[3]

It is no secret that the Godwinian novel, and most commonly his debut major work of fiction *Things as they Are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), have been continuingly interpreted as unquestionably 'homophobic'. In Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal and still widely influential *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985), Godwin's 1794 work is pinpointed as being the earliest example of a group of novels beginning to emerge at the end of the eighteenth century that would repeatedly centralise — and apparently repeatedly demonise — the markedly passionate relationships between two men which lie at the beating heart of each of their dramatic and destructive plotlines.[4]

For individuals somewhat familiar with the tragic story of the teenage servant Caleb and his aristocrat master Ferdinando Falkland, such a reading would perhaps be unsurprising.[5] This novel, published during the aftermath of the French

---

[1] Robert J. Corber, 'Representing the "Unspeakable"': William Godwin and the Politics of Homophobia', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 1: 1 (1990), 85-107 (p. 98). All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.
[2] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 91. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.
[3] Alex Gold Jr., 'It's Only Love: The Politics of Passion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 19:2 (1977), 135-160 (p. 153). All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.
[4] Sedgwick also lists Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Charles Maturin's *Melmouth the Wanderer* (1820), and Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian* (1797).
[5] The central plotline revolves around Caleb's all-consuming obsession with Falkland. This eventually leads to his discovery of Falkland's murderous past, something which serves only to intensify the

Revolution, is commonly conceived to represent what has been documented as the antisodomitical aftershocks coming to typify both Godwin's, as well as his first wife Mary Wollstonecraft's, reaction to the events unfolding across the Channel. Critics propose that Wollstonecraft and Godwin, two of England's most radical and influential thinkers of the era, communicated in part their revolutionary philosophies to an emerging bourgeoise readership by playing upon the associations between aristocratic male privilege with the sodomitical and, in turn, the effeminate.

In 2019, Katherine O'Donnell examined *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) to document how Wollstonecraft employed a 'systematic feminizing' of Edmund Burke as a tactic to counter his anti-Revolutionary agenda and impugn the continuing support for aristocratic hegemony witnessed earlier that same year in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).[6] Wollstonecraft, for O'Donnell, adopted a deliberately 'masculine' and 'rational, combative, righteously passionate, middle-class' voice as a rhetorical strategy to ridicule and undermine Burkean thinking. 'Burke is not merely feminized throughout the *VRM*', O'Donnell's study evidences, 'he is routinely implicated among the despised effeminate and sodomitical wealthy'.[7] Comparative readings have been offered by scholars who have analysed what appears to be Godwin's unwaveringly damning depiction of aristocrat Falkland's and middle-class Caleb's unusually close, obsessively passionate, and ultimately calamitous relationship in the 1794 work. Sedgwick lists *Caleb Williams* as a novel partly responsible for establishing a trend within 'popular literature — linking English male homosexuality [...] to the aristocracy', and argues that Godwin did so in

---

passion Caleb has for this man. This ultimately proves to be Caleb's downfall, as Falkland then relentlessly persecutes him; the elder man becomes consumed with the feeling that Caleb's intense desire for closeness with him is fuelled only by a wish to blackmail and to extort money.

[6] Katherine O'Donnell, 'Effeminate Edmund Burke and the Masculine Voice of Mary Wollstonecraft', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28: 7 (2019), 789-801 (p. 789).

[7] Ibid, p. 793.

order to draw a 'line between the aristocracy and the bourgeoise' (92). 'An important, recurrent, wishful gesture of this ideological construction was the feminization of the aristocracy as a whole', Sedgwick writes, 'in relation to the vigorous and productive values of the middle class' (93).

Five years after *Between Men*, Robert J. Corber published 'William Godwin and the Politics of Homophobia' (1990). This study remains arguably the most detailed examination of the relationship between Godwin's debut major novel and the virulently antisodomitical and antieffeminate socio-political climate of early 1790s Britain: Corber offers numerous close readings of Godwin's portrayal of the bond between teenager and master to demonstrate the ways in which he believes the author to have actively 'participate[d]' in that so-called 'homophobic discourse' (98) which *Between Men* had originally detailed. Corber argues that Caleb's unwaveringly obsessive desire to become close to Falkland and to possess his exclusive attention is fuelled by a desire to remedy the social inequalities between himself and his employer. His study proposes that Falkland's initial enjoyment and encouragement — but ultimate punishment — of the strong curiosity he has excited in the teenager to be representative of the elder man's 'feminizing control' in which he attempts to 'emasculate' Caleb 'by robbing [him] of [his] initiative and self-sufficiency' (87, 97). Caleb's eventual flight and subsequent attempts to thwart his pursuer is read by Corber as the middle-class man's strive to 'preserve his masculinity' (95) against the threatening, feminising, and ultimately destructive presence of aristocrat Falkland. More recent studies centralising Godwinian male-male passion have continued to prioritise *Caleb Williams*. Further, these have continued to examine the 1794 work chiefly in relation to post-Revolutionary antisodomitical and antieffeminate

attitudes, typically corroborating that Godwin's depiction of male-male passion, and male femininity, is contemptuous and cautionary.[8]

It is difficult to contend with these readings showcasing how Godwin's novel does appear to bring his readers' attention directly and deliberately to the destructive potentialities of close, exclusive, and unusually passionate relations between men, and of men who deviate from the rational, objective, and masculine. It is also difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to try and read *Caleb Williams* totally outside of such antisodomitical and antieffeminate attitudes that were so socially and politically present in England at this time — attitudes that appeared to constitute a significant aspect of Wollstonecraftian and Godwinian post-Revolutionary radicalism of the early 1790s more broadly.[9] Yet, while studies have continued to bring attention to the ways Godwin's novel appears to play upon contemporary associations with the sodomitical and the effeminate as a method of strengthening his and Wollstonecraft's anti-aristocratic intention, studies which bring attention to instances where Godwin can be seen to have directly attributed an actual, living, breathing, eroticised element to the relationship between his male characters are, by contrast, noticeably lacking.[10] Caleb's unwavering desire — while at first appearing to be fuelled by a passion that may have potentially transgressed the platonic boundaries of the homosocial — is repeatedly interpreted not as a sexual desire to

[8] See, for example, George E. Haggerty, '"The End of History": Identity and Dissolution in Apocalyptic Gothic' in *Queer Gothic* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 108-130. See also Max Fincher's study noted below.

[9] Andrew Elfenbein's *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) further documents how Britain saw 'a widespread crackdown of gender non-conformity in British society' at this time (110). All subsequent to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

[10] While Max Fincher's chapter '*Caleb Williams* and the Queer Sublime' does explore direct connections between *Caleb Williams* and the sodomitical, his focus is predominantly not upon reading a romantic relationship between Caleb and Falkland: rather, it is upon reading the novel in relation to how late-eighteenth century aristocratic men were often victims of false accusations of sodomy by those wishing only to blackmail and extort money from them. See Fincher, *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age: The Penetrating Eye* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 110-130.

become close to Falkland. Rather, it is read predominantly, if not only, as a desire to become close to his aristocrat employer's wealth, status, and power.[11] In turn, Falkland's enjoyment of Caleb's keen attention is repeatedly interpreted not as a sexual enjoyment. Rather, it is read only as the elder man's enjoyment of wielding said status, wealth, and power over his middle-class employee.[12] This is, moreover, not simply a coincidental lack present throughout Godwinian scholarship. Rather, it is perhaps described more appositely as a deliberate omission: critics conducting examinations of Caleb's and Falkland's wildly passionate relationship have consistently issued caution that — despite such same-sex intenseness — to actively read the passion within the 1794 novel as sexual, as Godwin recognising a specifically romantic passion between two men, to be ill-judged, specious, and anachronistic.[13]

The title of my project has perhaps already offered an indication as to the nature of the intervention this thesis will make. Over the course of my study, I explore how and why we must now re-evaluate these established — and, I believe, intrinsically fallacious — ways of (mis)reading and (mis)understanding the thematic of male-male passion which lies at the core of Godwin's fiction. I argue that Godwin was not simply playing upon vague, indirect associations with the sodomitical. Rather, in order that Godwinian scholarship can begin to move outside and beyond this lens of the 'homophobic' which has proven so continually dominant, I propose that Godwin now needs to be reread — and recognised — as an author who was actively considering and paying repeated attention to romantic relationships between members of the same sex. Much more than this, my study argues that Godwin

[11] See, for example, the afore-noted readings of *Caleb Williams* by Sedgwick, Corber, Haggerty, and Fincher.
[12] Corber's analysis of the character of Falkland in his article 'The Politics of Homophobia' provides perhaps the most detailed example of such a reading.
[13] I go on to address the issue of how we may (or may not) analyse portrayals of sex and sexuality in pre-twentieth century literature later on in this introduction, pp. 12-23.

brought attention to such relationships not to damn and to delegitimate, but, by complete contrast, to recognise and to advocate. Far from the Godwinian novel being documented as the instigator of a 'homophobic' and antisodomitical/antieffeminate literary trend emerging at the turn of the century, I reappraise the author's fiction as being one of the earliest novelistic examples of an author centralising — and celebrating — individuals whose romantic passions actively exceeded social, political, and, most immediately, gendered boundaries of normativity and acceptability.

My re-evaluation of Godwin builds upon the scholarship emerging at the close of the twentieth century which originally drew focus to constructions of gender and sexuality within Romanticism, and in particular Anne K. Mellor's *Romanticism and Gender* (1993), Tim Fulford's *Romanticism and Masculinity* (1999), and Andrew Elfenbein's *Romantic Genius* (1999). Mellor's study, the first to give a broad overview of Romantic writing from a feminist perspective, documented how 'gender-based Romantic ideologies are based not on biological sex but rather on socially constructed and therefore fluid systems of discourse'.[14] Fulford later examined how authors destabilised dominant ideologies of masculinity through questioning the notion of inherent distinctions between the female/feminine and male/masculine. His study explores how masculinity 'became unstable and contested'; authors recognised the 'potentially liberating' abilities to step outside traditional gendered roles, as they set about 'formulating new discourses' of gender free of the social and political constraints of dominant ideals.[15] Elfenbein documented how these dominant ideologies of gender were largely inextricable from ideologies of sexual desire within the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century socio-political

[14] Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Masculinity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 4.
[15] Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), p. 5, 17.

climate. 'Male sodomy and sapphism', he writes, came increasingly to be regarded and reviled as 'transgressions against natural gendered roles'.[16] *Romantic Genius* began to uncover how authors 'punctured [...] the conventional sex/gender system' specifically through their 'disruption of structured sexualities' and, in particular, their undamning portrayals of same-sex desire (153). Despite the prevalence of intense male-male relations within its plotline, *Caleb Williams* is surprisingly totally absent from Elfenbein's consideration of Romantic same-sex passion; indeed, Godwin only receives two very brief mentions across the entire study.[17] And, while Mellor and Fulford do pay some attention to Godwin within their studies, both appear markedly hesitant to incorporate him within this community of Romantic writers who were actively challenging the constraints of traditional gender roles.[18] For Mellor, while *Caleb Williams* 'calls into question the masculine code', she argues Godwin does so only 'in the name of the common man' and not in any way connected with 'gender transformation' (9) — a reading which lends support to Sedgwick's and Corber's previous linking of Godwin's portrayal of male-male passion only with those antieffeminate, antisodomitical, and anti-aristocratic attitudes.[19]

My project argues that, in order to now more fully appreciate the nuanced ways in which Godwin portrays disruptive passions which exceed normative gender boundaries, we must now re-evaluate him as an author who was actively challenging

---

[16] *Romantic Genius*, p. 19. His study traces how this notion of same-sex desire as a gender transgression was not so prevalent in the late-seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries, noting how men could have 'sex with boys without losing their manliness' (ibid).
[17] Godwin appears in passing in *Romantic Genius* firstly in a discussion about educational reform and later in a reference to his role as Wollstonecraft's husband (p. 37, 129).
[18] Fulford documents how Godwin did envision a future state in which 'men were free from prejudices' associated with the dominant ideals of masculinity which directly limited freedom of expression. Yet, in his discussion of how Wollstonecraft worked to formulate new forms of gender outside the boundaries of the female/feminine and male/masculine, Fulford notes that: 'Godwin, for all his own radicalism, seems to have been unable either to find the new language [of gender] for which Wollstonecraft had been searching or to understand the significance of her struggle' (p. 77-78).
[19] That is, Mellor, in a similar manner to Sedgwick and Corber, reads *Caleb Williams* as an anti-aristocratic novel which is most immediately concerned with arguing for the rights of the middle-class.

and rethinking dominant ideologies of gender and sexuality at this time. Moreover, I propose Godwin to be one of the first Romantic authors to pay keen, repeated, and perpetually advocative attention to the thematic of romantic same-sex passions across his fiction. In doing so, I aim to expand our appreciation and understanding of how the Romantics began to formulate these new, expansive, and non-deterministic understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality that the studies of Mellor, Fulford, and Elfenbein originally drew focus to. While my thesis functions initially as a re-evaluation of Godwin's treatment of male-male relationships, it concurrently re-evaluates Godwin's influence upon the writing of those individuals to whom he was connected: through exploring how Godwinian same-sex passion and gender non-conformity is presented in his novels as advocative and celebratory, we can in turn explore the ways in which his path-breaking fiction directly inspired those writers within his circle to similarly pay attention to the kinds of radical, experimental, and expansive modes of sexuality and gender first witnessed within Godwin's own novels. Across this thesis, I examine how Godwin's work can be seen to have helped initiate this radical rethinking of sexuality and gender in the early-1790s that would then proliferate through and beyond the Godwin-Shelley circle over the next four decades. While I will attend to the work of some of the authors listed within Sedgwick's aforementioned subset of Godwin-inspired novels, it is my primary intention to explore new or understudied connections between the author and his fellow writers. In doing so, we can move away from Godwin and his contemporaries' entrenchment within this 'homophobic' circle. We can instead begin to build an alternative picture of the network of authors who were, by contrast, inspired by Godwin to recognise and celebrate those individuals whose passions and desires transgressed the narrow boundaries of social and political acceptability.

These aims of my project may, at first, seem grandiose, given the numerous Godwinian studies that have definitively concluded the reverse in relation to the author's fiction, influence, and legacy.[20] The rereading offered by this thesis runs directly opposite to Alex Gold Jr.'s widely impactful study 'It's Only Love: The Politics of Passion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*' (1977). This was the first ever study to focus exclusively upon the treatment of same-sex passion within Godwin's fiction, and proved directly influential to Sedgwick's study of Godwin and his 'homophobic' novelistic influence that would emerge eight years later.[21] While, unlike Sedgwick and her successors, Gold Jr. does not draw direct or deliberate comparisons between *Caleb Williams* and the antisodomitical/antieffeminate, his study nonetheless argues that Godwin's presentation of 'exclusive dependencies' between men is shown by the author only to 'threaten to render passionate and exclusive the social instincts of rational regard and independent dignity', as he concludes: 'in *Caleb Williams* and recurrently through the rest of his career', Godwin presents male-male passion 'as a regressive, disruptive, and pathogenic distemper […] with the disastrous consequences his novels detail'.[22]

I certainly do not intend to contest this idea that the author's presentation of male-male passion — and, in turn, of men who deviate from the rational, objective, and masculine gender ideology — is destructive. Instead, I call for an about-turn in how we interpret and appreciate precisely why the author presents these thematics in this way. I concur with the influential arguments put forward by Gold Jr., Sedgwick, Corber, Haggerty, and Fincher that, within Godwin's fiction, close, same-sex bonds

[20] I refer here to those previously mentioned studies by Sedgwick, Corber, Fincher, and Haggerty, which all similarly appear to conclude that Godwin wrote to warn his readers about the inherent dangers of passionate, exclusive, and deeply-felt personal relationships which transgress the boundaries of normativity and acceptability.
[21] See Sedgwick's discussion of Gold Jr.'s study in *Between Men*, p. 16.
[22] Gold Jr., pp. 153-155.

do take the form of damaging reconfigurations of male/masculine homosocial relations with the subverting potential to throw social order into disarray. But, instead of treating such disarray as intrinsically 'homophobic' — that is, as Godwin depicting same-sex passion as a root cause of social ruin which must then be remedied as an essential means to restore a civilised and correct gendered order — I instead propose that Godwin wrote to *expose* the inherent problems of this antisodomitical and antieffeminate socio-political climate of his era: I explore how he would repeatedly achieve this by delineating the ways in which such desires and passions are inevitably made ruinous within the ideological male/masculine boundaries of this restrictive and oppressive culture.

Godwin's protagonists repeatedly find themselves torturously at odds with their assigned roles as husband, father, son, heir, man, and so forth, within a political, social, and familial order. After the troubling realisation of their inability to perform the masculine duties repeatedly enforced upon them by their parents, guardians, father-in-laws, siblings, children, or society more generally, each protagonist comes to understand these roles to be unfulfilling, ill-fitting, and restrictive. The attempt to pursue their ineluctable need for same-sex closeness is repeatedly depicted by Godwin as dependent on first having to attempt to break free from these prescribed roles. His novels consistently document the ways in which male-desiring, gender non-conforming men perceive themselves in relation to this desire, and the author delineates the impact of this to their perceived place within a familial, social, and broader political landscape. His protagonists' perceptions of themselves and their desires take on myriad forms, from self-hatred and despair, to agonising cravings and sensations of intolerable incompleteness, to glimpses of hope, and even utopian imaginings. Such numerous, diverse explorations of passions between men are manifold, but I believe they can be grouped as one: they each

scrutinise the experience of having a deep-rooted desire that falls far beyond the boundaries of familial, social, and moral acceptability — and beyond the boundaries of that which was defined as normal or natural within the political regimes of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.

My study therefore re-evaluates the passionate male-male relations within Godwin's fiction not as inherently and negatively destructive. Rather, I see Godwin as presenting such passions as having been limited and destructed by the socio-political climate under which their male participants are trying — but ultimately failing — to live and to love. I concur with Gold Jr. that the author characteristically presents male-male passion as this 'disruptive and pathogenic distemper'. But I argue that this same-sex passion only manifests itself as such because of its inability to be freely expressed, explored, and experienced. Instead of the author being seen only to reaffirm a sanctity to an already established social order that must be perpetually protected from the inherent threat of sexual and gender transgression, I see these disruptive male-male relations witnessed within Godwin's fiction as productive subversions. I argue that they function as interrogations and radical reimaginings of what liveable social relations between men, and humans more generally, could and should be: but which, within the virulently antisodomitical and antieffeminate reality of Godwin's day, can ultimately never be. It is this exposure of the oppressive, restrictive, and ultimately destructive socio-political influence wielded upon individual agency to love and to live freely which I argue to be the defining aspect of Godwinian male-male passion. Moreover, I argue this to be the reason why his novels proved so influential to the work of numerous individuals to whom he was connected, and who would similarly pay remarkably keen attention to this thematic of intense, exclusive, deeply-involved, but ultimately hopeless and ruinous, same-sex passion.

In order to now more comprehensively set out this re-evaluative approach to Godwin, to further justify why such an approach is needed, and to outline the broader cross-disciplinary contributions this project will in turn make, it is necessary to first of all pinpoint the specific reasons why critics have repeatedly been so intent on examining the author's fiction and his influence through this lens of the 'homophobic'. In turn, I outline how my study will respond to each of these: I build a case as to why and how this thesis's re-evaluation will guide us to appreciate and understand not only Godwin's detailed exploration of passions between men — but his influence, legacy, and afterlife within (and beyond) Romantic studies more broadly.

THE QUESTION OF (SAME-SEX) SEXUALITY

In *Between Men,* Sedgwick asks: 'why should the different shapes of the homosocial continuum be an interesting question? Why should it be a *literary* question?' (5). Her answer, at least in relation to the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, is that it helps us, as modern readers, to observe 'the changing meaning and importance of homophobia in England [...] treat[ing] homophobia not most immediately as an oppression of homosexual men, but as a tool for manipulating the entire spectrum of male bonds, and hence the gender system as a whole' (16). She pinpoints this as 'the paranoid Gothic tradition in the novel' and documents *Caleb Williams* as spearheading what *Between Men* outlines as this new subset of novels offering the most visible — but nonetheless only tangential — connections to same-sex eroticism within the literature of this era.

The paranoid Gothic, as per *Caleb Williams*, is consistently driven by destructively passionate male-male relationships, and consistently characterised by

themes including desire, obsession, violence, and/or even murder. Sedgwick, and numerous Sedgwickian readings following *Between Men*, argue these passions to be indicative only of the intense 'panic' men would have felt towards simply the idea of potentially becoming too close to another man in ways that would transgress the social and moral boundaries of acceptability inextricably interwoven within the patriarchal structures so dominant at this time (116). The argument underpinning *Between Men*'s examination of these late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century novels is that, if we are to remain historically accurate, we should only ever be focused upon tracing the ways in which authors reflected the contemporary anxieties, fears, and/or resentments associated with passions that transgressed the boundaries of the male/masculine — as opposed to striving to locate or prove the irrefutable existence of 'homosexual men' within such works.

Such a stance is, on the one level, certainly justified. As *Between Men* is so useful in documenting, to sustain patriarchy, the ideology of male/masculine has, for centuries, needed to be continually affirmed and reaffirmed as intrinsically separate from, and dominant over, the ideology of female/feminine. These systems of power have historically related directly to the oppression and delegitimating of male-male sexual desire: the 'male-dominated kinship systems' integral to patriarchal structures (marriage, the nuclear family unit, and so forth) legitimate, as Sedgwick details, only male-female, procreative sexualities (20). Male masculinity within patriarchy is thus interlocked with men's desiring only of women. Male-male desire, in turn, wields that feminising potential that threatens the ideology of exclusive male dominance. Structural patriarchal homophobia represents a broader attempt to delegitimise and oppress the 'feminine in men' and to justify and maintain patriarchal control (ibid).

Yet, for Sedgwick, when we then turn attention to those 'paranoid' early Gothic novels of the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, modern readers

must be continually vigilant that — while authors could certainly be assumed to have imbibed contemporary anxieties and/or resentments towards same-sex relations that transgressed sexual and gendered boundaries of acceptability — we should not in turn assume that they could have possessed the capacity to conceive the idea of same-sex eroticism to a more complex notion of same-sex sexuality. 'Even motifs that might ex post facto look like homosexual thematics [...] even when presented in a context of intensities between men, nevertheless have as their *first* referent the psychology and sociology of prohibition and control', Sedgwick affirms. She thus concludes: 'the fact that it is about what we would today call "homosexual panic" means that the paranoid Gothic is specifically not about homosexuals or the homosexual' (116). Within *Between Men*, these early Gothic authors are seen to present any suggestions of same-sex eroticism only as this threat to be vanquished in order that social and patriarchal order be maintained. 'The Gothic novel crystallised for English audiences the terms of a dialectic between male homosexuality and homophobia, in which homophobia appeared thematically in paranoid plots', Sedgwick affirms. 'Not until the late-Victorian Gothic did a comparable body of homosexual thematics emerge clearly, however. In earlier Gothic fiction, the associations with male homosexuality were grounded most visibly in the lives of a few authors, and only rather sketchily in their works' (92). *Between Men* thus positions (the threat of) eroticised male-male desire in the novels of the early Gothic, and broader Romantic, era as all but inextricable from 'homophobia' — if, that is, such desire can even be said to exist in these works at all.[23] While Elfenbein's *Romantic Genius* clearly began to contest this given that his primary aim was to

[23] *Between Men* argues that we cannot trace novelistic examples of authors directly recognising the existence of same-sex eroticism (in ways independent of these indirect and tangential 'mechanisms of homophobia') until the late-Victorian. See pp. 91-93.

uncover 'the prehistory of a homosexual role' within Romanticism,[24] Godwin's all but total absence from Elfenbein's study did nothing to revise the author's already established reputation as this 'homophobic' novelist.

Through this Sedgwickian lens of reading the pre-Victorian paranoid Gothic, Godwin's depiction of male-male passion, and specifically that which is witnessed in the ill-fated bond between teenager and master within *Caleb Williams*, seemingly offers zero evidence of any positive — or even impartial — consideration or recognition of same-sex eroticism. Rather, Godwin, like Wollstonecraft, has been repeatedly regarded only as strategically capitalising on the increasingly prevalent antisodomitical and antieffeminate attitudes as a strategy of strengthening their shared anti-aristocratic agenda. I pause briefly here to note that Sedgwick and her successors list *Caleb Williams* as just one novel, and not Godwin's entire fictional and philosophical oeuvre, as consciously employing these so-described 'mechanisms of homophobia'. And, despite gesturing to 'the rest of his career', Gold Jr.'s study similarly prioritises focus upon the author's debut major novel.[25] That is to say, this continuing linking of Godwinian male-male passion only to 'homophobia', to a cautioning of bonds between men that become passionate and exclusive, and to a cautioning of men who transgress the ideological gendered boundaries, speaks more to the relatively and continuingly limited scholarship on Godwin's fiction than it does to any apparent issues with the otherwise hugely useful ideas put forward in *Between Men*. I argue that these studies are intrinsically restricted in what they can tell us about Godwin's continuing focus upon male-male passion, and upon men who

[24] This phrase is taken from the subtitle of Elfenbein's study.
[25] While Gold Jr. briefly pays attention to some of Godwin's other major novels within his study, the close analyses within 'It's Only Love' remain focused upon *Caleb Williams*.

transgress the male/masculine, more broadly across his long career — and outside of those few, brief years of early 1790s Britain.

Godwin, like Wollstonecraft, certainly could have alluded momentarily to aspects of the sodomitical and the effeminate as one tactic to strengthen their shared anti-aristocratic agenda in the immediate aftermath of the events unfolding in France. Yet, for Godwin, this oft-documented relationship between servant and master in *Caleb Williams* simply offers one window into what would eventually prove to be the author's comprehensive and consistent attention to the thematic of male-male passion across his career. To make any kind of totalizing assumptions or full conclusions about the author's work and his intentions based solely on this one (albeit most famous) novel is, I believe, crucially misguided: while emphasising the 1794 work's supposedly undeniably antisodomitical and antieffeminate core, critics have concurrently deigned to consider the ways in which the author would explore repeatedly the thematic of male-male passion in remarkable depth and detail over the long course of his numerous major novels.[26]

This scholarly neglect is, perhaps, not altogether unexpected. Throughout the twentieth and extending into the very early twenty-first centuries, the majority of Godwinian scholarship tended to pay minimal attention to, or even discount, the author's later work.[27] Theoretical interventions taking place in 2011 and 2021 saw Godwin specialists stress how scholarship on the author must consider him as having a significant and important career far beyond the late-eighteenth century.[28] In doing

[26] This limiting prioritisation of *Caleb Williams* from scholars exploring Godwinian male-male passion continues even into much more recent scholarship. See, for instance, the 2018 chapter 'The Abyss of Friendship in *Caleb Williams*' in George E. Haggerty, *Queer Friendship: Male Intimacy in the English Literary Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 92-108.
[27] Julie Carlson, 'Heavy Drama', in *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert M. Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 217-240 (p. 220).
[28] See *Godwinian Moments*, p. 4. See also *New Approaches to William Godwin: Forms, Fears, Futures*, ed. by Eliza O'Brien, Helen Stark and Beatrice Turner (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

this, we gain a more thorough and informed understanding of his ever-developing and evolving political philosophies, continuing as he did to write almost up until his death in 1836 at the age of 80. This much more expansive and considered approach is now required when it comes to how we (re)examine the thematics upon which this thesis is focused. This will allow us to move away from just *Caleb Williams*, and to move away from treating Godwinian male-male passion — and the male femininity to which it speaks within patriarchy — as representative only of post-Revolutionary antisodomitical and antieffeminate attitudes.

Across this thesis, I examine how Godwin's presentation of male-male passion and male femininity progresses and eventually transforms once we move out from and beyond the debut novel and the early 1790s. A very recent reappraisal of Mary Wollstonecraft's work by Dustin Friedman showcases how her subsequent treatment of male femininity was more complex — and more positive — than the aforementioned antisodomitical and antieffeminate appearance of her 1790 *Vindication*.[29] This thesis will trace a similarly important progression in the later novels of her husband: I document how same-sex passion evolves from the depressing, destructive, and ultimately dystopian bond originally witnessed with Caleb and Falkland in 1794, through to the defiant, irrepressibly hopeful, and ultimately utopian vision of male-male romantic love that would eventually be centralised by Godwin in his depiction of Julian's and Francesco's relationship in 1830's *Cloudesley*. Further, I show how examinations of the relationships of Reginald and Bethlem in *St. Leon* (1799), Casimir and the Marchioness in *Fleetwood*

[29] Dustin Friedman, 'Parents of the Mind: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Aesthetics of Productive Masculinity', *Studies in Romanticism*, 48: 4 (2009), 423-446. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text. I outline Friedman's reappraisal in more detail later in this introduction, pp. 24-25.

(1805),[30] and Charles and Clifford in *Mandeville* (1817) allow us to document the ever-developing — and advocative — approaches through which the author readdresses this thematic of intense passions that actively transgress boundaries of gendered acceptability. I simultaneously explore how, within each of these novels, we can uncover repeated, close connections to the fiction of Godwin's contemporaries that allow us to trace the increasingly prevalent ways in which his portrayal of same-sex passion and gender non-conformity can be seen to have directly interacted with and/or inspired those individuals within his circle.[31] Given this, while I will attend very briefly to *Caleb Williams* within my analyses, my study prioritises examinations of the comparatively much under-studied later works — some of which, despite the very recent resurgence of scholarship upon the author, have yet to receive detailed attention.[32]

While this repeated neglect of later Godwin is unsurprising, it nonetheless highlights a key question which critics working on this theme of male-male passion have yet to answer: would Godwin — a writer otherwise renowned specifically for his thought-changing anarchism and radicalism — have gone on to dedicate the next forty years and five major novels simply to support the kind of antisodomitical and antieffeminate attitudes that were already so socially and politically present in England during these years in which he was writing?[33] Or, as this thesis will now

[30] As will be outlined in the chapter summaries later in this introduction (pp. 35-40), while I centre the majority of my analyses upon same-sex passion, I will also consider how Godwin presents opposite-sex desire in *Fleetwood* in ways that similarly challenge gendered boundaries of acceptability and normativity in relation to romantic desire and love. For my analysis of Casimir Fleetwood's and the Marchioness's relationship, see chapter three, pp. 135-150.
[31] See the chapter summaries later in this introduction for an outline of the specific authors which I will be focusing upon within this thesis, pp. 34-39.
[32] I refer here mainly to 1830's *Cloudesley*, which, while mentioned very briefly in *Godwinian Moments* and *New Approaches to William Godwin*, has yet to receive detailed scholarly attention. See chapter four of this thesis for my analysis of same-sex love within this novel, pp. 185-198.
[33] For studies which document how the antisodomitical and the antieffeminate had a strong and continuous hold in Britain at this time, see Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982), Elfenbein's *Romantic Genius*, and Rictor Norton, *Homosexuality in*

begin to suggest, do we not need to begin to delve much deeper to examine exactly why Godwin was so recurringly invested in bringing his readers' attention to the intricacies of these passionate and transgressive male-male bonds, and in inviting readers into the minds of these individuals who wrestle with the experience of being consumed by the intense desires aroused within them specifically by a member of the same sex?[34] To make the assumption that Godwin — and the genre of the (paranoid) early Gothic more broadly — recurringly addressed these intense and intimate same-sex relationships in such close detail only as a means of confirming the kinds of attitudes which were already established within the socio-political is, I believe, inherently specious.[35]

The aim of my study is not necessarily to totally upend these established ways of reading Godwinian male-male passion, or of reading the paranoid Gothic. Remaining, like Sedgwick et al., continually aware of the ferocious — and indeed legalised — vitriol relentlessly targeted at sodomitical practices and gender non-conformity at this time is, quite clearly, an historically relevant practice and continuingly essential for any study aiming to objectively analyse authors' treatments of sexuality, gender, and/or any area(s) related to these.[36] I also concur with the

Eighteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook (2022), <https://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/index.htm> [accessed 3 October 2022].

[34] I clarify that my study is not intended to be a biographical reading of Godwin. I argue that within his novels we can uncover advocacy for same-sex romantic love. But this is not to say there is anything in the details of his life that suggest the author had a particular or personal interest in men who were exclusively sexually attracted to other men. While the author had a series of close, younger male friends throughout his later life, I do not believe it would be productive to be overly scrutinising or assumptive here.

[35] While, in more recent years, studies focusing upon same-sex desire and/or gender non-conformity within the early Gothic have begun to move away from the Sedgwickian paranoid theory — such as George E. Haggerty's *Queer Gothic* (2006) and Max Fincher's *Queering Gothic* (2007) — scholarship on Godwin has remained within the paranoid model.

[36] The Buggery Act 1533, which was later replaced by the Offences Against the Person Act 1828, saw the act of sodomy remain a capital offence until 1861. While the law was centred upon sodomy, sodomitical practices (extending even to presentations of overt femininity in men) were still in danger of being prosecuted under the Act(s). See Norton's *Homosexuality in Eighteenth Century England* for examples of these prosecutions.

aforementioned statement in *Between Men* about Godwin's fiction 'not [being] about homosexuals or the homosexual', since applying a twentieth century sexological definition to late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century writing would be — and has already proven to be — both problematic and ahistorical.[37]

Yet, I argue that the theory which lies at the core of the 'homophobic' paranoid reading of his fiction — namely, the assumption that we are unquestionably and essentially unable to trace any occurrence of authors actively recognising romantic relationships between members of the same sex in novels pre-dating the late-Victorian — to be a rather hasty (and contradictory) dismissal.[38] On the one hand, such a dismissal is understandable, arising as it most likely did as a direct consequence of the widely influential historicising work of Michel Foucault taking place in the twentieth century. *The History of Sexuality* famously pinpointed the year 1870 as the moment in history when eroticised same-sex relations transformed from being solely about sexual acts to become a type of sexual sensibility.[39] The late-nineteenth century, for Foucault, represented the origins of what would later come to be defined and categorised as homosexuality. In Foucauldian terms, conceptions of same-sex desire in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries were tied only to physical act and not to a more complex notion of sexuality. This scrutinising of history to locate specific paradigm shifts from an older to a modern way of thinking

---

[37] I refer mainly here to the misguided use of 'gay' to describe Percy Shelley in John Lauritsen, 'Hellenism and Homoeroticism in Shelley and his Circle', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 49: 3-4 (2005), 357-376 (pp. 358-359). For further examination of the problematic aspects of this study, see chapter three of this thesis, pp. 165-166.
[38] In suggesting this dismissal to be contradictory, I draw attention to how studies which have totally dismissed the existence of 'homosexuality' in pre-Victorian literature have simultaneously argued that 'heterosexuality' existed within the writing of this era, despite the fact that both sexological terms post-date the Romantic period. See, for instance, the discussion in *Between Men* in which Sedgwick argues that 'the paranoid Gothic is specifically not about homosexuals or the homosexual; instead, heterosexuality is by definition its subject' (116).
[39] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: Vintage, 1990), I, p. 43.

about sex/sexuality is similarly present in the work of Randolph Trumbach.[40] Such widely influential historicising subsequently brought about a noticeable tension within literary criticism as to how we should think about and analyse sexuality in work that predates the late-nineteenth century. While some critics paying attention to same-sex passion in this literature have similarly advised against assuming that writers could have conceived of anything akin to what we today understand as same-sex sexuality, others have counter-argued by striving to locate indisputable evidence to prove that same-sex sexual identities definitely existed in the later eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries.[41]

For the purposes of my re-evaluation of Godwin, I stress that I do not intend to align with either of these analytical standpoints. The notion that we should discount entirely the potential existence of (specifically same-sex) sexualities prior to the late-nineteenth century is assumptive and circumscriptive. And the theory central to this approach — that is, that such sexualities used to appear one way before suddenly transforming into a modern form — is reliant upon problematically simplified conceptions about the obviousness and definability of sexuality in the present day.[42] Yet, arguing for the undeniable existence of overt and defined same-sex sexual identities is potentially as problematic and limiting as discounting the idea that same-sex sexualities could have feasibly been recognised at this time. The identity politics dominating much of twentieth-century literary scholarship meant

[40] Randolph Trumbach, 'The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660-1750', in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989), pp. 129-140.
[41] Rictor Norton's *Myth of the Modern Homosexual* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 1997) offers perhaps the most vehement counter-argument to social constructionist approaches; Norton's study argues that defined and autonomous queer identities existed at this time.
[42] See Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008) for a discussion of how sexualities should not be assumed as being overt and defined in the modern day (pp. 44-47).

that examinations of same-sex passion in the literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were often plagued by such sexological terminology and rigid definitions of sexuality.[43] The idea that we should strive only to locate homosexuality or the homosexual role within this literature (or, indeed, strive only to deny their existence) does not allow us to appreciate the fluidity and complexity with which writers approached thinking about sexuality and sexual matters. In *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism* (2015), David Sigler has gone as far as to suggest that aspects of Romantic sexualities were potentially even too complex for modern critics to ever fully understand or appreciate, and Andrew Elfenbein previously affirmed that Romanticism possesses the 'power to unsettle the homosexual/heterosexual split that the twentieth century made so rigid'.[44] I concur that continuing to recognise this complexity is paramount if we are to work towards being able to more fully understand and appreciate presentations of sexuality and gender within the literature of this era.

The impact of these identity-driven approaches upon Godwinian studies — namely the preoccupation with disproving the existence of the 'homosexual' within the author's treatment of male-male passion, in conjunction with the listing of Godwin as instigating this paranoid and deliberately 'homophobic' literary trend — is not only to miss the nuance and depth of his depiction of same-sex relationships. It is, I propose, a disservice to the author, his influence, his legacy, and to appreciating the expansive ways in which Godwin and his circle recognised and celebrated the wealth and breadth of human sexualities and genders within their work. Given how

[43] Andrew Elfenbein has examined the limitations of this rigid, identity-focused approach towards reading Romantic sexualities in *Romantic Genius*, pp. 8-16.
[44] David Sigler, *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism: Gender and Psychoanalysis, 1753-1835* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), p. 16. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text. Andrew Elfenbein, 'Mary Wollstonecraft and the Sexuality of Genius', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 228-245 (p. 228).

my study aims to remedy these problematic and ahistorical identity-driven approaches to the author, I may have appeared to suggest that I will remain hesitant to explore connections between Godwin's treatment of same-sex passion and gender non-conformity with how we think about and theorise sexuality and gender in our present moment. This, however, could not be further from the culminating aim of my re-evaluation, as I will now outline in the third and final section of this introduction.

QUEER GODWIN

Thus far, I have suggested why scholarship now needs to move beyond *Caleb Williams* and the early 1790s, and into the ensuing four decades of Godwin's later life, later novels, and authorial influence and connections. In doing so, we can expand our appreciation of the radical understandings of gender and sexuality present within his fiction and within the Romantic period more broadly. The re-evaluative approach to Godwin offered by this thesis has potential to widen our scope of interest much further: specifically, into the very late twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. By recognising the complexity and expansiveness with which Godwin and those whom he influenced wrote in relation to sexuality and gender, we can, I argue, recognise the ways in which Godwin's anarchistic writing can be seen to have prefigured key aspects of queer theory that would emerge over 150-years after the author's death.

This inviting of a conversation between present and past may, at first, seem like a misstep, especially given the way in which I have just put forth the numerous reasons as to why applying same-sex sexological terminologies and notions of same-sex sexual identities which post-dated the Romantic era to be ill-advised and likely anachronistic. And, while queer theory arose largely as a deconstructive

counterreaction to these fixed, identity-driven conceptions of sexuality and gender that dominated much of the twentieth century,[45] several Romantic scholars have nonetheless issued similar caution to the notion of exploring connections between the era and the modern-day work of queer theorists. In his afore-noted re-evaluation of Wollstonecraft, Dustin Friedman only very tentatively suggests that her writing could potentially be observed to 'predict' the gender theories of Judith Butler that would later emerge in the early 1990s.[46] Friedman's study offers a persuasive rereading of Wollstonecraft's treatment of male-male passion and male femininity to counter the previously-held assumption dominant within Romantic scholarship that she wrote directly and deliberately in support of the antisodomitical and the antieffeminate.[47] He reappraises her work as actively supportive — and not deliberately critical — of men who transgressed the sexual and gendered boundaries of the male/masculine.[48] Despite appearing to suggest connections between Wollstonecraftian thought and Butlerian theory, he ultimately advises against doing so. 'I hesitate to ascribe to Wollstonecraft a theory that, given the intellectual climate of the day, would have been unthinkable or unsayable', he affirms (430). Friedman's subsequent 2019 study *Before Queer Theory* — which traces a history of queer thinking and theorisation as far back as the Victorian — continues this hesitancy to journey to the preceding decades to consider potential earlier connections between

[45] Queer theory, as a mode of critical practice, emerged out of women's studies and queer studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Queer theorists exposed how a notion of normal or natural sexualities and genders were social and cultural constructions. Their work destabilised essentialism (the notion of certain attributes as essential to identity) through an interrogation of categories, binaries, and languages.
[46] 'Parents of the Mind', p. 430.
[47] In the above-noted study, Friedman demonstrates how closer scrutiny of the second *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and *Maria: or, the Wrongs of Woman* (1798) allows us to observe that Wollstonecraft understood the need 'to recognise, represent, and theorize the political and ethical importance of non-heterosexual identities' (446).
[48] See, particularly, Friedman's discussion in 'Parents of the Mind' of how Wollstonecraft's 'emphatic redefinition of women as rational beings necessarily entails a rethinking of masculinity' (427-428).

queer theory and the Romantics, a standpoint which Sigler's *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism* similarly appears to adopt.[49]

Friedman's re-evaluation of Wollstonecraft highlighted the importance of countering the assumption that authors of the era would not have been able to conceive of same-sex sexualities. More than this, his work demonstrated the necessity of doing so in order that we revise the previously-held (mis)readings attached to their work, and, in turn, reconsider their legacy and place within Romantic studies. Yet his reluctance to then further explore this as a connection between past and present, to argue for a lineage from Wollstonecraft to Butler, is something I believe to be a missed opportunity to recognise not only Wollstonecraft's, but Romanticism's, integral place within a broader genealogy of queer, counter-cultural thinking. I suggest that the repeated reluctance to entertain prefigurations of present-day theoretical approaches to queer sexualities and genders within the literature of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries to be an unnecessarily confining approach. Labelling the practice of tracing queer theory's possible origins in Romanticism as always already anachronistic underestimates the relevance of Romantic thinking to the queer present and limits the potential to document queer genealogies. For the purposes of my re-evaluation, I propose that the presentation of same-sex passion and gender non-conformity in Godwin's writing, and in the writing of those connected to him and/or inspired by him, can be reread not only outside of the 'homophobic' and 'paranoid' lens dominating early Gothic scholarship, but outside and beyond the Romantic era itself. That is to say,

[49] Dustin Friedman, *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019). In *Sexual Enjoyment*, Sigler suggests queer theory may actually be too restrictive to be read alongside Romanticism, writing: 'the range of sexualities within British Romanticism is much broader than the usual binaries, even those of queer theory, can accommodate' (16).

this thesis actively considers the interrelations between queer past and queer present.

I propose that the writings of Godwin and his circle speaks so closely to queer theory because they offer very early examples of authors' recognition of, and advocacy for, sexualities and genders which transgress ideological boundaries. More than this, they function to expose and de-essentialise the ways in which these boundaries of acceptability and normativity are created and sustained within social and familial structures, to then in turn challenge and subvert their oppressive and restrictive confines. I explore how Godwin and his contemporaries work towards envisioning a future world in which individuals are not subjected to externally-imposed hindrances upon their ability to freely express and explore deeply-felt passions. While I centre my usage of queer for much of this project primarily upon same-sex romantic desire, to most effectively uncover the queer connections between the writing of Godwin, his circle, and modern-day theoretical approaches, I expand this to a much broader definition of queer that incorporates the ways of loving and living otherwise beyond the gendered boundaries of marital, familial, social, and political normativity and acceptability.[50]

By actively pursuing and not shutting down potential connections between queer past and queer present, my study aims to bring attention to both what queer theory can do for Romanticism, as well as what Romanticism can do for queer theory. David Sigler's afore-noted reluctance to consider connections between Romanticism and queer theory was rooted in his belief that 'the range of sexualities within British Romanticism' was potentially too broad and too complex for queer theory to be able to 'accommodate' (16). I suggest an alternative way to approach

[50] See further discussion about how my usage of queer within this thesis expands in this way later in this introduction, pp. 30-34.

this: I propose that the complexity, diversity, and expansiveness of Romantic authors' understandings of sexuality and gender has within it the potential to help expand and/or reconsider aspects of queer thinking and theorisation in our present moment. In chapter four of this thesis, I examine how Godwin's presentation of same-sex love within the novel *Cloudesley* may guide us to respond to the recent criticisms within queer scholarship levelled at both the utopian and antiutopian approaches to queer love and queer futurities, exploring how Godwinian thought can potentially unite and strengthen both theoretical standpoints.[51]

In doing so, my project is indebted to the work of queer scholars who have previously addressed the potential anachronisms and/or controversies within this kind of study, including the challenges — but also the importance — of discussing queerness across time. In *Comparatively Queer: Interrogating Identities Across Time and Cultures* (2010), Jarrod Hayes, Margaret R. Higonnet, and William J. Spurlin deftly observe that 'queer' should always be 'considered a concept capable of crossing both time and cultures' as a way to 'bridge both historical and [...] breach disciplinary boundaries that might otherwise inhibit'.[52] In *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (2007), Heather Love advocates specifically for examining portrayals of same-sex love and gender non-conformity within the work of authors who 'lived "before" the invention of modern homosexuality'.[53] For Love, by examining queer sexualities and genders that precede the sexological, we gain the potential to uncover a 'rich archive of queer historical structures of feeling'. This, in turn, allows us to expand our understanding of a 'queer historiography' (24) far

[51] See the chapter summaries later in this introduction for a more detailed outline of the ways in which I will explore this, pp. 36-37.
[52] *Comparatively Queer: Interrogating Identities Across Time and Cultures*, ed. by Jarrod Hayes, Margaret R. Higonnet, and William J. Spurlin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 2.
[53] Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 18. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

beyond the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries, with Love's study feeling backward as far as the late-nineteenth century.[54]

Love explains how queer scholars would typically 'dismiss' or 'deny the significance' of these earlier portrayals of same-sex love and gender non-conformity precisely because of the perceived 'toxicity' of their characteristic unrelenting depressiveness. 'The history of Western representation is littered with the corpses of gender and sexual deviants,' she writes, who so 'often end up dead; [or] if they manage to survive, it is on such compromised terms that it makes death seem attractive' (1, 3). With queer scholars proving continually reluctant to further the painful 'stigma' surrounding the link between queerness and loss, these darker, later nineteenth-century accounts were, as Love documents, all but ignored: and, with it, the ability to expand our understanding of a queer literary genealogy.[55] *Feeling Backward* thus enacted a critical intervention to argue for the pressing need to embrace and explore both queerness' historical connections to the negative, the dark, the impossible, and the tragic, as well as considering how such portrayals can inform our understandings of queer within the present moment.[56] Such an undertaking, Love argues further, would remedy the way in which the authors her study focuses upon had wrongly been 'held accountable for the realities they represented and often end[ed] up being branded as internally homophobic' (4) — something not dissimilar to critics' aforementioned branding of Godwin, and the dark and destructive plotline of *Caleb Williams*, as having 'participated' in that 'homophobic discourse'. Given that *Feeling Backward* journeys as far back as the later Victorian, my study builds upon

[54] Love focuses her study upon authors including Willa Cather, Walter Pater, Sylvia Townsend Warner, and Marguerite Antonia Radclyffe Hall.
[55] Love explains further that, while 'queer critics take exception to the idea of a linear, triumphalist view of history, we are in practice deeply committed to the notion of progress' (3), a notion which these often painful and tragic depictions are seen to disrupt or undermine.
[56] See Love's discussion of the 'continuities between the bad gay past and the present' (27).

this to expand that which Love termed as the queer 'archive of feeling' (4) into the Romantic era through a queer re-evaluation of the fiction of Godwin and his circle.

To clarify, this is not to say that there are not already studies in existence that explore 'queer Romanticisms'.[57] It is to say that, since Michael O'Rourke and David Collings first introduced this phrase in their special issue journal of the same name in 2004, research in this area remained minimal for many years. O'Rourke and Collings deplored what they termed as the 'rampantly hetero' Romanticism 'of the academy' at that time (1); readdressing this gap in scholarship almost two decades later, Talia M. Vestri documented in 2019 how 'the scene' within Romantic studies had unfortunately 'little changed'.[58] 'This is not for lack of interest', Vestri clarified, highlighting the presence of two panels on queerness at the annual meeting of *NASSR* in 2019 compared to just one in 2018, and none in 2017 and 2016.[59] Scholarly interest in this area has, most welcomely, continued to grow in very recent years. In *Romantic Vacancy* (2019), Kate Singer uncovers 'non-binary' approaches to gender within Romanticism: her study illustrates how the era's writers not only query and deconstruct ideological gender categories, but, much more than this, Singer explores how writers actively 'create new ontologies that move beyond' such categories to instead open up 'a non-binary landscape of transgressive figurative motion'.[60] Michael E. Robinson's 2021 study *The Queer Bookishness of Romanticism* uncovers connections between queerness, literary materiality, and the history of

[57] I quote here from the 2004 special issue journal of the same name. See Michael O'Rourke and David Collings, 'Introduction: Queer Romanticisms: Past, Present, and Future', *Romanticism on the Net*, 36-37 (2004) <https://doi.org/10.7202/011132ar>.
[58] Talia M. Vestri, 'Where's Queer?', *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 68 (2019), 185-187 (p. 185).
[59] Ibid, p. 186.
[60] Kate Singer, *Romantic Vacancy: The Poetics of Gender, Affect, and Radical Speculation* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2019), p. xv, xviii. See pp. 33-34 of this introduction for an overview of how I connect my study to Singer's; I go on to examine how we can explore non-binary landscapes within Godwin's portrayal of gender transgression in chapter one of this thesis, pp. 74-77; and in chapter two, pp. 102-103.

homophobia.[61] And, the following year, the joint NASSR/BARS 'New Romanticisms' 2022 conference featured both a 'Queering Romanticism' as well as an 'LGBTQ+ Romanticism' panel.[62] While O'Rourke's and Collings's wish to see the publication of a major reassessment style study entitled '*Queering the Romantics* or *Queering Romanticism*' still has yet to materialise,[63] Romantic scholarship has nonetheless continued to offer exciting indications of an increasing interest in exploring queer in numerous ways within the field.

In their respective calls to action, O'Rourke/Collings and Vestri defined their understanding of queer Romanticisms on somewhat differing terms. While the former defined queer as 'a prehistory of the homosexual to be found in the Romantic period' (5), the latter defined queer as 'less the hunt for same-sex desires and non-normative sexual identities' and more as uncovering 'queer historiography, queer ecology, queer temporality, queer affect, or queer kinship' within Romanticism.[64] In 2014, O'Rourke partially revised this way in which queer was defined within their study, concurring that 'we do need a queer Romanticisms' which 'would not solely be about sexuality'.[65] I concur with the observation that our understanding of 'queer' within Romantic studies may potentially be limited when it is explored predominantly in relation to same-sex or non-normative desire. Yet, I also argue that analysing these forms of desire within Romanticism — and certainly within the writing of Godwin and his circle — offers a way for us to then trace, and make wider

[61] Michael E. Robinson, *The Queer Bookishness of Romanticism: Ornamental Community* (Washington: Lexington, 2021). Robinson's study focuses upon the transgressive role that the buying and collecting of books played in the lives and works of the Romantics.
[62] 'New Romanticisms' (Edge Hill University, 2-5 August 2022). I discuss this conference in more detail in the conclusion to this thesis, pp. 289-290.
[63] O'Rourke and Collings, para. 2 of 41.
[64] Ibid, para. 5 of 41; Vestri, p. 185.
[65] This quotation is taken from a comment which O'Rourke posted on Vestri's 2014 NASSR blog post in which she had originally discussed the lack of work of queer Romanticisms at that time. See Vestri, p. 185.

observations about, the forms of queerness listed by Vestri; and, in particular for my project, queer kinship.

As I will shortly set out more comprehensively in the chapter breakdown, the opening sections of this thesis will be focused upon uncovering the ways in which Godwin actively paid repeated attention to recognising and celebrating romantic relationships between men. Interwoven with these early analyses, and coming to then be centralised within the latter parts of my study, I demonstrate how the author's repeated and keen attentiveness to same-sex passion signals the broader and more pervasive political project at work within and running throughout the five-decade span of his writing: exploring the fluidity, multiplicity, and capability of sexualities and genders beyond the ideological boundaries of the marital and familial units. Recent work by Godwinian specialists has started to bring attention to the ways in which Godwin, in a comparable manner to Wollstonecraft, theorised the marital and the familial as a direct extension of the political. These domestic units were characteristically treated by Wollstonecraft as a perpetuation of state control and a site in which political regimes could be reinforced — and this is a view which Godwin is now considered to have shared.[66] Both Wollstonecraft and Godwin have, moreover, been shown to have possessed a collective awareness that an interrogation of familial ideology was one of — if not the — most important step in bringing about the radical political reform they both desired, and in progressing towards the egalitarian society they both believed so passionately in.[67] As part of my study's intention to re-evaluate the previously outlined connection between Godwin and the

[66] See Nancy E. Johnson, 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin: Dialogues', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 101-116.
[67] Eileen Hunt Botting examines the integral role the domestic played in the political writing of Wollstonecraft, and specifically how she regarded the family as the theoretical foundation from which she envisioned her egalitarian vision of society. See *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rosseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2006).

antisodomitical/antieffeminate, this thesis functions to illustrate how recognising the multiplicity of sexualities and genders beyond domestic roles now needs to be recognised as a key part of Godwin's broader advocacy for political — and familial — change and progress.

My queer reading of Godwin therefore connects to that which Richard C. Sha defines as 'perverse Romanticism' in his 2009 study of the same name.[68] Sha argues that Romantic writers can be seen to have understood the productive potentialities of human sexualities and relationalities beyond familial/marital ideology; and, more specifically, beyond the confines of the procreative.[69] 'Writers linked eroticism with a mutuality that had the form of purposiveness instead of with reproductive function', writes Sha (1). 'The fact that Romantic writers linked sexual perversity with liberation meant that this purposiveness had purpose: to imagine what mutuality and equality might look like' beyond the gendered, procreative roles assigned to women and men within the familial and marital constellation (4). 'Romanticism's interest in perversion suggests a far more radical politics', he continues. 'The Romantic period understood what sexuality might gain [...] the suspension or disregard of reproductive purpose allowed sexuality to rise above brute instinct and become idealized in terms of love, [...] equality, and mutuality' (6, 7).

Building upon Sha's study, which does not pay attention to Godwin,[70] I uncover the ways in which the philosopher, and those authors whom he inspired, recognised the productive potentialities of human-human connection beyond those roles and relationalities associated only with the sexually reproductive — allowing us

[68] Richard C. Sha, *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.
[69] Sha's study is focused upon the work of William Blake, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Lord Byron.
[70] Godwin is all but absent from Sha's study, with just two passing mentions given to the philosopher in the introduction during discussions of Wollstonecraft and Percy Shelley, p. 7, 24.

to observe how their fiction queries and queers sexuality, gender, and, in turn, the familial regimes which originate and enforce ideological roles. Across my analyses, I demonstrate how Godwinian same-sex passion wields a threefold political radicalism within his novels. Firstly, to argue for the rights of each individual to freely and fully express and explore their desires unchecked by oppressive and restrictive external influence. Secondly, to counter the gendered ideologies interwoven with political regimes. Thirdly, to envision how a redefinition of the family was the key site for bringing about the more expansive forms of human-human kinship Godwin's novels repeatedly call for in order that individuals are liberated from the pre-determined and destructive gendered categories that his own series of protagonists repeatedly and tragically fall victim to. Through uncovering how the author recognised the subversive, expansive, and unrestrained space beyond the confines of marital and familial normativity as a productive site to envision human potentiality beyond gender categories, my queer re-evaluation of Godwin also connects with Kate Singer's *Romantic Vacancy*: I examine how, within Godwin's fiction, this space beyond gender categories functions in a comparative way to that which Singer describes as vacancy's non-binary 'staging ground [...] to figure bodies, emotions, and genders as continuously shifting' which allowed the Romantics to move 'through and then beyond those categories'.[71]

Queer Romanticisms, then, insofar as I broadly define this within my thesis, is most certainly incorporative of romantic relationships between men. But it is focused more broadly upon the ways in which Godwin and those writers connected to him worked to de-naturalise the normativity granted exclusively to those sexualities and genders that fell within the acceptable boundaries of the marital and the familial. I

[71] *Romantic Vacancy*, p. xvii, 2.

examine how they worked to expose the ways in which only certain forms of sexualities gain legitimacy — an appearance of being normal or natural — within the socio-political. These repeated explorations of same-sex passion within their works operate most expressly to question and rethink the privilege granted to the male-female and the procreative in order to reconceptualise sexuality — and in turn gender and kinship — in progressive and non-deterministic ways. My study will therefore function not only as a re-evaluation of Godwinian male-male passion. It will function as a re-evaluation of the ways in which we understand Godwin's connection to and influence upon those writers close to him, as a further call for queer Romanticisms' integral place within a broader counter-cultural genealogy of radical sexualities, genders, and conceptions of kinship and the family, and, in so doing, it will connect queer theory to a literary past beyond the Victorian.

*

As indicated by the title of my project, this thesis will be divided into three parts: 'Queer Desire', 'Queer Love', and 'Queer Kinship'. Each of these will then be split into two chapters.

In 'Queer Desire', I begin by examining Godwin's advocacy for the free, unhindered expression of desires that transgress the ideological confines of the female/feminine, male/masculine. Chapter one, 'A Queer (Un)Being: William Godwin and the Productive Failure to Perform Masculinity', demonstrates how close scrutiny of Godwin's first post-*Caleb Williams* novel *St. Leon* reveals how he — in ways redolent of Wollstonecraft and her second *Vindication* (1792) — possessed a keen awareness of the potentialities lying beyond the boundaries of the marital and familial units: and, more specifically, beyond the roles prescribed to their female and

male members. I uncover how Godwin encouraged readers to pursue their deeply-felt passions and desires even (or especially) if these transgressed domestic, and more broadly social, boundaries of normativity and acceptability. By then tracing connections between *St. Leon* and Jack Halberstam's theory of queer unbeing in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), I uncover how Godwin's portrayal of Reginald de St. Leon's wilful failure to perform his prescribed domestic roles fosters a productive, ungendered, and reinvigorating space for the expansion and expression of his extramarital, extrafamilial — and ultimately same-sex — desires. Chapter two, '"His Closet": Godwin, Joanna Baillie, and the (Un)Knowability of Same-Sex Desire', examines how those subversive, same-sex passions witnessed in the latter stages of *St. Leon* come to be centralised and developed in a much more pervasive way in Godwin's *Mandeville*. I document how this novel, a work directly inspired by Joanna Baillie's *De Monfort* (1798), can be revalued as a very early example of the closet in relation to the hiddenness, concealment, and unknowability of queer desire.[72] I examine how Baillie and Godwin delineate the debilitating ways in which their protagonists' deeply-rooted and never-satiated same-sex feelings are perpetually unable to be expressed, explained, or made known. By tracing the ways in which these portrayals prefigure Lee Edelman's theory of the queer abject in *No Future* (2004), I demonstrate how Baillie and Godwin repeatedly destabilise the notion of an essential unnaturalness to same-sex eroticised desire: and how their works function as a warning of the intrinsic destructivity wielded upon the self when one's innermost desires are oppressed, delegitimated, and forced to remain closeted within a social, political, and gendered order.

[72] I re-evaluate Eve Sedgwick's claim that we can trace a history of the same-sex closet only as far back as the late Victorian, to instead suggest that *Mandeville* offers a much earlier example of a closeted, same-sex sexuality being actively recognised by an author. See chapter two of this thesis, p. 83.

Part two, 'Queer Love', builds upon my analysis of Godwin's advocacy for the expression of deeply-felt desires that transgress sexual and gendered normativity and acceptability to explore this more broadly in relation to future-oriented Godwinian philosophies of love. Chapter three, 'Beyond the (Gendered) Body: Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Romantic Love', illustrates how Godwin came to theorise the ideal human-human romantic love union as, on the one level, bodily — that is, as comprising in part an eroticised desire between its two parties. Yet, concurrently, he understood romantic love, realised to its full potential, as more than just a momentary physical connection of those bodies. My analysis traces how he stressed the importance that such intimate human-human connection must then extend beyond the immediate, beyond the body, beyond the bodily, and be fortified by an ongoing, reciprocated, and exclusive emotional and intellectual alliance forged between its two participants. I explore how Godwin's portrayal of the (im)materiality of the body/bodily in relation to romantic love witnessed within his novel *Fleetwood* draws numerous close comparisons with Wollstonecraftian reimaginings of male-female love witnessed in the 1792 *Vindication*. In turn, I argue that Godwin ultimately came to envision an ideal romantic union as nondependent on any essential requirement for a certain biological sex of love's two participants: but, rather, only that the union served both a romantic and pragmatic function to equally abate and/or satiate the individual needs, shortcomings, and indeed desires, of the two complementary individuals comprising the union. This chapter thus serves to document Godwin's advocacy for the freedom of romantic love to blossom in ways unimpeded by any gendered ideologies or expectations attached to the material body of the individuals comprising the love union. Chapter four, 'Godwin, Percy Shelley, and Queer Utopia', uncovers the largely unsung influence that this radical philosophy of romantic love found within Godwin's work had upon Percy Shelley's famous and

widely-documented philosophy of free love that would emerge almost a decade later. In so doing, I trace the ways in which these expansive, future-oriented, and non-deterministic Godwinian, and later Shelleyan, philosophies of love can be seen to prefigure José Esteban Muñoz's theory of queer utopia introduced in *Cruising Utopia* (2009). Further, I suggest that — more than just being anticipatory — the Godwinian novel, and specifically his penultimate offering *Cloudesley*, has potential to then guide us to respond to the recent criticisms that have been levelled at the utopian, as well as the antiutopian, theoretical approaches within queer studies in the twenty-first century.

Part three, 'Queer Kinship', builds upon my argument that Godwin recognised the need to liberate human-human desire and love beyond the gendered restrictions imposed upon one's sex to examine this in relation to Godwinian philosophies of human-human kinship. Where the first two parts of this thesis work to uncover the radical ways in which Godwin reconceptualised desire and love outside of the ideologies attached to the sexual biology of the human, this third part serves to examine the radical ways in which he reconceptualised kinship outside of the problematic ideologies attached to the biological — and, in addition, the procreative — connections between humans. I examine how the disdain for blood familial relation and heritage witnessed within his philosophical writing was rooted in his awareness of the restrictive and problematic ways in which biological connections were privileged and legitimated within the political regimes of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. This chapter uncovers how Godwin, in ways closely comparable to the queer interrogations of the family unit witnessed within the work of Jack Halberstam, Judith Butler, and Susan Stryker, recognised the ways in which ideologies of blood privilege and biological relationality fixed humans into restrictive, gendered binds attached only to the sexual materiality of — and between — their

bodies. In order to examine this aspect of Godwinian thought most effectively, this chapter will move away from a prioritisation of Godwin's fiction to instead place primary attention upon the ways in which his interrogations of familial ideology proved influential to the fiction of his own literary offspring: I uncover the philosopher's influence upon this new generation of young, original thinkers succeeding him and continuing his anarchistic legacy. Chapter five, '"Mere Material Ligament": Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, William Godwin Jr., and (Un)Doing Blood Kin', traces the interrelations between Godwinian familial radicalism and the portrayals of blood and non-blood kinship relation witnessed within the fiction of Godwin's own biological daughter and his own biological son. Part two, '"More Than" Blood: Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Renewal of the Godwinian Same-Sex Dyad', brings this thesis to a close by moving beyond the Godwin-Shelleys. Through bringing refreshed attention to Edward Bulwer-Lytton's Godwinian origins, I examine the ways in which this close friend and final mentee of the elder philosopher would go on to develop Godwin's familial reimaginings in even more daring — and, as I argue, incestuous — ways in his 1829 novel *Devereux*. With a view to the future work which may potentially be focused upon queering the fiction of Godwin, his circle, and beyond, this chapter begins to expand our understanding and appreciation of Godwin's queer influence outside the boundaries of his own blood family.

Across these chapters, my project aims to demonstrate the pervasiveness with which Godwin's radicalism connects not only with the work of his literary contemporaries and successors, but with the theoretical approaches and debates happening within queer studies today. In very recent years, queer scholars have increasingly come to recognise how 'expand[ing] our archives' and 'archival recovery' allows us to reclaim or re-evaluate works and writers that have been ignored or

misread, in order that we can build on the historiographical approaches to queer which Love's *Feeling Backward* advocated passionately for.[73] And, in very recent years, Romantic scholars have increasingly come to recognise how rereading and re-evaluating the work of authors in intersectional ways that 'rewrite commonplaces about the Romantic period', 'expand its boundaries', and 'speak urgently to our present moment' allows us to develop and diversify scholarship through examining Romanticism's connections with the social and political conversations happening in the modern day.[74] This thesis thus offers a response to these calls for expansion and re-evaluation within both disciplines: I argue for the important place of queer Romanticisms within both queer and Romantic studies today — and I argue for and illustrate Godwin's central place within queer Romanticisms.

[73] In his 2022 'state of the field review', Travis M. Foster affirms how 'queer studies scholars' must continue to work towards 'expand[ing] our archives and conceptual resources for challenging' the 'heteronormativ[e]' histories that have ignored or misrepresented queer subjects and subjectivities. See Foster, 'Race, Sex, and God', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* 28: 2 (2022), 289-297 (p. 292). Octavio R. González writes similarly about how queer 'archival recovery' enacts a historical 'reparation' for queers. See González, 'Towards a Black-Queer Critical Rhetoricism', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 28: 2 (2022), 311-316 (p. 312).
[74] Andrew McInnes, 'Should We Cancel Romantic Studies?', <https://romanticridiculous.wordpress.com/2020/06/15/should-we-cancel-romantic-studies/> [accessed 4 Oct 2022]. I explore these current conversations about the place of Romantic studies in 2022 in more detail during the conclusion to this thesis, pp. 286-291.

PART ONE: QUEER DESIRE

CHAPTER ONE

A QUEER (UN)BEING: WILLIAM GODWIN AND THE PRODUCTIVE FAILURE TO PERFORM MASCULINITY

In 1798, William Godwin found himself facing what could be described as a difficult public relations situation. Mary Wollstonecraft had died the previous year following complications arising from the birth of their only child, Mary. While Godwin's recounting of Wollstonecraft's life in *Memoirs of the Author of Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) was loving and well-intentioned, his decision to include the details of her deeply personal history was met with a fierce public backlash. This would negatively impact her, and his, reputation for years to come.[1] Godwin's radical critique of marital and familial ideology in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) five years earlier was tolerated — if perhaps not exactly embraced — by readers.[2] But the highly unsentimental and unfiltered treatment of Wollstonecraft's and his own marriage witnessed in the *Memoirs* was, as Julie A. Carlson has documented, 'where the public drew the line'.[3]

---

[1] This included an openly celebratory depiction of Wollstonecraft's love for Fanny Blood, details of her two attempts at suicide, and references to non-conjugal sexual activity. See Mitzi Myers, 'Godwin's *Memoirs* of Wollstonecraft: The Shaping of Self and Subject', *Studies in Romanticism*, 20: 3 (1981), 299-316.

[2] See Godwin's thoughts on marriage and domesticity in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793), pp. 848-859.

[3] Julie A. Carlson, *England's First Family of Writers: Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Mary Shelley* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 34.

One year after the *Memoirs*, amid a shifting socio-political climate in an increasingly conservative Britain following the fallout from the French Revolution, Godwin published *St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, his second major novel. *St. Leon* has generally been understood by critics to represent the author's attempt to repair his relationship with an increasingly hostile reading public.[4] The novel tells the story of Reginald de St. Leon, a man who repeatedly attempts — and repeatedly fails — to dedicate his life to his wife, Marguerite, and their children. He experiences an inescapable desire for the colourful and enticing Parisian nightlife, and for the company of its carefree and happily debauched people. When one day he discovers the secret to the philosopher's stone and is also granted the elixir of life, this leads him to abandon his role and responsibilities as husband and father to instead immerse himself in the hedonism he enjoyed in Paris. He never escapes the guilt of abandoning his family. Yet, being relieved of his marital and familial roles and obligations ultimately proves liberating.

Reginald's abandonment of domesticity is presented as a difficult, but necessary, separation. The novel's softer approach to marriage and family has previously been linked by Godwinian scholars to a project already underway in the revised editions of the *Enquiry* taking place in 1796 and 1798 in which the author would readdress his previous total objection towards domestic affection.[5] More recent rereadings argue this apparently positive depiction in *St. Leon* to be a smokescreen behind which Godwin would continue to pursue his critique. Carlson

---

[4] Ibid, p. 46.
[5] Burton Ralph Pollin, *Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin* (New York: Las Americas, 1962), p. 264; and Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Duckworth, 1986), pp. 142-160. Godwin's noticeably warmer depiction of marriage in *St. Leon* is also understood to have been influenced by his own happy experience of life with Wollstonecraft. See Pamela Clemit, 'Introduction', in *St. Leon*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. vii-xxiii (pp. xv-xviii); and Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley, 'Introduction', in *Fleetwood*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), pp. 9-39 (pp. 12-16).

explores how the 'real project' underpinning the novel was 'altering the appearance, but not essential substance, of his critique of family [...] stating new support for marriage and family life while showing how they have a tendency to destroy women, men, and children'.[6] Cathy Collet writes along similar lines to argue that Godwin presents Reginald as a character who 'does not require a paternal legacy to invest his life with meaning'.[7]

In this chapter I build upon these rereadings to show how Godwin's nuanced critique of domestic ideology in *St. Leon* directly informs — and is inextricable from — his positive presentation of non-reproductive desire and gender non-conformity. I propose that the portrayal of domesticity in the novel functions as an exploration of the sexual and gendered potentialities that arise through one's liberation from the confines of marriage and family. While no longer automatically dismissive like in the *Enquiry*, *St. Leon* would nevertheless see Godwin argue against the automatic privileging granted to domestic affection: I trace how he does so through destabilising the ideology that male-female, procreative desire was the only legitimate form of desire. This allows us to explore how *St. Leon* questions and rethinks the gender binaries underpinning marital and familial ideologies, as Godwin imagines human potentiality beyond the domestic roles prescribed to women and men.

I explore how Reginald's narration consists of two distinct parts: his detached and consciously performative experience as husband and father, against his immersive and unperformative experience of the intimate relationships he forms firstly with the women and men of Paris, and secondly with Bethlem Gabor in the

---

[6] 'Heavy Drama', p. 229
[7] Cathy Collett, 'Every Child Left Behind: *St. Leon* and William Godwin's Immortal Future', *European Romantic Review*, 25: 3 (2014), 327-336 (p. 331).

latter half of the novel. By performative, I mean to say that Reginald continually signals his detachment from the domestic scene to the reader, and consistently portrays his masculine roles as 'characters' to which he has little to no emotional attachment.[8] By unperformative, I mean to say that he depicts the relationships he forms in Paris and with Bethlem as addictive, inescapable, and, quite simply, deeply enjoyable.

I argue that these contrasting relationships are representative of Reginald's gender non-conformity. In *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism* (2015), David Sigler examines how femininity and masculinity, and in turn women and men, were often depicted through how and who characters sexually desired. Men would, for example, be depicted as being 'made' a man through their sexual desiring of a woman.[9] Yet, as Sigler argues, this fluidity of Romantic sexualities simultaneously opened the door for non-gendered, disoriented modes of desiring that wielded the disruptive potential to blur the boundaries of female/feminine and male/masculine and, in turn, question the notion of inherent distinctions between women and men.[10] In *St. Leon*, Godwin plays upon the sexual and gendered possibilities within the experimental space of the novel form.[11] Reginald attempts to become a successful and socially legitimated man, to enact his prescribed and approved masculine duties, but ultimately fails. He then willingly immerses himself in a world outside of socially approved and politically legitimated masculinity — a space, to which I will be referring throughout this chapter, of the queer man.

---

[8] William Godwin, *St. Leon*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 78. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.
[9] David Sigler, *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism: Gender and Psychoanalysis, 1753-1835* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), p. 11.
[10] See Sigler's discussion of 'sexual difference', pp. 9-13.
[11] For a discussion of how the Romantic novel functioned as an experimental space for gender and sexuality, see Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman, 'Preface', in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel*, ed. by Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 1-12 (pp. 1-6).

By using the term queer man, I argue that Reginald's story opens a space in which Godwin imagines anew his protagonist's sexuality and gender in ways unattached to and undefined by the limited confines of the procreative family unit and its prescribed roles. In resigning his position and respected social standing of husband, father, son-in-law, and so forth, Reginald simultaneously gives up his position of legitimacy within those patriarchal familial, social, and political regimes. Given that the late-eighteenth century was a time in which a kind of gender panic took hold in Britain which led to a strict 'crackdown' on gender non-conformity in the wake of the Revolution,[12] Godwin's sensitive portrayal of failed masculinity questioned gendered domesticity in a tactically subtle, yet nevertheless effective, way.

Thus, I see *St. Leon* as a novel embodying productive failure. Reginald is a protagonist who, after struggling to understand his own place in a domestic regime, realises that his failure to be or become a successful man is not a fault lying within himself, but, instead, with the flawed domestic and political ideologies under which both he and his family are trying to live. It is within Reginald's reaction to his failure to perform the roles of husband and father — his willing embracement to fail as a man within patriarchy — which allows him to experience the potentialities of a life unscripted by the conventions of family, inheritance, and parenthood. As such, I illustrate how *St. Leon* anticipates theories of queer failure through tracing the novel's ontological connections with Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). Godwin and Halberstam both portray gender failure as imbued with productive possibility: in failing to live up to political idealisations of one's gender, one creates a form of resistance by refusing to subscribe or define themselves against

[12] Elfenbein documents this in *Romantic Genius*, p. 110.

patriarchal notions of success. Through the softer and nuanced portrayal of his protagonist's failure to perform marital and familial roles, Godwin explores the mysteries, difficulties, but also pleasures and potentialities, within the 'untrodden paths' of the queer man.[13]

FASHIONABLY MASCULINE OR DEFIANTLY FEMININE?

From the moment Marguerite de Damville and Reginald de St. Leon enter wedlock, they perform. They enact their prescribed duties as wife and husband to one another, and they attempt to showcase nothing but a spotless marital image to the outside world. 'When we were at home, every accidental guest was received and entertained with extraordinary pomp, a pomp not directed to add to his accommodation, but that was designed to leave him impressed with astonishment and admiration at the spirit of his host', Reginald describes. 'This I called, doing honour to my ancestors and my country' (42-43). With their union orchestrated by Marguerite's father the Marquis de Damville — who instructs the young couple under no uncertain terms to make nothing but a success of their marriage for the sake of 'my posterity' (37) — Marguerite and Reginald quickly realise that their marriage is not a prioritisation of their own wants and needs, but a contractual agreement to dedicate their lives in service of a patriarchal lineage.

But *St. Leon* isn't really a story about marriage: it is a lifting of the theatre curtain to see behind domestic performativity. 'I am not content to observe such a man on the public stage', Godwin declared in an essay written one year before the

[13] In 1797, Godwin describes in an essay his desire, through the novel form, to 'explore new and untrodden paths' by 'mark[ing] the operation of human passions'. See 'Of History and Romance' in *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2016), pp. 461-468 (pp. 462-463).

publication of *St. Leon*, in which he explained his decision to move away from philosophical discourse to focus instead on the individuality offered by the novel form. 'I would follow him into his closet […] I would observe the turn of his thoughts', he continues.[14] In *St. Leon*, Godwin does just this. The 'extraordinary pomp' of domesticity is peeled away over the course of the novel, as the reader is invited into the mind of the failed husband and father.

Early in the novel, Reginald signals to his reader that his will not be a happy tale of wedded bliss. 'I am aware it breaks the tone of feeling, and the harmony of the picture. But it is not my intention in this history to pass myself for better than I am', he explains. 'It may be, that Marguerite could, and ought, by insensible degrees, to have rooted out this disease of my mind. But I am concerned only with the statement of facts; and I know that no such thing was the effect of our intercourse' (42). Reginald's interjection to the reader tentatively establishes his relationship with them: 'break[ing] the tone of feeling' of marital love and disrupting the 'harmony of the picture' are positioned within his narration as unfortunate consequences. Yet, as this chapter will document, seeing through the façade of marriage, and questioning the gendered ideologies that underpin it, ultimately appear to be a key purpose in the telling of his story.

What Godwin appears to employ here is a form of reverse psychology upon those readers who regarded him with an increasing hostility following the backlash to the *Memoirs*. In the *Enquiry*, he had brazenly targeted marriage as an unquestionable 'evil' that destroys individual agency.[15] In *St. Leon*, this is reversed: it is Reginald's self-described 'disease' that he apparently believes to be destructive to

[14] 'Of History and Romance', p. 464.
[15] Godwin writes that the 'evil of marriage as it is practised in European countries' is something that 'checks the independent progress of mind; it is also inconsistent with the imperfections and propensities of man' (848-849).

the 'harmony' of his marriage. Reginald's reference to 'disease' is representative of the notion that pleasures outside of marriage are assumed to be bad and destructive; and his reference to 'harmony' is representative of the notion that marriage is automatically assumed positive and worthy. Yet, ultimately, it is the undoing of these acquired opinions that leads Reginald on a journey of emancipation from the injurious confines of domesticity.

Despite the term 'disease' appearing on numerous occasions, there is ambiguity throughout the novel as to what this specifically refers to. It is employed in an enigmatic way firstly in relation to a host of Reginald's youthful Parisian pleasures, and later to gesture towards a transgressive desire beyond the marital bond.[16] The Marquis instructs him that he must 'break off your present modes of life; [...] [and] separate yourself from your connections' (37) in order to marry Marguerite. He then promises his future son-in-law that he 'will find contentment and joy in the society of my daughter, and in the bosom of your rising family' (ibid). A marked distinction is enforced by the Marquis: anything that is not directly conducive to the lineage of marriage, procreation, and posterity must automatically be delegitimated, disregarded, and ultimately replaced by a life in which one continually strives towards a reproductive futurism where the non-reproductive can claim no place.[17] Reginald's 'disease', then, is defined by its marked non-reproductivity, insofar as it is distinguished from the procreative. And yet, from very early on in his story, he refuses to render void these hedonistic pleasures. 'I lived in

[16] *St. Leon*, pp. 42-43, 77. Reginald also refers to this as his 'original vice' and his 'absurd passion' (42).
[17] My use of the term reproductive futurism is taken from Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) and refers to the belief that the political and the social is always motivated by a belief that we must always strive towards creating better futures for children. I will not be referring to Edelman's work during my analysis of *St. Leon*. *No Future* will instead be a key focus of the following chapter which examines non-reproductive desire, murder, and futurity in Godwin's *Mandeville* (1817). For a more comprehensive outline of Edelman's reproductive futurism, see chapter two of this thesis, pp. 108-112, 115-116.

the midst of all that Paris could at that time furnish of splendid and luxurious. This system of living was calculated to lull me in pleasing dreams, and to waste away existence in delirious softness', he describes prior to his meeting Marguerite (32). The careless, extravagant, and ultimately purposeless nature of these pleasures are the very qualities which draw Reginald to them — where the wasting away of one's existence seems not so much as an unfortunate misstep, but perhaps the very goal itself.

To look more closely at this phrase 'waste away existence', I suggest that it is not Reginald's 'existence' as an individual that he is attempting to waste away. Rather, I propose that these Parisian pleasures offer a temporary escape route from his masculine obligations as defined within the patriarchal world he inhabits. In its place, he briefly gets to experience a life unhindered by the need to perform socially legitimated masculinity within this expansive and unregulated space of the queer man. Reginald's complete and willing immersion into the Parisian nightlife transgresses the gendered divide between male sensibility and what has been documented by Andrew Elfenbein in *Romantic Genius* as the 'defiantly feminized'.[18] Male sensibility was typically associated at the time of Godwin's writing with the relatively passive qualities pertaining to fantasy, escape, and a deep emotional bond with the world. As Dustin Friedman's re-evaluation of Wollstonecraft and the antieffeminate demonstrates, such qualities were, to some degree, idealised in men and even purported by influential figures such as Edmund Burke to be '*essentially* masculine'.[19] The defiantly feminine was, on the other hand, typified by active, wilful

---

[18] Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 45-46.
[19] Friedman evidences how 'Burke's "fundamental disruption" of gender codes [...] resulted in the reconfiguration of the traditionally "feminine" qualities of sensibility as *essentially* masculine and conservative in orientation, as opposed to the potentially subversive gender attitudes of the "man of feeling"'. See 'Parents of the Mind: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Aesthetics of Productive Masculinity', *Studies in Romanticism*, 48: 4 (2009), 423-446 (p. 427).

acts that transgressed late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century masculine ideology — those linked with luxury, pleasure, the materialistic, the guiltless, and the free.[20] Reginald's Parisian lifestyle is not passive or imaginative — it is one immersed totally in a unhindered world of drink, gambling, and unrestrained relations with all people, where he actively 'laid aside those more rigorous restraints which render the soberer part of mankind plausible and decent' (32).

I draw connections here between Reginald's 'waste away existence', the defiantly feminine, and Jack Halberstam's theory of 'unbeing' in *The Queer Art of Failure*. Where conventional understandings of success as defined within patriarchy are, Halberstam writes, typically equated with 'advancement, capital accumulation, family, ethical conduct, and hope. Other subordinate, queer, or counter-hegemonic modes [...] lead to the association of failure with nonconformity, anticapitalist practices, nonreproductive lifestyles, negativity, and critique'.[21] Gender failure — particularly 'failed masculinity' (125) within patriarchal systems of power — has the potential to function, Halberstam argues, as a 'shadow archive of resistance, one that does not speak in the language of action and momentum but instead articulates itself in terms of evacuation, refusal [...] unbecoming, unbeing' (129). Unbeing thus stems from gender failure, where one willingly steps outside of the gendered ideologies and notions of success attached to their physical body.

Reginald's 'waste away existence' is a form of unbeing: it represents a transgression from the male/masculine ideology. In crossing the boundary from a socially and morally acceptable form of male sensibility to the more scandalous and defiant femininity, he can be seen to step outside of the gendered limitations placed

---

[20] See Elfenbein's *Romantic Genius* pp. 44-45, 69.
[21] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer of the Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 89. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

upon him. Halberstam further describes unbeing as 'the disruption of lineage rather than its continuation' (126). *St. Leon* sets up such a contrast between Reginald's wilfully wasteful behaviour and continuation/obligation of family lineage, since it is Reginald's city life that his future father-in-law targets as the one thing wholly opposed to the sacred 'posterity' of the Damville dynasty. For the Marquis, in order for Reginald to ever be a successful son-in-law, husband and father, to be legitimated as a man, he can in no way be associated with anything outside the boundaries of patriarchal domesticity.

Yet, at the time in which *St. Leon* was published, social pressures and expectations meant that distinguishing oneself independently from gendered familial roles and expectations was not always transgressive. If anything, it could be celebrated, encouraged, and commonplace, particularly in the middle and upper reaches of society, and especially for men. Elfenbein coined the phrase 'domestication of genius' to describe this 'atomizing need for distinction [that] tempered the construction of normative gender roles'. The 'demand for originality in living', writes Elfenbein, meant that 'men had to be different enough to validate their cultural competence, but not different enough to estrange themselves from bourgeois norms of masculine behaviour and family structure'.[22] While it is important to remember that Godwin sets *St. Leon* many years earlier than the time in which he was writing, the way in which the novel navigates the relationship between individuality and familial role would likely have resonated with contemporary readers attuned to these emerging social mores.

One could thus interpret Reginald's immersion into Parisian culture as Godwin portraying these fashionable expectations placed upon men — that of

[22] *Romantic Genius*, p. 67, 69.

distinguishing one's individuality and originality — rather than the protagonist's conscious effort to transgress and disrupt familial or gendered norms. I believe that the movement of the novel points towards something else: Reginald's Parisian engagements are not relayed in a way that suggests he is seeking social validation or attempting to proudly showcase his distinctiveness. It appears quite the opposite. He presents these to his reader in a markedly cryptic way, signalling his awareness of them potentially knowing too much. 'The course of sensuality in which I was now engaged, though it did not absolutely sink into grossness, may well be supposed to have trodden upon the very edge of license', he writes. 'I will not contaminate the minds of my innocent and inexperienced readers by entering into the detail of the follies in which I engaged' (32). His behaviour has knowingly crossed — or at least blurred — the boundary from the socially and morally accepted to the unacceptable. Reginald's Parisian engagements are thus suggested to have transgressed the norms of masculine behaviour.

Yet, in then vowing so openly to protect his 'innocent' reader like this, he has illuminated his deviance, and invited their closer scrutiny. This sets up a dualistic relationship with his audience. On the one hand, he is sanitising his story for the reader and presenting it to them in such a way so as not to contaminate them with his licentiousness. On the other hand, he is half-heartedly casting a semi-transparent veil over his 'course of sensuality', peppering tantalising clues throughout to signpost to the reader that which is supposedly being kept hidden. This offers an early indication in the novel that his gender failure — his occupying a defiantly feminine space outside of ideological masculinity — will not automatically be disregarded or delegitimated, but explored as a site of potentialities.

Read in the latter mode of the two approaches listed in the preceding paragraph, Paris can be seen to function in *St. Leon* as a testing ground for Reginald's sexual experimentation. He begins by suggesting how he has formed close relationships that have directly informed the construction of his own desires. 'A very young man rather takes the tone of his passions from those about him, than forms one that is properly his own; and this was my case in the present instance', he describes (31). The reference to these never 'properly' belonging to oneself signposts Reginald's alertness to the fluid and changeable quality of these 'passions'.

He works out and constructs what is conducive to his own enjoyment through adopting a free and easy attitude towards all whom he encounters. 'The mistresses with whom I chanced to associate', he firstly describes, had 'beauty and vivacity, frolic without rudeness, and softness without timidity. [...] In their society I was led into new trains of reflection, a nicer consideration of human passion and the varieties of human character' (31-32). Within his increasing awareness of the multiplicity of human passions arises Reginald's expansive understanding of his own feelings and attractions:

> Few women of regular and reputable lives have that ease of manners, that flow of fancy, and that grateful intrepidity of thinking and expressing themselves, that is sometimes to be found among those who have discharged themselves from the tyranny of custom. There is something irresistibly captivating in that voluptuousness [...]. A judicious and limited voluptuousness is necessary to the cultivation of the mind, to the polishing of the manners, to the refining of sentiment and the development of the understanding; and a woman deficient

> in this respect may be of use for the government of our families, but can neither add to the enjoyment, nor fix the partiality, of a man of animation and taste. (31)

Reginald's narration poses an opposition between his experience of the unstimulating 'regular and reputable', for which he displays little desire, and the revivifying 'grateful intrepidity', which draws him so eagerly towards the women with whom he associates in Paris. The socially legitimated is presented as unstimulating and insipid; it is the actively transgressive, or at least the unregulated, to which he is eagerly drawn, and which he believes offers the greatest potential to expand and understand the self.

There is a suggestion within Reginald's narration here that these youthful behaviours specifically transgress domestic ideology. He aligns the 'tyranny of custom' with the familial. He suggests that those who remove themselves from the stultifying domestic scene open their minds up to a world of potentialities for the expansion of self. Those, in contrast, who do not, he believes to be useful only in 'the government of our families'. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam documents an opposition: enacting one's gender successfully within patriarchy is linked directly to 'family' and 'ethical conduct'; gender failure, by contrast, is associated with 'nonreproductive lifestyles' and 'nonconformity' (89). Reginald's narration marks out a similar contrast in how 'families' and the 'reputable' are set against 'sensual' acts and behaviours associated with an active 'intrepidity'. While the familial is not disregarded by Reginald as wholly negative, its reputability is treated as limited and limiting to the individual. The non-reputable — the non-familial — is, by contrast, treated as stimulating, expansive, and offering new ways of understanding and existing in the world.

Halberstam explores the space outside of strict domestic procreativity as a site of 'queer possibility': 'heterosexual relations are not essentially bound to "regularity and repetitiveness," yet the bourgeois family matrix, with its emphasis on lineage, inheritance, and generation, does tend to cast temporal flux' (74). To step outside the domestic matrix is to step outside of straight time and enact a 'rupture' (ibid) in its deterministic temporality. To recall in *St. Leon*, where the Marquis instructs Reginald that he 'will find contentment and joy in the society of my daughter, and in the bosom of your rising family', the elder figure positioned a predictable, regulated, and knowing form of reproductive futurity as a way to steer Reginald away from his 'present modes of life'. Reginald's attraction to the Parisian nightlife, by contrast, signals his pull towards that which is not pre-determined, known, or regulated, where the onus is instead upon the 'delirious' and the 'waste[ful]'.

Halberstam writes that within this space of queer possibilities arises the potential for 'nonnormative sexualities' to claim a place in ways they cannot within the rigid confines of the procreative (74). These sexualities are defined in *The Queer Art of Failure* as 'queer relations' marked by 'uncertainty, irregularity, and even perversity [that] disregard the so-called natural bonds' of the heteronormative (ibid). In *St. Leon*, I draw closer attention to how, in the final sentence of the previous indented passage, there is a contrast made in Reginald's narration between 'families' against that of 'enjoyment'. He phrases this to suggest that the familial offers some, but only a circumscribed, enjoyment — that those trapped within the quagmire of domestic human-human relations can in no way 'add to the enjoyment' of a man such as himself. Reginald's depiction of his relations with the women of Paris indicates his being attuned to extrafamilial pleasures and possibilities in which the procreative is one — but not the only — source of this 'enjoyment'.

One could read this as the protagonist's specific attraction to non-reproductive forms of eroticised pleasure. It is not just the women of Paris with whom he gains this elusively described 'enjoyment', but the men, too. 'My hours, for the most part rolled swiftly and easily away, sometimes in the society of the young, the gay, and the ambitious of my own sex', Reginald describes. 'No man enjoyed more extensively than I did the sweets of friendship, as far as the sweets of friendship can be extensively enjoyed', he details shortly thereafter (32-33). This is a loaded sentence which could potentially both substantiate and refute the idea that Reginald experiences and explores an eroticised attraction to these men. Enjoying something 'as far as' one can intriguingly suggests a limitedness and a limitlessness. On the one hand, Reginald indicates that these friendships offer a wealth of ways in which they can, and do, satisfy his need for enjoyment. Or, alternatively, he indicates that the sweets of friendship can only go so far as to satisfy his need for enjoyment. The employment — twice — of 'enjoyed' in this sentence is a noticeably vague, indeterminate way to depict these male-male bonds, especially when followed by the immediate chapter break, and even more so when that next chapter moves forward two years to Reginald first meeting Marguerite. But the use of enjoyment to refer to both his free and easy relations with the mistresses of Paris, as well as his friendships with the men of Paris, aligns these in a way that, even in its vagueness, implies an interconnectedness. And that interconnectedness potentially lies within how they each offer enjoyment precisely because of their associations with the hedonistic, the non-reproductive, and the irreputable. They offer alternative modes of enjoyment beyond those available within the limited confines of the 'regulated and reputable' domestic matrix.

PERFORMING GENDER: BECOMING THE 'NEW MAN'

When the story jumps two years ahead, these Parisian relations are presented to Reginald as needing to be cleansed and remedied by 'domestic affections' if he stands any chance of salvaging his societal reputation and legitimation. 'The Marquis', Reginald describes, 'saw the ruin in which I was heedlessly involving myself, and believed that it was not yet too late to save me. As he thought that there was no method so likely to effect my reformation as the interposition of domestic affections, he was not unwilling to encourage the attachment I began to feel for his daughter' (34). The Marquis steers Reginald away from the free and polyamorous towards the rigid and respectable monogamy of the marital bond.

There is an opposition enforced by the elder man between the 'ruin' of non-reproductive, extrafamilial pleasures and the salvation of 'domestic affections'. The sanctity of a union with Marguerite will, Reginald is advised, repair the supposed ill-effects of the free and unrestrained relations he previously enjoyed. 'I became as it were a new man', Reginald describes after heeding the Marquis's advice. 'I was astonished at my own folly, that I could so long have found gratification in pleasures mean and sensual. [...] I could not endure the comparison between the shadowy, unsubstantial attractions of the women I had hitherto frequented, and the charms of the adorable Marguerite' (35). Reginald's gender, his masculinity, constitutes a key part within this process of supposed reparation and reformation. His unbeing/unbecoming, his occupying a space of the queer man, is now a becoming — he 'became as it were a new man' — a phrase that stands in marked contrast to that earlier reference to 'waste away existence'. What is supposedly 'new' about him, as a man, appears to lie within his conscious attempt to alter/modify himself to appease the Marquis and regain social legitimation. Reginald's attention is no longer focused

upon refusing to cohere to societal norms, to wilfully transgress beyond the reputable. Instead, it is upon an attempt to present his gender in such a way so that he adheres to those norms: he aims to make himself intelligible as a successful future son-in-law/husband/man on the Marquis's terms through subscribing to that which is legitimated. He doesn't just treat his own gender in such a way. The women of Paris, who were previously 'irresistibly captivating' precisely because of their lack of adherence to the reputable and the domestic, he now espouses to be 'shadowy' and 'insubstantial'. And, where he previously declared how he found 'women of regular and reputable lives' unalluring for precisely the same reason, Marguerite — or, more accurately, the socially approved femininity that the Marquis imparts upon Marguerite — is now 'adorable'.[23]

It could be argued that there is something akin to Butlerian performativity going on here, insofar as this 'new man' Reginald is modifying himself in such a way as to conform to the masculine norms of patriarchal intelligibility, and in turn reap the supposed rewards of social legitimation. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) examined how legitimated genders (female/feminine, male/masculine) are automatically privileged within patriarchal regimes and in turn gain an illusion of having a 'coherent' or 'true' gender.[24] This image of coherence, Butler documents, is further instilled through procreative privilege. Those non-conforming genders 'in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire to not "follow" from either sex or gender' are instead marginalised, delegitimated, and deprivileged (24). Reginald's becoming this 'new man', this man who coheres to the

[23] Marguerite has a noticeable lack of input into the decisions behind her and Reginald's marriage. The Marquis controls their union, instructing Reginald how Marguerite's 'understanding, accomplishments and virtue' will prove necessary to his future son-in-law's 'reform' from his previous connections. In 'possessing her', the Marquis further affirms to him, 'you will be blessed beyond the lot of princes' (37).

[24] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 4, 22.

Marquis's narrow masculine requirements, is a process dependent upon the total usurpation of the transgressively free and sensual by the reputably and rigidly marital.

The way in which Godwin explores Reginald's thought process thereafter suggests that such a gender transformation can never actually take place. Or, at least, it cannot happen on any level deeper than a conscious performance. The 'new man' begins and remains an enactment of a masculinity to which Reginald has no personal identification. 'The virtue I had recently adopted was a strenuous effort. I rather resolved to be happy, than could strictly be said to be happy', he describes. 'Vanity and ostentation were habits wrought into my soul, and might be said to form part of its essence' (99). 'Virtue', as husband and father, are pitted against 'vanity', a prioritisation of the self. More than this, the socially approved masculinity of the former is depicted by Reginald as an adopted mode of living contingent on perpetual efforts; the qualities of the latter are relayed to the reader as an intrinsic part of his 'essence'.

This sets up, however, something of a contradiction. The way in which Reginald regards the extrafamilial as a site of 'ostentation', a space in which to display his distinctiveness outside of normative familial roles, is negated by a marked trepidation in doing just that. When he does not return home following an extended stay in Paris, Marguerite joins him, pleading with her husband to not 'hide from me the real state of your thoughts' (65). His response is to conceal his Parisian activities, to 'play the hypocrite', and assure her (falsely) of his total commitment to the family; Marguerite, in response, promises to 'conquer my weakness' for doubting his 'prudence and honour' by playing the part of the 'complying wife' (66, 68). Marguerite's and Reginald's roles as wife and husband are in perpetual need of maintenance. Attempting to commit to the monogamous marital bond, to sacrifice

one's inner desires in service of, and to cohere to, the abstract notion societal 'honour', appears as suffocating. And, far from being ostentatious, Reginald's extramarital feelings and desires are narrated with a marked obliqueness:

> What were my feelings, while this admirable woman was taking shame to herself for her suspicions, and pouring out her soul in commendation of my integrity! I looked inward, and found everything there the reverse of her apprehension, a scene of desolation and remorse. I embraced her in silence. My heart panted upon her bosom, and seemed bursting with a secret that it was death to reveal. [...] The wound of my bosom was opened, and would not be closed. The more I loved her for her confidence, the less I could endure myself in her presence. (68)

He distinguishes between the extrinsic performance of masculine 'integrity' — his prescribed roles within the marital and familial units — and that which exists 'inward'. In its hiddenness and indescribability, this inner self is also distinguished from the fashionably extrafamilial, or what Elfenbein refers to as that 'masculine distinctiveness' pursued by domestic men in search of their social validation independent of family role.[25] Reginald's extrafamilial desires are kept firmly concealed, where 'reveal[ing]' them would be something akin to 'death'. This inescapable self is referred to not by what it actively is (the son-in-law, the husband, the father, the man of masculine distinctiveness) but by what it isn't (existing in the realm of the queer man). Reginald's unmasculine 'essence' is thus distinguished from the gender performative and legitimated. Godwin depicts this mysterious,

[25] *Romantic Genius*, p. 69.

undescribed ‘essence’ existing inside him that cannot be explained or contained within the prescribed limits of the male/masculine. In this sense, *St. Leon* bears connections with how Butler would go on to explain how their theory of performativity was not intended to deny gender as existing as what they comparatively termed ‘an interior essence’ beyond the level of performance.[26]

‘ESSENCE’: THE BODY, THE MIND, AND EMBODIED FEMININITY

Mary Wollstonecraft’s treatment of marriage in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) resonates with Godwin’s depiction in *St. Leon*. She similarly depicts the performing of domestic roles as something which is potentially incompatible with, and limiting to, the self. To those ‘who have any knowledge of human nature’, she asks,

> do they imagine marriage can eradicate the habitude of life? The woman who has only been taught to please, will soon find that her charms are oblique sun-beams, and they cannot have much effect on her husband’s heart when they are seen every-day, when the summer is past and gone. Will she then have sufficient native energy to look into herself for comfort and to cultivate her dormant faculties? or, is it not more rational to expect, that she will try to please other men [...]?[27]

[26] *Gender Trouble*, p. xiv.
[27] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 96-97.

Wollstonecraft did, to a point, appear to revere the idea of marriage, suggesting that it could potentially play a key part in the function of human society.[28] Yet, the reality of marriage in the late-eighteenth century she treated as something far from this.[29] Her suggestion in the above passage that one could, ideally, 'look into' themselves in order to 'cultivate' their 'dormant faculties' — those unattached to the performative marital role — signals her awareness of the importance of recognising the productive space outside of the confines of gendered marital ideology. What is striking about Reginald's self-described process of 'look[ing] inward' in *St. Leon* is his marked anxiety about what he encounters there: this inner self is the 'reverse of [Marguerite's] apprehension' that he cannot 'endure' in her presence. Instead of cultivating that which lies dormant, this innerness appears instead as being wholly unable to even be expressed. Marriage, and its ideological gendered underpinnings, proves only limiting, and in no way nurturing or harmonious, to Reginald's inner self.

St. Leon finds further resonances with the 1792 *Vindication* in its portrayal of the compromised inner self which has been relegated in service of marital virtue. Wollstonecraft, like Godwin, pinpoints the performativity of gendered domesticity as potentially damaging to individuals bound to what she terms as the 'slavery of marriage' (248). The 'married woman [...] breaks a most sacred engagement, and becomes a cruel mother when she is a false and faithless wife', she describes. 'If her husband still has affection for her, the arts which she must practice to deceive him, will render her the most contemptible of human beings; and at any rate, the

---

[28] Wollstonecraft discusses in the 1792 *Vindication* how she 'respect[s] marriage as the foundation of every social virtue' (149) but lists a number of factors impeding its potential, and most pressingly that of gender ideology and the confines of prescribed marital roles.
[29] See, for instance, Wollstonecraft's discussion in the 1792 *Vindication* of the how the confines of marriage thwart one's ability to 'improve the heart and mind' which may, in turn, 'ruin' the individual's progress and potential in life (ibid).

contrivances necessary to preserve appearances, will keep her mind in that childish, or vicious, tumult, which destroys all energy'.[30] For Wollstonecraft, blind subservience to marriage — that of maintaining an illusion of perfect domesticity through performing one's assigned role — did little to expand the faculties of the individual mind, of the self. Rather, she affirmed that such an effort proved directly destructive to that 'energy'. Any social rewards or legitimation associated with the 'preserv[ing] [of] appearances' of marriage is treated in the *Vindication* as something that should not be prioritised over the wellbeing, and extramarital potentialities, of its participants.

In *St. Leon*, the disconnect between Reginald's secret inner self against that of his performative masculinity is comparatively depicted as destructive. He experiences a 'distemper' of mind that has physical manifestations. 'The state of my mind was in the utmost degree dejected and forlorn. I carried an arrow in my heart, which the kindness of my wife and children proved inadequate to extract', he describes after returning from Paris to the family home. 'It was a species of disability; my soul had not force enough to give motion to the organs [...] I seemed like a man in that species of distemper, in which the patient suffers a wasting of the bones, and at length presents to us the shadow, without the powers, of a human body' (82). He experiences a complex interplay between his 'soul' and his 'organs'. They are, on the one hand, connected — as in, the 'forlorn' state of mind has an apparent direct impact upon the 'wasting' body. Yet, they are also separate — as in, there is a marked disengaging of mind from body given that Reginald's 'soul had not force enough to give motion to the organs'. In either case, Godwin's depiction of Reginald's mind/body distinguishes the protagonist from a masculine, rational, disembodied,

---

[30] Ibid, p. 220.

ideal male subject and places him much closer to a feminine, embodied form of human subjectivity which the imprisoning marital unit proves wholly unequipped to accommodate.

Godwin can be seen to draw increasingly keen attention to his protagonist's transgressive gender, especially if we read this depiction of embodiment alongside that which Alan Richardson has documented in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (2009) as the 'fundamental redefinition of the brain' emerging towards the end of the eighteenth century.[31] Richardson documents how 'Romantic-era physiological theories' re-evaluated interactions between the body (female/male) and the mind (feminine/masculine) and, in doing so, blurred traditional understandings of absolute sexual difference. 'The conventionally gendered opposition between (masculine) transcendent reason and (feminine) embodied emotion', he writes, begins to 'erode' at this time (71). This new science, Richardson continues, gave 'an expanded and often leading role to unconscious cognition, instinctive behaviours, "inward" sensations, emotional reactions, and bodily sensation' within which 'men were [...] fully implicated within a changing vision of the human' where the male body could potentially be 'irrupted' by the feminine mind (110). Contemporary critics, and most notably William Hazlitt, fiercely countered these emerging sciences which blurred female/male sexual distinctions to argue instead for what he affirmed to be unquestionably 'inherent' and 'universal' differences between women and men.[32] Godwin, in contrast to Hazlitt, appears in *St. Leon* not only to be influenced

[31] Alan Richardson, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 2. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.
[32] 'Phrenological Fallacies', in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1933), XX, p. 253. Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992) offers a detailed account of how this bioessentialist notion of inherent and universal differences between women and men had emerged 'sometime in the eighteenth century' (149). He documents how 'bones, nerves, and, most important, reproductive organs, came to

by — but reinforcing of — these shifting physiological theories that undercut gender binaries. Reginald's 'soul' is too weak, too affected, to 'give motion' to the body in which it resides: we can observe that this (dis)connection between Reginald's mind and his body is not depicted by Godwin as a masculine transcendence of his protagonist's physical form. Trapped within the confines of domesticity and made continually aware of his needing to perform masculinity, he becomes keenly attuned to his physical body and this disconnect from his 'soul'. He recognises how completely this inner 'essence' is the 'reverse' of the ideological masculinity that is being required of him. This experience creates both a feeling of separation from, as well as an acute awareness of, his body.

One could thus argue that there is something essentially unmasculine within Reginald. His 'essence' is depicted as at odds with his domestic masculine duties, male sensibility, and now, his physical body. Godwin's stance upon the idea of innateness was an evolving one. Six years prior to *St. Leon*, he wrote an influential social constructionist account of the human mind, declaring that 'we bring into the world with us no innate principles' and that 'there are no innate ideas'.[33] Then, several decades later, he revised this, writing now that 'human creatures are born into the world with various dispositions' and that we cannot 'penetrate into the mysteries of human nature'.[34] While Godwin seems to convert across his career from a psychology of sameness (each individual capable of being shaped) to a psychology of difference (each individual as being predisposed), his philosophy of being 'born' a certain way was not biologically (sexually) deterministic: that is, he does not align

bear an enormous new weight of meaning. Two sexes, in other words, were invented as a new foundation for gender' (150).

[33] *Enquiry,* p. 12, 55.

[34] *Thoughts on Man: His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1831), p. 29. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

masculinity as innately male and femininity as innately female. These 'various dispositions' to which he refers in 1831 are connected instead with the 'mysteries' of the universal 'human'.

The portrayal of Reginald's 'essence' in *St. Leon* situates the novel closer to the latter of Godwin's philosophies, that of the mysteries of human predisposition. Reginald's inescapable desire for the extrafamilial, the non-reproductive, disrupts notions of a biological, predetermined link between the male and the masculine. His essence, furthermore, cannot be moulded or modified into that vision of the idealistic son-in-law, husband, father, man, as required by the Marquis. Instead, it is that which lies beyond the rigid sphere of marriage, family, procreation, of being a successful man, that resonates most with his inner self. The realm of the queer man, the realm of unbeing, forms an identificatory sanctuary for him in a way that attempting to gain legitimation through becoming a socially intelligible man proves inept to do.

PLEASURE AND THE 'UNDESCRIBABLE'

Up until this point in the novel, Reginald's 'essence' has been linked to the extrafamilial, but only directly to 'vanity' and 'ostentation'. In the latter half of the novel, following his discovery of the philosopher's stone, this undergoes a development. Despite his now endless riches, he discovers that 'I did not like the deadness of heart that seemed to threaten me', as he comes to understand that 'human affections and passions are not made of this transferable stuff' (164). His recognising of his own extrafamilial passions as being 'made of' something invites several interpretations: an idea of substantiveness/innateness beyond that which is learned/acquired, and a utility function to these passions which are distinct from the

familial/procreative. This attraction to the space outside of domesticity becomes nuanced from a generalised, abstracted desire for luxury, unrestraint, and hedonism as witnessed in Paris, to a specific need for a 'friend'. He asks: 'must I forever live without a companion' with whom he can 'have a community of sensations, and feelings, and hopes, and desires, and fears?' (ibid).

As documented earlier in this chapter, Wollstonecraft suggested two ways in which an individual should or would utilise their extramarital energies and desires. One was to 'cultivate' that inner self away from the performative role. Yet, 'is it not more rational to expect', she continued, that the individual 'will try to please other men?' Wollstonecraft appeared to treat the ability to cultivate the inner self independently as the ideal; she simultaneously accepted that such desires would likely be directed into finding another companion through which to channel this energy. In Reginald's narration, the ability to awaken/cultivate his inner energy appears similarly dependent upon the human connection he hopes to form, describing his wish to 'devote' himself to this relationship 'heart and soul, and our life is, as it were, bound up in the object of our attachment' (164).

The way in which this 'friend' is depicted is vague yet also particularised. First, in describing this 'community of sensations' which he requires them to satisfy within him, such sensations are distinguished from that 'torpor' (164) he previously referred to in describing his marital and filial relationships. Then, later, after using his riches to procure the gratitude of strangers, he affirms: 'yet, thus surrounded and regaled with this animated praise, I was not content; I wanted a friend. I was alone' (377). This 'friend[ship]' is thus portrayed as distinct from his relationships with Marguerite, his children, and his acquaintances; it is another form of close attachment which Reginald seeks — one that he appears to possess a specific idea of — but one that he does not, or cannot, verbalise an explicit criterion for.

What takes priority at this point in his narration is his embodied emotion. Explicit verbalisation, the ability to define or rationalise exactly what he wants from this friend, is not to be found in his narration; instead, he depicts what he feels. When he eventually comes to select the brooding Hungarian arms dealer Bethlem Gabor as 'the fittest man in the world upon whom to fix for my friend' (399), he describes to the reader his attraction to this man as being an 'exhaustless pleasure' that is simultaneously 'undescribable', 'inexplicable', and 'indelible' (395-397, 401). His feelings for Bethlem are relayed as something akin to instinctual, existing somewhere in a betweenness of language and bodily feeling. Such a depiction is reminiscent of the way in which Godwin portrayed Caleb's feelings for Falkland in *Caleb Williams*.[35] Reginald describes how being in Bethlem's presence 'electrified me' as he 'saw myself as completely in the power of a man' (406-407). This bond, consisting of equal parts 'pleasure' (400) and 'fear' (397), gratifies that 'community of sensations' he desired. It is his embodied emotion, and not his rational, disembodied mind, that is dominant: in explaining to the reader why he is so drawn to a man who excites fear within him, he writes that 'our senses are often the masters of our mind, and reason vainly opposes itself to the liveliness of their impressions' (406). Reginald displays a lack of identification with a masculine 'reason', portrays himself as under the mastery of his 'senses', gesturing towards this mysterious, unknown, deeply rooted quality towards his feelings for this man.

Reginald marks out a distinction here between these bodily 'senses' and the 'impressions' they make upon them. Eighteenth century philosophers, and most notably David Hume, distinguished between impressions and senses. Impressions,

[35] See, for instance, the description of how Caleb's 'animal system had undergone a total revolution' and how his 'passions were too deeply engaged' when describing his feelings for Falkland. William Godwin, *Caleb Williams* (London: Printed for B. Crosby, 1794), II, p. 61, 69.

Hume wrote, are those deeply-rooted 'passions, emotions, desires' that exist exclusively in the 'internal'. Trying to 'perceive' one's passions is reliant upon how we 'regard [...] certain impressions, which enter by the senses', where senses are understood as being directly linked to 'the constitution of the body'.[36] In *St. Leon*, there is a seeming disconnect — but what may more accurately be described as an immoveable connection — between Reginald's body and mind, since he admits that he 'know[s] not why it was' (406) he experiences this emotional attachment to Bethlem. He is at a loss to understand his own bodily feeling as it operates seemingly involuntarily of his conscious mind. Once again, this appears not as a masculine transcendence of his physical form, but a complicated interplay of mind, body, and the betweenness of the two.

Later in his career, Godwin offered his own philosophy of body and mind. The 'mind', he writes in *Thoughts on Man*, is distinguished from the body as 'that within us which feels and thinks [...] which constitutes the great essence of, and gives value to, existence'. While he refers unlovingly to the body as simply being 'gross flesh and blood', Godwin admitted that 'we cannot tell, nor can authoritatively pronounce' whether the mind exists 'in the body, or out of the body' (7). Thus, for Godwin, mind constitutes essence over body, but mind may or may not exist within that very body. What, for the purposes of this chapter, is most pertinent in *St. Leon* is how there is noticeable interaction between body and mind/soul, but that such an interaction is non-binary — as in, Reginald's body, his biological maleness, is not automatically conducive nor bound to ideological masculinity, and does not dictate Reginald's 'essence'. Enacting the socially legitimated and limiting roles of husband, father, son-in-law, left him in a state of physical and mental 'torpor'; placing himself in an

---

[36] David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), I, p. 340, 481; II, p. 3.

unhindered space outside of prescribed masculinity firstly in Paris, and now in this male-male attachment, is physically and mentally 'electrif[ying]' and gratifying. What constitutes his essence is undefined, unregulated, and unknown, but unattached to ideological masculinity.

Godwin, like Judith Butler, distinguishes between the material and the mind in ways linked to gender. In Butler's *Bodies That Matter*, they unpick the relationship between 'the materiality of the body' and 'the performativity of gender' to interrogate the notion of an innate naturalness to female femininity and male masculinity.[37] Patriarchal ideology, they write, functions to materialise the female and male body in ways conducive to absolute sexual difference through linking these as essentially feminine/masculine. This, in turn, relegates and deligitimatises bodies which do not conform. In *Thoughts on Man,* as we have seen, Godwin treated body and mind in an ungendered, individualistic way. In addition, he appears, like Butler, attuned to how bodies can undergo a (negative) process of materialisation that could prove limiting or injurious to one's 'mind', writing: 'the superior dignity of mind over body. This, we persuade ourselves, shall subsist uninjured by the mutations of our corporeal frame, and undestroyed by the wreck of the material universe' (15). In *Bodies That Matter,* Butler writes that those bodies which 'never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled' give birth to 'instabilities' and 'possibilities' (xii), and Godwin is similarly investigative in *St. Leon* of the potentialities when one is liberated from the gender binary. What appears most injurious to Reginald's mind/soul/essence is the ideologies attached to his male body; increasingly throughout the novel, the relationship between mind and body is interrogated by Godwin so as to expose and destabilise this deterministic linking of

[37] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. xi.

one's sex to one's gender, as the author begins to envision the potentialities beyond such determinisms.

QUEER NEGATIVITY: EMOTIONS, PASSIVITY, MASOCHISM

That which constitutes Reginald's ungendered 'essence' is linked predominantly to his emotions. Where Godwin later describes the notion of innateness as linked to those 'mysteries of human nature' in *Thoughts on Man*, essence in *St. Leon* similarly exists in a shadowy, undefined, unexplained form: it is something deeply rooted, something embodied, and something simultaneously incoherent with a biological male/masculine pre-determinism.

The author's depiction of essence in *St. Leon* resonates with the way in which more recent queer theory has typically addressed notions of innateness. Early theorists tended to dismiss or steer away from the idea of an innate or essential self. Within more recent queer and trans work, innateness has typically been reconceptualised as that which is 'deeply felt', but which is also distinct from any notion of sexual pre-determinism.[38] This recent approach continues to reject any linking of masculinity as innately male, femininity as innately female, and counters the naturalisation of male-female, procreative desire, but recognises that individuals may feel and experience something akin to an 'inescapable' inner self that should not be dismissed as fleeting or performative.[39] In the following passage during which

[38] See, for instance, discussions of the 'deeply felt' in: Erica Lennon and Brian J. Mistler, 'Cisgenderism', *Transgender Studies Quarterly,* 1: 1-2 (2014), 63-64; Jonathan Alexander and Karen Yescavage, '"The Scholars Formerly Known as…": Bisexuality, Queerness and Identity Politics', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, ed. by Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 49-64; and Rob Cover, *Queer Youth Suicide, Culture and Identity: Unliveable Lives?* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 84, 143.
[39] Susan Stryker, '(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-18 (p. 10).

Reginald describes the ‘whole nights’ he spends with Bethlem, deeply rooted feelings appear as directly linked to his essence/‘soul’, and as distinct from ideological masculinity:

> There was a similarity in our fortunes that secretly endeared him to me. [...] we blended ourselves the one with the other as perfectly as we could. Often over our gloomy bowl we mingled groans, and sweetened our draught as we drank with maledictions. In the school of Bethlem Gabor I became acquainted with the delights of melancholy—of a melancholy, not that contracted, but that swelled the soul—of a melancholy that looked down upon the world with indignation, and that relieved its secret load with curses and execrations. We frequently continued whole nights in the participation of these bitter joys. (398)

The intriguingly described ‘bitter joys’ and ‘delights of melancholy’ allow for the expansion and relief of his ‘soul’. These seemingly counterintuitive phrasings — the linking of the pleasurable with the unpleasurable — stands in contrast to how Reginald’s ‘soul’ was previously referred to in relation to legitimated masculinity. He referred to it then as an ‘unnatural state of my soul, to which it was necessary that I should resolutely hold myself down’ as he attempted to successfully perform (and be gratified by) the roles of husband, father, son-in-law, and so forth (99). The reference to ‘secretly endeared’ and ‘secret load’ in describing this male-male bond and the emotions attached to it distinguishes this relationship from such conscious performativity, and points towards a sense of innerness. What constitutes this essence, this soul, is separated and de-naturalised from ideological masculinity — an ‘unnatural’ masculinity — and paired instead with an instinctual identification with

this darkly passionate attachment. Negativity, melancholy, and bitterness function in what appears to be a reparative process; a remedy and relief to the years of confining and limiting normative gender, or what Reginald describes as that 'sparing stock of pleasures' which he had 'for years been inured to satisfy myself with' (423).

Halberstam explores in *The Queer Art of Failure* how individuals who are so oriented to a form of 'negativity, rejection, and transformation' are those who are simultaneously drawn to 'shady, murky modes of undoing, unbecoming, and violating' (4). 'Queer negativity', as he later defines it, interrupts the 'continuity of ideas, family lines, and normativity' which stems 'not from a doing but from an undoing, not from a being or becoming [...] but from a refusal to be or to become' (124). In *St. Leon*, Reginald's description of his experience of domestic normativity, that 'unnatural state of [his] soul', is one of 'affecting contentment' (87): he is actively attempting to be/become happy, to be/become satisfied, to be/become a socially legitimated man. Those 'genuine' pleasures did not prove conducive to a notion of genuine existence beyond the extrinsic performance. Reginald's pull towards the negative, to the space outside of affected contentment and performative masculinity, becomes more apparent in the subsequent darker turn his relationship takes with Bethlem. Following a violently passionate disagreement, the Hungarian locks and chains Reginald within a prison cell in the bowels of his sprawling castle and refuses to release him. 'Boy, you *are* my prisoner, you *shall* be my creature. I shall humble you at my feet', Bethlem declares, before securing the door and leaving Reginald alone for days on end before returning sporadically (422). Reginald's subsequent reaction is that of one where there is a marked disconnect between unpleasurable, bodily sensations and the not strictly un-pleasurable impressions this sadistic treatment has upon him.

He describes, for instance, his emotions as being 'sublimed by despair, where the torture of the mind gives new pungency to the corporeal anguish' (413), and later asks the reader: 'was it a crime in me, that this fury in my tyrant produced the operation of a sedative and a cordial?' (423). The reference to a potentially criminal nature to this subversive same-sex enjoyment suggests his attachment to Bethlem, and the feelings he experiences and gratifies here, transgresses some form(s) of social/moral acceptability. Reginald's mind producing this sublime 'new pungency' to his bodily anguish distinguishes this moment in *St. Leon* from Burkean notions of the sublime, given that Reginald derives something akin to pleasure not from an imagined/modified sense of pain, but from an actual, bodily pain that the Hungarian inflicts upon him.[40] This literal pain acting as a 'cordial' infers a sense not only of pleasure, but of reparation, as being derived from the bodily anguish.

This pain functions as both pleasureful and remedial to the torpor, to the sense of unfeeling, he experienced within the realm of performative masculinity. 'I was afraid of vacancy and torpor', he had previously described when enacting his domestic roles (163). 'Refusing me the indulgence of torpor', Reginald now describes in his dungeon, 'I was comparatively little exposed to the pain of vacuity. [...] the joy I felt was because his fury told me, was the unwilling evidence of my own value' (423). There is a clear differentiation: he was previously 'afraid' of his body and mind being unstimulated, of not feeling, when in the domestic scene, and now he is welcoming of the bodily pain because it stimulates him so. This reparative nature to body/mind, pain/pleasure — something which, as I will presently explore, we could read as akin to masochistic enjoyment — sees his tortured body become a place of respite over the

[40] In *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1757), Edmund Burke suggested that pain can be pleasureful, but only at 'certain distances' and with 'certain modifications' so that that 'danger of pain' does not 'press too nearly' (14).

course of his weeks-long imprisonment. That 'torpor' which was previously depicted in the disconnect between his 'soul' and his 'organs' when confined within domesticity is replaced here by the opposite: the pleasure of experiencing an acute awareness of his painful-pleasureful body in this subversive and unregulated space of the queer man.

Reginald's experience of this bodily gratification, effected through his painful/pleasureful liberation from the confines of the male/masculine, connects the novel to Kate Singer's description of Romantic 'vacancy' as a non-binary 'affective movement' that wends its way 'past binary gender'.[41] Singer writes how vacancy appears within the work of Romantic writers as a 'complex form of affect that is released from the feeling, gendered body' which, in turn, rewrites 'ideological narratives dictating how bodily responses gender subjects' bodies and minds'.[42] This notion of the individual being released from the stultifying confines of the gendered body into a space beyond rules, regulations, and categories resonates with Reginald's experience here in Bethlem's prison cell. When Godwin's protagonist is liberated from the male/masculine, he comes to find a subversive 'joy' in the space of the queer man: he experiences that aforementioned 'pain of vacuity' in the pleasurable way outlined above precisely because such vacuity is unregulated, expansive, and because his existence within it is not predicated upon any pre-determined roles or rules (423). 'Vacancy,' Singer writes further, 'enacts a tropological movement not merely to eradicate the surety of our sensing bodies and to undermine gender ideology, but to refigure our relation to reality', a movement which Reginald's painful/pleasureful experience of this unbound 'vacuity' connects with.[43] The thrilling and transgressive

[41] Kate Singer, *Romantic Vacancy: The Poetics of Gender, Affect, and Radical Speculation* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2019), p. 17.
[42] Ibid, pp. xv-xvi.
[43] *Romantic Vacancy*, p. xviii.

space beyond the domestic regime is experienced as joyful by Reginald because he no longer has to endure that 'torpor' of living his life within the ill-fitting and unfulfilling ideologies of the gender binary, granting him the ability to satiate those deeply-felt desires through this masochistic same-sex attachment he develops with Bethlem.

While *St. Leon* predates Richard von Krafft-Ebing's 'invent[ion]' of masochism in 1885 to denote a 'disorder' in which acts of bodily punishment become erotically pleasurable,[44] Godwin's depiction of Reginald's enjoyment of Bethlem's treatment of him nonetheless recognises how the pleasureful potentialities of bodily pain can function directly to satiate a deeply-felt desire that transgresses normative boundaries. During the twentieth century, masochism came to be understood most commonly as representative of the masochist's desire to 'escape from self'.[45] Queer theorists have more recently intervened to suggest masochistic pleasure may instead be representative of the masochist's reconfiguration of self. Torkild Thanem and Louise Wallenberg propose that these earlier theories of masochistic pleasure only as escape 'limit the transgressive and subversive forces of masochism', as they called instead for the ongoing need 'to develop an alternative, queer theory of masochism'.[46] The following year, Halberstam outlined in *The Queer Art of Failure* how masochistic enjoyment is closely connected with gender unbeing. Finding pleasure within the painful, Halberstam explains, is an experience which forms part of what he terms more broadly as 'radical passivity' (123). This is a process in which

[44] See Barbara Caroline Mennel, *The Representation of Masochism and Queer Desire in Film and Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 1-2.
[45] Roy F. Baumeister, for instance, defined masochism as an 'escape from self in which the sensation of pain removes a broader awareness of self and world'. See 'Masochism as Escape from Self', *Journal of Sex Research*, 25: 1 (1998), 28-59 (p. 38). Robert Grimwade later similarly described masochistic enjoyment as 'the deep pleasure that results from losing our individuality'. See 'Between the Quills: Schopenhauer and Freud on Sadism and Masochism', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92: 1 (2011), 149-169 (p. 163).
[46] 'Buggering Freud and Deleuze: Toward a Queer Theory of Masochism', *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2: 1 (2010) <https://doi.org/10.3402/jac.v2i0.4642>.

one wilfully turns away from performing prescribed, ill-fitting, and unfulfilling gender roles. Instead, they 'refuse to cohere [...] [and] refuse 'being' where being has already been defined' for us by external social and political forces, even if we may then face the pain of scorn, ridicule, or rejection as a consequence of this refusal (126). For Halberstam, this pain of unbeing can be experienced as pleasureful precisely because unbeing relieves the individual from the far more painful restrictions and burdens of ideological gender boundaries — something which Godwin's description of Reginald's torturous experience of performing gender, and specifically that unrelenting 'torpor' he experienced within the marital and familial units, finds resonance with.

During this imprisonment in Bethlem's castle, Reginald's body, and his deriving of pleasure from physical pain, become an active part of his subjectivity. They function as a mechanism for understanding and reconciling with this inner self which he was previously too afraid to 'encounter' because of its total incompatibility with the masculinity he was attempting to perform. His masochistic 'joy' is derived firstly from the actual bodily pain, but, as Reginald described, more specifically because it gives 'evidence of my own value'. This value is specified as individual, that which is belonging to — and not imposed upon — him, his body, his (un)being. Halberstam's theory of masochism as a refusal to be when being has already been decided for us (and not by us) connects with the emphasis Reginald places here upon the vitalness of finding and understanding his 'own value' outside of a system which made sense of him only as a father, heir, husband, and so forth. To requote Singer's *Romantic Vacancy*, Bethlem's prison cell thus becomes, perhaps ironically, a space in which Reginald is finally able to 'break free from [his] gendered bod[y]' and immerse himself into that 'non-binary landscape of transgressive figurative motion'

where he gains the capacity to explore the deeply-felt in ways unbound by the limits of the male/masculine.[47]

With his body and his subjectivity functioning as a necessary and active part of self, that aforementioned distinction between Reginald's feminine embodiment against that ideological masculine transcendence widens further here, given that the body becomes the vessel through which he gains access to, and expression of, the deeply-felt. Godwin may thus be seen to be portraying something of a renaturalisation of the body in *St. Leon* as a way to recognise the potentialities beyond the gender binary. As previously documented, Judith Butler explored how bodies which do not cohere to the female/feminine, male/masculine matrix are marginalised, delegitimated, or made to look unnatural. In *St. Leon*, this is reversed: Godwin depicts Reginald as being held down in a state of unnaturalness within domesticity, portraying a perpetual and damaging disconnect between his male body, his essence, and performative/legitimated masculinity. His gender unbeing and his masochistic enjoyment function, by contrast, as a reconfiguration and subsequent reconciliation between self and desire. Reginald becomes attuned to his body and, in turn, finds a harmony between his physical self and his unmasculine essence, through the pleasureful, gratifying, and reparative 'friendship' he forms within this deeply passionate extrafamilial same-sex bond.

*

When Richard Polwhele infamously described Mary Wollstonecraft as 'unsex'd' in *The Unsex'd Females* (1798), he did so because he thought she was not 'proper'. This

---

[47] *Romantic Vacancy*, p. xvii.

poem, which was more broadly an attack on the ideals of the French Revolution, took aim at Wollstonecraft because she had illuminated how women had been trivialized and confined by assigned gendered roles within British society. For Polwhele, Wollstonecraft had 'despis[ed] NATURE's law'.[48] In doing so, she had dared to question this inherent linking of femaleness only with an emotional, sentimental femininity, and, in turn, of maleness only with a rational masculinity by arguing instead that the sexes should be regarded as equally rational and emotional creatures.[49]

In the *Memoirs* of his late wife, Godwin dismisses the ideological notion that women should be limited in this way, and, at points, questions this deterministic linking of femaleness with femininity. He mocked 'that class of men who believe they could not exist without such pretty, soft creatures to resort to'.[50] As I have illustrated over the course of this chapter, in *St. Leon* it is Reginald who is depicted as essentially incompatible with ideological masculinity, and linked instead with an embodied subjectivity. In addition to this, it is Marguerite who takes on the role of the rational marital partner across the novel, as she continually mitigates the effects of her husband's inescapable emotions. 'Marguerite', he narrates early in the novel, 'had recovered me from the state of the most dreadful disease'; 'I entreat you to think deeply', she instructs him later on, so that her husband does not end up 'totally deprived of your rational judgment' (77, 175). Marguerite is the one who 'recover[s]' her husband from his emotions, and she is the one to encourage him to try and be 'rational'.

---

[48] Richard Polwhele, 'The Unsex'd Females, a Poem to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature', Oxford Text Archive <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12024/3251> [accessed 6 October 2021].
[49] I go onto examine Wollstonecraft's discussion of femininity and masculinity in more detail in chapter three of this thesis, pp. 136-138, 143-144.
[50] William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), p. 81. I note here that the *Memoirs* nonetheless also contains some misogynistic elements. I address this in chapter three of this thesis, pp. 137-139.

What is perhaps most pressing about Marguerite's and Reginald's relationship is that marriage and family life only stultify them as individuals. They adhere to an empty, joyless institution, and, in turn, to the limiting gendered roles that come with it. Reginald's failing, his immersion in the space of the queer man, opened his life up to the scary, but stimulating, world of potentialities beyond marriage, family, and normative gender. *St. Leon* is a novel that showcases how not conforming to imposed ideological roles — to be unsex'd, as it were — is not to regress or ruin, but to reveal the confines of those very roles. Godwin's 1799 work recognises, documents, and imagines the potentialities for those who claim agency over their lives, their loves, and their bodies.

CHAPTER TWO

'HIS CLOSET': GODWIN, JOANNA BAILLIE, AND THE (UN)KNOWABILITY OF SAME-SEX DESIRE

In this chapter I develop my analysis of the subversive, secret, same-sex passions witnessed in *St. Leon* by examining how Godwin and Joanna Baillie — the writer whose work directly influenced Godwin's later fiction — portrayed male-male desire in relation to the closet. This term, most often used in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries to refer to a private place of study,[1] is depicted by both writers in relation to this spatial aspect, but, most immediately, to its emotional associations. For Baillie and Godwin, the closet denoted not only a literal secret space: they were first and foremost interested in scrutinising the closeted passions of the individual.

In the 'Introductory Discourse' to *Plays on the Passions* (1798), Baillie outlines her 'desire to know what men are in the closet as well as the field' (78). Her aim, she explains, was to 'follow' the protagonist 'into his lonely haunts, into his closet' to examine his 'concealed passion' (73). Godwin cites *De Monfort*, the third work in Baillie's *Passions*, as inspiration for his fourth major novel *Mandeville* (1817).[2] Prior to this, he had, like Baillie, described how he was 'not content to observe such a man on the public stage'. Instead, he wanted to 'follow' the protagonist 'into his closet' in order to 'mark the operation of human passions'.[3]

[1] See note in Joanna Baillie, *Plays on the Passions*, ed. by Peter Duthie (Ontario: Broadview, 2001), p. 108. All subsequent references to the 'Introductory Discourse' and to *De Monfort* are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.
[2] In the preface, Godwin describes how he took 'some hints from De Montfort, a tragedy, by Joanna Baillie'. He does not elaborate further on this. See *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Ontario: Broadview, 2016), p. 62. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.
[3] Ibid, p. 462, 464.

In the preceding chapter, I proposed that Godwin's *St. Leon*, as well as Mary Wollstonecraft's second *Vindication*, encouraged individuals to explore their deeply-felt passions — even (or especially) if these transgressed the limiting boundaries of social and moral acceptability.[4] Where secret passions formed an undercurrent in *St. Leon*, *Mandeville* features these as its primary focus. The 1817 novel, described by Percy Shelley as Godwin's darkest and most affecting work,[5] scrutinises the deeply-rooted desires of its eponymous protagonist, Charles, as he wrestles with a 'hot, boiling and furious passion' that is 'undisciplined in the purest principles of morality' (405). Like *St. Leon*, Godwin centres *Mandeville* upon the relationship between an inhibitory external world and the incompatibility of its protagonist's inner passions with this world. And, like *St. Leon*, *Mandeville* explores the impeding nature of marriage, in addition to the disabling effects of religious fanaticism: where Reginald de St. Leon's secret extrafamilial 'enjoyment[s]' comprised drinking, gambling, as well as unregulated relations with both women and men,[6] that which constitutes Presbyterian Charles's closeted 'passion' is focused only on the compulsive and obsessive feelings he has for his Catholic schoolfellow and rival, Lionel Clifford.

Set in the mid-seventeenth century, *Mandeville* begins with orphan baby Charles's rescue from the massacre of the Ulster Rebellion. He grows up under the care of an apathetic uncle and the tutelage of a fanatical minister before enrolling at Winchester College. Here, he meets Clifford, and experiences an immediate and powerful 'intoxication' with this 'irresistible' young man (158-159). This attraction later transforms into a fierce envy of Clifford's physical beauty and social popularity,

[4] My use of 'especially' here refers to Godwin's advocacy for expressing the deeply-felt which I examined in chapter one, pp. 70-71, 75-77.
[5] In a letter to *The Examiner* regarding Godwin and *Mandeville*, Percy Shelley describes how 'the picture is never bright, and we wonder whence you drew the darkness' which 'shakes the deepest soul'. He then affirms that this 'power of *Mandeville* is inferior to nothing you have done'. See *Mandeville*, p. 469.
[6] See my previous analysis of these 'enjoyment[s]' in chapter one, pp. 54-55.

which eventually manifests itself as a (seemingly unfounded) revulsion. Charles's growingly complicated passion for this man — switching repeatedly between 'intoxication', 'hatred', and 'confusion' — is aggravated by Clifford's conversion to Catholicism and Charles's doubting his commitment to the Royalist cause.[7] But, as I document, it originates due to what appears to be a seemingly unrelated 'secret' (220) and inescapable passion which Clifford continually excites within him. When Clifford eventually plans to marry Charles's sister Henrietta, Charles's inability to accept their romantic happiness pushes him into a frenzied state in which he then attempts to murder the man he feels so passionately for. This fails, and the novel bluntly concludes with Charles being transfixed with the reflection of his disfigured face, the result of the wound inflicted upon him by Clifford.

Critics have previously linked Godwin's depiction of Charles's fragile psychological state, as well as his tumultuous relationship with Clifford, primarily to the author's disdain towards war, religious conflict, and their traumatic consequences. For Carmel Murphy, '*Mandeville* explores the disabling effects of religious extremism and prejudice on the individual consciousness'.[8] Tilottama Rajan writes similarly that Godwin depicts war and conflict as creating a 'psychic wound that is repressed and cannot be discussed or resolved'.[9] Rajan, however, stresses further that 'the specifics of conflict — what it means to be a Catholic or a Presbyterian royalist — scarcely matter', as she argues that Godwin 'us[es] actual war merely as a screen for a more profound psychic war [...] at a structural level where

[7] For Charles's references to hatred and confusion in the description of his feelings for Clifford, see *Mandeville*, pp. 186-187, 210, 220, and 432. The novel centres primarily upon the events of the Penruddock uprising, a 1655 Royalist revolt supported by Presbyterian opponents of the Protectorate.
[8] Carmel Murphy, 'Possibilities of Past and Future: Republican History in William Godwin's *Mandeville*', *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 28: 2 (2014), 104-116 (p. 111).
[9] Tilottama Rajan, 'The Disfiguration of Enlightenment: War, Trauma, and the Historical Novel in Godwin's *Mandeville*', in *Godwinian Moments*, ed. by Robert M. Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 172-192 (p. 178).

politics is the matrix from which various forms of "normal" social and psychic relations are also generated' (179). I concur with Rajan that the novel's historical setting functions as a vessel through which the author continues his project of exposing the destructive influence that political control and social normativity had upon the individual and their ability to form relations with others. I scrutinise this further to argue that Charles's closeted passion for Clifford manifests itself as it does — from intoxication, to envy, to revulsion, to confusion, and back again — in ways essentially unconnected to either man's religion or royalism. This chapter offers an alternative way to read their relationship: that Charles's 'furious' feelings for Clifford have their origins, at least in part, in an ungratified eroticised attraction.

These frenzied manifestations, these complex and contradictory passions, can, I propose, be read as the result of Charles's attempt to navigate a desire that transgresses the boundaries of socially and morally acceptable homosociality. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick pinpoints the late-nineteenth century as the time when same-sex desire became the 'one particular sexuality that was distinctively constituted *as* secrecy'.[10] I propose *Mandeville* to be a much earlier novelistic example of a closeted, same-sex eroticism. Further, I trace how Godwin's process of 'follow[ing] him into his closet' can be read as a prefiguration of what we today understand as that 'closet' in relation to the hiddenness, concealment, and unknowability of queer desire.[11]

This is not intended to minimise the significance of war or religion to how we read male-male relations within the novel. Rather, it is to say that part of Charles's same-sex passion — that 'secret' desire for Clifford which remains mysterious and

[10] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) p. 73.
[11] See Sedgwick's discussion in *Epistemology* of the 'known and the unknown', pp. 2-5, 168-169.

undescribed — cannot be solely explained through this specific historical setting and religious context. In *Mandeville*, while Charles's mild disapproval of Clifford's Catholicism and suspected anti-royalism is vocalised and made known to the reader, this 'boiling' deeper passion, this unnamed 'secret', remains closeted, unvocalised, and unknown, manifesting instead as flashes of intoxication mixed with an inexplicable and murderous infuriation. As Godwin writes in 'Of History and Romance', his turn to the historical novel was motivated by what he saw as the need to move away from those 'generalities of historical abstraction' which had previously neglected to consider the 'passions and peculiarities' of the individual.[12] The Godwinian novel functioned as a way to remedy what the author described as the 'dull repetition' of those studies which had only 'consider[ed] society in a mass', to place focus instead on the transgressive passions in the 'closet' which had the potential to 'disturb' or 'excit[e]' the reader.[13]

Godwin's pinpointing Baillie's *De Monfort* as inspiration for *Mandeville* draws attention to these enigmatic qualities of Charles's closeted same-sex obsession. The Count de Monfort's complex and confused feelings towards his rival the Count de Rezenvelt unmissably resonates with *Mandeville* — even down to the fact that it is Rezenvelt's suspected intimacy with De Monfort's sister Jane that ultimately throws the eponymous protagonist into an inexplicable and murderous envy. Like religion and royalism in *Mandeville*, the known reason linked to De Monfort's passionate feelings for Rezenvelt — that of a mild power struggle and mutual dislike between a middle class and an aristocratic man — does not appear to explain or justify why this passion is so frenzied, murderous, and so debilitatingly all-consuming. Charles and De Monfort do not come out of their closets to make their same-sex passion known.

[12] See *Mandeville*, p. 462.
[13] Ibid, pp. 461-462, 464.

Rather, we are invited into their closet as we observe the discordance between their passion and the oppressive external world: Godwin and Baillie are consistently concerned with depicting how the protagonist's deeply rooted feelings for their male aggressors cannot be expressed, explained, or made known within the social and moral order.

For both writers, this unwavering unknowability of the passion could appear unusual when set against their broader oeuvres. Godwin's established reputation within Romantic scholarship aligns him as a writer concerned foremost with clear and defined rationality, reason, logic, and shrewd perception, in addition to that which critics have identified as his 'fear' of those private passions and affections which cannot be rationalised.[14] Baillie has typically been regarded by scholars as 'commit[ted] to Enlightenment ideals of sociability and civility' rather than an advocate for the 'Romantic Gothic' transgressor.[15] Her *Passions*, in turn, have commonly been viewed as lessons in moral reform, with critics affirming that her aim was to create a 'well-structured, systematic taxonomy of single passions' and teach theatregoers to 'identify them, reflect on them, control them, and thus protect themselves'.[16]

Yet, this intriguing, shared quality of unknowability between their two works sees the preoccupation in *Mandeville* and *De Monfort* fall more upon spotlighting the limits of society to accommodate the protagonist's passion than it does upon insisting any need to know, rationalise, and/or control the desire which transgresses

[14] See, for instance, Shawn Fraistat, 'Godwin's Fear of the Private Affections', in *New Approaches to William Godwin*, ed. by Eliza O'Brien, Helen Stark, and Beatrice Turner (London: Palgrave, 2021), pp. 103-126. While St. Leon's extrafamilial desires were marked by a similar undescribed/unknown quality, these were only focused on during certain parts of the novel, whereas nearly the entirety *Mandeville* is centred on Charles's unhinged obsession.

[15] See Barbara Schaff's documentation of Baillie's life, work, and reputation in 'Joanna Baillie, *Plays on the Passions*', in *Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. by Ralf Haekel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 326-342 (p. 337).

[16] Ibid, p. 332, 337.

its moral boundaries. The shadowy and unexplained dynamics of De Monfort's furiously passionate relationship with Rezenvelt, the very quality which looks to have directly inspired Godwin to recreate and further explore such a similarly complex dynamic in *Mandeville*,[17] queries the moralistic analysis that audiences would or could have been able to 'identify' his particular 'passion' in order to reflect upon it and control it. Charles's and De Monfort's same-sex passions begin and remain closeted, forcing attention instead onto the inhibitory and oppressive social and moral order which has made such a problematic containment necessary.

Drawing connections between Godwin, Baillie, and the queer closet, I document how we can read *Mandeville* and *De Monfort* as anticipations of queer theories of the abject, and primarily Lee Edelman's *No Future* (2004). Edelman aligns queer desire with a total rejection of the dominant social order, insisting that queers should always resist intelligibility or recognisability within this order.[18] Queers, he argues, function as an irremovable reminder of the order's inability to inhabit all meaning and coherence. Baillie and Godwin consistently place focus on society's limitations and restraints, where their protagonists' complex and closeted passions remain undisclosed and unintelligible. As both their texts tread the line between secrecy and disclosure, knowledge and ignorance, desire and aversion, the passion remains (un)defined by its unknowability. The reader may never know what the specifics of either protagonist's passion actually are, but the very nature of this unknowability and unnameability perhaps conveys all we need to know.

[17] In the preface, Godwin does not offer any further detail as to how *De Monfort* inspired him to write *Mandeville*, writing only that 'an author [...] takes his hint from some suggestion afforded by an author that has gone before him' (62).
[18] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 3-9. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

STIMULATION AND (DIS)PLEASURE

From teenage Charles's first meeting with Clifford in *Mandeville*, he makes known to the reader his immediate obsession. Clifford 'instantly fixed my attention', he describes, telling us how 'there was something in him perfectly fascinating and irresistible', which sees Charles experience an 'inexpressible and thrilling' series of emotions (158):

> I, like the rest, admired a spectacle, so new to me, and so beautiful in itself, that I was wrapt in self-oblivion, and possessed no faculties, but an eye to remark his graces, and an ear to drink in every sound he uttered. The illusion lasted for days, and I returned to the feast with an appetite that seemed as if it would never be sated.
>
> But this was a brief intoxication. The solemn tone of my true character speedily returned to me; and, though for a time I relished the vein of Clifford with a genuine zest, it was in the main too alien for the settled temper of my mind, for it to be possible I should enjoy it long. (158-159)

Charles marks out this initial attraction as normative, as homosocial — he is 'like the rest' of his schoolfellows, insofar that his finding Clifford 'irresistible' is not singled out as anything transgressive in and of itself.

Yet, introduced here is a disconnect between Charles's narration of his known feelings for Clifford, and the gesturing towards a something else, an unknown, as to why exactly he feels this way. His being able to 'enjoy' Clifford is concurrently dependent upon his being 'wrapt in self-oblivion' and 'possess[ing] no faculties'. To

find pleasure in — and to sustain the enjoyment of — these feelings, Charles must remain unconscious to the 'cause' which underpins his attraction:

> It held me in an unnatural state of feeling; and my thoughts soon fell back to the train to which they had been accustomed. My rooted habits were those of reflection, silence, and reverie. […] [It] had an effect upon me similar to that produced by the rattling progress of a vehicle at full speed. It made my brain giddy, and my head ache, with its violence. And, when I looked back upon the pleasure I had for a time enjoyed, I scorned or imagined I scorned, the cause that produced it. (159)

Charles's distinction between this 'unnatural' feeling set against his 'rooted habits' indicates he doesn't quite understand this new passion. He is instinctively drawn to Clifford, but he experiences such a draw as unnatural and, in turn, unsettling. His repressing these feelings sees his thoughts fall back to the known and familiar part of his mind, one that hasn't been excited or stimulated by this young man.

Intertwined with this is Charles's awareness that this repression of the troubling pleasureful feelings is something only attempted, and not actualised. When he 'looked back upon the pleasure' he 'enjoyed', there is an intriguing, dualistic phrasing — where he 'scorned or imagined I scorned the cause' of his desire. This 'or', this mid-sentence reappraisal, reveals Charles's awareness that his denying himself any sustaining of the 'pleasure' or enjoyment caused by this young man is performative. It appears as a consciously enacted defence mechanism; 'imagined' protection from the intrusion of such 'alien' feelings upon his 'settled' mind. The singular use of 'the cause' and 'the pleasure' highlights the specificness of that which

underpins Charles's feelings for Clifford — feelings which, at this very early stage of the novel, have no obvious connection to or association with religion or royalism.[19]

As Charles wrestles with this same-sex feeling which is 'so new to me', there is a complex interplay between the known and the unknown, the familiar and the strange, happening within his mind. The way in which Godwin aligns this newness as something at odds with Charles's mental state appears antithetical to the philosophy of mind he would go on to publish in *Thoughts on Man* (1831). In this account, the author affirms that 'familiarity breeds contempt'.[20] An unstimulated and wearied mind, he believed, would send one into a miserable state of torpor. 'Attention anew should be excited', he further affirms in this study, if one is to 'awake the languid soul' (2). For Charles, however, this process appears to be reversed. It is attention anew which breeds contempt, which breeds his 'scorn'. And it is familiarity, his 'rooted habits', which speak most immediately to 'the settled' state of his mind — a state that he appears noticeably hesitant to move away from. While this 'new[ness]' of Clifford does set in motion an awakening within the protagonist, Charles appears overstimulated: it is his inability to cope with these new feelings which brings about that subsequent scornful attitude which leads to the 'imagined' retreat to the known/familiar. Godwin portrays Charles, at this early stage, as being uncomfortable with whatever 'pleasure' it is Clifford awakens and excites within him. Yet, he also portrays him as being unable to remedy this through simply ignoring or repressing this emerging passion.

[19] As noted earlier, these events at Winchester take place prior to Clifford's conversion and before either Charles or Clifford enter into royalist activities.
[20] William Godwin, *Thoughts on Man: His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1831), p. 1. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

In the previous indented quotation, it can be observed how Godwin pinpoints Charles's 'brain', as opposed to his mind, as the site of this passion aroused by Clifford. This highlights the complex relationship between the protagonist and his emotions towards this young man. He described that 'settled temper of my mind' when referring to the known/familiar, but then refers to this giddy 'brain' when detailing those 'new', (un)pleasurable sensations which Clifford arouses. These stimulatory same-sex passions appear to operate on a deep, embodied level, generating confusion within the protagonist's rational, objective mind. This reference to the brain resonates with the emerging understandings of the interpenetrative relationship between body and mind in the neurological sciences of the very early nineteenth century in which the brain was considered to be the site of the 'corporeal mind'.[21] Joanna's pathologist brother Matthew Baillie wrote of a 'system through which the influence of mind, as connected with the brain' is 'communicated to many different parts of the body'.[22] Sir Charles Bell documented how 'the capacities of the mind' and 'the powers of the organs' worked in synergy as a 'medium betwixt the mind and the external world' in his 1811 *New Anatomy of the Brain*.[23] *Mandeville* both recalls and complicates these contemporary theories. There is evidence of interplay between mind, body, and the external world in how Godwin depicted Charles's reaction to Clifford. But this same-sex (dis)pleasure confuses notions of a synergetic relationship between these separate components: as will become

[21] Alan Richardson offers a well-researched documentation of these changing theories across *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For Richardson's specific discussion about the corporeal mind, see pp. 9-19.
[22] Matthew Baillie, *Lectures and Observations on Medicine* (London: Printed for Richard Taylor, 1825), p. 123. While Joanna's *De Monfort* contains no such specific references to the brain as a signifier the corporeal mind like *Mandeville*, *The Dream* (a Baillie drama included in the 1821 edition of *Passions*) does: namely, the description of 'tremendous thoughts' which 'make the brain confused and giddy' (a phrase closely aligned with Godwin's 'brain giddy'). See *A Series of Plays: In Which it is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of Mind* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), III, p. 135.
[23] Charles Bell, *Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain* (London: Strahan and Preston, 1811), p. 8.

continuingly apparent in the novel, Charles's initial pleasure manifests itself as displeasure, and, in turn, disrupts this system of direct communication between body/mind, mind/body.

Four years before the publication of *Mandeville*, anatomist Alexander Ramsay published a neurological definition of 'pleasure' as being 'that action, depending on a state of system prepared for and dependent on the reception of physical stimuli' in his *Anatomy of the Heart, Cranium, and Brain* (1813).[24] Charles's system of mental preparedness appears ill equipped to adequately process the physical stimuli, and bodily stimulation, of that 'pleasure' he experiences from Clifford. His focus when first meeting the teenager is upon his physicality. Clifford's 'countenance was beautiful, and his figure was airy', he tells us, among several other observations of his body.[25] Yet, his mind cannot then process his pleasureful reaction to this young man's beauty — he can only 'call the feelings, which thus at second thoughts arose in my mind, by the name of envy' (158). This 'envy' is marked out not as the motivating passion, but instead only as a secondary feeling, suggesting that it is not a jealousy of Clifford which underpins his obsession with him. The original, primary feeling — whatever it may be — is, by contrast, left unexplained, existent in a shadowy realm of the vehemently passionate but markedly unknown.

In the male-male passion of *De Monfort*, the mind, the body, and (dis)pleasure operate, like *Mandeville*, with a clear yet complex interconnectedness. By Baillie's own admission, this passion exists with very little backstory or explanation in the drama.[26] De Monfort's feelings for this man are nevertheless

---

[24] Alexander Ramsay, *Anatomy of the Heart, Cranium, and Brain* (Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Company, 1813), p. 7.

[25] Further physical and/or sensual descriptions of Clifford include: 'the bloom of health revelled in his cheeks. There was a vivacity in his eye […] [a] charm in his voice' (158).

[26] In her introduction to *Passions*, Baillie writes: 'the rise and progress of this passion I have […] give[n] in retrospect, instead of representing it all along in its actual operation. […] [H]atred is a slow growth, and to have exhibited it from its beginnings would have included a longer period, than even

consistently portrayed as ferocious, inescapable, and altogether intolerable. Where Charles appeared unable to confront the bodily 'pleasure' aroused in him by Clifford, De Monfort is instead fixated upon the 'pleasure' he believes Rezenvelt experiences from taunting him with his body. After De Monfort is hesitant to accept Rezenvelt's offer of a physical embrace following their reunion, Rezenvelt suggestively replies: 'I'll take thy hand since I can have no more' (345). Previously, De Monfort had described how Rezenvelt's playful behaviour had affected him deeply, recalling how 'he hath a pleasure too, / A damned pleasure in the pain he gives! [...] It touches every nerve: it makes me mad' (318). Baillie marks out a disconnect between what appears to be a simple, friendly gesture from Rezenvelt, against the complex and intolerable feeling aroused in her protagonist — a feeling which appears to trigger some kind of past trauma.

Unlike the lengthy passages of Charles's first-person narration, the few times we are offered a glimpse inside De Monfort's closet, to the inner workings of why his passion for Rezenvelt manifests itself in this way, is in soliloquies. Through stage direction, Baillie demonstrates a disruption in the synergetic relationship between the mind and the body, a disruption apparently caused by the protagonist's inability to understand or confront his deeply troubling feelings for his rival. It is upon De Monfort's bodily feeling, and upon his bodily gestures, that Baillie places repeated focus, as she depicts his wrestling with this unsocial, unspoken 'raging passion' (331).[27] In the following soliloquy, after the protagonist finds Rezenvelt's presence

---

those who are least scrupulous about the limitation of dramatick time' (107-108). The only known elements to the two men's relationship is that, at some point in their earlier life, Rezenvelt won and then spared De Monfort's life in a duel. Mortified, De Monfort then fled England for Europe, only to later be unexpectedly reunited with his rival.

[27] I refer here to the numerous directions which Baillie focuses on De Monfort's body, and much more so than any of the other characters in the play, such as how he 'shrinks back' (315), his 'turning haughtily' (316), how he 'comes close to his ear' (317), 'tossing his arms distractedly' (318), 'bursts into tears' (328), 'a long pause, expressive of great agony of mind' (357), and so forth.

increasingly unendurable, De Monfort then turns his attention precisely to what he wants to do to him (and, specifically, to his body). Mid-way through the passage, Baillie instructs the actor playing the protagonist to '*cover his face with his hand, and burst into tears*'. Immediately following this action, De Monfort declares: 'I'll do a deed of blood [...] Piercing the lifeless figure on that wall / Could pierce his bosom too [...] Shall groans and blood affright me? No, I'll do it / Tho gasping life beneath my pressure heav'd' (358). Murder doesn't appear in these lines as a sole motivation underpinning De Monfort's desires. These imaginations seem to function simultaneously as a way for the protagonist to visualise the fulfilment of his desire to penetrate ('pierce') the body of Rezenvelt and to make his rival 'groan' as he is 'beneath [the] pressure' of De Monfort's own body. Baillie's specifying for the actor to be in 'tears' while voicing his bloodthirsty desires further blurs the notion that his passion is only murderous hatred, in a comparable way to how Charles's scornful obsession for Clifford is conveyed as something more than envy.

Baillie's assertion that her 'closet dramas' should be performed, and not read,[28] highlights the importance she placed upon audiences witnessing the enactment of a passion visually; feelings, sensations, and emotions communicated through the physical body of the actor. Barbara Schaff notes that, where Baillie's fellow dramatists were constructing works that were primarily intended to be read (in the closet) as opposed to being performed (on the stage), Baillie 'reinterpret[ed] the term closet drama as a new form of psychological play'.[29] The author's keen interest in physiognomy underscored this wish to have her drama performed to audiences, motivated by her belief that the body could be 'read as information'

[28] See Baillie's 'Introductory Discourse', pp. 108-109. See also Barbara Schaff's overview of the closet drama in the *Handbook of British Romanticism*, pp. 330-333.
[29] Schaff, p. 333. See also the discussion of Baillie and the closet drama in Catherine B. Burroughs, *Closet Stages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), pp. 100-114.

pertaining to human character.[30] Where *De Monfort* appears at variance with this, however, is that the Count's body, particularly in this dramatic soliloquy, is somewhat unreadable — that is, his placing his hands over his face and bursting into tears seems contrary to the callous and unfeeling visualisations of murder the actor would be vocalising in the same moment. Critics have documented how Baillie characteristically 'us[ed] the female body as a stage for enacting morality plays designed to encourage virtuous behaviour in female characters'.[31] In *De Monfort*, the Count's body doesn't aid in identifying his transgressive passion. Rather, it appears to serve only to continue the passion's unknowability and its inextricability. Instead of assisting her audience to identify, control, and protect themselves against the passion they witness playing out on stage, Baillie appears to be baffling her audience's ability to clearly discern De Monfort's emotions and feelings.

In her work on the morality drama, Julie Carlson has explored the role that the physical body of the actor played in communicating author sentiment with audiences. 'The stage's dependence on physical reality', Carlson writes, 'makes its investigations of even the most abstract subjects more accessible and engaging'. Yet, she continues, 'the stage's special relation to the body is also its chief danger, since the body's appeal can block out the less palpable and immediate workings of mind'.[32] *De Monfort* seems not to conform to either of these — physical reality (the actor's gesture), does not make De Monfort's passion more 'accessible' to the audience. And, instead of 'block[ing] out' the workings of his mind, bodily expression seems instead to draw attention to the furious inner processes and confusion of De Monfort's mind.

[30] Burroughs, p. 113.
[31] Ibid, p. 38
[32] Carlson, quoted in Burroughs, p. 175.

In both cases, *De Monfort* cannot so easily be labelled a morality play, and De Monfort's same-sex passion cannot so easily be identified, controlled, or moralised.

At the time of the play's publication, Elizabeth Inchbald voiced criticism that Baillie never provides her audience with a full and satisfying explanation for this unhinged ferocity of De Monfort.[33] For Godwin, this appears to be the specific reason why he was so drawn to the play, given the similarity between Charles's inscrutable and complex passion with that of Baillie's protagonist. Nevertheless, while no stranger to writing drama, Godwin's decision to construct *Mandeville* as a novel infers that he saw this as the more suitable form to accommodate an exploration of such a male-male dynamic. For Godwin, dramas, and the theatre, were at their most effective in fostering a sense of social togetherness through bodily interaction. The 'power of meeting', he writes, creates 'a spark [that] spreads along from man to man. It is thus that we have our feelings in common at a theatrical representation [...] this is the nursing mother of oratory, of public morality, of public religion, and the drama'.[34] What marks *Mandeville*, and indeed *De Monfort*, is that their focus is expressly not upon a social togetherness, but, in contrast, upon a fractious and socially unintelligible male-male passion that transgresses the boundaries of that which Godwin terms as this 'public morality'.

INTELLECTUAL RATIONALISM / ANIMAL DESIRE

While this complex interplay between mind and body in *Mandeville* and *De Monfort* obscures, rather than explains, the protagonists' same-sex feelings, it does guide us

---

[33] See Schaff's description of the contemporary reaction to *De Monfort*, p. 336.
[34] *Thoughts on Man*, pp. 6-7.

to situate their passion within what Godwin later defines as the animal, as opposed to the intellectual, part of the human.

In *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin defines 'the intellectual man' as a 'disembodied spirit' (8). In 'the ruminations of the inner man, and the dissection of our thoughts and desires, we employ our intellectual arithmetic', he explains, 'without adverting to the existence of our joints and members' (10). For Godwin, the intellectual man is a transcendent being and one who analyses their desires and passions with a rationality and objectivity unimpeded by subjective, bodily feeling; the 'animal' part of man, by contrast, involves 'thinking of this medium, our own material frame' and is associated with that which he terms as 'the humiliating necessities of nature' (10, 12-13). Charles's 'intoxication' with Clifford, and De Monfort's 'raging passion' for Rezenvelt, both align with Godwin's definition of the animal. Neither are shown to be able to employ 'intellectual arithmetic' to rationalise or control their desires. Instead, the protagonists' emotional involvement with these men circumscribes any ability to do so. And, unlike that 'disembodied spirit' of the intellectual, Charles and De Monfort display a keen and ongoing awareness of their (and their rival's) physical body. While Godwin does not go on to explicitly define those 'humiliating necessities of nature' which form part of the 'animal' human, one could assume this refers to sustenance, procreation, or some other desire-driven, bodily function necessary to the propagation and continuation of life. As such, these animal 'necessities' have no direct link to how the author portrays Charles's same-sex passion in *Mandeville*. Yet, the way in which Godwin depicts Charles's feelings as something unexplainable within a known, rational, objective, disembodied intellectualism, and locates his 'passion' for Clifford alongside the subjective and the embodied, suggests a potential association between Charles's obsession with Clifford and a bodily, animal desire.

To explore this, I return to that earlier passage in which Charles described his initial 'intoxication' with Clifford (158). The rational mind was relegated to a state of 'oblivion'. The body, or more specifically Charles's organs of sense, functioned all but independently, as he narrated how he 'possessed no faculties, but an eye to remark his graces, and an ear to drink in every sound he uttered'. His desire, too, was relayed in bodily terms, as he described his feelings for this young man as 'an appetite that seemed as if it would never be sated'. It was also upon the 'beautiful' physicality of Clifford that Charles placed focus. For a brief, intoxicated moment, Charles appeared as a highly sentient body immersed in his attraction to another body. When unconscious to this external world, Charles is freely immersed in his animal (bodily) feeling; when his mind is awoken, there is a barrier erected which seems to circumscribe his ability to sustain the pleasure gained from this feeling. Godwin appears to position the rational mind — and specifically how Charles's mind reacts to his same-sex passion — as limiting his ability to pursue and enjoy this intoxicating new feeling.

This notion of the mind appearing as limiting, and the body appearing as free, may appear something of an anomaly within Godwinian philosophy. Godwin typically regarded the body as confining to the mind.[35] The disembodied spirit could even be assumed to be Godwin's idealistic vision — the human as free to exist beyond its corporeal constraints, and away from those 'humiliating necessities' required to sustain its life. However, while Godwin appreciated the intellectual advantages of disembodied rationality and objectivity, he also understood that to be human was to exist both spiritually and physically. In *Thoughts on Man*, he writes how 'man is a creature of mingled substance' (12) — that is, the human is a fusion of both mind and

[35] In *Thoughts of Man*, we can observe Godwin write disdainfully of 'gross flesh and blood', the 'house of clay that contains me', and his affirmation that 'the body is the prison of the mind' (11, 14).

body, both intellectual and animal. The following undated letter written by the author to an anonymous recipient 'who was in some trouble of mind' offers one of the clearest examples of the author's appreciation of this fusion/interrelatedness:

> Dr Darwin, you say, assured you it is a disease of the mind. [...] The mind and the animal frame are so closely connected, that scarcely anything can affect the one without deranging the other. [...] [R]emedies might sometimes be found in material, sometimes in mental applications. I see no good reason to doubt, that a certain discipline of the mind may have a powerful tendency to restore sanity to the intellect, and consequent vigour to the animal frame.[36]

Godwin's primary concern is to create a harmony and a synergy between body and mind, between the intellectual and the animal, to restore this individual to their full, unhindered potential. His nod towards 'Dr [Erasmus] Darwin' draws further attention to this given that Darwin's *Zoonomia* (1794), published at the time this letter was thought to have been written, was instrumental in establishing these new theories of mind/body interconnectedness.

The mind, for Darwin, was part of a 'sensorium' reliant on receiving information both from organs attuned to the external world as well as organs located within the body. He lists these internal senses, or what he calls 'appetites', as comprising the 'want of fresh Air, animal Love, and the Suckling of Children'.[37] The mind's primary function was to translate sensory data into 'cognizable' (10)

---

[36] See this letter published in Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1876), I, pp. 141-142. Though undated, Kegan Paul suggests the letter was likely written at some point between 1794 and 1796. The contents of the recipient's initial letter to Godwin remain unknown.

[37] Erasmus Darwin, *Zoonomia; or, the Laws of Organic Life* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1796), I, p. 32, 124. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

information. These mental processes, writes Darwin, were guided by a 'natural' desire; 'our senses' are there to 'acquaint us with the means of preserving our existence' (108). Thus, for Darwin, the sensual 'pleasure' associated with 'animal Love' serves a 'natural' function and purpose of sexual reproduction and is recognisable to the human mind as such (125).[38]

Godwin does not refer to *Zoonomia* within his writings upon body and mind. Yet, this anonymous letter suggests he was at least acquainted with Darwin's work. Moreover, we can potentially consider *Mandeville* as alluding to this description of animal love in *Zoonomia* given how several of the key terms Darwin uses to describe this love are present in the language Godwin employs to describe Charles's deeply-felt passions for Clifford. Charles describes that 'appetite' for him and that 'pleasure' gratified by him. Furthermore, it was specifically Charles's organs of sense — the eyes, the ears, and so forth — that guided these passions. Charles also used the term 'natural'. Or, more specifically, he used the term 'unnatural' when, no longer intoxicated, he 'looked back' upon his appetite, his pleasure, appearing to situate this desire for Clifford outside of a perceived natural order. This passion, he described it so, 'held me in an unnatural state of feeling'. The phrasing here was suggestive — it was not the passion itself which was necessarily being portrayed as essentially 'unnatural'. Rather, it was how Charles's rational mind could not cognize his same-sex passion, his sensual reactions, which then led him to 'feel' as though it transgressed naturality. Charles's inability to situate these subjective, pleasureful, same-sex bodily passions within a known, natural order, seems to be the primary issue he encounters in confronting his immediate feelings for Clifford. Godwin thus appears to attach this notion of unnaturalness not to Charles's same-sex desire, but

[38] See also Alan Richardson's work on 'natural' desire and Darwin's *Zoonomia* in *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind*, pp. 13-15.

instead to the unnaturalness of his being compelled to try and understand this desire only in relation to a known order.

It could therefore be argued that *Mandeville* offers an indication of Godwin recognising the destructive limitations of aligning the notion of 'natural' animal love only with the male-female, procreative. In believing that his passion transgresses naturality, Charles's feelings for Clifford tragically become cognizable to his rational mind only as revulsion. Later in the novel, he describes the now nineteen-year-old Clifford's continuing attractiveness: 'I looked upon him: he was a head taller than when we last met, and was radiant with youthful beauty. I withdrew my eyes in confusion: all the demons of hatred took their seat in my bosom' (210). There is a clear sequence of sensations here: recognising Clifford's 'beauty', experiencing 'confusion', followed by 'hatred', situating hatred as the end-product, a manifested emotion of this incognizable 'confusion'. Charles once again fixates on Clifford's body, telling us how 'his skin is smooth, and the contour of his body is sleek' (268). Yet, Charles then clarifies that, despite Clifford's socially celebrated beauty, he is the only one able to 'see the falseness of his eye, penetrating all softness, all tenderness', and that he is the only one able to 'see the insidious curl of that lip, that to a discerning eye expresses volumes' (269). This passage draws direct parallels with *De Monfort*, specifically when the Count describes his unique ability to observe Rezenvelt's 'full insulting lip' and 'that detested eye', in contrast to those surrounding him who are all 'besotted' and 'bewitched' by this man's charmful attractiveness (318-319).

Charles and De Monfort not only fixate on specific, sensual parts of these men's attractive bodies — the 'eye', the lip' — but, in turn, both protagonists then cite their unique, privileged ability to connect with them. Both indirectly mark out an intimacy and exclusivity to their relationships, even when professing their supposed

revulsion: as in, they are the only ones who understand this man, who can truly read his bodily gesture, and scrutinise its specific emotional expression. In doing so, they indicate their passion as being distinct from that of anyone and everyone else who does not possess this unique connection. This highlights a contrast in *Mandeville*: Charles initially described his passion for Clifford as 'unnatural'. Yet, at this later stage of the novel, it is this passionate connection with Clifford which underpins Charles's belief that he possesses an ability to see beyond the artificial façade of Clifford's 'superficial grace' and penetrate into his 'secret soul'.

A 'NATURAL' DESIRE FOR THE UNNATURAL

In Godwin's *Thoughts on Man*, this idea of being in an 'unnatural state of feeling' — to experience those feelings with which we have not yet been acquainted — is treated by the philosopher as a necessary component of human development and enlightenment. To fulfil the 'animal' drives of the human, he writes, we should at times 'resign the spectre of reason' and disregard the 'authority derived to us from any system of thinking' to then 'escape the restraint of being wise. [...] We long to be something, or to do something, sudden and unexpected' (94). Where Godwin had previously linked the animal part of the human in *Thoughts on Man* with those desire-driven 'humiliating necessities of our nature', here he expands this definition to encompass a broader scope of animalistic 'desire[s]'. Human 'nature', he continues, 'has within it [...] a desire to be something that we are not, a feeling that we are out of our place, and ought to be where we are not' (103). Godwin aligns human 'nature' with the 'disordinate' and the 'strange' — where each individual has within them an 'innate' desire for those things that we shouldn't be, do, or feel. Too strict an attempt to 'counteract the innate rebelliousness of man' would, he affirms,

effect a ‘restlessness of the soul’. While individuals ‘long to escape’ such restlessness, they may be ‘restrained from perpetrating’ their animal desires on three accounts: one, ‘the laws of morality’; two, ‘the construction that will be put upon our actions by our fellow-creatures’; and three, the ‘fear’ of ‘be[ing] made amenable to the criminal laws of our country’ (95-96, 99).

Godwin’s advocacy for individuals to have the capacity to ‘escape’ these laws, rules, and boundaries and exceed instead to a ‘place’ beyond regulation recalls my previous examination of Godwin’s earlier fiction and Kate Singer’s *Romantic Vacancy*: specifically how, in *St. Leon*, Reginald ultimately found pleasure and fulfilment through ‘vacuity’ because his body and his bodily passion were no longer constrained within a stultifying social order.[39] This account of human ‘restlessness’ in Godwin’s *Thoughts on Man* is also analogous to how, in *Mandeville*, Godwin depicts a marked disconnect between Charles’s infuriated unsatisfied feelings for Clifford against the boundaries of social order. Following their time at Winchester and through to both young men’s entry into royalist groups, Charles’s obsession with Clifford is increasingly ferocious. The following passage suggests that the reason Charles has previously disclosed to the reader for his pointed dislike of Clifford — that of doubting his allegiance to the royalist cause — is distinct from this deeper, unspoken emotion which transgresses social and moral acceptability. Describing his growing desire to ‘unload the secret sorrows of my bosom’, Charles explains:

> This was a relief, from which the very vital principles of my character forever debarred me. [...] I never mentioned Clifford. [...] The expressions of my hatred confined themselves to generals; it seemed as if there was an

[39] See chapter one of this thesis, pp. 74-77.

> impassable gulph, that prevented me from descending to particulars [...] with a feeling as if I was somehow violating a secret, which it was the most flagitious of crimes to violate. [...]
> Oh, if I could have pronounced the name of Clifford, if I could have told the griefs that had flowed to me from him, if I could have given vent to the various emotions he had excited within me, I should have become a different man. [...] I should have leaped, and bounded, and given loose to my limbs, 'like man new made'. (220-1)

At this stage of the novel, Charles is receptive to the 'emotions' Clifford 'excite[s]' within him. He now recognises the necessity of expressing — and not repressing — these so as to arrive at a state of physical and emotional fulfilment. In Charles's fantasy, giving 'vent to the various emotions he had excited within me' is equated with giving 'loose to my limbs', where mind and body work in synergy and would revitalise him as 'man new made'. Yet, in reality, that 'impassable gulph' between the closeted passion and the external world which prevents Charles 'from descending to [the] particulars' of these same-sex emotions forestalls this ability to express them.

When analysed alongside eighteenth-century theories of sentimentality, we can explore more closely how Godwin's depiction of these 'various emotions' suggests a marked disconnect between Charles's closeted passion for Clifford against a known social order. Julie Ellison has examined how theorists typically 'distinguished "emotion" from [...] "sentiment"'.[40] Emotions, as well as passions, Ellison documents, were most commonly 'affiliated with instinct and the body' (6); we can

[40] Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 6. Subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

trace examples of this within David Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739).[41] Sentiment, Ellison continues, was distinguished from emotion as a 'sophisticated acquirement, a sympathetic understanding gained through complex acts of conscious attention and reflection'; sentiment was thus typically understood 'as a heightened awareness of emotion' (6). In Godwin's *Mandeville*, recalling these contemporary differentiations between passion/emotion and sentiment, Charles goes on to contrast his own deeply-felt 'passion' for Clifford against the contrastingly dispassionate 'sentiment' that he believes Clifford feels towards him. 'He came to me, spurred forward by all the purest sentiments that can inform a human heart. He pitied me, he loved me', Charles describes. Yet, Clifford's sentiment, Charles tells us further, 'sunk into nothing, before the eddy and whirlwind of' Charles's own 'passion' for this man (212). Clifford's same-sex sentiments seem to gain what Charles perceives as this purity because, unlike the 'eddy and whirlwind' of his own bodily and instinctual same-sex passion, they have not transgressed normative and acceptable boundaries. Charles's emotions and passions cannot, it seems, transform into sentiment: they cannot transform into that sophisticated state of knowing, understanding, and reflecting precisely because they are hindered by that 'impassable gulph' blocking him from reconciling his closeted male-male passion with the narrow boundaries of the social.

Godwin thus appears to draw attention to Charles's torturous inability to cognize his same-sex feelings as a way of exposing the destructiveness of placing boundaries upon the individual's ability to explore and understand the deeply-felt. In *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Hume describes a smooth process in which 'emotion

[41] Hume aligns 'our passions and emotions' with that which is 'perceived by the eyes, [...] by the ears, [...] by the palate, [...] and so of the other senses'. See *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed. by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874), I, p. 174. Subsequent references to this work are to this edition and given as volume and page numbers in the text.

passes by an easy transition to the imagination; and diffusing itself over our idea of the affecting object, makes us form that idea with greater force and vivacity' (1: 418). In *Mandeville*, Charles's ability to 'transition' his passion for Clifford into this 'greater' form appears forever inhibited precisely because they have exceeded the narrow confines of social and moral acceptability. His subsequent describing of his same-sex emotions as violating 'the most flagitious of crimes' further highlights this transgressive nature. Yet, if we recall how Godwin deplored the ways in which individuals are 'made amenable to the criminal laws of our country',[42] transgression and criminality appear in *Mandeville* almost as a necessary component of relieving the experience of having a deeply-felt passion that is denied the legal privilege and social safety of being explored, understood, and reflected upon.

Like Godwin, Baillie depicts De Monfort's unspecified yet furious male-male passion as a criminal passion that has transgressed a perceived natural or acceptable boundary; she also similarly appears to portray this unnaturalness not as truth, but as a social construction that impedes the free expression of passion. During a conversation between De Monfort and Jane, his sister declares: 'There was a time e'en with murder stain'd [...] Thou would'st have told it me', to which De Monfort responds: 'So would I now—but ask of this no more. All other trouble but the one I feel / I had disclos'd to thee. I pray thee spare me. / It is the secret weakness of my nature' (329). Like the singularity with which Charles described 'the cause' of his passion for Clifford, so too does De Monfort pinpoint this 'one' feeling. His passion is not (un)cognized here as 'unnatural', like Charles's feeling for Clifford initially was. It is referred to instead as this 'secret weakness of my nature'. This possessive phrasing locates his feelings for Rezenvelt in a curious space that is both transgressive (as in, it

[42] *Thoughts on Man*, p. 96.

eludes any disclosure, even to his beloved sister) yet, simultaneously, intrinsic to De Monfort. Baillie appears to recognise how De Monfort's 'natur[al]' passion would made intelligible as unnatural within the social order were it ever to be disclosed. Compounding this, when Jane then attempts to reassure her brother that one day he will 'smil'st again, / [...] When th' active soul within its lifeless cell / Holds its own world' (330), De Monfort cannot share in his sister's vision of this emancipated future world or his 'active' place within it, responding bleakly and bluntly that his intolerable feeling 'will not pass away' (ibid).

In *Mandeville*, intertwined with Charles's frustration towards the inhibitory reality in which he lives, we observe a similar turn towards visions of an emancipated future 'world'. Or, more accurately, he turns his attention to the past, to 'ancient Greece and Rome', in order to then fantasise about a future in which these times have 'come round again' (319). Charles mourns the fact that 'of this world I form no part, I am cut off from it forever', juxtaposing his inability to express his passion – 'my heart seemed ready to burst from the chamber that held it' — against that of the ancients. He enigmatically describes these people as being able to 'think such things, and feel such things, and act such things' (318-319). These 'things' are never elaborated on, existing within his narration only in this vague and unspecified form. The entirety of his knowledge of this world, he informs the reader, has originated from the 'records of the venerable Plutarch' (318). This historian, famed for his biographies of illustrious Greeks and Romans, also wrote *Erotikos*, or the *Dialogue on Love*, notable for containing a male character who Plutarch openly describes as an individual who 'engages in love [...] without regard for any difference in physiological detail'.[43] While Charles doesn't refer directly to the *Erotikos*, the way in which his

[43] See David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 146.

own inability to express his closeted passion for Clifford is contrasted against those unspecified 'things' which Plutarch recorded the ancients as being able to 'think', 'feel', and 'act' upon is certainly an intriguing comparison, and one that resonates with that disrupted continuum of Charles's own passion for Clifford. While he is able to 'think' and 'feel' things for this man, he is seemingly unable to then 'act' upon these things: 'giv[ing] vent to the various emotions he had excited within me' is relayed to the reader only as a fantasy.

While the transgressive nature of Charles's passion for Clifford gives rise to these troubling and frustrated feelings, transgression also comes to figure as a desire in and of itself. Further detailing this disconnect between self and society, Charles declares:

> Morality is a sort of limit, which the policy of society sets to the active powers of the individual, for the interest of the general. But man has a natural delight in the exercise of his active powers. [...] We covet experience; we have a secret desire to learn, not from cold prohibition, but from trial, whether those things, which are not without a semblance of good, are really so ill as they are described to us. And prohibition itself gives a zest, an appropriate sweetness. (319)

Charles transitions from (un)cognizing and spurning his passion as essentially unnatural, to a realisation that his pull towards to that which is 'prohibit[ed]' forms part of a 'natural' human instinct to transgress social and moral boundaries. This draws comparisons with how Baillie details her conception of the transgressive and closeted passion in her 'Introductory Discourse'. She describes these as 'those feelings of nature, which, like a beating stream, will oft'times burst through the

artificial barriers of pride', aligning one's inner passions with the natural, and social intelligibility with the 'artificial' (70-71). In the previous indented passage, Charles's preoccupation is not upon trying to make the 'impassable' passable, or on trying to facilitate a way in which to reconcile his desires with the normative boundaries of his reality. Rather, he appears to now accept and embrace the total incompatibility between those 'particulars' that constitute his feelings for Clifford against a social, moral, and natural order. While the individual may absorb 'the policy of society' for 'the general good', this, Charles now professes, does little to 'exercise' and utilise one's individual 'powers'. He recognises how transgressing a perceived acceptable boundary is a motivating factor underpinning his passion. It boasts both a pragmatic (the exercising of our individual powers unimpeded by social or moral limitations) and a pleasureful ('appropriate sweetness') functionality.

THE CHILD

We can situate Charles's re-evaluation of the (dis)connection between his closeted same-sex passion and the social order alongside Lee Edelman's definition of the abject in his queer manifesto *No Future*. For Edelman, queer desire must always embrace its transgression from, and unintelligibility within, social order. 'The queer must insist on disturbing, on queering, social organization as such — on disturbing, therefore, and on queering *ourselves* and our investment in such organization', he affirms (17).

The social order to which Edelman refers here, and which is the primary focus throughout *No Future*, is that of 'reproductive futurism'. This is the process whereby all political, and in turn social, organization becomes centred upon prioritising children; not literal, living children, but 'figural children' upon which all notions of

hope for this future are attached (66). Edelman accepts — but transvalues — the queerphobia at the heart of reproductive futurism. Non-procreative sexual acts and sexualities are, he documents, marginalised, delegitimated, and even denaturalised, within these familial and future-focused regimes.[44] Yet, he stresses that the political gains its value only insofar as the individual partakes in 'the fantasies structurally necessary in order to sustain it' (7). To place oneself on 'the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism' is to enact a 'challenge to value as defined by the social' (3, 6).

Connections could be traced between Edelman's rejection of reproductive futurism with that of Godwin's treatment of marital and familial ideology in his 1793 *Enquiry* which was documented in the preceding chapter of this thesis.[45] It is Godwin's later and lesser-known work *Of Population* — published just three years after *Mandeville* — which arguably displays some of the closest anticipations of Edelman. This 1820 enquiry was published by Godwin in response to Thomas Robert Malthus's 1798 *Essay on the Principle of Population*. Malthus repeatedly justifies his call for sexual regulation through invoking images of the 'innocent children' of the 'future' and by calling for sexual acts to only be performed within the marital bond, and with an informed and regulated intention to procreate.[46] Scholars have further documented how Malthus reviled non-procreative sexual acts, as he staunchly 'oppose[d] birth control (as well as prostitution and homosexuality) on moral and

[44] See Edelman's discission in *No Future* about how same-sex 'acts' have historically been conceived of as 'violat[ing] natural law' (9), as well as the 'natural' rights claimed by religious groups to 'discriminate against immoral, unhealthy, ugly, society-disturbing behaviour' (91).
[45] See my previous discussion of the *Enquiry*, pp. 40-42, 46-47.
[46] Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 141, 136. For Malthus, sexual acts should always be future-oriented: any desire-driven quests for 'present gratification' should be 'acquiesce[d]' (252); individuals should be continually aware of 'the future support of children' (136). To fail to do this, he affirms, will lead only to an unsustainable and over-populated future in which children are 'plunged' into 'misery and want' (141), where 'children starve' (91), and, potentially, 'die' (93). All subsequent references to this work are given as page numbers in the text.

religious grounds as "improper acts to conceal the consequences of irregular actions"'.[47] Malthus's *Essay* can be read as relating to Edelman's notion of the 'figural Child' insofar as Malthus's philosophy calls upon an image of a fantastical future child as a method through which to substantiate his legitimising only of certain forms of sexual practice (the marital, procreative, regulated, and moral) to the exclusion of others (the non-marital, non-procreative, unregulated, and/or immoral).

Godwin's response in *Of Population* criticises the universality with which Malthus treats 'the passion between the sexes'. 'Mr Malthus's proposition, if explicitly unfolded, must mean, that "the passion between the sexes" always exists and acts, in all persons, in all countries, and in all ages of the world, under all institutions, prejudices, superstitions, and systems of thinking, in the same manner'.[48] We can connect Godwin's statement here with Richard C. Sha's definition of the 'perverse Romanticism' which I outlined in the introduction to this thesis.[49] Sha explores how authors of the era recognised that 'limiting [sexuality] to function' impoverishes the many alternative forms that sexuality can take outside of 'brute instinct'.[50] In *Of Population* Godwin appears to recognise alternative 'passion[s]' which transgress the procreative given how he directly interrogates Malthus's assumption that male-female reproductive sexual relations have had, and will continue only to have, an unbroken history and unchanging meaning and coherence across all times, cultures, and peoples. He notes that 'all persons' should not be

---

[47] Jim Horner, 'Henry George on Thomas Robert Malthus: Abundance vs. Scarcity', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 56: 4 (1997), 595-607 (p. 597).
[48] William Godwin, *Of Population: An Enquiry Concerning the Power of Increase in the Numbers of Mankind* (London, Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820), p. 530. Subsequent references to this work are given as page numbers in the text.
[49] See pp. 32-33.
[50] Richard C. Sha, *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), pp. 2-3.

assumed to have their passion rooted only in an innate desire for reproduction which dictates entirely how that passion will 'exist', 'act' and 'unfold'.

In turn, Godwin questions Malthus's prediction that unregulated and immoral sexual expression would somehow lead directly to this destructed future world in which these figural 'children' die.[51] 'I never will believe', Godwin affirms, that 'society [...] would degenerate [...] and be "destroyed in less than thirty years", from the uncontrolableness with which every man would hasten to gratify the "gross impulses of the lower part of his nature"' (537). Godwin places focus not on any need to actively repress these 'impulses' as a mode of future protection. Rather, he regards this as largely futile, appearing to instead suggest that to express such urges would bear no meaningful connection to, or causation of, this imagined destructed futurity. In *No Future*, Edelman describes a process whereby child-focused political policies typically seek to control or delegitimise the sexual freedom of present-day citizens. He documents the 'blame' which is attached to 'the fatal lure of sterile, narcissistic enjoyments', exposing how such non-procreative enjoyments are made intelligible only 'as inherently destructive of meaning and therefore as responsible for the undoing of social organization, collective reality, and, inevitably, life itself' (13). While their respective focuses are essentially opposite — Edelman writes about sterility in *No Future*, and Godwin about over-productivity in *Of Population* — both nevertheless demonstrate a shared refusal to subjugate individual passion by pledging allegiance to a general, societal, future- and child-oriented good. Godwin's preoccupation in *Of Population*, and from what I have examined in the previous chapter in *St. Leon*, is placed repeatedly upon affording the individual an ability to

[51] 'Mr. Malthus may say, if he pleases', writes Godwin, 'that this society will be ruined by the uncontrolableness of his indulgences, [with] no foresight that the children he begets will perish' (534).

express their drives unimpeded by political and societal limitations. Godwin's affirmation that the expression of one's 'impulses' would not lead to a destructed futurity becomes nuanced in the closing stages of *Mandeville* to a much more direct and pointed observation. In contrast to the Malthusian notion of unregulated human passion as causing societal destruction, Godwin portrays how political and social order — and the inability to freely express one's passions — would lead to the destruction of the individual.

THE MONSTROUS CHILD

> I must kill him, or he must kill me.[52]

> To be dust, to be nothing, / Were bliss to me, compar'd to what I am.[53]

In the latter stages of *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin outlines a theory as to why an individual may 'welcome' their own death. 'All our faculties and attributes bear relation to, and talk to us of, other beings like ourselves', he explains, 'and we know that we cannot subsist without them. [...] [T]he life of our lives would be gone. [...] Life must be inevitably a burden to us, a dreary, unvaried, motiveless existence; and death must be welcomed' (452-453).

Godwin refers to a 'Robinson Crusoe' type situation in which the individual is wholly alone and cut off from all social interaction (453). At first, his sentiments appear to aid little in helping to explain the morbid imaginings of Charles Mandeville and the Count de Monfort highlighted in the previous indented quotations. Yet, while

[52] *Mandeville*, p. 187.
[53] *De Monfort*, p. 334

Godwin viewed human society as necessary to give meaning to one's existence — and avoid this wish for death — he simultaneously viewed the delimiting and regulated aspects of social order as potentially generating a comparable desire to escape one's corporeal constraints. 'In proportion as I am rendered familiar with my fellow-creatures, or with society at large, I come to feel the ties which bind men to each other, and the [...] necessity of governing my conduct by inexorable rules', he describes (96-97). Yet, 'I want to be alive, to be something more than I commonly am. [...] We beat ourselves to pieces against the wires of our cage, and long to escape, and shoot through the elements' (97, 100); a wish, he further describes, to no longer be 'cribbed in a cabin of flesh, and shut up by the capricious and arbitrary injunctions of human communities' (101).

Godwin does not align corporeality itself as originating these 'injunctions'. Rather, he places focus upon how the 'rules' and 'bind[s]' that society imposes upon the individual — and their relations with others — may instigate a desire to abandon one's participation in such systems through an evacuation of their 'cabin of flesh'. After Charles becomes aware of his sister Henrietta's romance with Clifford, we can trace connections to Godwin's account of escaping one's flesh through the way in which Charles signals to the reader the dissatisfaction and restriction he feels within his own body: Godwin portrays Charles's desire to be liberated of his physical form as a specific wish to escape his body so as to instead inhabit the body of Henrietta. He tells the reader of his and Henrietta's early years together, and how he 'learned to be dissatisfied with myself, and to despise myself', from which he 'learned to go out of myself [...] I left my own rejected and loathsome corse, to live in another, to feel her pleasures, and rejoice in her joys' (440-441). In a similar vein to how corporeality wasn't relayed in Godwin's *Thoughts on Man* as confining in and of itself, Charles's dissatisfaction with his body is described as something 'learned'. His ability to

visualise himself feeling this elusively described ‘pleasure’ is, he believes, dependent upon his experiencing this pleasure as Henrietta, in Henrietta’s body, and free of his own ‘loathsome’ corpse.

This process — a spirit/soul/mind being separated from the body of the brother and then rehoused within the body of the sister — is something which would later come to be actualised in William Godwin Jr.’s novel *Transfusion* (1835), a work edited, prefaced, and published by Godwin following the death of his son in 1832. In the 1835 novel, Albert Schvolen briefly manages to transfuse his soul into the body of his sibling Madeline in order to experience first-hand her romantic attachment to the Count de Mara, with Albert’s decision to transfuse having been motivated, at least in part, by his envy of the affection Madeline receives from De Mara. Ann Louise Kibbie has documented how this idea of transfusing souls has appeared within the Romantic and Gothic novel over the years, tracing its origins to the mid-eighteenth century when grieving (and usually male) characters would typically express a wish to transfuse their souls into the dead bodies of their female beloveds.[54] However, what distinguishes *Mandeville*, and later *Transfusion*, from this trope is that both Godwin and Godwin Jr. depict male characters whose desire to transfuse is not motivated in grief or male-female love. Their male characters desire to inhabit the (already living) female body of their sister in order to disrupt the romantic bond she shares with the man to whom the brother himself has a passionate attachment.

To look at this more closely in *Mandeville*, after describing this ‘learned’ dissatisfaction with his ‘loathsome’ corpse, Charles then visualises how, in his sister’s future marital union, Clifford will ‘play with [Henrietta] as he pleased, for him to

[54] Ann Louise Kibbie, *Transfusion: Blood and Sympathy in the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019). In particular, see chapter one of Kibbie’s study, ‘Transfusing Souls: The Dead End of Sympathy’, pp. 3-18.

plant kisses on that cheek [...] for him to come home to, wearied with the business and the turmoil of the world, and to find his peace, his reward, and his consolation there!—there!' (441). Charles doesn't explicitly visualise himself 'liv[ing]' in Henrietta's body in these imaginings like he had, just moments before, relayed those childhood memories to the reader. Yet, the way in which Henrietta is essentially dehumanised in these visions — she is not visualised as a thinking, speaking, rational being, but she is imagined only as a body, a physical plaything who exists only for Clifford to kiss and be rewarded by — suggests that Charles's juvenile fantasies of transfusing into his sister's body are perhaps continuing into this moment.

Highlighting this lack and dissatisfaction Charles associates with his body against Henrietta's, he then fixates on the procreative potential of her union with Clifford. Having previously described his 'passion' for Clifford as 'ill regulated and abortive' (186), he later explains how 'my feelings were tenfold embittered with the recollection, that this was a marriage', before affirming that 'human life grow[s] out of marriage [...]. Aye, my story is arrived at a festival. Clifford and Henrietta are one! May serpents and all venomous animals solemnise their union!' (441). Charles appears to distinguish his own 'feelings' as embittered and abortive because they hold no share in the reproductive futurism he associates with his sister's union with Clifford. His dark wish for their marriage be 'solemnised' by poisonous creatures offers an indication of his identification not with the life-giving, but with the toxic and the wilfully destructive: that which, to quote Edelman's *No Future*, locates him on 'the side outside the consensus by which all politics confirms the absolute value of reproductive futurism' (3). Godwin appears to portray Charles's identification with the dark and the negative as a necessary counterreaction to, and a desperate attempt to remedy the pain of his exclusion from, the socially celebrated and legitimated form of love enjoyed by Henrietta and Clifford.

However, the queer abject, as described by Edelman, is not to simply refuse this futurism. 'Queerness attains its ethical value', he explains, by 'accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social while insisting on the inextricability of such resistance from every social structure' (4). While Charles seems to locate himself in the shadowy space external to and at odds with the reproductive, he simultaneously refuses to resign his own place and participation in this (no) future. He doesn't simply turn away from Henrietta's and Clifford's union — he visualises further ways in which he can insert himself within their romantic relationship in order to then disrupt and then destroy its happiness and its future. Continuing those fantasies of inhabiting Henrietta's body, he declares how his sister is 'flesh of my flesh, and bone of my bone' (432). Having been traumatised by her decision to marry Clifford, he then resigns any relation to her as a brother — 'I renounce all kindred' — and, in turn, resigns any relation to 'human nature', declaring how he now 'ha[s] nothing of human nature left within me' (ibid). He gives up his 'kindred' and 'natural' relationship to Henrietta as a blood sibling, to instead accede to a place of relationality to her beyond the familial, beyond the natural, where he envisions himself as that monstrous, abortive, and unnatural counterpart to her. A counterpart, moreover, who will not 'grow' life from a union with Clifford, but disrupt and destroy that very life-giving process, as we witness in the following visualisation:

> If she has children—Ha! they will be the children of Clifford—living, substantial beings, in whom the blood of Clifford and of Mandeville shall be mingled together!—Can nature sustain such monsters?—Will not the demons themselves, tenants of the deepest hell, laugh with unhuman joy to behold them?—I will steal them from her; I will teach them to hate her; I will make

them the instruments of my vengeance. How it will delight me, what mitigation will it bring to the fire that burns within me, to see their infant fingers stream with their parents' blood! (432)

Charles's description of these beings as only 'the children of Clifford', as opposed to the children of Clifford and Henrietta, again dehumanises his sister: she is not imagined as a parent figure, or as playing an important or significant role beyond the procreative function of her body. Further, Charles hysterically visualises these imaginary children's 'blood' as a mixture 'of Clifford and of Mandeville'. In using Henrietta's and his shared, family name, he seems to call upon an image of his own blood having been mixed with Clifford's: Charles is, potentially, visualising himself replacing Henrietta in this procreative bond with Clifford, gesturing towards a kind of dystopian reproductive futurism in which he imagines the ghastly manifestation of the two men's monstrous offspring. While not so frenzied or explicit, a brief moment within De Monfort's reaction to what he suspects to be a romance between Jane and Rezenvelt bears similarities to Charles's hysteria. As De Monfort declares that the 'combination' of his sister and his rival as lovers would 'produce' things that 'Hell's blackest magic [...] Did ne'er produce' (358), De Monfort appears, like Charles, to be focused predominantly upon the hellish, monstrous future progeny of this 'combination'.

In *Mandeville*, the idea of these 'monsters' being unsustainable within 'nature' suggests that the imagined children transgress a natural order, a natural creation, having been delivered directly from the 'deepest hell'. This draws potential connections with the birth of the Creature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (published just one year after her father's *Mandeville*), insofar that *Mandeville* appears to visualise a comparably monstrous, preternatural offspring which has its origins in a

same-sex desire.[55] To recall earlier in this chapter, there were specific comparisons between the way Godwin portrayed Charles's initial attraction to Clifford with that of Darwin's conception of 'animal Love' in *Zoonomia*, with those references to appetites, pleasure, the organs of sense, and the (un)natural. Darwin had described how the individual's 'natural' desire guided their sensual passions, with these senses being there to 'acquaint us with the means of preserving our existence'. What we witness at this stage of *Mandeville* is the reverse: Charles's passions are guided by something that transgresses, and is unsustainable within, the boundaries of this natural/reproductive order. He focuses expressly not on the means of 'preserving' life through begetting children, but on destroying life — where, if these children were to somehow survive their monstrous creation, he would then go on to make them monstrous by 'steal[ing]' them and teaching them to murder the very people who gave them life. What we may call Charles's 'figural Child', then, the as-yet-unborn result of this procreation, is not innocent and vulnerable signifier of a reproductive futurism. Instead, it is a being whose 'infant fingers' are 'stream[ing]' with the blood of their parents whom they have just murdered. While undeniably murderous and monstrous, Charles's violent destructivity appears in *Mandeville* as born specifically out of, and then perpetually aggravated by, his experience as the ostracised, queer outsider for whom the natural/reproductive order holds no place. Through this depiction, Godwin can be seen to depict a process in which his tragic protagonist and his desires are made monstrous/destructive within the oppressive social order under which he is desperately trying to make sense of his same-sex feelings.

[55] Close male-male bonds play an important role in the Creature's birth, with Victor Frankenstein's original interest in the creation of life having been influenced primarily by the close bond he forms with Professor Waldman, and how his passionate creation of the Creature features numerous references to specific parts of his male body.

While Charles's frenzied imaginings of this world of parent-murdering children begins and remain a fantasy, his wilful desire to disrupt and destroy the couple's reproductive futurism is attempted via alternative means — his own quest to murder Clifford 'before their marriage might be consecrated' (442).

It is Charles's intolerable feeling of exclusion from the politically legitimised and socially accepted union that Henrietta and Clifford share which drives his impulse to destroy. 'We struck, we grappled, [...] and came to the ground together', Charles narrates after he has begun his attack on this man after having stalked him for some time. 'Clifford called out to me, not to force him to embrew his sword in the blood of the brother of his wife! That word drove me instantaneously to a towering madness' (446). It seems to be the disrupted relationality between Charles and Clifford that instigates the former's 'madness'. That is, in Clifford's vocalised threat to 'embrew his sword', he refers to Charles through Charles's relation to Henrietta ('the brother of his wife') while also distinguishing Charles from Henrietta, something which explicitly contrasts their male-male relationship against that of the wife-husband. This gives rise to Charles's intolerable feeling of loathing towards himself in contrast to his envy of his sister, which he had previously attempted to remedy through imagining living his life within Henrietta's body.

The way in which Charles then reacts to the 'terrible gash' that Clifford inflicts upon his face highlights a desire to gratify the need to create a direct, bodily, lasting connection with Clifford. 'My wound', he describes, is like a 'glazed, or shining scar, like the effect of a streak of varnish upon a picture', continuing:

> The sword of my enemy had given a perpetual grimace, a sort of preternatural and unvarying distorted smile. [...] I saw Clifford, and the cruel heart of Clifford, branded into me. [...] Before, to think of Clifford was an act of the mind, and an exercise of the imagination; he was not there, but my thoughts went on their destined errand and fetched him; now I bore Clifford and his injuries perpetually about with me. [...] Clifford had set his mark upon me, as a token that I was his for ever. (447-448)

Charles's narration conveys this wound as a kind of dark mimicry of the marriage night: he believes it to represent a transition from an attachment only of 'mind' to that of body which fuses himself and Clifford in a perpetual connection, and he wilfully resigns autonomy to declare himself as 'for ever' the property of this man. Those things that would be loving and harmonious in a romantic bond are twisted: the smile is 'distorted', the heart is 'cruel', the bodily penetration is 'injur[ious]' and 'preternatural'. The wound appears to be treated by Charles in a comparable way to that which scholars understand as the 'wound' of *eros*, and specifically how 'the arrows of Eros create a piercing [...] that dismantles the watertight construction of oneself as an independent and impermeable identity' and 'dissolves our core concept of who we are'.[56] Charles views his wound as a signifier of Clifford's possession of him, a marker of how this man's 'cruel heart' is 'branded into me' (447). The wound becomes intelligible to Charles not as something that will heal, but as a permanent mark of his transition from an independent being to a state in which he is perpetually bound to Clifford.

[56] See Judith Pickering, *Being in Love* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 22.

Charles's reaction to his wound can be seen to anticipate George Bataille's definition of the erotic as a 'dissolution of the person' in *Erotism* (1957). 'The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character', Bataille writes. 'The transition from the normal state to that of erotic desire presupposes a partial dissolution of the person [...] paving the way for a fusion where both [partners] are mingled'.[57] For Bataille, ungratified erotic feelings potentially instigate murderous or suicidal feelings, where death — of the desirer or the desired — signifies an attempt to remedy this torturous separation: 'we suffer from our isolation in our individual separateness', he writes, which the individual so affected may feel can be remedied 'only in the violation, through death if need be, of the individual's solitariness' (20-21). Yet, while 'death opens the way to the denial of our individual lives', Bataille clarifies that it is not the realisation of death, but rather the tantalising possibility of death, in which the individual finds a way to 'live on in [their] desire, instead of dying by going the whole way' (141-142). Charles's failed murder of Clifford, and the resulting 'terrible' wound inflicted upon him that he becomes so transfixed by, functions as a way for him to abate his inescapable desire, a way for him to feel that he is now 'for ever' Clifford's property; he imagines that he has remedied that torturous separation between the two of them through this brush with — but eventual escape from — death. While Charles is denied his one desperate wish to have openly 'given vent to the various emotions' Clifford 'excited within' him (220-221), Godwin nonetheless illustrates how his protagonist bravely pursues his own means of expressing and exploring his same-sex passion by his acceding to that place of the abject, and by embracing the dark, negative, and tragic space he has been

[57] Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and* Sensuality, trans. by Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), p. 17.

forced to occupy outside of the privileged boundaries of normal love and its life-giving futurism.

In *De Monfort*, the Count's frenzied attempt to injure Rezenvelt proves fatal. It is then De Monfort's bleak realisation that his rival 'art nothing now' (370) which Baillie depicts not as a remedy to her protagonist's suffering, but a fatal continuation and intensification of it. Baillie's construction of this line — 'Alone with thee! but thou are nothing now' — suggests that De Monfort has fantasised about being alone with this man, with this use of 'but' positioning Rezenvelt's death as forestalling whatever it was De Monfort desired to do with him in such a private, intimate moment. Rezenvelt's death ultimately proves to be the reason why De Monfort then takes his own life in order that he can escape this torturous feeling. 'I cannot suffer this', he declares. 'Nought is there here but fix'd and grisly death. / [...] I cannot suffer this! Here, rocky wall, / Scatter these brains or dull them' (371). The protagonist's inability to 'suffer' being in Rezenvelt's presence is depicted by Baillie as being precisely because this man is now 'naught' but 'fix'd' in death; like in those earlier frustrated visions where De Monfort's 'tears' indicated that the root of his passionate same-sex feelings were not rooted in murderous intent, Rezenvelt's death does nothing to satiate this passion. De Monfort then comes to see his own death as the sole remedy. As Bataille explains further in *Erotism* that if the desirer 'cannot possess the beloved he will sometimes think of killing her', which may then be followed by a 'wish to die himself' (20), we could potentially interpret De Monfort's suicide as the desperate attempt to finally remedy the closeted passion he has for this man — or, at the very least, escape the intolerable 'raging passion' this man continually arouses in him, even in death.

*

In each of their frenzied, murderous conclusions, both Baillie and Godwin seem to warn of the dangers that arise when a passion remains undisclosed and ungratified. Death, disaster, and destruction appear in both texts as the fatal manifestations of De Monfort's and Charles's infuriated inability to express their deeply-felt passion.

Godwin appeared keenly aware of the importance of satisfying one's animal desires, given his advocacy in his *Thoughts on Man* and *Of Population* for the individual to be free to express their passions and emotions unimpeded by social or moral constraints, in order to thus escape that purgatorial 'restlessness of the soul'. Repeatedly throughout *Mandeville*, Godwin showcases how Charles's frenzied passion for Clifford manifests itself as it does — from his teenage 'confusion' and 'scorn', through to the novel's murderous conclusion — *because* of its closetedness, because of this inability to openly express and gratify it, and his continually being trapped in this intolerable restlessness. The destruction, the violating of boundaries, appeared to figure as a necessary outlet for the inescapable passion and the intolerable restlessness he felt for Clifford. His frenzied visions of inhabiting Henrietta's body, plotting to make monstrous her and Clifford's future children, his attempt to murder Clifford, as well as marvelling at his disfigured face, all appear in the novel as the ramifications of this closeted, restless, impeded state. They represented his desire to disrupt, escape, modify, or destroy his own physical form, or attempt to imagine an alternative world in which he could forge a bodily connection with this man. For Godwin, a free society where such a passion would be liberated, unimpeded and uncloseted, and a world in which bodies and desires are not controlled and categorised, is treated in *Mandeville* as something to strive towards, in order that the individual be liberated from such intolerable confinement upon their agency and potential.

It would likely be misguided to apply such a radical interpretation to the same-sex passion of *De Monfort*. Yet, the numerous similarities identified in this chapter between Baillie's depiction of De Monfort's closetedness and that of Charles's in *Mandeville* at least opens up questions about whether we should view the 1798 drama as being a work only of moral reform. In the closing scenes of the drama, when the two men's mutual friend the Count Freberg stands in front of their bodies, he exclaims: 'ye should have lov'd, but yet deadly rancour came' (382). This moment continues the elusiveness with which Baillie has portrayed her protagonist's complex passion throughout. That 'secret inmate', Freberg continues, 'ungen'rously excites, with careless scorn, / Such baleful passion in a brother's breast, / Whom heav'n commands to love' (ibid). The 'secret' feeling is pinpointed as having 'excite[d]' the 'baleful passion', which once again appears to place the murderous intent as the destructive manifestation of the unnamed, originating, closeted passion. De Monfort's 'rancour', like Charles's passion, was rooted only in the inability to disclose it: something which suggests Baillie's drama can be read as advocating for free expression rather than moral repression, as Godwin's *Mandeville* is testament to.

PART TWO: QUEER LOVE

CHAPTER THREE

BEYOND THE (GENDERED) BODY: GODWIN, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, AND ROMANTIC LOVE

In an 1831 essay, William Godwin proposed a disconnection between 'desire' and the materiality of the body. 'The machine which constitutes the visible man, bears no proportion to our thoughts, our wishes and desires'.[1] Godwin wrote most immediately here about what he understood as the 'superiority' of one's mind over one's body. 'The mind', he described, is 'imprison[ed] within the limits of the body' (9). Yet, as my analysis across the opening two chapters began to uncover, Godwin's portrayal of the relationship between mind and matter did not appear to subscribe to philosophies of mind-body dualism: that is, he did not necessarily view one's body as inherently imprisoning to, or distinct from, one's mind.[2] Rather, he understood how the 'ties' of society, 'the laws of morality', and the 'arbitrary injunctions of human communities' could inhibit the individual's ability to freely express their emotions, passions, and desires, which may then generate a wish to no longer be 'cribbed in a cabin of flesh'.[3] If *St. Leon* and *Mandeville* pointed towards Godwin's awareness of the dangers of social/moral control upon one's body, and upon one's ability to satiate

[1] *Thoughts on Man: His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1831), p. 102.
[2] Godwin does not refer to René Descartes within in this 1831 account; he receives only two very brief, passing mentions elsewhere in *Thoughts on Man* (p. 82, 203). Yet, the way in which Godwin appears to suggest that one's body may not be intrinsically distinct from one's mind suggests that his theory may have been written at least in part as a reaction to Descartes's ideas of mind-body dualism.
[3] *Thoughts on Man*, p. 96, 101. For my previous discussion of Godwin's treatment of the human body and its relationship with the human mind, see chapter one, pp. 68-70.

the deeply-felt, then *Fleetwood: or, the New Man of Feeling* (1805) highlights the author's fear of the individual becoming, quite literally, a disaffected 'puppet' dwindling under society's destructive influence.[4]

Godwin's third major novel tells the life story of eponymous protagonist Casimir. A loving and 'tender' child, Casimir grows cold and apathetic through the novel, as this seemingly ironically named 'new' man of feeling becomes increasingly impotent in his attempts to connect emotionally with his fellow human.[5] More specifically, he repeatedly fails to gratify his ongoing need for romantic companionship. Met repeatedly with rejection, ridicule, indifference, and exploitation, Casimir is transformed into an asocial — and aromantic — misanthrope by the novel's closing stages.[6] From his ongoing incapacity to acquire what he terms as this 'romantic, if not impossible friendship', and through to his ill-fated and passionless 'substitute' later life marriage to Mary Macneil, Casimir is an individual at odds with the society in which he is attempting to live, and desperately trying — yet relentlessly failing — to love.[7]

Some critics read *Fleetwood* as a generalised depiction of the failure of sympathy against destructive societal influence; they understand the novel to be

---

[4] Emma Peacocke has explored the problematic relationship between self and society in *Fleetwood*, and specifically in relation to how Godwin employs multiple references to mid-to-late-eighteenth century puppet theatre. Peacocke argues that the author alludes to puppetry to demonstrate how Casimir's 'well-founded fear that a master hand could easily manipulate his own wires' leads to his emotional stuntedness, in which 'the mechanism of sympathy seems to be working imperfectly'. See 'Puppets, Waxworks, and a Wooden Dramatis Personae: Eighteenth-Century Material Culture and Philosophical History in William Godwin's *Fleetwood*', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 31: 1 (2018), 189-192 (p. 196).

[5] William Godwin, *Fleetwood*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), p. 54. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

[6] Aromanticism refers to an orientation in which the individual experiences little to no desire or motivation to enter into romantic relationships with others.

[7] As I will explore in the latter half of this chapter, Casimir's marriage to Mary is a union he enters into only under the proviso that 'the marriage-tie' will act as a 'substitute […] for this romantic, if not impossible friendship' (285).

something of a contradistinction to Henry Mackenzie's original.[8] Others read Casimir's failed sympathy as an internalised misogyny, arguing that his interpersonal difficulties arise primarily within his romantic relationships with women, and most pertinently in his marriage to Mary. Gary Handwerk reads *Fleetwood* as a rewriting of Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria* (1798) 'from the unsettling perspective of the male perpetrator's mind'.[9] As Anne K. Mellor's study of *Maria* documents, this male perpetrator — the tyrannical George Venables — functions primarily as a character through whom Wollstonecraft would expose the dangers of women becoming literal 'slaves' within the late-eighteenth century marital contract.[10] Seemingly like Venables, in *Fleetwood* Casimir displays little romantic affection for his young wife. He is continually fearful of Mary gaining any power within, or independence from, their marital union, eventually desiring only to control her — or, more specifically, to control the extramarital romantic relationships he believes she forms with other men. Casimir then eventually declares how he can 'not bear that Mary should be weaned from me in any respect' (305) as he becomes increasingly and destructively jealous of the intimate attention she appears to receive from a series of younger male acquaintances.

---

[8] I refer here to Henry Mackenzie's sentimental novel *The Man of Feeling* (1771). A. A. Markley and Evert Jan van Leeuwen have explored the notable contrasts between Mackenzie's protagonist Harley and Godwin's new man of feeling specifically in relation to sympathy. Markley writes that Godwin 'studies the degree to which external circumstances' foster 'social pathologies characterized by a deep distrust of their fellow man', and van Leeuwen documents how 'external forces [...] continually form and reform, or to be more precise, deform' the protagonist. See A.A. Markley, '"The Success of Gentleness": Homosocial Desire and the Homosexual Personality in the Novels of William Godwin', *Romanticism on the Net*, 36-37 (2004) <https://doi.org/10.7202/011139ar>; and Evert Jan van Leeuwen, 'Monstrous Masculinity and Emotional Torture in Godwin's *Fleetwood; or, the New Man of Feeling*', *Critical Studies,* 34 (2010), 117-139 (p. 117).
[9] See Handwerk's introduction in *Fleetwood*, p. 27. *Maria*, published posthumously by Godwin following Wollstonecraft's death in the September of 1797, tells the story of the titular character's imprisonment by her husband George Venables.
[10] Anne K. Mellor, 'Righting the Wrongs of Woman: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria*', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 19: 4 (1996), 413-424 (p. 413).

The aim of this chapter is to suggest that misogyny and failed sympathy can be read as symptoms — rather than causations — of the more immediate issue which I propose initiates and exacerbates the protagonist's tragic transformation to become this apparently callous man and husband of unfeeling. I reread Casimir's envy and attempted mastery of Mary's extramarital relationships as ramifications of Casimir's own inability to fulfil his desire for this 'romantic friendship' that he craves throughout his life, which results in a jealousy of the romantic male attention he believes Mary receives. This chapter examines how Casimir's statement that he cannot 'bear that Mary should be weaned' from him does not represent a wish to possess his wife, but, instead, it represents his attempt to live vicariously through her so that he can share in the intimate extramarital bonds he believes Mary forms firstly with the 'handsome' Matthews (308) and later with the 'manly' Kenrick (343). My reading explores how this desire is aggravated by Casimir's increasing dissatisfaction with his prescribed roles only of husband, protector, guardian, guide, and father figure within the couple's stultifying marital dynamic, as he comes to be increasingly destructed by the masculine romantic boundaries imposed upon him.[11]

I further explore the interrelation of *Maria* and *Fleetwood* — and of Wollstonecraftian and Godwinian philosophies of sex/gender and romantic love more broadly — by suggesting a queer reading of Mary's and Casimir's marital discord allows us to see how their relational dynamic is more complex than a scenario of female subjugation against male domination. Noted in the introduction to this thesis, Dustin Friedman's study of *Maria* explored how Wollstonecraft's

[11] As will be documented in the second chapter of 'Queer Love', both Mary and Casimir are prescribed their specifical marital roles by Mary's father, Macneil. Despite their shared reservations, following Macneil's sudden death both wife and husband attempt to fulfil these feminine and masculine roles in honour of his memory. This, as I explore, results in a number of damaging and destructive consequences for both partners.

treatment of the union of woman and man functioned as a portrayal of the precarious position women occupied in marriage. But Friedman reread *Maria* as a much broader exposé of the sexual and gendered roles underpinning marital ideology, where Wollstonecraft would trace domesticity's potentially pernicious effects on numerous marginalised individuals, and across social, political, and ethical arenas. Wollstonecraft's novel, Friedman argued, de-idealised marriage as part of the author's attempt to 'recognise, represent, and theorize the political and ethical importance' of non-reproductive sexualities and non-conforming genders which held little or no place in late-eighteenth century marital and/or romantic roles and ideology, or that which Friedman termed collectively as 'non-heterosexual identities'.[12]

I reread *Fleetwood* as a novel that, like *Maria*,[13] can be seen to recognise and advocate for romantic desires that fall outside marital normativity and which transgress society's prescribed roles for women and for men. A. A. Markley has, quite justifiably, proposed that Casimir's 'intense longing' for romance in the novel has an almost unmissably 'homoerotic' quality to it; he then writes that the protagonist may be read as an early example of what would later come to be categorised as 'the homosexual'.[14] While Casimir does attempt to form intimate relations with certain male companions, I suggest that to read his extramarital desires only as homoerotic risks oversimplifying the complexity with which Godwin delineates Casimir's

[12] See my previous discussion of Friedman's study in the introduction to this thesis, pp. 24-25.
[13] Given the comprehensiveness of Friedman's analysis of *Maria* and the limited space available in this chapter, I will not be offering my own analysis of the 1797 novel. I will instead focus primarily upon examining how *Fleetwood* interacts with both Godwinian and Wollstonecraftian philosophies of sex, gender, and romantic love more broadly.
[14] 'Homosocial Desire and the Homosexual Personality in the Novels of William Godwin', *Romanticism on the Net*, 36-37 (2004) <https://doi.org/10.7202/011139ar>. Markley proposes Casimir's apparent misogyny to be read more accurately as a sexual apathy, arguing that the protagonist's passionless feelings and loveless actions towards Mary arise because 'only another man can satisfy his longing for human contact' (para. 19 of 39).

ongoing wish for romantic love. This chapter explores an alternative reading: analysing the myriad close relationships he attempts to form with both women and men across the novel, I trace how Godwin portrays Casimir as an individual who is not so much romantically attracted (or unattracted) to men (or to women) *per se*. I examine his romantic desires as a non-exclusive wish for intimate and complementary companionship with a 'masculine' individual irrespective of the physical, female/male body of that individual.[15]

I thus read Casimir's problematic relationship with Mary as an aversion to the masculine form of relationality he is assigned specifically to her, and the feminine form of relationality she is assigned specifically to him, in their union as husband/wife, protector/protected, guardian/ward: ill-fitting roles which serve only to circumscribe the agency and potential of both characters. Instead of interpreting Casimir's desires as something akin to homosexuality, I suggest — if we were indeed to attempt to categorise his romantic preferences as anything — that he be more appositely described as an androsexual, or one who is romantically attracted to men or women, but, more specifically, masculinity. I document how Godwin centres the depiction of his protagonist's ongoing desire, but ultimate failure, to secure the exclusive love of another upon Casimir's attempt to find a masculine counterpart who can both complement and compensate for his own sensitive, emotional, and feeling qualities. In doing so, this chapter functions to build upon my previous examination of what I termed Godwinian queer desire — that is, his advocacy for the satiation of deeply-felt passions that transgressed gender boundaries — to explore this in relation to future-oriented Godwinian philosophies of romantic love.

---

[15] Casimir refers to his ideal romantic partner numerous times in *Fleetwood* through descriptors that highlight and prioritise specifically masculine qualities, including 'masculine' (103) and 'manly' (242, 343).

In departing from my focus purely upon Godwinian queer desire, to move towards exploring Godwinian queer love, my analysis across the following two chapters examines how the philosopher came to envision an ideal romantic love between humans as, on the one level, bodily — that is, as comprising in part a physical, sensual desire between the two parties, between two bodies. I explore how Godwin understood that human-human romantic attachments should then be free to operate and flourish outside any deterministic requirement for a specific sexual materiality of these bodies. What, I argue, concerned the philosopher first and foremost was not the biological sex of the romantic union's participants, but only that the two individuals comprising it have the respective capacity to assist one other to 'be complete' in whichever specific way necessary that each participant feels they are 'in need of the other'.[16] While certainly incorporative of the kind of intimate, immediate, and potentially eroticised 'need[s]' which I explored previously, I examine how Godwin understood the human-human romantic union — realised to its full potential — as much more than just a physical connection of two bodies, and/or as much more than just a 'momentary impulse' of desire or pleasure.[17] My study traces how Godwin recognised that such human-human connection must extend beyond the immediate, beyond the moment, and be fortified by a future-oriented emotional and intellectual alliance; an equilibrate system of 'perfect reliance' whereby each party continues to grow, both as a unit and as individuals, from this exclusive connection with their complementary other.[18]

My reading of Godwinian love may appear antithetical to the author's broader philosophical position in relation to such romantic attachments. In his most widely

[16] *Thoughts on Man*, p. 298.
[17] Ibid, p. 295.
[18] Ibid, pp. 291-292, 295.

studied work of the early 1790s, Godwin is conspicuously dismissive not only of marriage, but of all monogamous forms of romantic human-human bonds, for corresponding reasons — mostly that he saw any ongoing and committed union between two individuals as inherently limiting to the agency of both.[19] However, moving into the nineteenth century, we can trace his reconsideration of this stance: I document how this previous total aversion towards marriage becomes nuanced to a specific critique of the way in which domestic ideologies categorised and restricted its female and male participants to prescribed feminine and masculine romantic roles and modes of relationality. I document how Godwin's previous dismissal of all monogamous, romantic attachments is overturned. Instead of believing such bonds to always and only limit those involved, Godwin comes to recognise the important function that romantic love can play in the individual's fulfilment, growth, and potentiality. The philosopher exhibits a new awareness of how such relationships could foster a more productive and harmonious relationship between self, other, and society more broadly.

My chapter suggests that Godwin came to regard the romantic love union as inclusive of — but, unlike marriage, not exclusively dependent upon — the respective parties being female and male. I illustrate how the philosopher can be understood to have regarded the romantic love union as dependent only upon the two individuals, the two humans, being complementary 'unequals' whose love union served both a romantic and pragmatic function to equally abate and/or satiate the needs, shortcomings, and desires, of both participants.[20] I examine how we can read Godwin as advocating for the liberation of romantic love from the confines of

[19] See Godwin's critique of 'the evil of marriage' and ideologies of monogamous romantic human-human 'eternal attachments' in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793), pp. 849-852.
[20] Godwin discusses this idea of 'unequals' and shared inequality in *Thoughts on Man*, pp. 291-292.

marriage — and from the confines of the prescriptions and ideologies attached to the female and male body. By liberating women, men, humans to love in this unhindered and ungendered way, Godwin understood how the ‘pain’, ‘fear’, and ‘resentment’ one would develop when being subjugated to externally-imposed rules placed upon their body — and as we have witnessed in *St. Leon* and *Mandeville* — had the potential to be transformed into ‘pleasure’, ‘regard’, and ‘hope’.[21] I therefore examine Godwinian ideal love throughout this chapter as a love beyond the body. This refers to the author’s treatment of love as a romantic attachment that develops beyond desire, beyond the immediate, beyond the bodily. More broadly, it refers to the author’s treatment of love as a romantic attachment which must be free to develop in this way precisely through its being unimpeded by ideologies or expectations attached to the material body of the two individuals comprising the union.

THE MASCULINE WOMAN

Casimir Fleetwood’s early years are spent harmoniously, where his sensitive, feeling, and delicate personality is cherished, and nourished. Too young to remember his deceased mother, he tells the reader how his father’s ‘actions towards me were tender and indulgent; he recognised in me all that remained of the individual he had loved more than all the other persons in the world’ (53). In echoing the loving bond once shared between mother and father in that of this ‘tender’ bond of son and father, the opening of *Fleetwood* offers an early indication of Casimir’s sensitive and feeling qualities. Not only is he recognised as this physical and emotional reminder of his

[21] Ibid, p. 451.

mother,[22] but Casimir also recalls with much fondness how his father imposed no expectations or obligations upon him, and specifically in relation to his masculine position as 'the only son' of the Fleetwood dynasty. He describes how this 'lov[ing]' man cared not for the 'nourishment of his paternal vanity or pride', but rather how he prioritised his only child's liberty, aiming never 'to put much restraint upon me', and never enforcing Casimir to 'render myself subservient' to any familial rules, restraints, or posterity (53).

Years later, following his studies at Oxford, Casimir retains his appreciation for those spaces in which he is free to express himself unhindered by social and moral boundaries. He travels to Paris with his close friend Charles Gleed, with both young men having been drawn precisely to the 'licentious and profligate' freedom offered by the city (99). While equally desirous to engage in open and unhindered relations with others — Casimir highlights the 'contempt for the marriage bond' and the 'universal toleration […] extended to adultery and debauchery' existent within the city's culture — he specifies his romantic desires as distinct from Charles's uncomplicated wish for free, sexual liaisons. Charles is consumed with what Casimir understands as the 'manly' pursuit of being 'devoted to the pleasure' of the 'ladies'; Casimir relays his own desires in a way noticeably more intricate (98). While describing himself as a comparative '*un homme à bonnes fortunes*',[23] the protagonist's wish for romantic intimacy is driven by a desire to meet an individual with whom he can form a romantic union that extends beyond the immediately physical. Continuing to describe these 'strikingly contrasted' qualities between

[22] While Godwin offers little information as to the personality of Casimir's mother, she is briefly described as being 'affectionate', 'amiable', and one whom offered perpetual 'kindness' to her husband (53).

[23] Translated literally as 'a man of good fortune', the phrase *un homme á bonnes fortunes* was also used at the time of Godwin's writing to refer specifically to success in romantic or sexual relations with women, and especially considered as a source of pride by a man. See note in *Fleetwood*, p. 100.

himself, his friend, and their respective romantic 'pursuits', Casimir describes Charles as 'set, disciplined and regular; I was quick, sensitive, and variable. He had speciousness; I sensibility'. Casimir believes himself to be 'too tremblingly alive, to be well adapted to the commerce of the world [...] I had gained a certain degree of self-possession and assurance; yet my sensibility was too great', as he sets out to locate a companion who can aid to 'repair' these aspects of himself (98-99).

If Casimir understands Charles to be 'manly', self-possessed, and desiring only a momentary, sexual companionship with 'the ladies', then Casimir does not then judge his contrastingly sensitive, dependent, and more emotionally needful qualities and desires as negative by comparison. His sensibility is treated not as adverse, but quantified as 'too great'; his emotional proclivity is treated not as needing to be extirpated, but 'repair[ed]'. His focus is upon locating a romantic partner who can help tame and focus his femininity in such a way as to balance and complement these traits and 'adapt' Casimir 'to the commerce of the world'. Recalling Reginald's suggestively described Parisian pursuits in Godwin's *St. Leon*,[24] Casimir 'associated freely and cordially with characters of either sex'; he eventually comes to desire the company of one individual referred to firstly, and then only, by her rank and title of 'the Marchioness' (99-100).

Casimir's attraction to this individual appears largely unconnected to her physicality. His focus is placed upon the Marchioness's 'masculine' character. 'Her passion', he affirms, 'seemed particularly to prompt her to the bold, the intrepid, and the masculine'; he pinpoints these qualities as instantly 'fix[ing] my regard' (101, 103). We are not informed of the Marchioness's physical appearance until a short while later, when Casimir briefly alludes to her 'countenance', her 'figure', and her

[24] See chapter one of this thesis for my examination of how Reginald enjoys the 'society' of both women and men in his transgressive Parisian activities, p. 55.

'eye [which] combined a feminine softness with vivacity and fire' (104). In focusing upon what he perceives as the Marchioness's 'masculine' character, and secondly upon what he perceives as her 'feminine' physicality, Casimir appears to harbour no deterministic judgment that one could or should impact the other. Casimir's pinpointing the Marchioness's 'eye' as the site where her masculine character and her feminine physicality 'combine' is suggestive of his ability to appreciate her in ways unimpacted by the female/feminine binary: he depicts the eye as a window to, or a 'penetration of',[25] the fiery masculine spirit observed through the feminine body.

This non-deterministic portrayal of the 'masculine' in *Fleetwood* draws parallels with Mary Wollstonecraft's 1792 *Vindication*. Early on in the manifesto, Wollstonecraft writes in praise of 'masculine women'.[26] She is keen to stress her strict usage of such a term, specifying that she is not referring to those individuals who are assumed as trying to be like men, or women who are seen as striving to adopt 'the imitation of manly virtues' (75). 'Masculinity', for Wollstonecraft, is distinct from 'manly'. The former is not treated by the author as something inherent to a male body, or as the exclusive property of men, or as something that women can only at best imitate, just as the feminine is not treated by Wollstonecraft as something inherent to a female body.[27] She stresses the masculine to be a quality, as indicatory of 'courage and fortitude' and as representative of 'the attainment of talents and virtues, the exercise of which ennobles the human character'. She stresses the masculine to be essentially unrelated to any 'physical' constitution of that

[25] Casimir's description of the Marchioness's spirit and body recalls Godwin's essay 'Of Body and Mind' (1831), in which the philosopher describes how we can observe the 'penetration' of spirit through the body, and specifically the eye. See *Thoughts on Man*, p. 3.
[26] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman,* ed. by Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 75. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.
[27] See Wollstonecraft's discussion of 'feminine weakness' in the 1792 *Vindication*, pp. 281-282. Wollstonecraft affirms that such femininity is not inherent to women but, rather, she recognises how it is a consequence 'produced by a confined education'.

individual (75-76). Casimir's usage of 'manly' to describe Charles's masculinity, in contrast to his usage of 'masculine' describe the Marchioness's masculinity, resonates with Wollstonecraft's differentiation between these terms in the *Vindication*. Wollstonecraft later jests how society typically conceptualises masculine women who step 'out of the orbit prescribed to their sex' as '*male* spirits, confined by mistake in a female frame' (105). Her husband's *Fleetwood* exhibits a progressive example of a refreshingly non-deterministic thinking, where the masculine is not linked exclusively to the male.

Godwin's treatment of masculine women has not, however, always showcased such enlightened and progressive thought. We can trace contrasts between this 'masculine' depiction of the Marchioness in *Fleetwood* and Godwin's controversial portrayal of the 'masculine' Wollstonecraft in the 1798 *Memoirs* of his late wife. While this work was well-intentioned and largely celebratory, multiple critics have highlighted Godwin's attempt to 'whitewash' Wollstonecraft's memory through downplaying the masculine qualities of his late wife and her work, and privileging the more traditionally feminine, to 'align it more easily with the feminine ideology of the day'.[28] Ghislaine McDayter documents how this extended even as far as Godwin's depiction of Wollstonecraft's and his romantic union, noting how he appears to categorise and conventionalise their respective contrasting roles, casting himself as the masculine man of 'reason' and 'intellect', against Wollstonecraft as the feminine woman of 'feeling' and 'imagination', with Godwin declaring how both wife and husband 'carried [...] the characteristics of the sexes to which we belonged'.[29]

---

[28] Ghislaine McDayter, 'On the Publication of William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1798', *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History* (2012) <https://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=ghislaine-mcdayter-on-the-publication-of-william-godwins-memoirs-of-the-author-of-a-vindication-of-the-rights-of-woman-1798> [accessed 5 October 2021] (para. 11 of 18). See also Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992).
[29] Godwin, quoted in McDayter (para 14 of 18).

I draw closer attention to the way in which Godwin theorises the female body in the *Memoirs*. 'A circumstance by which the two sexes are particularly distinguished', he declares, 'is that the one is accustomed to the exercise of its reasoning powers, and the other of its feelings. Women have a frame of body more delicate and susceptible of impression than men'.[30] While Wollstonecraft does briefly outline in the 1792 *Vindication* how a female body potentially has less 'bodily strength' than a male,[31] she does not then correlate this to a respective quality of women (or men) to be more (or less) 'impression[able]' or 'delicate'. In contrast, Godwin, as he wrote here in 1798, treated biological femaleness and maleness as deterministic of the individual's propensity to 'feel'. We can observe this notion of feminine/female innateness in the *Memoirs* when Godwin writes how 'many of [Wollstonecraft's] sentiments are undoubtedly of a rather masculine description', only for him to then immediately clarify how this masculinity was 'incompatible with the writer's essential character' as 'feminine' (81, 83). This essentialised depiction of Wollstonecraft's femininity appears particularly jarring when compared to how, in the introduction to 1833 edition of the 1792 *Vindication*, the anonymous biographer of Wollstonecraft admires how the couple's 'love' for one another was noteworthy precisely because neither conformed to the gendered roles attached to their respective 'sex' as female and male.[32]

Critics have suggested that Godwin's misogynistic treatment of his late wife potentially arose from a well-intentioned, if misguided, attempt to soften the opinion

---

[30] Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: J. Johnson, 1798), p. 200.
[31] Wollstonecraft writes that the 'bodily strength' of men may assist them in being perceived as possessing the masculine quality of 'courage and fortitude' (10).
[32] 'One sex did not take the priority which long established custom had awarded it', the biographer writes, describing further how Wollstonecraft's and Godwin's relationship 'grew with equal advances in the mind of each', with 'neither party' playing the role of 'the agent or the patient, the toil spreader or the prey' (vii). See 'Brief Sketch of the Life of Mary Wollstonecraft', in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: A. J. Matsell, 1833).

of a growingly conservative post-Revolutionary reading public towards Wollstonecraft, himself, and their unconventional relationship, by aligning their respective characteristics and their marriage with more socially acceptable gendered ideals and roles.[33] I concur with this, and I argue further that the apparent sexism found within the *Memoirs* to be an anomaly within broader Godwinian thought. Just a few years later, with *Fleetwood*, Godwin revises this previously perspicuous stance on sex and gender. In contrast to how the *Memoirs* cited femininity/feeling/imagination and masculinity/reason/intellect as indicative of essential differences between a woman and a man, a female and a male body, Godwin takes this dualistic gendered paradigm to suggest an intrinsic difference between a man and a man. Casimir describes himself as a man of 'imagination', in contrast to Charles as a man of 'perception', delineating the ways in which their qualities essentially differ, and drawing parallels with the language previously employed by Godwin in the *Memoirs* to differentiate women and men.[34] Casimir's and Charles's biological maleness is presented as holding little, if any, determination upon their respective qualities as individuals, and specifically their propensity to feel.

In *Fleetwood*, Godwin readdresses the way in which he had previously suggested in the *Memoirs* how male masculinity and female femininity was the necessary basis for a romantic union to operate synergistically and successfully. Casimir's narration signals his and Charles's maleness as largely unimportant in their potential to form a romantic attachment with the Marchioness. It is only their

---

[33] See Nancy E. Johnson, 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin: Dialogues.', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 101-116.

[34] See, for instance, Casimir's description of his own feminine qualities as being associated with 'romance', 'emotion', and 'feelings', in contrast to Charles's masculine qualities as being associated with 'perceptions', being 'dispassionate', and being 'led astray by no prepossessions of partialities' (108-109). In the *Memoirs* Godwin had referred to these qualities as markers of inherent differences between females and males, writing of the former's 'delicate' and 'impression[able]' essential nature in contrast to the latter's greater propensity to exercise 'reasoning powers' (200).

gender (feminine/masculine) — and not sexual (female/male) — qualities upon which Casimir places repeated prioritisation. He describes the incongruity that he believes would plague any romantic relationship between the conflictingly 'masculine' Marchioness against the 'manly' Charles; he describes how the former would find his friend's emotionally monotonous 'constancy', 'calmness', and 'unalterable' nature as 'intolerable' to her romantic requirement for a partner whose qualities could productively 'combine' with her own (100-101). Any romantic connection between these two, Casimir believes, would not extend beyond something momentary or bodily, as he imagines the Marchioness using Charles simply 'as a convenient instrument, or a respectable piece of furniture, [rather] than a living being whose passions were to mix, and shock, and contend, and combine, with her own' (ibid). Casimir's reference to how the romantic union must continually operate so as to 'mix', to 'shock', to 'contend', and to 'combine' the qualities of its two participants are terms which denote the intermixture of two contrasting or complementary elements to produce something new, or at least modified in some way. Despite the Marchioness's and Charles's sexual disparity, it is this gendered similarity which Casimir pinpoints as stunting any romantic potential of these two individuals to 'mix' in such a way.

Casimir depicts his own feminine and emotionally sensitive qualities as harbouring a much greater potential to 'combine' with the Marchioness's masculine and bold qualities. 'My character was of an opposite sort' to Charles's, he tells us, as he then describes this opposition as rendering him 'more flattering to a person of [the Marchioness's] character' (100). The way in which Casimir refers to himself and the Marchioness as these non-sexed 'character[s]' draws attention to his focus upon individual qualities over sexual materialities. In *Fleetwood*, while femininity and masculinity are still treated as the necessary complementary 'characteristics'

important to the romantic dynamic, they are treated as qualities unattached to, and undetermined by, the sexual materiality of the love union's respective participants.

This anticipates Godwin's theory of romantic love that would later emerge in *Thoughts on Man* (1831). While Godwin does refer numerous times to relationships between 'the sexes' during his discussion of the romantic love unit,[35] the philosopher places focus not solely upon the sex of the respective participants' bodies. Rather, he appears to prioritise the individual, feminine/masculine characteristics of each participant over and above their biology as female or male. Take, for instance, the following moment when Godwin turns his attention back to the eleventh century to offer his interpretation of how Chivalry marked the time when 'vulgar impulse[s]' (purely sexual desires) were 'transformed into somewhat of a totally different nature' (romantic love) (292). He writes:

> Its principle was built upon a theory of the sexes, giving to each a relative importance, and assigning to both functions full of honour and grace. [...] The ladies regarded it as their glory to assist their champions to arm and disarm, to perform for them even menial services, to attend them [...]. The knights on the other hand considered any slight towards the fair sex as an indelible stain to their order. (294)

Apparent here is Godwin's awareness that the feminine and masculine roles underpinning the love dynamic between these 'ladies' and these 'knights' are not necessarily essential or intrinsic. Rather, he refers to them as a 'theory of' women and men, gendered qualities which these individuals have been 'assign[ed]' and then

[35] *Thoughts on Man*, pp. 291-292, 295. Subsequent references to this work are given as page numbers in the text.

subsequently 'perform', as part of a system of relationality which Godwin understood as having been 'built' in service of 'the scheme and arrangements of civil society'. There appears to be a suggestion from Godwin that these men's exclusive romantic desire for 'the ladies' was socially encouraged, but not inherent, as he writes intriguingly that 'the knights [...] were taught [...] the "love of God and the ladies"' (ibid).

While Godwin goes on to refer to 'the sexes' in continuing this discussion of love in the Chivalric age, it is arguable that he does not interpret, or at least focus, upon the two parties as women or men, female or male. 'A man was no longer merely a man, nor a woman merely a woman', he writes, placing focus instead upon their respective masculine and feminine roles and modes of relationality. When he then turns his attention back to the 'modern times' of the early 1830s, we can mark a change in the language used to refer to the love union's participants: he replaces his previous reference to 'each sex' and 'either sex' with non-sexed and non-deterministic terms such as 'each party', 'the parties', and 'each other' (297). When he refers to 'the attachment of the sexes' in this same paragraph, he does so only to declare that a male-female romantic union 'cannot subsist' unless it fulfils the lengthy criteria of relationality he has previously outlined. What preoccupies Godwin in his discussion of love in *Thoughts on Man* are these contrasting and complementary roles of each party towards each other. 'Tenderness on the one part, and a deep feeling of honour and respect on the other, give a completeness to the union which it must otherwise for ever want'. These feminine and masculine roles foster 'in either party a perfect reliance, an idea of inequality with the most entire assurance that it can never operate unworthily in the stronger party, or produce insincerity or servility in the weaker', where 'there is a pouring out of the heart on the one side, and a cordial acceptance on the other' (290-292). This theory of romantic

love appears to offer no privilege or prioritisation to the male-female, treating such a form of attachment as simply one that must fulfil this criterion of masculine-feminine synergetic roles and relationality if romantic potential is to be realised.

BODILY CONNECTION(S): BEYOND THE SENSUAL

In *Fleetwood*, the portrayal of the 'masculine' Marchioness, in addition to the portrayal of the 'tender' Casimir, could be read as Godwin's response to Wollstonecraft's call to see representations of women who occupied positions in romantic relationships with men unhindered by any requirement for her to fit into a category of the 'pretty feminine'.[36]

The 1792 manifesto calls for women, like men, to gain an equal ability to be regarded as 'rational creatures, instead of flattering their *fascinating* graces'. Wollstonecraft declares how she wishes to see women who 'endeavour to acquire strength, both of mind and body' and who are no longer treated like 'those beings who are the objects of pity and that kind of love' (76). By 'that kind of love', the author refers to the deterministic position women were so often assigned in the male-female romantic union, writing of a 'slavish dependence' within which 'men' relegated their partners to a subservient role of being only 'weak' and 'sweet' (ibid). A short while later in the *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft refers to this female/feminine positionality and male-female relationality in a more specifically bodily/sexual way, writing how women are continually 'degraded by being made subservient to love or lust' precisely because of how men regard 'the constitution of their bodies' (95-96).

[36] 1792 *Vindication*, p. 75.

Wollstonecraft's conception of this subjugated female femininity — as far as it relates to the ideological romantic relationship — was thus typified by sexual subservience combined with an emotional dependency. The woman's prescribed position was largely defined by her being regarded foremost as a sensual object for the man's masculine lustful need, and less as an independent individual whose own passions and desires may supersede that of simply living to please and satisfy her male partner. Wollstonecraft's primary issue appears to be upon how femininity was deterministically regarded as intrinsic to all women, and as an integral and essential part of the role they were assumed to always enact in any romantic union with any man.

In *Fleetwood*, Godwin envisions a romantic relationship between a woman and a man which has been liberated from these restrictive and sexually deterministic roles targeted by Wollstonecraft. The novel showcases a role reversal: it is Casimir — and not the Marchioness — who is markedly more delicate and impressionable in their relationship. He is the one ruled by a subjective, bodily, emotional connection to his female partner, a connection quite distinct from a straightforward masculine lust. Casimir's position falls in direct contrast to the more emotionally detached role which the Marchioness plays in their relationship, where her feelings for Casimir appear to not extend beyond lust.

Casimir initially infers their relationship to be initially only sexual, as he briefly refers to 'the very room' which 'witnessed the consummation of my joys' (101-102). He details how the Marchioness 'gave me possession of her person', highlighting his understanding of how the Marchioness's body is exclusively hers to give, and in no way his to claim or control. Wollstonecraft lamented in the *Vindication* how women face social pressures encouraging them to perform in service of male lust, writing how women typically feel 'it is necessary to exert mean

arts to please him' (123). The man would typically encourage the woman's adopting of such 'mean arts' due to his sexual desire, but, more pressingly, his desire to exercise power and control over the woman's body and, in turn, her mind.[37] Godwin's protagonist desires the reverse of this stultifying male-female dynamic: he wishes for a connection with the Marchioness that is not simply physical love, and where both his and his partner's connection to one another can extend beyond a momentary and bodily one to a deeper emotional one, and where neither partner is relegated and subjugated to simply being a sensual object to satiate the needs of their partner. We can trace how Casimir's narration moves away from this initial focus upon the bodily — as in, carnal — nature of their relationship to instead be replaced by a focus upon another bodily — as in, a subjective, embodied — nature of his inescapable feeling of emotional attachment to her. His ongoing romantic attraction is underpinned by a kind of physiological, continually suggestible, and impressionable fixation with the deeply-felt feelings and emotions she excites within him. Feelings, furthermore, which appear to operate independently of his rational, objective mind, and that cannot be satiated simply through sex.

He describes how 'the Marchioness tormented me with her flights and uncertainty, both before and after the completing of my wishes. [...] I thought myself ten times at the summit of my desires, when again I was, in the most unexpected manner, baffled and thrown back' (102). Casimir displays a lack of understanding of, yet also intrigue towards, this emotional coolness the Marchioness exhibits. Where he seems to require re-affirmation of her love for him beyond the erotic, she displays no comparative need, relegating him to this 'uncertain' position of relationality to her

[37] Wollstonecraft writes further in the *Vindication*: 'men, taking her body, the mind is left to rust; so that while physical love enervates man, as being his favourite recreation, he will endeavour to enslave the woman' (155).

where she requires his companionship for little more than sexual purposes. Casimir not only displays a lack of understanding and uncertainty towards the Marchioness, but towards himself, and specifically this bodily, deeply-felt feeling that she excites within him. He cannot claim mastery over his feelings — they, instead, rule him. This reference above to how he can only 'th[ink]' about his desires for her, but is unable to sufficiently introspect them or satiate them simply through a sexual gratification, highlights his incapacity to rationalise these deeper romantic emotions and passions; the reference to being 'baffled' and 'thrown back' by the 'unexpected' ways in which these feelings operate upon him highlights his sensitivity and impressionability as one under the rule of subjective feelings beyond the straightforwardly erotic or easily rationalised.

Casimir later laments how the Marchioness's and his romantic union is compromised by its being too sexual. Any sensual connection, while enjoyable, is treated by the protagonist as secondary to the ongoing emotional dependency he understands as necessary to the full realisation of romantic love. He declares how he has 'attached myself strongly', how the Marchioness 'kept my soul in a tumult', and how she 'excited in me [...] the passion of love'. He bluntly describes how she 'was less engrossed by me' in ways beyond an eroticised desire (102, 105-106). In *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin affirms how 'the passion between the sexes, in its grossest sense, is a momentary impulse merely', as he described how 'love' is defined instead by 'each party' being 'in need of the other' in ways including — but extending far beyond — the sexual (295). In his reference to this 'passion of love' here in *Fleetwood*, Casimir craves a connection in which both partners are 'attached' not simply in a physical, momentary, bodily entanglement, but in a deeply-felt and ongoing emotional need of one other.

In describing the Marchioness's efforts to placate his despondency at this imbalance in their relationship, Casimir describes how at 'times she would put the woman upon me, display her charms, assume the attitudes, the gestures, and expression of features', and that while this would likely be 'impossible for a young and susceptible admirer' to resist, he clarifies that this 'was not the effect upon me' (104-105). This reference to the Marchioness 'put[ting] the woman' upon him suggests 'the woman' is used by Casimir as a term to denote a particular type of sexualised femininity, a donned persona, which has been adopted by a woman solely in service of pleasing a man's masculine lust — as opposed to a term denoting all women. This is the kind of femininity which, in the 1792 *Vindication*, Wollstonecraft is repeatedly keen to drive women away from performing: she uses this term 'the woman' in a comparative way to Casimir's usage in *Fleetwood* during her discussion of 'the woman who has only been taught to please' (96).

It could therefore be argued that Casimir does not actually regard the Marchioness as a woman, insofar as his use of this phrase denotes only this subservient feminine role like the one described by Wollstonecraft. This can be observed more keenly by tracing the close similarities between the language Godwin uses to describe this male-female relationship with the language the author uses to describe the deeply-felt male-male relationships in the novels explored earlier in this thesis. Casimir describes his feeling for the Marchioness as 'undescribable' (105); in *Mandeville*, Charles had written of the 'indescribable' feelings excited in him by the hegemonic Clifford; and, in *St. Leon*, Reginald referred to the 'undescribable' pleasure he felt in the company of Bethlem.[38] Casimir describes his 'infatuation' with

[38] William Godwin, *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Ontario: Broadview, 2016), p. 275; and Godwin, *St. Leon*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 401. For my earlier discussion of Godwinian male-male passion and the 'undescribable', see chapter one of this thesis, pp. 65-70.

the Marchioness; Charles described his 'intoxication' with Clifford.[39] Casimir writes how his feelings for the Marchioness 'will never be obliterated while this heart continues to beat' (102); Reginald wrote about the 'indelible' impression left upon his 'heart' by Bethlem Gabor in *St. Leon*.[40] Given these repeated similarities between Godwin's depiction of the Marchioness's masculine effect upon Casimir, alongside that of Clifford's and Bethlem's masculine effect upon Charles and Reginald, it is notable that the author appears at no point to de-legitimise her female masculinity against that of his portrayal of a male masculinity, or her propensity to occupy the masculine role in a passionately involved relationship with a man. These early stages of *Fleetwood* see Godwin, like Wollstonecraft before him, explore the potentialities for romantic love to exist in ways unbound by the normative roles typically prescribed to women and men.

'THE SUBSTANCE OF WHAT WAS SEEN': THE MAN OF (MIS)PERCEPTION

The Marchioness's and Casimir's relationship soon draws to a close. Casimir relays the decision to conclude their romance as being rooted in this lack of a reciprocated connection, on the Marchioness's part, beyond the sensual.[41] What begins only as the termination of this one, ultimately short-lived relationship, is something which comes to dictate (and limit) Casimir's search for all future romantic companionship. Dejected by his failure to procure this emotional connection with the Marchioness,

[39] *Mandeville*, p. 159. For my earlier discussion of this male-male 'intoxication', see chapter two of this thesis, pp. 96-97.
[40] *St. Leon*, pp. 395-396.
[41] 'I was therefore in the wrong to measure the modes of thinking or of sensation in my mistress's bosom by my own' (107), Casimir bemoans to the reader.

Casimir turns to his only friend Charles, the afore-described 'man of perception', for his advice:

> At length Sir Charles Gleed removed the film which had grown over my eyes, and cured me of my infatuation. Sir Charles was a man who, in many points, observations of detail, saw the world more truly than I did. I have often remarked [...] this difference between men of imagination, and those whom I will call men of simple perception. (107)

The employment of 'cured' signals Charles's influence as instigating a distinct attitude shift in Casimir's perception of romantic companionship. Casimir had initially told the reader of his desire for a romantic partner who could help to 'repair' his more emotionally needful and sensitive qualities.[42] He now describes these qualities as needing to be 'cured'. While semantically similar, it is arguable that 'repair' positions the object — Casimir's sensibility — as something in need of restoration/adjustment to reach its full potential; 'cure' positions his sensibility as something to be extirpated so as to rid the individual of a disease or contamination. Casimir reconceptualises his femininity as a physical affliction; he treats it as something extrinsic: it is a 'film', it has 'grown', and it needs to be 'remove[d]' to restore him to an original, functioning, male/masculine position. Casimir bluntly de-legitimises his male femininity against that of Charles's male masculinity, as he states that this 'manly' man 'saw the world more truly than I did'.

[42] Charles described how he required complementary companionship to balance and regulate his sensibility and 'adapt' him harmoniously and productively to the 'commerce' of human society. See my earlier discussion of this, p. 135.

Casimir internalises the notion that Charles's masculinity (as a man) somehow renders him true, and that his own femininity (as a man) is faulty or flawed. The Marchioness similarly becomes a victim of Casimir's internalisation of the gender binary: where she was celebrated by Casimir for her 'masculine' character, she is now referred to as 'a woman of abandoned character, disengaged from all restraints of decency and shame' (109). He reconceptualises her masculinity, like his own femininity, to be a destructive modification — she has 'abandoned' a supposedly true or original position, as a 'woman', to occupy instead a damagingly transgressive one. His previous ability to see beyond the gender binary, to see beyond the restrictive ideologies attached to her female and his male body, appears now to be declining with a marked rapidity.

This opens up a wider discussion not just about how Casimir internalises these viewpoints about Charles's, his own, and the Marchioness's sex/gender, but how *Fleetwood* comes to portray damaging internalisations of the material world more broadly. Delineating further the differing ways in which Charles and himself interpret the world, Casimir writes that if Charles were to see only 'the configuration of the clouds' and 'the nature of the fields', then Casimir would have discerned these objects in such a way so as to instead perceive the clouds as 'a passage, through which he plunged in imagination into the world unknown', and the fields as 'beauty, and harmony, and life' (108). Casimir no longer embraces his more emotionally and sensitively enlightened capacities as this 'man of imagination'. He believes that Charles sees what 'was external and in the things themselves', and that he himself sees merely a 'painting of his own mind' (ibid). That which is 'external' is aligned directly in his narration with that which is supposedly true or real, that which constitutes whatever is 'in the things themselves'. By contrast, anything which is perhaps not apparent or discerned based solely upon an immediate judgment of the

thing's external attributes or materiality — anything requiring emotion, sensitivity, feeling, and/or a more enlightened discernment — is then dismissed as unreal, as just a figment of the viewer's imagination and unanchored to any reality. To be this man of supposed true 'perception', Casimir now apparently believes, is to call a cloud a cloud, a field a field, and nothing more.

The reductive way in which Casimir now re-conceptualises — and dismisses — his intuitive ability to 'imagin[e]' is something which falls in direct contrast to Godwinian philosophy, and specifically the account of romantic love the author later put forth in *Thoughts on Man*. For Godwin, 'there can be no passion, and by consequence no love, where there is not imagination'. He swiftly dismisses seeing romantic love as something only to be 'understood', 'measured', or 'reduced to rule'. Godwin instead places focus upon the importance that the romantic partner imagines beyond that which is immediately apparent or known within the material world. This is exemplified in the value he assigns in this account to the impalpable, observed through references to 'the absent', 'what I do not see', 'no image', and 'neither certain outline or colour'. Individuals, he stresses, must accept this 'mystery' and unknowingness inherent to romantic love if they are to experience it to its full potential (273-274).

Godwin's visualisation of a world where romantic love has been freed from any requirement to be 'understood', 'measured', or bound by 'rule[s]' — to place focus instead upon the individual's capacity to imagine beyond the present and beyond the known to embrace the potentialities of love — is, I propose, anticipatory of the theory of queer love put forward in José Esteban Muñoz's *Cruising Utopia* (2009). Muñoz defines queer love as 'a structuring and educated mode of desiring

that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present'.[43] This parallels Godwin's declaration in *Thoughts on Man* that an ideal romantic love must be underpinned by a focus 'on the absent [rather] than the present, more upon what I do not see than on what I do see' (273-274). Both theorists position rules, regulations, and forms of knowing as antithetical to utopian love, and both position freedom, unrestraint, and imagination as essential to utopian love. In this account of love in *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin writes that when 'every thing is [...] reduced to rule, love is out of the question'. And, prior to this, he had written about these 'rules' specifically in relation to the 'rules' of society which he believed dictated — and circumscribed — the ways in which individuals are granted the ability to form relationships with their fellow human, writing: 'in proportion as I am rendered familiar with my fellow-creatures, or with society at large, I come to feel the ties which bind men to each other, and the [...] inexorable rules. We are thus further and further removed from unexpected sallies of the mind' (96-97).

Godwin, then, understood imagination as essential to love. He regarded rules as antithetical to love. And he treated society as being underpinned by rules of human-human relationality which directly delimited the individual's ability to imagine beyond the normative 'ties which bind men together'. The realisation of romantic love within Godwinian philosophy is dependent firstly upon the need to imagine beyond the social, and beyond its rules, norms, and restraints. If Muñoz theorises queer love as the 'rejection of normal love that keeps a repressive social order in place' (134), then Godwin seems to be undertaking something markedly similar in theorising an ideal love as something freed from normative social and moral boundaries in *Thoughts on Man*. Ideal romantic love, for Godwin, is a vision, a

[43] *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 1. All subsequent references to this work are given as page numbers in the text.

not-yet-known, 'something that is seen obscurely, that is just hinted at in the distance, that has neither certain outline or colour' (274). Utopian queer love, for Muñoz, is something 'that registers as the illumination of a horizon of existence [...] a way of being in the world that is glimpsed through reveries' (25).

Fleetwood sees Godwin warn of the dangers when romantic love is stripped of this essential need to be unbound and undefined, and specifically in relation to how this marginalises non-normative forms. With Casimir having repressed his emotional and sensitive abilities, he comes to reductively judge any future romantic companion based only upon that which can be immediately known, understood, measured, and reduced to rule. That is to say, he comes to judge these companions based solely upon their sexual materiality; Godwin's portrayal of Casimir's loss of the ability to 'imagine' love in this way comes to be a specific portrayal of his loss of the ability to visualise the potentialities of love outside the gender binary. Immersing themselves in the city once again, we are told how Casimir and Charles 'mingled in the scenes of human society', with Casimir observing how this friend 'saw only those things in character and action which formed the substance of what was seen [...] he was led astray by no prepossessions or partialities, and drew a great number of just conclusions from the indications before him' (108). There is an inference in Casimir's narration that to move away from Charles's (mis)perceptive method of 'only' seeing the material or the substance — and to move away from making a 'conclusion' purely from these — is unjust; Casimir, in trying to imitate his friend, believes he would be 'led astray' by not judging the thing in question purely by observing its 'substance'. While this reference to 'human society' and the various 'substance[s]' comprising it is not explicitly connected with the materiality of body, the way in which Casimir describes his ensuing choice of a romantic partner suggests this is what the protagonist was, at least in part, signalling towards.

He describes this individual, 'the Countess', in ways fixated upon her body, or that which Casimir terms as her 'belong[ing]' to the 'female sex'. Where the Marchioness's female materiality appeared in his narration as a secondary, less important factor in Casimir's romantic attraction to her, it seems by contrast to be the primary motivation in his decision to now enter a romantic relationship with the Countess. Casimir immediately pinpoints how she 'had all the attributes that belong exclusively to the female sex, and as few as possible of those which are possessed by the whole species, male and female, in common' (112). He portrays the Countess's female materiality as directly informing a kind of essentialised, inborn, and inescapable femininity, as he writes that 'her heart shone in her visage [...] modulated to the expression of tenderness [...] she appeared born only to feel' (110). In turn, he re-evaluates — and de-legitimises — the Marchioness's previously-celebrated masculinity, affirming this to be 'a character merely artificial' which was a 'departure from the genuine female character' (117). This notion of a woman's performative masculinity set against her essentialised femininity is reminiscent of Godwin's aforementioned treatment of Wollstonecraft in the *Memoirs*. This time, however, Godwin depicts how Casimir's espousing of such a misogynistic attitude is the end-product of his internalising Charles's deterministic method of (un)discerning his fellow human purely on their 'substance'. 'Female' and 'male' are now employed by the protagonist to describe the 'attribute' or quality of the individual, in contrast to his previous use only of 'feminine' and 'masculine'. Casimir celebrates how, with the Countess, 'there was no danger that she should become the rival of her lover in any man-like pursuit' (112). This reference to 'man-like' repositions masculinity in his narration as essentially male, meaning *Fleetwood* once again recalls — but this

time in a distinctly different light — the masculine/manly differentiation seen in Wollstonecraft's 1792 *Vindication*.[44]

Godwin illustrates how the man of perception's influence over the man of imagination has not aided the latter to actually be more perceptive, but markedly less so. Casimir relies on basic descriptions of sex to abstractly gesture to these undescribed 'attributes' that actually tell us little to nothing about the Countess as an individual. In this sudden preoccupation with his romantic partner's (female) materiality, Casimir can be seen to reinforce something akin to that which Wollstonecraft describes in the 1792 *Vindication* as the 'material shackles' typically imposed upon women's bodies by their male lovers.[45] *Fleetwood* therefore begins to portray something of an un-enlightenment: through internalising the reductive views of the man of (mis)perception, sex now determines Casimir's (in)ability to discern gender outside of the binary. In turn, it circumscribes is ability to visualise the kind of utopian and unregulated romantic love Godwin celebrates so vehemently in his *Thoughts on Man*.

There are moments within Casimir's narration that nonetheless demonstrate his continued awareness that the simple fact of the Countess' materiality as female, and his materiality as male, remains essentially disconnected from the propensity of a deeper romantic attachment to then materialise between the two of them. Referring to those 'female' traits of the Countess, Casimir declares: 'according to the ideas many men entertain of the fair sex, it was impossible for any one, in the particulars above described, to be more exactly qualified for a mistress or a wife, than this

[44] See my earlier discussion in this chapter of Wollstonecraft's usage of the 'masculine' and the 'manly', pp. 136-137.
[45] For Wollstonecraft, the woman is treated as 'a fanciful kind of *half* being' and assumed unable to 'acquire human virtues (or perfections) by the *same* means as men'; Wollstonecraft instead stresses how 'the two sexes' should both be regarded as equally capable of attaining these virtues regardless of the materiality of their female or male bodies. See the 1792 *Vindication*, p. 110.

fascinating woman' (112). This normative way in which Casimir believes 'many men' would be romantically attracted to the Countess and her 'sex' corresponds little with his own specific romantic needs and wants. The attachment he forms with the Countess is described dispassionately as 'rather an abstract propensity'; their union only 'softened and relaxed my mind' (ibid) — a series of descriptors that fall short of Casimir's previously outlined criteria that an ideal romantic union must continually operate so as to equally 'shock' and 'combine' the contrasting qualities of its respective participants.

The 'bold', 'masculine' and 'Amazonian' (103) character of the Marchioness had complemented his softer, feminine, and emotional qualities. While brief, their relationship was nonetheless portrayed as deeply enjoyable and perpetually stimulating. The 'sweetness' and 'tranquil' characteristics of the Countess appear too similar to Casimir's own gender to operate in such a stimulatory way. It is their shared femininity which seems to halt Casimir from developing a deeper romantic attachment to the Countess beyond the 'allure' of a fleeting affection or sexual connection. Casimir describes how the Countess's 'feminine gentleness and softness of her nature' operated only so as to 'allure my attention in this period of anguish'; femininity has the capacity to soothe but is not qualified for the specific form of deep romantic attachment which he desires. Casimir, as such, still appears to retain an ability to regard his romantic desires as distinct from the gender binary, distinguishing himself from these 'many men' (112). Yet, he does not regain the ability to appreciate his fellow human in a comparatively non-deterministic and ungendered way. A short while later, following the termination of what comes to be a very short union with the Countess, Casimir once again turns his sights to finding romantic companionship. No longer retaining his capacities as a 'man of

imagination', Casimir then restricts his search for any future romantic companion as exclusively a search for a male companion.

MALE/MASCULINE ROMANTIC COMPANIONSHIP: (UN)FREE LOVE

What first appears in Casimir's narration as an openly romantic desire for another man could, on the one level, be celebrated as a very early novelistic example of what we may term today as the homoromantic.[46] Yet, when judged against how *Fleetwood* in its early stages showcased such non-deterministic approaches to sex, gender, and imaginations of romantic love for both women and men, the male exclusivity of Casimir's subsequent search for romance — while clearly transgressive from a normal love of the male/masculine-female/feminine — appears almost less remarkable by comparison. In *Fleetwood*, male-male desire is portrayed in a markedly different light by Godwin to the portrayals which I previously examined in *St. Leon* and *Mandeville*. In the case of these latter two, passionate relations between two men were delineated by Godwin as deeply-felt, inescapable, and all-consuming infatuations, where the author's focus was placed upon the romantic feelings aroused in the protagonist by a specific same-sex individual. Feelings, furthermore, which were inhibited by social and moral boundaries, and where the deterministic masculine ideologies attached to the protagonist's sexual materiality destructively halted the free expression of their desire for this other man.

By contrast, in *Fleetwood*, Casimir's desire for same-sex companionship is instigated firstly and then only by his increasingly strong internalisation that no individual who 'belong[s]' to the female 'sex' would be able to fulfil his need for

[46] This term, distinguished from the broad category of the homosexual, refers specifically to a romantic attraction between two persons of the same sex.

romantic companionship (112). This then leads him to the acquired belief that, following his relationships with the Marchioness and the Countess, only a man can now fulfil his lengthy criteria of masculine relationality. I thus propose that we cannot read such a form of male-male romantic desire as transgressive or boundary-breaking in the way I have Godwin's other novels: it is a desire predicated first and foremost on Casimir's refusal to entertain the notion of a woman being capable to fulfil the masculine companionship he desires. Male-male desire in *Fleetwood* appears underpinned more by Casimir's sudden internalising of the problematic ideologies of the gender binary: his requirement for male romantic love — his reasons for suddenly wanting only a man to love him — are as much misogynistic as they are homoromantic, if not, indeed, more so.

The presentation of male-male romantic desire in *Fleetwood* can still be read as an instance of Godwin drawing attention to the social and moral — and more specifically gendered – constraints placed upon the human body. But, in this case, the author appears to draw attention most immediately towards how it is the protagonist who is the one espousing and attaching such ideologies to the sex of others, with Godwin appearing noticeably less concerned with portraying the protagonist as being the one attempting to break free from gendered limitations placed upon his own body. In further explaining the 'anguish' he believes he experienced in his relationships with the Marchioness and the Countess which then leads him to envision this exclusively male future companion, Casimir declares how they 'taught me to abhor and revile her sex', and, later, that he 'believed it impossible that any of the sex could again possess herself of my inmost affections' (114, 205). These highlight how Casimir focuses most immediately upon this sudden aversion to 'the [female] sex' before he even sets his sights on any desire for a man: repeated references to 'the sex' see Casimir relegate the Countess, and also the Marchioness, to

a sole focus upon their bodies; he perceives their female materiality to be directly conducive to their personhood. He relays this as an indicator that all those who inhabit a female body therefore have an inherent inability to successfully provide the masculine romantic companionship he desires. I have previously proposed in this chapter that Godwinian philosophies of love can be read as queer due to the author's emphasis on utopian love as one predicated on freedom from any rules, restraints, or boundaries, and specifically in relation to the materiality of the body. Casimir's subsequent search for only male-male love thus appears, bizarrely, almost conventional and rule-bound by comparison given how it is predicated most expressly upon imposing such rigid restraints binding 'any of the [female] sex' to an ideological femininity, and, in turn, binding only men to the kind of masculinity he desires.

In analysing the following romantic criteria which Casimir now verbalises to the reader over the course of five lengthy paragraphs, it is apparent how Godwin portrays his protagonist's ideal companion most immediately as a masculine companion, with Casimir then envisioning this fantastical companion exclusively as male due only to his continuing inability to imagine otherwise. I refer to the parallels that can be drawn between Godwin's aforementioned theory in *Thoughts on Man* in which he discussed the masculine romantic role which the eleventh century 'knights' performed for the 'ladies', in comparison to the type of masculine role Casimir desires his romantic companion to perform for him. Godwin wrote how, within this Chivalric construction of romantic 'love', these knights 'esteemed it as perhaps their first duty of their profession, to relieve the wrongs, and avenge the injuries' of their beloved (294). Casimir writes similarly that his partner must fully prioritise the protection of his health and wellbeing, declaring that they 'must be zealous to procure every alleviation of my pains', and that if they 'can close my eyes, and then

return with a free and unembarrassed mind' to their 'ordinary business and avocations, this is not love' (231). Where the knights possessed 'a feeling that partook of religious homage and veneration' for the 'ladies' (295), Casimir similarly requires his romantic companion to 'have sworn an eternal partnership of the soul' with a pledge 'to distinguish and to love me' (230). Godwin describes these knights as possessing a strong feeling that to be 'without' their partner's love they 'cannot be complete' (298); Casimir declares how his romantic companion must have made him 'a part of himself' and be 'convinced that the loss of him would be a calamity which nothing earthly could repair' (230). If Godwin then describes these Chivalric 'ladies' as possessing a complementary feminine desire for 'a protector and a champion' in the form of their masculine 'knights' (295), then the author portrays Casimir as desiring something markedly similar in his desire for this protective, dedicated, honour-bound, and endlessly loving companion in *Fleetwood*.

Yet, it was also apparent that Godwin didn't appear to portray these female/feminine, male/masculine forms of romantic love as intrinsic. He inferred these ladies and these knights to have instead been 'assig[ned]' these respective roles to 'perform', with the philosopher's ensuing description of an ideal love being focused upon the feminine-masculine modes of relationality within the romantic union over and above the sexual materiality of 'each party' comprising the union. The way in which Casimir, following this lengthy description, then uses only male pronouns when referring to this fantastical masculine romantic companion appears deterministic and restrictive by comparison. The protagonist employs, for example, numerous references to 'men', 'he', and 'the man', with there being no references to women by sharp contrast (230-232).

Despite the overt homoromanticism seemingly on display here, it remains difficult to interpret Casimir's masculine-only-as-male romantic desire as connected

in any way to the notion of a free love.[47] If free love is underpinned by a philosophy that romantic and/or sexual desire between persons should be liberated of rules and ideologies from external forces, then Casimir's internalisation of the view that only a man can be his future romantic companion — underpinned by his belief that only men can possess the masculine qualities he so yearns for — appears markedly unfree by comparison. We can uncover numerous direct parallels — combined with noticeable contrasts — between this passage in *Fleetwood* and certain works that would go on to be written by one of Romanticism's most widely known and celebrated advocates for the free love movement, Percy Bysshe Shelley. By parallels, I refer to the way in which Shelley theorises love in a remarkably similar way to his future father-in-law's portrayal of Casimir's romantic criterion in *Fleetwood*. By contrasts, I refer to the way in which Shelley, unlike Casimir, writes about this love in a noticeably open, unregulated, and non-deterministic way, as the next chapter in 'Queer Love' begins to explore.

[47] Free love refers to the social movement beginning in the nineteenth century that aimed to accept and embrace all forms of love. The movement's broad aim was to separate state from sexual and romantic matters between persons.

CHAPTER FOUR

GODWIN, PERCY SHELLEY, AND QUEER UTOPIA

Percy Shelley is known to have been very well acquainted with *Fleetwood*.[1] What has been little, if at all, examined, however, is the way in which Godwin's 1805 novel may have directly inspired Shelley's future theoretical accounts of love. Indeed, Godwin's influence on Shelley, and specifically Shelleyan love, remains an under-explored area within Romantic scholarship, which this chapter will hopefully now go some way to remedying.

Critics have previously drawn attention to how Shelley's essay 'On Love' (1818) offers some of the clearest examples of the poet's expansive, complex, and free approach to love: and, specifically, to romantic forms of human-human attachment.[2] While Shelley does not appear to have ever credited Godwin's writing as inspiration for this essay, in this chapter I suggest Shelley's approach to romantic love witnessed within the 1818 work may have been directly influenced by Godwin, and specifically by the author's portrayal of Casimir Fleetwood's passionate search for a 'romantic' companion in the novel which Shelley had previously been so captivated by.[3]

---

[1] See James Bieri, *Percy Bysshe Shelley A Biography: Youth's Unextinguished Fire, 1792-1816*, (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2004), p. 222, 248. Bieri documents how Shelley attempted to model himself on 'the hero of Godwin's novel' by travelling to various sites frequented by the new man of feeling (248).

[2] Teddi Lynn Chichester provides a summary of this scholarship in the chapter 'Love, Sexuality, Gender: On Love, Discourse on Love, and the Banquet of Plato', in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Michael O'Neill, Anthony Howe, and Madeleine Callaghan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 141-147.

[3] William Godwin, *Fleetwood*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), p. 285. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text. For my earlier discussion of Casimir's 'romantic' criterion, see pp. 159-160.

Shelley opens 'On Love' by declaring: 'I know not the constitution of other men',[4] paralleling how Casimir begins his romantic criterion with the statement 'I know not how other men are constituted' (178). These phrases suggest Shelley's and Casimir's shared understanding of love as one that is personal, subjective, and disconnected from any desires these 'other men' may or may not possess. Further, the respective references to 'constitution' and 'constituted' may infer potential material and in turn political implications for such an understanding of love. Shelley's and Casimir's keenness to stress that their individual constitution is distinct from 'other men' could be suggestive of constitution in relation to the bodily: we could interpret these references as an inference that their own physical (sexual) constitution does not determine their relationship to love, and hence why both are keen to not automatically group all 'men' together in relation to how, why, and whom they may or may not love. Such an expansive and diverse approach to love would also likely exceed the boundaries of legal or constitutional forms, adding a further dimension to these intriguing references: Shelley's and Casimir's accounts move towards portraying an ideal love as something that can never be categorised, known, or pre-determined within a set of externally-imposed rules.

While both accounts do appear to treat a desire for love as potentially pre-determined or innate, or what they both term as one's deeply-felt 'thirst', this is stressed as something unique to each person as an individual. Shelley writes that 'we are born into the world, and there is something within which, from the instant that we live, more and more thirsts after its likeness' (268); Casimir writes similarly of 'so impatient a thirst' for love being 'one of the earliest passions of my life' (178, 180).

---

[4] Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'On Love', in *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Harry Buxton Forman, (London: Reeves and Turner, 1880), VI, p. 267. Subsequent references to this essay are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

Shelley's account, like Casimir's, reinforces the satiation of emotions and passions as an essential component of the human experience — but as something which should not be then regarded as indicative of an essential form of desire they could be assumed to share with any other humans, and specifically these 'other men'. Agency to freely love whom they choose uninhibited by ideological boundaries thus appears to sit atop Shelley's and the new man of feeling's utopian vision.

A third comparison can be made between these two accounts in how both Shelley and Casimir refer to the reciprocation of 'sensation'. In *Fleetwood*, the new man of feeling affirms that 'if that which produces sensation in me, produces sensation nowhere else, I am substantially alone' (179); Shelley describes love as comprising 'all sensations, thirsting that they should resemble or correspond with it' (269). Both centralise an emotional and physiological reciprocity as essential to love. Yet, Casimir refers to this as a 'sensation', with Shelley referring to this as 'all sensations'. I argue this to be a nuance which draws attention to a fundamental difference between 'On Love' and this account of love in *Fleetwood*: Shelley's is ungendered; Casimir's is, by contrast, fixated only upon the male/masculine. Shelley's account is open, expansive, and suggestible to the myriad potentialities of love, of 'all' its 'sensations'. At no point in 'On Love' is it specified from or to whom – female and/or male — these sensations could or should be produced. Casimir, with his now growing inability to imagine otherwise, has already decided that this singular 'sensation', this external arousal of romantic love within him by a masculine individual, can and will be produced only by an individual inhabiting a male body.

Despite — or perhaps because — of its noticeable lack of reference to women or men, to female or male, numerous critics have subsequently read Shelleyan theories of love as homoerotic, with some even having labelled him 'gay' or

'homosexual' consequently.[5] This has also led to some highly problematic biographical accounts of the poet which seek to dismiss entirely any romantic relationships he formed with women, and most notably Godwin's daughter Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, with such readings fuelled most immediately by repeated misogyny.[6] Trying to label or categorise Shelley's theories of love or his sexuality in this way misses, I believe, this expansive way in which he approached love both in his theoretical work and in his personal life.[7] This is not to dismiss the important place of homoromanticism within the poet's free approach to love, but it is also not to spotlight or exclusively prioritise it over and above other forms of love either. As we can later evidence in a little known and posthumously published essay on love and friendship (1822), the then twenty-nine-year-old Shelley recalls openly and affectionately about having been 'bound' to and having 'kissed' both women and men in his life, with no obvious preference given to either, and with the poet's focus being upon his freedom to love whomever he chose.[8] And, in analysing certain correspondence, the way in which Shelley writes about those to whom he was romantically linked suggests the sexual materiality of these individuals was not

---

[5] See, for instance, John Lauritsen, 'Hellenism and Homoeroticism in Shelley and his Circle', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 49: 3-4 (2005), 357-376 (pp. 358-359).
[6] Lauritsen, for example, refers to Mary Shelley as a 'cold and querulous woman' whom Percy Shelley was 'coerced' into marriage with; Lauritsen writes further that Mary Shelley later attempted to 'destroy every trace of homoeroticism, as well as to fabricate spurious signs of heterosexuality' within her late husband's work. See 'Hellenism and Homoeroticism', p. 359, 362.
[7] Recent queer work on Shelley has begun to draw attention to how moving away from a limiting preoccupation with uncovering heterosexuality and/or homosexuality within his work allows for a greater appreciation of the poet's complex, fluid, and expansive concept of romantic love, a concept which I will argue during this chapter was potentially directly inspired by Godwin. See, in particular, Terence H. W. Shih's discussion of how Shelley's 'unorthodox concept of love advocates the idea of free love and relates to his queer desire in his poetry' in 'Shelley's Quest for Love: Queering *Epipsychidion*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 72-73 (2019) <https://ronjournal.org/files/sites/140/2020/06/RoN72-73_01.pdf> [accessed 6 February 2023] (para. 1 of 14). See also Chichester's 'Love, Sexuality, Gender', pp. 141-147.
[8] See this essay in Richard Holmes, *Shelley on Love: An Anthology* (California: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 17-23.

necessarily the first priority to his own romantic desires, or in guiding his choice of a romantic partner.[9]

Given this, I draw attention to how Shelley is keen to emphasise in 'On Love' how individuals should not discern meaning purely from the 'external attributes' of any potential love companion, due to his belief that the individual would then be in danger of being 'misled by that appearance' (267). While this may simply be Shelley inferring that physical beauty and/or superficial qualities should not be the primary focus directing one's quest for love, I suggest that Shelley to have been writing, at least in part, about the 'external' more specifically in reference to the materiality of the body. That is to say, by 'external attributes', Shelley may be referring to female and male, and, by 'misled by that appearance', he may be referring to the gendered ideologies attached to these 'attributes'. Put simply, I propose that we can potentially read this part of 'On Love' as Shelley writing about the dangers of assuming romantic propensity guided purely by sexual materiality.

It is perhaps unfeasible to make such an argument based solely upon what we can discern from 'On Love' in and of itself, due to its noticeably short length, and the fact that Shelley is writing about human-human love in a much broader sense than just the romantic. Yet, given how this essay was likely written as a response to *Fleetwood*, I propose Shelley may have become attuned to the dangers of deterministic materiality — in relation to romantic love — through his familiarity

[9] This is to say that studies such as Lauritsen's — which attempt to disregard any romantic relationships Shelley formed with women, to then prioritise only those he potentially formed with men — miss the nuance with which Shelley writes to and/or about these individuals. Shelley's apparent dislike or indifference towards the relationships he formed with women are expressed more as a specific dislike for the confines of marriage and marital roles; his apparent preference for those he formed with men appear to be expressed more as a broader desire to pursue extramarital/experimental forms of love. See, for instance, Shelley's discussion of marriage as a 'prison' in a letter to James Lawrence in Buxton Forman's *The Works of*, p. 346; and Shelley's discussion of his wish to be 'free' to love unimpeded by social and moral boundaries in a letter to Thomas Jefferson Hogg in Hogg's *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: Edward Moxon, 1858), II, p. 20.

with Godwin's novel: and, specifically, through the way in which Godwin goes on to depict Casimir's ill-fated journey to procure the love of this masculine (but exclusively male) romantic companion in the concluding stages of the 1805 work, as I explore in the following section.

THE HUMAN PUPPET

After twenty years of searching, Casimir finally makes the acquaintance of a 'Mr. Macneil', the first man whom he believes to be 'peculiarly comfortable to my notions' (240). The way in which Casimir describes Macneil to the reader highlights what he regards as this man's masculine qualities, and directly recalls Godwin's afore-described delineation of the male/masculine Chivalric romantic role outlined in his *Thoughts on Man*. Macneil is introduced as a 'a true knight errant' and 'the model of integrity and honour', and a few paragraphs later he is described as 'tall, robust, and manly in his appearance' (235, 242). Like Casimir's earlier description of the Marchioness, it is the gender of this individual that takes priority in his narration; Macneil's physical 'appearance' is briefly described later as a seemingly secondary, less important factor guiding Casimir's attraction.

Nevertheless, the resurgence of this term 'manly' — even though it is used by Casimir this time only in relation to Macneil's body — still suggests the new man of feeling harbours a notion of masculinity as essentially male, especially if we were to analyse his use of this term in light of Wollstonecraft's aforementioned delineation of the 'manly' in the *Vindication*.[10] When informing Macneil of the adoration he has for this man's 'integrity and honour', Casimir then feels the need to affirm that he is, by

[10] See chapter three of this thesis, pp. 136-137.

contrast, 'impressed with no favourable prepossessions toward the female sex' (252). The use of 'prepossessions' does, at least, signal that Casimir retains some awareness that these opinions he harbours for 'the female sex' are just that — they are internalisations, views he has acquired, even if he doesn't in turn recognise them as restrictive and damaging.

Casimir, in a stark turnaround, then subsequently appears to regain his earlier capacity to appreciate his fellow human beyond the gender binary. In describing to Macneil his own feminine qualities, or what he now dejectedly terms as 'the sickly sensibility of my temper', Casimir then details the desperation with which he feels the need for a complementary romantic companion to remedy 'my detached and unconnected situation' (247). When Macneil then vehemently proposes Casimir's only 'remedy' to his solitude will be to 'marry!' (252), the latter's reaction is one of unmistakable aversion. This is not — as a reader well acquainted with Wollstonecraft's and Godwin's treatment of marriage may assume — an aversion underpinned by a hesitancy to commit himself to the confines and roles of the political union of woman and man. Casimir's initial hesitancy towards marriage is relayed as a blanket aversion to entering into any form of romantic relationship with a woman, marital or otherwise, as he then declares: 'Whom was I to marry? [...] I could not say I felt in myself much propensity to fall in love with a lady' (ibid). This use of 'a lady' — as opposed to, say, a woman — can be seen to reinforce Casimir's continuing to equate an ideological femininity with female materiality, particularly if we recall Godwin's description of the feminine role the 'ladies' were prescribed in the Chivalric form of romantic love.[11] But, as he then ruminates on Macneil's suggestion, this restrictive equating finally — if albeit briefly — seems to wane, as Casimir comes

[11] See my discussion of this in chapter three, pp. 141-143.

to develop reciprocated romantic feelings for Macneil's 'engaging' (247) daughter, Mary. Casimir is able to perceive, and then become romantically attracted to, specific qualities within Mary which he previously found so attractive and alluring in her father. She is a 'brilliant' and 'accomplished' individual possessing a 'cultivated mind' (256, 259): it is Casimir's close connection to Macneil, and the fact that the female child reminds him so fondly of the male parent, which seems to drive his romantic attraction to her. This form of relationality — a homoromantic desire transforming into a male-female romantic desire — connects with that which Andrew Elfenbein terms as characters being 'resexed' within the Romantic, and in particular the Wollstonecraftian, novel.[12] He explores how, in Wollstonecraft's *Mary: A Fiction* (1788), the eponymous protagonist falls in love with Henry in the later stages of the novel precisely because Mary believes he possesses the same qualities as Ann, the woman Mary had originally fallen romantically 'in love' with.[13] Claudia L. Johnson concurs that Henry is 'beloved [to Mary] not insofar as he is different from Ann, but rather insofar as he is like her'.[14] In *Fleetwood*, Casimir's ability to resex his desire for (the masculine) Macneil as a desire for Mary illustrates his being reacquainted with the enlightened capacity to imagine beyond the gender binary — and Godwin shows how this once again opens his protagonist's mind to the potentialities of romantic love to blossom in ways unbound. 'I forgot my prejudices against her sex' (259), Casimir informs the reader, where Mary's (female) 'sex' continues to be highlighted within his narration, but no longer in a way assumptive of its being essentially conducive to personhood.

---

[12] Andrew Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 128-129.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 57.

Casimir comes to imagine an idealistic romantic love for Mary and himself of perfect reciprocity and equality, stressing to Macneil 'if such a marriage as you describe is desirable, it will be no less desirable for the woman', and later declaring that neither Mary nor himself should feel subject to 'imposing fetters of any sort' if they were to marry (256-257). Initially remaining unmarried, Casimir's romantic connection to Mary appears to blossom, with references such as 'her I loved' (262) and 'my adored Mary' (264). However, following the sudden death of Macneil at sea — and with this man having mandated Casimir to marry Mary if such a calamity were to befall him — any romantic potential then spectacularly falters. 'Man marries because he desires a lovely and soothing companion', Macneil had declared to Casimir, 'woman marries, because she feels the want of a protector, a guardian, a guide' (254); Macneil then commands Casimir to perform this role within the future marital union he requests he and Mary enter into. Macneil's instruction is one underpinned by an assumption that his daughter — as this 'woman' — must inherently need a protector, guardian, and/or guide, and that she must be inherently incapable of protecting or guiding herself through life without a man to do so for her; and, in turn, that Casimir — as this 'man' — is therefore automatically capable of, and must obligate himself to, undertaking such a role for this woman. Macneil essentially assigns Mary and Casimir their romantic roles based only upon their sexual materiality as female and male, underpinned by the assumption that their female/feminine and male/masculine marital union cannot fail to be complementary and successful.

While both Mary and Casimir strive to perform their prescribed marital role as 'woman' and 'man' in honour of Macneil's memory, it becomes clear how damaging the deceased father's gendered assumptions prove for both parties. Casimir becomes consumed by a jealousy of the feminine role Mary has been

assigned in their marriage — compounded by the envy he feels towards the masculine romantic attention he believes she receives from other men — as Casimir's own desire for masculine romantic companionship continues to be unsatiated. Mary becomes frustrated for corresponding reasons: namely, her envy at the masculine role Casimir has been assigned, as we then witness how her growing desire for feminine complementary companionship comes to be clearly unfulfilled within their stultifying union.

Take, for example, Casimir's depiction of Mary's connection to the individual he introduces to the reader as 'the handsome Mr. Matthews' (308). In scrutinising the attention Mary receives from this man, Casimir becomes focused upon what he believes is Matthews's attraction to her feminine beauty: 'Mary was the most beautiful woman in the assembly, and accordingly Mr. Matthews appeared highly satisfied', he observes when the three of them attend a dance (ibid). What Casimir then describes as his ensuing 'torments of jealousy' in watching Mary and Matthews together appears caused — or at least aggravated — by the contrasting dislike Matthews exhibits towards him: 'they passed me [...] I thought I could discover a smothered contempt in his air', he writes (308-309). Casimir states how Mary appears little enamoured with Matthews's apparently romantic advances,[15] suggesting Casimir's so-described 'jealousy' to be a jealousy of Mary, of not receiving this kind of attention from Matthews for himself, and as distinct from a jealousy rooted in having Mary's romantic attention diverted away from him by this man. Casimir, with himself and Mary becoming increasingly dissatisfied in the lonely and unsatisfying marital company of one other, then invites his nephew Kenrick to stay at their home. Like with Matthews, the new man of feeling once again displays envious

[15] Casimir, for instance, describes how Mary had been attempting to avoid Matthews but 'had been betrayed into receiving his visit' (316).

— and increasingly crazed — tendencies towards any attention Kenrick exhibits towards Mary.

Just a few days after Kenrick's arrival, Casimir appears to try and convince himself that this 'most interesting', 'beautiful', and 'irresistible' young man harbours some form of 'love' for him beyond a familial affection. He declares 'the tone of [Kenrick's] voice [...] implicitly told the love, gratitude, and respect he entertained for me' (336); the protagonist then appears to struggle to differentiate the form of 'love' he feels for Kenrick from the 'love' he initially felt for Mary in their once-blossoming, pre-marital relationship. 'Enamoured of Mary, I also affected, with a love equally sincere [...] the engaging Kenrick', Casimir declares, as he highlights Kenrick's masculinity, and namely his 'manly heart', as the quality driving what appears to be a romantic attraction towards him (343). So passionate are Casimir's growing feelings for this man that he describes them as a kind of physical and emotional perpetual entanglement: 'my heart melted over the boy', 'my bosom swelled, as if it could no longer contain its fraught', he states, before confessing to Kenrick that 'wherever you are, my heart goes with you' (354-355). When Casimir then suspects Kenrick to harbour romantic feelings for Mary, he fixates upon notions of an intimate relationship between his wife and his nephew only in ways connected with how this would compromise the exclusive bond which he has convinced himself that he shares with this young man. 'I threw myself into his arms', Casimir laments, 'I wrote him a letter burning with words of affection'; he subsequently accuses Kenrick of only pretending to love him, of 'echoing and mimicking back to me the emotions of my heart', as he accuses the young man as instead possessing only 'stimulants of lust' for 'my wife' (362-363). Later confronting Mary, Casimir taunts how he 'wish[es] I had [Kenrick] now writhing at my feet!' so that he could 'fondle and caress him' (381).

Casimir's reaction to the idea of Mary and Kenrick entering into a romantic relationship with one another signals the protagonist's increasingly manic mindset as he struggles to navigate his masculine assigned role in their marital union; revealing this more clearly is the fact that all of the events above begin, and remain, in Casimir's own mind. That is, there is no evidence of Kenrick ever developing feelings for Casimir beyond a familial affection, there is no evidence of Mary or Kenrick having romantic feelings for one another, and there is no evidence of Matthews harbouring romantic feelings for Mary, as each of these are revealed as the protagonist's spectacular misjudgements of those around him.[16] The one and only time Mary does express directly to her husband the need she increasingly feels for an intimate extramarital relationship, she specifies this as the need for 'a strong and entire affection' with a 'softer and more fragile' individual. Further, she comes to believes this need can only be satiated in a close bond of 'woman with woman', as the female/feminine, male/masculine dynamic of marriage proves for Mary, like Casimir, increasingly frustrating and confining (297). However, unlike the ferocity with which Casimir had reacted to these imaginary intimate relationships of Mary with Matthews and Kenrick, he then pays barely any thought to the actual intimate relationship Mary does desire to form with this 'softer' woman, rendering his subsequent belief that Mary would choose to dedicate herself to a romantic intimacy with these masculine men all the more bizarre and misguided.

Godwin illustrates to the reader his declining protagonist's now total inability to understand or connect with his fellow human — to understand them in ways not solely reliant upon assumptions based upon only the individual's materiality as female or male. In these increasingly crazed imaginings, Mary, Matthews, and

[16] While Casimir does observe Mary and Kenrick in a private meeting, it is later revealed that his wife and his nephew have met only to discuss Casimir's welfare and diminishing mental state (378).

Kenrick are each ascribed imaginary gendered traits by Casimir totally disconnected from the reality around him: he (mis)reads Mary as a kind of feminine temptress to these men, and he (mis)reads Matthews and Kenrick as both equally consumed by a kind of masculine 'lust' for Mary, while simultaneously appearing repeatedly unresponsive to the reality in front of him which contradicts each assumption. While a flicker of his own need for masculine romantic companionship remains, this has become only a desperate and unhinged projection of his desires onto other men, specifically the 'handsome' Matthews and the 'manly' Kenrick, and seemingly disconnected from all reality.

What appears as Casimir's now total fixation on discerning all meaning from the materiality of the female and male body comes to be highlighted in perhaps the most crazed and frenetic scene in the whole novel. Growing increasingly frustrated with what he imagines to be this romantic connection between Mary and Kenrick, Casimir travels alone to Florence to order bespoke, life-sized, true-to-life wax models to be made of his wife and his nephew. Renting private apartments, he then prepares a candlelit meal for these figures as part of his plan to scrutinise their romantic behaviour towards one another. When playing a 'duet of love', Casimir believes the figures to have come to life: Mary's wax counterpart behaves in a 'languishing and tender style' towards her supposed lover, and Kenrick's 'threw himself at her feet, and poured out his soul in terms of adoration' (387). Mary's and Kenrick's models each perform, in Casimir's mind, the kind of feminine ('tender') and masculine ('adoration') roles reminiscent of the Chivalric romance outlined in Godwin's *Thoughts on Man* — and in ways jarring with how the real-life Mary and Kenrick would act, having displayed no such traits or feelings for one another elsewhere in the novel. The boundary between human and puppet blurs: Casimir now seems to conceptualise his wife and his nephew, quite literally, as only material, as bodies, as

puppets, whose qualities and characteristics are incapable of transgressing from the rigidity of the gender binary due to Casimir's total inability to imagine otherwise. Casimir, in turn, comes to sense his own painful exclusion from the romantic scene he imagines playing out in front of him: as the figures then apparently turn their attention upon him, he believes they do so only to 'grin', ridicule, and mock him (387), working him into such a state that he tears the wax models to pieces with his hands and his teeth before subsequently suffering a total mental breakdown.

Fleetwood can be seen to function as one of Godwin's most cautionary tales of the gender binary: the author delineates the devastating side effect of Casimir's attempts to navigate his masculine/male romantic role as one in which he then becomes totally inept of judging or discerning others in ways that don't also ultimately attach such ideologies to their sexual materiality. This was prefigured in Casimir's earlier treatment of the Marchioness; he now appears to be wholly consumed by such deterministic and narrow thought processes as he becomes totally incapable of imagining the human, and human potentiality, beyond the binary. While clearly deeply pained and frustrated, the new man of feeling simultaneously cannot break away from the destructive thought processes he has internalised. We could say that, as he comes to be treated like a gendered puppet by those around him — repeatedly instructed to perform, as one inhabiting a male body, only a masculine role, firstly by Charles and then through to Macneil — Casimir comes to see the world around him as similarly populated only by female and male puppets capable only of performing in such a way. Shelley, then, as he deftly advises in 'On Love' that individuals should not rely upon those aforementioned 'external attributes' since they would then be in danger of being 'misled by that appearance', could certainly have had this frenzied image of the tragic Casimir and his wax models etched into his mind as he wrote his essay on love directly after having read Godwin's novel.

Casimir's deterioration into this puppet-like figure compelled only to perform — and capable only of discerning the world around him through — this system of deterministic gendered materiality can be further examined through Godwinian, and Shelleyan, advocacies for free love.

In delineating Casimir's struggle to procure the love he needs, coupled with his being pressured to love only in ways deemed acceptable within the gender binary, Godwin signals how delimiting the individual's free ability to love directly delimits their ability to connect with their fellow human, and with human society more broadly. Earlier in *Fleetwood*, Casimir morbidly predicted his fate as this solitary and disconnected figure: he envisioned utopian love as the 'alleviation' of 'every kind of distress', he admitted his 'deep and insurmountable' fear of never finding such a love, and of becoming 'a creature [...] who looks every where around for sympathy, but looks in vain' (232). Casimir remained aware of the material fact of human separateness — 'we are', he writes, 'substantive and independent. But if there is a being [...] in whom my sensations are by a kind of necessity echoed and repeated, that being is a part of myself', as he subsequently revealed an awareness that the ability to form a deeply-felt, reciprocated romantic connection with such a being would dispel any 'conviction that I am alone' (ibid). Unable to ever find this love, Casimir — while surrounded by his wife and his family at the close of the novel — also ends up essentially alone, as he appears incapable of connecting emotionally with any human, and as that utopian love he dreamed of remains perpetually unfulfilled.

Like Casimir, Shelley stresses how the freedom to satiate one's inner desires to be crucial in fostering a harmonious and healthy relation between the individual, the

other, and human society more broadly through enacting a rupture of individual separateness. 'Thou demandest to know what is Love', Shelley introduces 'On Love', before then defining it as 'that powerful attraction towards all we conceive, or fear, or hope beyond ourselves, when we find within our own thoughts the chasm of an insufficient void, and seek to awaken in all things that are, a community with what we experience within ourselves' (267-268). For Shelley, as for Casimir, feelings of love are the necessary remedy to our material separateness, with this love serving a dualistic function to create a connection with another that reciprocally satiates our rainbow of emotions, passions, and desires; and, in doing so, remedies the torturous individual separateness which the young poet saw as totally incompatible with the very fact of our being human. To remain unloved, for Shelley, is to remain 'one in a distant and savage land', and where 'this want of power [of love] is dead, man becomes the living sepulchre of himself, and yet what survives is the mere husk of what once was' (267, 270) — with this 'mere husk' imagery aptly describing the kind of puppet-like state Casimir ends up becoming at the close of his story.

In 'On Love', Shelley depicts human society as proving circumscriptive to his own ability to move romantically 'beyond' this material separateness. He describes his experience of 'being surrounded by human beings' but remaining painfully 'in solitude' and having 'found only repulse and disappointment' (267). Casimir had similarly verbalised his belief that 'society, an active and crowded scene, is the furthest in the world from relieving the sensation of this solitude' (232). Like Casimir's being prescribed to perform only a romantic role of male/masculine, and Mary the female/feminine — roles which were then officialised through the marital contract — Shelley's critique of the social landscape and moral boundaries delimiting free love comes to be revealed as a more specific critique of the gendered limits placed upon love by marriage.

‘I then retained no doubts of the evils of marriage—Mrs. Wollstonecraft reasons too well for that’, Shelley writes in a letter from 1812, likely referring to Wollstonecraft’s critique of socially prescribed marital roles for women and men in the 1792 *Vindication*.[17] Shelley unenthusiastically described his own marriage (to Harriet Westbrook) as one in which ‘love seems inclined to stay in the prison’.[18] We can examine how Shelley treated his own being bound by external rules imposed upon love, and specifically being bound to the marital contract, as the reason why he could not love freely whom he chose. He writes passionately to Thomas Jefferson Hogg, whom critics have identified as one of Shelley’s most intimate companions,[19] that ‘if I were free, I were unceasingly yours’. Shelley had, prior to this, declared to Hogg his visceral compulsion for the two of them to ‘be inseparable’ due to his acute fear that if ‘we were to be long parted, I should be wretchedly miserable,—half mad’.[20] Shelley signals his feelings towards this man to be a deeply-felt emotional connectivity reminiscent of the utopian vision of romantic love outlined by Godwin in his *Thoughts on Man*, and simultaneously signals his deep fear of being unable to fully express and explore this connectivity because he is not ‘free’ to do so.[21]

Further in Godwin’s *Thoughts on Man*, the philosopher describes how social and moral limitations placed upon one’s free ability to form this deeply-felt connectivity with another would likely result in the individual becoming ‘convinced that you were the only real being in existence’. Society, he believed, would then appear as compromised only of ‘mere phantasies and shadows’ to which we have no

[17] See Buxton Forman’s *The Works of*, VII, p. 346. For my discussion of Wollstonecraft and marriage, see chapter one of this thesis, pp. 61-63.
[18] Buxton Forman, p. 346.
[19] See Bieri, p. 138; and Lauritsen, pp. 358-359.
[20] See Hogg’s *The Life of*, pp. 16-17.
[21] Ibid. Shelley writes further in this letter to Hogg that ‘so sincerely am I attached to you’ that Hogg is ‘the object of my vivid interest’, affirming how this man’s love was ‘worthier of attainment than fame, or pleasure, or the attachment of all other beings’ (16-18).

meaningful connection (452). For Godwin, to be unable to love freely is, like for Shelley, devastating to the integral meaning of our lives, and to what it means to be human. 'The life of our lives would be gone', Godwin warns his readers. 'We could neither love nor hate. Sympathy would be a solemn mockery. We could not communicate; for the being to whom our communication was addressed we were satisfied was a non-entity' (ibid). Godwin's treatment of love in *Thoughts on Man*, especially when read alongside Shelley's 'On Love', positions love as the necessary and crucial remedy to the torturous material separateness of human reality. And, with what I have uncovered during the course of this chapter, Godwin and Shelley appeared to showcase a comparative awareness of how the potential to realise love between humans should never be delimited by any roles or rules attached to our materialities as female and/or male. Love, in both Godwinian and Shelleyan thought, comes to be envisioned as a perfect union between two parties or complementary others — not necessarily women and/or men — that can blossom in ways unbound by the gender binary.

What both Shelley and Godwin envision — and how their work can be seen to assist us in how we formulate understandings of queer love in the present day — is a move away from conceptualising utopian love in a purely naively romantic sense. This is to say, they do not just formulate abstract descriptions of an imaginary or idealistic love. Rather, they both appear driven first and foremost by a sense of pragmatism that calls directly for better relations and potentialities within the social, within the present, in order that the individual has the free ability to procure the form of love best tailored to their individual needs and desires. Both Godwin's and Shelley's philosophies of utopian love stress the need for a restructured sociality — a need to imagine beyond the limitations of the present, beyond the restrictions placed upon love in the social, to envision an emancipated future of freedom to love. To

employ the term which has come to describe the more recent developments within queer theory, Shelley's and Godwin's philosophies display what we may today refer to as the 'relational'.

In his 2009 work *Cruising Utopia*, Muñoz offered a critical interjection to stress that queer theory must move away from its previous preoccupation with the antirelational and antiutopian approaches characteristic of the field in the nineties and the early noughties and move towards the relational and utopian. 'Gay and lesbian studies can too easily snap into the basically reactionary posture of denouncing a critical imagination that is not locked down by a short-sighted denial of anything but the here and now. This is the antiutopian stance that characterizes the antirelational turn'.[22] Muñoz stressed how, as queers, we must not simply react to our marginalisation and de-legitimisation within the mainstream by then simply turning away from society and/or giving up on claiming our own place within the social. His reactionary critique throughout *Cruising Utopia* is centred primarily upon the widely impactful and field-defining queer manifesto *No Future* published five years earlier, a work which called for a voiding of the future for queers.

As I previously documented in chapter two, Edelman conceptualised the future as a reproductive futurity in which he believed queers would likely never be able, and should never attempt to, claim a place.[23] He advocated instead for queers to embrace our marginalised position outside the social and outside futurity by actively acceding to a place of the asocial, the antisocial, and the wilfully destructive. He refers to this queer experience throughout *No Future* by calling upon a Lacanian

---

[22] José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 14. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

[23] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004). All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text. See my previous discussion of Edelman's reproductive futurity in chapter two of this thesis, pp. 108-112, 115-116.

conception of *jouissance*.[24] 'Queerness', Edelman explains, 'is never a matter of being or becoming'. Rather, he conceptualises queerness as a 'movement beyond [...] the bounds of identity' integral to the social, a movement which dissolves and undoes 'the consistency of social reality that relies on Imaginary identifications, on the structures of Symbolic law'. *Jouissance*, he continues, is the experience, the 'fantasmatic escape', of no longer having to partake in meaning-based and future- and socially-oriented narratives of being or becoming — it is instead focused purely on our immediate needs within the moment, outside of futurity, and as something akin to an orgasmic pleasure (25).

Cruising Utopia advocated for what Muñoz termed 'queerness as collectivity [...] arguing that queerness is primarily about futurity and hope' (11). His focus was repeatedly upon imagining what 'the larger social order could be, what it should be', (20) in opposition to Edelman's total denouncement of any potential connection between queerness, the social, futurity, and being/becoming. *Cruising Utopia* moved away from 'Edelman's emphasis on queer jouissance, [and] his charge that we take up our abjection within the social' (92). Muñoz, while supportive of Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism, refused to void or give up hope for any kind of future for queers, and in doing so recognised that queerness' (un)relation to futurity shouldn't be solely defined by sexual associations with the non-procreative.[25] *Cruising Utopia* thus shifted focus from Edelman's exclusive focus upon queerness as the present moment, the immediate desire, the *jouissance*, to instead re-evaluate the ways in which queerness, the social, and futurity can operate harmoniously.

---

[24] I will explore Edelman's understanding of *jouissance* in more detail during the course of this chapter. For further information on Lacanian theories of *jouissance*, see Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

[25] Muñoz discusses his wish for queer theory to move away from this predominant focus on non-procreative (same-sex) sexualities in chapter eight of *Cruising Utopia*, and particularly pp. 134-139.

Cruising Utopia drew attention to how this would be achieved through examining the ways in which the dominant social order could be expanded beyond its current privileging of the reproductive and the gender binary, and in ways that would then allow queers to also glimpse and imagine our own futures, our own being/becoming, within a 'restructured sociality' (6).

In chapter two, I examined the ways in which Godwin's *Mandeville* could be seen to have anticipated the antiutopian and the antirelational theories within Edelman's *No Future*, and most glaringly in the protagonist's murderous compulsion to steal the imaginary children of Henrietta and Clifford and sabotage their reproductive futurism.[26] Thus, it may seem counterintuitive to now propose that Godwin's writing can concurrently be read as prefiguring Muñoz's theory of queer utopia, given that *No Future* and *Cruising Utopia* are seemingly diametrically opposed. Yet, when these are read alongside Godwin's fiction and philosophical discourse, I propose we can re-examine Edelmanian queer '*jouissance*' in conjunction with Muñozian 'queer utopia' in order to demonstrate how these two standpoints are not necessarily always antithetical. Instead, we can explore how these may work synergistically in ways that could potentially unite and strengthen.

To provide a brief background here to further explain the critical differences between Edelman's original theory of the queer antiutopian and Muñoz's reactionary theory of the queer utopian, the former's *No Future* initially faced criticism within queer scholarly communities for its repeated preoccupation with the present and its focus only upon the satiation of momentary queer desires — at a direct cost to being able to imagine queerness and queer potentialities outside of *jouissance*.[27] *Cruising*

[26] See chapter two, pp. 108-112, 115-116.

[27] See, for instance, Micha Cárdenas, 'Pregnancy: Reproductive Futures in Trans Color Feminism', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 3: 1-2 (2016), 48-57. Cárdenas discusses the 'failure' of Edelman's queer theory 'to envision futures', and how this 'underscores the importance of our writing own

Utopia's utopian approach has, in turn, faced criticisms from the opposite end. Namely, that this future-oriented approach dedicates little, if any, space to consider the importance of actually satiating one's transgressive desires within the present moment. Muñoz sweepingly terms these as being just 'the pleasures of this moment' for which queers 'must never settle for that minimal transport' (1). His manifesto encourages queers to instead be conscious first and foremost about our distant futures over and above any immediate, sensual, momentary needs and wants. *Cruising Utopia* stresses that queerness must therefore be expanded far beyond the sexual — it must be understood as much 'more than just sexuality' and much more than sexual desire — and instead be reconceptualised as a broader 'desire to entertain the impossibility of another world' where we must no longer be fixated only upon satiating queer desire through a destructive and/or asocial *jouissance* (134).

In the early noughties, queer scholars criticised previous studies which, like *Cruising Utopia* would boldly go on to do at length, advocated for a comparable theoretical shift away from a focus upon desire and the sexual to instead expand our understanding of queerness beyond sexualities. Such a shift has been described by critics as a damaging and misguided 'despecification and desexualisation' of queer that 'risks' it 'becoming utterly generalized and dematerializ[ed]'.[28] More recently, while studies continue to 'acknowledge the importance of recent work on queer utopia and particularly José Esteban Muñoz's', they concurrently stress that we must not lose focus of 'the messy, impure, and experimental' forms of queerness which are 'firmly in the here and now'.[29]

---

futures' (56). See also Zairong Xiang, 'Transdualism: Toward a Materio-Discursive Embodiment', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 5: 3 (2018), 425-442.

[28] See Calvin Thomas, *Straight with a Twist: Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 16-18.

[29] Melissa Autumn White, 'A Queer Migrant Politics of the Here and Now', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 21: 1 (2015), 177-179 (p. 177).

Godwinian philosophy may potentially help us to connect these two seemingly opposed, or at least markedly divergent, ends of the queer theoretical spectrum which have attracted such criticisms. My analysis of *St. Leon* and *Mandeville* uncovered how Godwin appeared, like Edelman, to advocate for the importance that the individual is afforded the capacity to satiate their deeply-felt, sensual desires, even — or especially — if these desires transgressed social boundaries, rules, or ideologies. Godwin further understood, in ways anticipatory of *No Future*, that it would likely be necessary to surrender one's adherence to social and moral — and more specifically familial and marital — futurities to consequently do so.[30] Yet, from what I have uncovered within my analysis of *Fleetwood* and *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin also appeared to advocate, like Muñoz, for the need to envision a utopian romantic love within a socially expansive futurity, and to move away from any preoccupations with what Godwin termed as the 'momentary impulse' of sex and the sensual. That is, in ways anticipatory of *Cruising Utopia*, Godwin understood the necessity that individuals have the capacity to imagine beyond any immediate and momentary needs to envision an expansive futurity of a restructured sociality for free love to blossom.[31]

Jouissance and futurity are not distinct within Godwinian thought. The philosopher possessed an awareness that, for the gratification of transgressive desires to be achievable, we must simultaneously work towards imagining a world where present-day restrictions delimiting the free ability to fulfil these desires have been lifted. For Godwin, in order that the individual be able to more satisfactorily satiate their passions in the moment, they must concurrently be able to envision a futurity: by doing so, the sensation of gratifying desire in the present is sweetened

[30] See chapter two of this thesis, pp. 108-112, 115-116.
[31] See chapter three of this thesis, pp. 151-153.

and intensified precisely because the individual is able to anticipate a future of more pleasures and more enjoyment. The essential need to gratify desires, and the essential need to envision a free world in which to do so, appear inseparable from, and dependent upon, one another within his philosophy. To demonstrate this, and to bring this 'Queer Love' part to a close, I turn to the final Godwinian novel which I will be examining in this thesis: his penultimate and largely unstudied fifth major novel, published just six years before the author's death in 1836, *Cloudesley: A Tale* (1830).[32]

JOUISSANCE AND UTOPIA

Like the previous Godwinian novels I have examined over the course of this thesis, *Cloudesley* features a passionate relationship between two men. In ways comparable to the socially transgressive element driving the compulsive same-sex desires in *Mandeville* and *St. Leon*, protagonist Julian's rapidly developing feelings for Francesco appear driven by something markedly similar.

As *Cloudesley* follows the life story of Julian, an Anglo-Irish orphan who comes to be raised in Lombardy from a very early age, we observe early in the novel the sudden and deeply-felt 'romantic' connection he forms as a teenager when he makes the acquaintance of the Italian bandit Francesco.[33] The two young men's rapidly-developing 'intimacy'(161) is described as being 'unrestrained': they 'did in almost all cases whatever their minds suggested them to do [...] they perpetually trod

[32] While *Cloudesley* receives very brief mentions in works such as *Godwinian Moments* (2011) and *New Approaches to William Godwin* (2021), comparatively few close studies of the novel exist in contrast to *Caleb Williams*, *St. Leon*, *Fleetwood*, and *Mandeville*.

[33] William Godwin, *Cloudesley: A Tale* (London: William Pickering, 1992), p. 169. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

as it were on the brink of what was indecorum'; they are subsequently described as exploring 'all the pleasures that fancy can beget' with one another (164). This idea of Julian's and Francesco's unimpeded desires for each other being guided purely by the 'suggest[ions]' of their own minds signals a mastery of their personal drives over and above any social or moral influences that may compromise such a free exploration of this 'pleasure'. Julian's conception of his desires are marked out as being consciously resistant towards any imposed limitations or restrictions of external 'prejudice': 'he resolved to examine everything', we are told; he desires only 'to see with his own eyes, as if he belonged to no one' and 'without the alloy of any partial bias and favour' as he dedicates himself to 'a life unshackled' with Francesco (162-163).

In contrast to how Reginald's and Charles's internalisation of social, moral, and familial ideologies led them to fear, abhor, and/or repress their transgressive same-sex feelings, Julian's resistance to external prejudice is depicted by Godwin as the crucial factor underpinning his contrastingly expansive and pleasureful ability to explore this 'unrestrained' relationality with Francesco. 'It was necessary', the reader is subsequently informed in *Cloudesley*, 'that [Julian's and Francesco's] private' relationship 'should be of a different character to what passed between them' in the public setting, in order that their 'souls' can then rise 'above the musty rules of priests and professors' (163, 165). Julian's and Francesco's relationship is marked out as distinct from the 'rules' and restrictions of normativity and acceptability. And, instead of attempting to conceptualise their desires within, or in relation to, this restrictive and prejudicial sociality, the two men recognise the necessity of creating and nurturing this 'private' space in which their feelings can be safely and freely expressed.

Godwin's depiction of same-sex desire thus shifts here from the kind of social destruction witnessed in the author's previous novels, and most keenly in *Mandeville*, to something altogether brighter. Charles's repeated attempts to understand his furiously passionate feelings for Clifford in relation to an already known social and moral order resulted in crazed, wilfully destructive behaviour when he was repeatedly thwarted in trying to do so.[34] Julian and Francesco appear conscious to the futility — and dangers — of trying to make sense of their desires for one another within the confines of the oppressive sociality they encounter. Instead, they consciously accede to this new, expansive space in which their love is liberated to blossom unhindered, or, at least, with markedly more freedom than it would otherwise be granted.

Like *Mandeville*, Godwin's depiction of same-sex desire in *Cloudesley* could be read as anticipatory of Edelman's theory of queer asociality. Edelman defines 'the queer' most expressly by its capacity to 'accede to that place' of 'resistance [...] to every social structure or form'. Queerness, for Edelman, destabilises the dominant order's capacity to inhabit all and absolute meaning as a 'social reality', with queers affirming 'a constant *no* in response to the law of the Symbolic'.[35] However, Julian's resistance to the social, his asociality, does not — in contrast to Charles's destructiveness in *Mandeville* — then automatically accede to a position of the antisocial. Edelman's conception of queer social 'resistance' is conceptualised within *No Future* as synonymous with 'queer negativity'. Queers, he writes, only have one viable option available to us once we rescind allegiance to the dominant order: to

---

[34] For my previous examination of the (un)knowability and destructivity of same-sex desire in *Mandeville*, see chapter two of this thesis.
[35] *No Future*, p. 3, 5, 7. Edelman's refers to the 'the Symbolic' calls upon a Lacanian conception of a social world of linguistic communication, intersubjective relations, knowledge of ideological conventions, and acceptance of the law. See chapter one of *No Future* for further discussion of the Symbolic and its relation to queer theory, pp. 1-32.

inhabit 'the place of the social order's death drive' and to 'figure the bar to every realization of futurity' (3-4). Negativity and the death drive aptly described the subsequent behaviour of Charles, with his compulsive fixation upon realising his own and/or Clifford's death: he became consumed with satiating only his immediate desire for this man and was unable to confront any vision of futurity, any 'world', involving both himself and Clifford.[36] By contrast, Julian satiates his passions for Francesco directly through imagining an alternative, expansive sociality in which a future for their same-sex love to grow and flourish would be made possible. It is Julian's ability to imagine a future for himself and Francesco which sweetens and heightens his experience of the pleasureful, present-day moments of intimacy with him, where queer jouissance — the subversive experience of transgressing beyond social order and meaning — is enhanced by queer futurity — the expansive visualisation of new social possibilities.

Julian and Francesco, for instance, appear to go some way to begin exploring their immediate 'romantic' desires for one another within this private space. In turn, they create a new and reimagined 'society' with one another which is distinct from the oppressive and prejudicial social order attempting to impede their love. They 'engaged their hearts', we are told, 'their feelings blended into the same key, [as] Julian began to think he could never be so happy as in the society of Francesco' (169). Recalling the complementary romantic love criterion set out in *Thoughts on Man*,[37] Godwin highlights in *Cloudesley* how this expansive social space nurturing the two young men's love allows for that masculine-feminine relationality to begin to fulfil its synergetic potential: Francesco is described as Julian's 'Italian protector' whom he

[36] Charles declares: 'in a world where Clifford lives, there can be no room for me'. See *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Ontario: Broadview, 2016), p. 206.
[37] See my examination of this in chapter three of this thesis, pp. 141-143.

treats with 'incredible softness and mildness', and Julian is described as the 'English youth' who displays a 'singular devotion' to Francesco (268).

This synergy of their 'hearts' actively engaging, as well as their 'feelings' actively blending, underscores the deeply gratifying and unhindered nature of the reciprocated emotional entanglement they experience within the present. Julian's experience of his same-sex intimate desires within the moment are described later in the novel as fostering a sensation of 'perverse pleasure' (269), where his sense of fear and/or excitement of their intimacy transgressing the social and moral order surrounding them heightens and intensifies its ability to be experienced as pleasureful. This use of 'perverse' also sees Godwin's fiction again draw connections with Richard C. Sha's *Perverse Romanticism*.[38] Sha examines how 'Romantic writers linked sexual perversity with liberation [...] to imagine what mutuality and equality might look like' beyond the boundaries of 'heteronormativity' (3-4). Julian's experience of his same-sex pleasure appears heightened precisely because of its perversity, because of its existence in this free and exciting space beyond social and moral acceptability. What thus seems to mark Julian's 'romantic' feelings for Francesco as something comparable to queer *jouissance* is the fact that they are not simply pleasureful: this term, nearly always left untranslated due to the incapacity of the English language to fully explain the specific sensation to which it refers, typically denotes a particular kind of pleasure beyond the straightforwardly pleasurable, beyond the pleasure principle. The experience of *jouissance* is crucially dependent on a frisson-like element of fear, transgression, and/or thrill that transforms the pleasant into something much more deeply pleasurable akin to the orgiastic.[39]

---

[38] *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text. For my previous discussion of the perverse within Godwin's writing, see chapter two, pp. 110-111.
[39] See Edelman's discussion of this in *No Future*, pp. 28-31

Julian's same-sex sensations are described as 'impulses of the most exalted kind, which he was unable to unravel' (268): Godwin signals how his protagonist's desires are on their way to reaching a full, unbounded potential, where ecstatic sensation and feeling are beyond being explained or unravelled.

The author's employment of the term 'perverse' thus signals the same-sex intimate relationship as disruptive, subversive and/or morally unacceptable, as beyond the limits of the social, and in a manner reminiscent of those earlier novels. Yet, this notion of their same-sex love acceding to a space beyond acceptability is not in turn defined by its sole capacity to be then directly, and only, damaging and destructive to an already existent social and moral order, as we witnessed in *Mandeville*. Julian's and Francesco's relationship comes instead to be nurtured through how they rise above the social and moral order to move to a place beyond it — beyond, that is, having to make it known or meaningful in relation to the social only as a damaging and destructive force, and nothing more. Sha describes how sexual perversity within Romanticism functions primarily as a 'form of purposiveness' in which authors 'revalue' non-normative forms of desire and love outside of a dominant order which legitimises only male-female, procreative forms (2). 'The Romantic period understood what sexuality might gain', Sha writes. 'The suspension or disregard of reproductive purpose allowed sexuality to rise above brute instinct and become idealized in terms of love' (6-7). Julian revalues his 'perverse pleasure' for Francesco both as a way to experience this pleasure more fully in the present moment, and, as I now document, also as a way to envision a liberated future for their love to flourish.

To look again at the sentence highlighted previously which described the two men's hearts engaging, we can see how this reference to Julian's transgressive and pleasureful 'feelings' for Francesco flows directly into Julian's vision of their future

together, with this reference to 'he could never be so happy as in the society of Francesco'. Julian's usage of 'could' — if we were to read this as an indication of possibility and potentiality — aligns the protagonist's ability to experience this present moment of same-sex *jouissance* more fully and passionately through an envisioned futurity of same-sex love. Julian's ability to experience his perverse pleasure and to satiate his desires in the moment appear intensified by his capacity to rise above the destructive influence of external prejudice in order to imagine a utopian futurity, something which comes to be revealed more fully in the following passage.

Julian and Francesco, we are told, 'raised the sparks' of their initial desires for one another 'into a brilliant and mighty flame'. In order for them to realise this transition from those 'sparks' of initial passion and pleasure into something much bolder and 'brilliant', the two young men consciously engage in a process of 'regarding the rest of the world as if it were not, and swearing that they would build a temple of attachment and love, in comparison of which all the examples of antiquity should fade into nothing' (169). Once again, their 'love' is depicted, like Charles's same-sex passion for Clifford, through its (un)relation to the social. But the negativity and destructivity subsequently witnessed in *Mandeville* is replaced in *Cloudesley* by the opposing thematics of positivity and creation/imagination. The marginalisation and de-legitimisation of Julian's and Francesco's love within the dominant social order becomes a motivation to dream and enact new ways of living, loving, and existing in this utopian 'world', while working simultaneously to gratify their immediate desires in the present world they inhabit.

To turn again to *Cruising Utopia*, Julian's imagining of how he and Francesco would 'build a temple of attachment and love' — with this man later described as being 'dear to him beyond any other person in the world' (232) — can be read as

anticipatory of that which Muñoz terms as the process of 'queer world-making' (40). *Cruising Utopia* proposes that in order for queers and queer love to resist becoming only 'pained and imprisoned subjects' at the whim and mercy of the social, we must consciously turn our attentions, and our imaginations, beyond and away from this. 'Queer world-making', he writes, 'hinges on the possibility to map a world where one is allowed to cast pictures of utopia' (ibid). Queerness' association only with the present, for Muñoz, has to be rethought, if not disregarded, if we are to successfully enter into this process of world-making. Queerness and futurity must now be understood as inseparable: 'the present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging', he writes (27). Comparative to Muñoz's queer world-making as a process of turning away from the present reality to envision a new world, and in turn new realities, Julian's ability to envision this loving utopia shared with Francesco is described as being dependent on 'regarding the rest of the world as if it were not'.

Yet, *Cloudesley*'s vision of this 'temple of attachment' for same-sex utopian love and *Cruising Utopia's* vision of 'queer world-making' can be seen to differ, given that Julian's utopia does not hinge upon an essential need to label all potentialities within the present moment as inherently 'impoverished' in this way that Muñoz appears to do within his manifesto. In Godwin's novel, the pleasureful potentialities of *jouissance* are not dismissed in service of placing a focus only upon an imagined future. And, from the opposite end of this spectrum, envisioning the future potentialities for love does not need to be relegated in service of placing a focus only upon the here and now of the moment. The two can, and in *Cloudesley* do, work synergistically to enhance the other: Julian's and Francesco's brave ability to strive to fulfil their desires within the present moment comes only to be enhanced by their

ability to imagine a futurity in which these pleasures with one another become even stronger and more fully realised.

What Godwin appears to be doing here in *Cloudesley*, then, is centring his philosophy of free love upon human ability in the here and now in conjunction with human imagination in relation to the future. It is Julian's brave, bold, and transgressive capacity to move beyond social and moral restrictions and take ownership of his desires which allows him both to satiate these in the moment and to imagine a future where these can be perpetually fulfilled, nurtured, and developed. This is something which uncovers a further comparison between the Godwinian novel and Shelley's 'On Love'. Like Julian in *Cloudesley*, Shelley recognises the importance of satiating our immediate — and likely asocial and transgressive — desires and 'thirsts' within the present moment. Shelley's philosophy of love incorporated, but extended beyond, this need for immediate gratification. He understood how, in being able to freely pursue our desires, this would equip our 'imagination' to in turn expand and develop a heightened ability to 'enter into and seize upon the subtle and delicate peculiarities which we have delighted to cherish and unfold in secret', which then allows us to 'hope beyond ourselves' by envisioning a future of utopian love (267-269).

Godwin's philosophy of free love witnessed here in *Cloudesley* can be examined in greater detail by turning back to *Thoughts on Man*. Discussing what he understood as the essential human need for the immediate, transgressive satiation of desire, or that which he describes as 'the scheme of gratifying any vehement and uncontrolable passion' from which we are 'only restrained by perpetrating them by the fear' of violating acceptable boundaries (94), Godwin highlights the importance of our ability to gratify the immediate satisfaction through his use of the present tense. 'We long to be something, or to do something, sudden and unexpected', he

writes (94). We can observe how this immediate desire is then tied by Godwin directly to futurity: ‘I want to be alive, to be something more than I commonly am, to change the scene, to cut the cable that binds my bark to the shore, to launch into the wide sea of possibilities, and to nourish my thoughts […] we wish to be assured that we are something’ (97).

An ability within the present moment to ‘be’ and to ‘do’ are placed directly in conjunction with this future of potentialities and ‘possibilities’, which then comes back to inform and reassure the individual that they ‘are something’. The transgressive present and the utopian future ‘nourish’ — and do not jar — with one another. Futurity, for Godwin, serves not so much an abstract, dream-like role in which we can only imagine by consciously separating our thoughts from our present reality. The transgression within the present moment is not destructive to, and/or separated from, all notions of productivity and futurity. Rather, this temporal continuum of present-future-present reveals Godwin’s awareness of the productive synergism in which the individual firstly transgresses and satiates deeply-felt, asocial desire within the moment, in order to develop an ability to ‘launch’ into and imagine this world of alternative, future utopian possibilities beyond the limits of the social. Such ability then functions, he writes further in *Thoughts on Man*, to enhance our propensity within the current moment to exist outside of the narrow confines of that which has only been ‘prescribed by the interests of our social existence’ (111). For Godwin, the satiation of desire equips the human mind to be able to imagine a futurity beyond the social, which comes to ‘nurture’ both our sense of worth as transgressive individuals, as well as how we regard our ‘existence’ in that transgressive space outside the deterministic and stultifying dominant social order and its prescriptions.

When Godwin turns his attention in *Thoughts on Man* directly upon romantic love, this present-future-present continuum is central to his philosophy. An ideal love, he writes, requires firstly the satiation of immediate romantic desire in the moment. 'Each party must feel that it stands in need of the other, and without the other cannot be complete'. This satiation then fosters a capacity to imagine, a capacity to envision a future: these feelings foster 'room for the imagination to grow' which creates 'an anticipation of a distant future'. Finally, this ability to imagine futurity then functions to enhance those initial romantic desires, as he concludes that imaginations of this 'future' will 'every day enhance the good to be imparted and enjoyed, and cause the individuals thus united perpetually to become more sensible of the fortunate event which gave them to each other' (295).

The passage which perhaps illustrates this Godwinian philosophy of a present-future-present continuum of free romantic love best is the concluding scenes of *Cloudesley*. With Julian and Francesco having been suddenly wrenched from the utopia of their 'temple of attachment and love' following the latter's unprovoked arrest for his involvement with the banditti, [40] Julian's reaction to the impending trial and likely execution of the person who is 'dearest to his heart' (211) is not one of despair, fear, or hopelessness. Neither is it a pugnacious and antisocial counterreaction where he tries only to seek revenge or destroy these external social and moral forces terminating their love. Rather, Julian is able to focus purely upon the glimmer of positivity he is capable of discerning despite the darkness surrounding him: his capacity to imagine beyond these assaultive forces within the immediate experience of oppression allows him to rise above the social and maintain his resistance to this dominant order's rules, regulations, and prescribed meanings

[40] Francesco is arrested during a military attack on the banditti camp.

and ideologies. With Francesco soon to be 'led to the scaffold', capital punishment is described in the novel as operating as a form of 'shock' which is 'greatly calculated to awaken a man out of a dream' (271). *Cloudesley* depicts this legal punishment — by death — of transgressive behaviours as being 'calculated' first and foremost to control the individual's capacity to 'dream': Julian is aware of how the threat of one's own death operates to instil a fear which then forces citizens to adhere to an illusion of social order by no longer imagining their existence as anything otherwise. This fosters a diminished — and more easily controllable — version of the human, where our 'desires are declining' and 'we are reasonably contended to close our eyes, and shut out daylight' (ibid).

Julian, however, is not one such individual. Having had the bravery to freely act upon his own 'desires' — and specifically to explore his romantic desires for Francesco — he does not now 'close [his] eyes'. He remains aware to the fact that the social, moral, and now legal forces delimiting his love for this man do not inhabit all meaning: he remains capable of discerning and appreciating himself, Francesco, and their love in ways unimpeded by the marginalisation and de-legitimisation these dominant forces repeatedly attempt to exert. 'We have everything to learn, and everything to enjoy', Julian's free outlook is described in the novel, and where, with himself and Francesco having possessed the bravery to live by such a free belief system, 'it is easy to dally with death' (271). Death comes to be presented in these closing moments of the novel as a rebirth; a drive to imagine and entertain the possibility of an emancipated future where 'love' trumps fear, oppression, and hatred. When Julian later ruminates upon the 'base and ignominious termination of [Francesco's] life' (287), his story concludes with an affirmation that the 'entire eclipse' of the tragic social reality surrounding him does not therefore have to now be his reality. 'It is a beautiful world', he fervently maintains. 'It contains warm hearts

and entire affection', as he declares that this darkness will not 'hid[e] it from my sight' (289). His brave capacity to love — his ability to live, and imagine, otherwise — comes here to be still very much inclusive of, but also something much broader than, his romantic love for Francesco. It becomes a devout conviction that the 'key to the universe is love', where human-human relationality in its broadest sense must always be guided by love, acceptance, and kindness. 'Has not God made man the crown of his works, and stamped all his limbs with majesty and grace? And shall we treat with harshness and indignity what God has chosen for his living temple?' (ibid).

*

It is fitting that Julian's story concludes with this affirmation that we must, both as individuals and as a society, always treat the human body, this human 'living temple', with unending love. Across 'Queer Desire', I argued that Godwin advocated for the free expression of emotions and passions unimpeded by ideologies attached to the sexual materiality of the body. Across 'Queer Love', I have examined Godwin's utopian vision of romantic love as contingent on its being unimpeded by any rules dictating a specific sexual materiality of the two individuals comprising the love union. Francesco's death — this literal execution of his body by law — comes to be conceptualised by Julian in *Cloudesley* as something undefined by these cruel regulations imposed upon the corporeal frame of the man so dear to him. 'His soul was above his fate; and fate itself, however rigorous, could not pull him down from the sphere to which he was native' (274). In death, as in life, Julian's love for Francesco remains wholly resistant to being made subservient to these assaultive external forces exercised upon it. This ultimate punishment is stripped of its totalizing power: Francesco's 'soul', and Julian's devout and immoveable connection

to it, is forever in a place ‘above’ those dominant forces trying — but only failing — to extinguish it. *Cloudesley*, then, offers an irrepressibly pleasureful and hopeful vision of queer desire and queer love which is, quite literally, beyond the body.

PART THREE: QUEER KINSHIP

CHAPTER FIVE

'MERE MATERIAL LIGAMENT': GODWIN, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY, WILLIAM GODWIN JR., AND (UN)DOING BLOOD KIN

In *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), William Godwin outlined what he believed was the need for the political regimes of the late-eighteenth century to re-evaluate the exclusive privilege automatically granted to familial relation. Delineating his utopian vision of a future world liberated from all laws of blood kin and heritage, Godwin declared: 'it cannot be known in such a state of society who is the father of each individual child. But it may be affirmed that such knowledge will be of no importance', as he goes on to argue that it is only 'aristocracy' and 'family pride' that 'teach us to set a value on it at present. I ought to prefer no human being to another, because that being is my father, my wife or my son, but because [...] that being is entitled to preference'.[1]

Scholars have interpreted the author's seemingly dismissive treatment of these domestic relationships as more broadly representative of a disinterest — and even antipathy — he harboured towards all forms of 'passionate and exclusive' attachments between humans.[2] More recently, *Godwinian Moments* (2011) — the

---

[1] William Godwin, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793), p. 852. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

[2] Alex Gold Jr.'s study was the first to examine in detail Godwin's treatment of 'passionate and exclusive' human-human relationships. Gold Jr. argues that the author dismissed such relationships as 'regressive, disruptive, and pathogenic distemper[s]'. See 'It's Only Love: The Politics of Passion in

first collection dedicated exclusively to the work of the author — has begun to readdress this previous stance held by Godwinian specialists. Several contributors suggest instead that Godwin's primary contention was only with the limitations of traditional domesticity to accommodate the wealth and breadth of human passion, and not with passionate, personal human-human relations more generally.[3] This line of enquiry has been pursued further in 2021's *New Approaches* to the author. Shawn Fraistat's chapter examines Godwin's 'opposition to the conventionalities of domestic life' specifically through examining the author's 're-envisioning of personal relationships'.[4]

Across the previous four chapters of this thesis, I have re-evaluated Godwin's presentation of non-normative desire and gender non-conformity within his major novels and philosophical writings, and in turn his presentation of unconventional, extramarital and extrafamilial forms of romantic love. I hope this has gone some way to expand this scholarship focused upon reconsidering the author's treatment of — and more specifically advocacy for — human-human relationality beyond the confines of the socially, morally, and domestically approved and legitimated. As I move now into the third and final part of this project, 'Queer Kinship', it is my intention to channel the discussions beginning to arise within works such as

---

Godwin's *Caleb* Williams', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 19: 2 (1977), 153-160 (p. 153). As documented previously in this thesis, Gold Jr.'s study proved particularly influential to Eve Sedgwick's reading of *Caleb Williams* in *Between Men*. See my previous discussion in the introduction to this thesis, pp. 9-11.

[3] Julie A. Carlson examines how Godwin's early novels can be read as critiques of traditional conceptions of family and marriage and their impact on private relationships, but Carlson does not explore how the philosopher went about theorising alternative modes of human-human relationality. See 'Heavy Drama', in *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert M. Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 217-240. Robert Anderson very briefly suggests how Godwin can be seen to 're-imagin[e] [...] the family to include persons not related by biology', but does not pursue this line of enquiry any further. See 'Godwin Disguised: Politics in the Juvenile Library', in *Godwinian Moments*, pp. 125-148 (p. 141)

[4] *New Approaches to William Godwin*, ed. by Eliza O'Brien, Helen Stark, and Beatrice Turner (London: Palgrave, 20210), p. 7. See Fraistat's chapter 'Godwin's Fear of the Private Affections', pp. 103-126.

Moments and *New Approaches* — that of expounding the author's critique of domesticity and the familial — towards a more precise examination of how Godwin denounced, and destabilised, ideologies of blood relation between humans.

I have previously argued Godwin's presentation of desire and love to be queer by uncovering how the author called for the liberation of human passion from the gendered boundaries enforced upon the biological (sexual) 'material frame' of the human.[5] Now, in suggesting the author's philosophies of kinship can be comparatively understood as queer, I examine how the philosopher advocated for alternative forms of non-biological kinship relation comparative to those recognised within queer theory today.[6] That is to say, where I previously examined the radical and expansive ways in which he subverted the ideologies attached to the materiality of the body, I now examine the radical and expansive ways in which he can be seen to have subverted the ideologies attached to that which he termed as 'the mere material ligament that binds' these bodies together simply and only through the fact of blood relation.[7] Through examining kinship within Godwin's writing, my study broadens the ways in which we can appreciate his work as queer: the third part of this thesis responds to the afore-noted call within Romantic studies to see queer readings of authors that are not focused predominantly upon same-sex or non-normative forms of desire and love.[8]

---

[5] For my previous discussion of Godwin, the materiality of the body, and human desire, see chapter two, pp. 95-108.
[6] As I will be exploring during this third part, interrogations of the biological family unit and traditional kinship relation is a prominent part of queer theory within the present day, and allows us to trace connections with Godwinian familial radicalism.
[7] William Godwin, *Thoughts on Man*: *His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1831), p. 279. In addition to the passage from the *Enquiry* with which I opened this chapter, Godwin's *Thoughts on Man* offers further indication of the author's ongoing denouncement of the exclusive privileging of biological relation. See, particularly, pp. 278-284. Subsequent references to *Thoughts on Man* are given as page numbers in the text.
[8] See my discussion of this in the introduction to this thesis, pp. 30-31.

Godwin regarded the notion of ascribing any sort of essential or inherent meaning solely to human biology — and specifically to the biological connection between humans — as fundamentally 'worthless'. Theorising the filial relationship in *Thoughts on Man*, he argues that if a child 'owes nothing more than this to his father' then they 'ow[e] him nothing' (279). For Godwin, the automatic privileging of blood kin over non-biological forms of human-human relation was a system of unfair privilege; he also regarded this as directly circumscriptive to the agency and ability of individuals to pursue their 'true destination' and reach their full potential in life away from the 'authority' and the 'dogmas' of familial authority, obligation, and expectation.[9]

While Godwin did not write about the fact of biological relation as a negative aspect in and of itself, he continually stressed that any sort of 'love' between blood family members — and most expressly that of the parent-child — must be 'nursed and fostered by two considerations: first, that the subject is capable of receiving much, and secondly, that my power concerning it is great and extensive' (230). Biological relation is unchangingly presented in both his 1793 *Enquiry* and through to his 1831 *Thoughts on Man* as something essentially meaningless. Such relations, he continually and perspicuously affirms, will only be made meaningful if the blood bond shared between two individuals is in turn 'nurtured' by a reciprocated deeper and more emotionally invested connection beyond the biological. To be connected only by blood is, for Godwin, a 'mere circumstance of filiation and descent' that is, essentially, of 'no importance'.[10] This 'material ligament' of biological relation is

[9] In *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin uses the following example to explain this thinking: 'he who was best adapted to make an exemplary carpenter or artisan, by being the son of a nobleman is thrown a thousand fathoms wide of his true destination' (29). He later stresses how 'senseless and inexpert is that parent, who endeavours to govern the mind by authority, and to lay down rugged and peremptory dogmas to his child' (282).

[10] *Enquiry*, p. 852; *Thoughts on Man*, p. 281.

presented recurringly over the forty-year period of his philosophical discourse as decidedly immaterial.

I have conducted analyses of Godwin's major novels over the course of this thesis which have incorporated many of the philosopher's critiques of domesticity comparative to those outlined above. Given this ground I have covered in relation to his novels and philosophical discourse, to progress my study I move away from a prioritisation of Godwin's fiction within this final part of my thesis. This chapter examines the author's advocacy for de-privileging biological relationality through uncovering the influence Godwin's radicalism had upon the work — and the lives — of two individuals with whom he shared his own 'bind' of a material ligament: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, born in 1797 as the only child of Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, and William Godwin Jr., born in 1803 as the only child of Godwin and his second wife Mary Jane Clairmont. I build on my previous analysis of Godwin's conceptualising of the (im)materiality of the body as a reference point within this final part of my thesis. As my study moves towards examining this thematic precisely in relation to Godwin's conceptualising of the (im)material connection between bodies, my primary aim is to trace how the philosopher's radicalism was further pursued — and indeed resisted — by his only biological daughter, and by his only biological son.[11]

Through analysing correspondence, I document how Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley shared a mutually appreciative intellectual bond with Godwin. A relationship, furthermore, that appeared to be little influenced by the fact that these two

[11] I use the phrase 'only biological' daughter and son here in relation to how Godwin also adopted a parental position to numerous individuals with whom he shared no blood relation. These included Fanny Imlay, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, the numerous children of Mary Jane Clairmont from her previous relationships, as well as the series of younger individuals to whom he adopted a father-like role as guide and mentor in his later life, which will be documented in the second chapter of 'Queer Kinship', p. 248.

individuals were biologically related to one another.[12] Following this, I trace how Shelley, like her father, interrogates and destabilises the ideology of ascribing essential meaning and/or automatic privilege to biological relationality in her novel *Frankenstein* (1818), a work which she dedicated exclusively to Godwin.[13] In doing so, I uncover the ways in which her presentation of kinship in *Frankenstein* was potentially directly inspired by the fiction of her father.

I focus upon how Shelley's portrayal of biological family and non-blood kinship, as well as procreative and non-procreative relationality, draws parallels with passages I previously highlighted in my examination of Godwin's *Mandeville*,[14] a novel published just one year before the arrival of *Frankenstein*. I analyse Shelley's portrayal of the fraught relationship between the Creature and the De Lacey family, as well as the Creature's subsequent desiring of a romantic and procreative female counterpart following his expulsion from the De Lacey's blood unit. This chapter documents how *Frankenstein*, in ways comparative to *Mandeville*, warns of the dangers of fixed, binary conceptions of human-human relationality which have their basis exclusively within a system that privileges and ascribes inherent and/or absolute meaning to the biological and the procreative. I focus upon Shelley's presentation of the fatal aftereffects of the Creature's experience as this queer outsider who is cast — violently and unnecessarily — outside the privilege of biological relation.

[12] As I document in this chapter, Godwin's correspondence suggests he revered Shelley first and foremost as an esteemed author and as a talented individual, and how he appeared to offer little in the way of fatherly affection.
[13] Shelley writes: 'TO WILLIAM GODWIN, *Author of Political Justice, Caleb Williams, &c. These Volumes are respectfully inscribed by* THE AUTHOR.' See Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, and Jones, 1818), I, p. v. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and are given as volume and page numbers in the text.
[14] I write here in reference to the portrayal of the Charles's monstrous fury in *Mandeville* previously examined in this thesis (see chapter two, pp. 112-118), which I go on to examine further during this chapter in relation to Shelley's portrayal of the Creature's monstrous fury.

I offer this reading as one which complements existing feminist, materialist, and queer scholarship on *Frankenstein*. In *Romanticism and Gender*, Anne K. Mellor documents how the 'concept of the family-politic' articulated in the 1818 novel 'entails a democracy in which women and men have equal rights and responsibilities'; through this, Mellor argues, Shelley advocates for the 'incalculable value' of each family member regardless of whether the sex of that member is female or male.[15] I propose that Shelley, in addition to recognising the importance of sexual equality within the family unit, also recognised the kinship potentialities for individuals who are freed from the unit's blood confines into alternative forms of non-biological relationalities which are not rooted in gendered, pre-determined family roles attached to the materiality of the female or male body. In *Material Transgressions*, Kate Singer, Ashley Cross, and Suzanne L. Barnett uncover how Shelley recognises 'alternative understandings of materiality as fluid, unstable, and affective' in *Frankenstein*, analysing how the novel 'move[s] beyond concepts that fix gendered bodies and intellectual capacities'.[16] Singer, Cross, and Barnett define these materialities as 'transgressive, in the sense that they move beyond prescribed limits, stepping across or removing a distance between, breaking, violating, infringing, contravening, trespassing, exceeding those boundaries' (3). My reading builds on this to explore transgressive materialities within *Frankenstein* specifically in relation to Shelley's portrayal of the prescribed limits of the blood family: I trace how — by transgressing and exceeding its biological boundaries — her novel de-essentialises and de-privileges familial systems that exclusively legitimate material ligaments.

---

[15] Mellor writes further that this portrayal reflects 'the Romantic ideology' of the 'equality of the sexes'. See *Romanticism and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 66.

[16] *Material Transgressions: Beyond Romantic Bodies, Genders, Things*, ed. by Kate Singer, Ashley Cross, and Suzanne L. Barnett (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p. 3. This reading is centred primarily upon Shelley's portrayal of the Female Creature, a part of the novel which I explore later in this chapter, pp. 239-240. All subsequent references to *Material Transgressions* are given as page numbers in the text.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that Shelley displays a particular fascination with orphans and those cast outside the blood family unit in *Frankenstein*.[17] They suggest that Shelley's depictions of 'early alienation from the patriarchal chain-of-being' function within the novel as 'ominous anxiety fantasies' in which one loses the safety and privilege of biological familial connection.[18] I build on this by examining Shelley's sensitive depiction of the Creature's relentlessly hostile experience as this socially ostracised alien to the domestic scene he wants only to be accepted into. I illustrate how his cruel treatment by the De Laceys is depicted by Shelley as directly instigating a series of destructive events in which the Creature then tragically internalises the deterministic conceptions of the material world of which he himself was a victim. After his hope for this inclusive and expansive form of kinship relation is extinguished following his expulsion from this family, the Creature ends up — in contrast to his previous imaginings of kinship beyond blood — placing all hope in breeding his own form of material, biological connection. We witness this in his subsequent ill-fated desire to procure a female counterpart with whom he hopes to (pro)create a family and, in turn, attach some kind of meaning to his apparently meaningless existence.

As I demonstrate, the Creature's desire for the Female Creature is depicted by Shelley as the desperate and perhaps unavoidable end result of his need to abate his continuing marginalisation, and his tormentingly disconnected state. Yet, it is also depicted by the author as a desire that has its basis in a problematic, pre-determined assumption about this Female Creature that strips her of agency, reduces her to sexual assumptions based upon her materiality as female, and where her role — her

[17] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) pp. 227-228.
[18] Ibid.

purpose and meaning in life — is defined as being the romantic partner of a man and the bearer of his offspring. Her death, or that which we may more accurately describe as her never being granted a chance at life, comes about in part because of a fear that she may 'refuse to comply' (3: 41) with these assumptions rooted only in the deterministic meaning ascribed to her biological sex. Victor's fear sees him then ruthlessly destroy her: in doing so, he destroys all remaining hope the Creature has to claim a place within a blood family unit.

Susan Stryker's reading of *Frankenstein* perhaps surmised the Creature's ostracization from this familial system best when she described him as one who is 'in an unassimilable, antagonistic, queer relationship' with a world in which he 'must nevertheless exist'.[19] George E. Haggerty similarly observes that 'the Creature, like the queer subject' is repeatedly denied 'the solace of any real companionship [...] he is shut out from the pleasures of sociability'.[20] For Stryker, the fact that Shelley's creation never realises his wish for a female counterpart — in conjunction with the disastrous events that this subsequently sets in tragic motion — is crucial to the novel's sensitive and detailed consideration of the experiences of the individual who must perpetually endure 'exclusion from a naturalized order of existence that seeks to maintain itself as the only possible basis for being a subject' (249). Where his being granted this romantic, procreative wish may have allowed for a limited

---

[19] Susan Stryker, 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage', *GLQ*: *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1: 3 (1994), 237-254 (p. 243). All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus primarily upon Stryker's seminal and continuingly influential trans reading of queer exclusion and fury in *Frankenstein* given how it speaks directly to my reading of queer kinship; I note also that the 1818 novel has, since Stryker's 1994 study, continued to attract queer and trans readings in numerous areas including affect, gender dysphoria, medicine, and the transgender imaginary. An excellent overview of this work is provided in Anson Koch-Rein, '*Trans*-lating the Monster: Transgender Affect and *Frankenstein*', *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 30: 1 (2019), 44-61 (pp. 44-45).

[20] George E. Haggerty, 'What is Queer About *Frankenstein*?', in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, ed. by Andrew Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 116-127 (p. 126).

assimilation into this pre-existing familial order, the Creature's being forced into an unguided existence without such privilege allows Shelley to depict much more closely, and explore much more broadly, the impact of his marginalisation as the non-blood, non-procreative outsider cast beyond the boundaries of the dominant order. Stryker writes that readers then get to witness the Creature's ultimate and spectacular 'disidentification with compulsory assigned subject positions', where the queer individual transgresses from any allegiance to this order to instead 'discover the enlivening power of darkness' by 'nourish[ing] your rage' (249, 251).

Stryker's reading helps us gauge how, following his ostracization from all privilege of blood relation and procreation, the Creature in turn comes to identify by contrast with the markedly destructive, or that which Stryker terms as his 'queer fury' (249). My reading examines the Creature's fury specifically in relation to his murder of the infant William. Through uncovering how Shelley's depiction of the Creature's child-killing fury was arguably directly inspired by Godwin's depiction of Charles's murderous, child-stealing fury in *Mandeville*, I demonstrate how both Shelley and Godwin locate the origins of their character's fury within the fatal effects of familial ostracization — as opposed, that is, to portraying their furious queer outsiders as innately or only destructive to the family unit. Shelley, like Godwin before her, destabilises notions of an inherent relation between queerness, fury, and destructiveness to instead expose how it is those systems that grant exclusive privileging and legitimation of biological and procreative relationalities which torturously compel the queer outsider to then enact their furious and murderous counterreactions.

Developing my analysis of blood family, biological sex, and procreative relationality in *Frankenstein*, I explore how William Godwin Jr. — in sharp contrast to both his half-sister and their father — presents these as forever indissoluble and

unquestionably inviolable within his fiction. I concurrently explore how he presents the queer outsider who transgresses biological boundaries only as an innately monstrous figure from whom civilised society must forever be protected. Largely absent from Godwin-Shelley scholarship and appearing only briefly (if at all) in biographies of the family,[21] Godwin Jr. experienced a distant and difficult relationship with his father during his short life. He died from cholera in 1832 before he even reached the age of thirty, with Godwin going on to outlive his son by four years. In 1818, the year of *Frankenstein*'s celebrated publication, Godwin singled out the then 15-year-old Godwin Jr. as the only member of the writing family who was not an 'original thinker'.[22] I explore how Godwin Jr.'s difficult existence on the margins of the family can be seen to have directly influenced his eventual presentation of the supremacy of blood ties and biology, and, in turn, the unviable status of alternative, non-blood forms of relationality which we witness within the two works of fiction that survive him.

Until very recently, Godwin Jr.'s only novel, the posthumously published *Transfusion* (1835), had been all but ignored within Romantic scholarship. Since 2019, studies by Beatrice Turner and Ann Louise Kibbie, as well as my own work, have brought attention to this overlooked novel. These studies have explored Godwin Jr.'s essentialised depiction of biological sex and/or family, with each reading focusing primarily upon Godwin Jr.'s damning portrayal of the 'soul's transfusion' itself: specifically the moment when Albert Schvolen makes the fatal decision to transfuse his spirit into the body of his sister Madeline in the novel's tragic finale.[23]

---

[21] Beatrice Turner writes that Godwin Jr. and his writing 'currently appear only as footnotes or foils to his half-sister's and father's brilliance'. See 'Family Genius and Family Blood', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 71: 4 (2017), 457-484 (p. 458).
[22] Godwin wrote this about his son in an 1818 letter. See Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1876), II, p. 258.
[23] See Turner, 'Family Genius and Family Blood'; Annie Louise Kibbie, 'Transfusing Souls: The Dead End of Sympathy', in *Transfusion: Blood and Sympathy in the Nineteenth-Century Literary*

What has yet to be explored in any great detail, however — and what I will go some way to exploring within this chapter — is how Godwin Jr.'s fiction can be seen to directly interact with Godwin's novels, and, more specifically, Godwinian philosophy of blood and biology. I examine Godwin Jr.'s presentation of the inviolability of biological sex (the materiality of the female/male body), in connection with his presentation of the inviolability of biological family (those material ligaments binding these bodies together), within his fiction. I trace how such depictions can be seen to oppose that which I previously uncovered as Godwin's dismissal of ascribing essential meaning to human biology and blood relation. Given the recent attention that the thematics of biological sex and biological family within *Transfusion* have received from the studies cited previously, the aim of my analysis of Godwin Jr.'s writing within this chapter is to instead bring new attention to his only other fictional offering, a work that remains continually unattended to by scholars. 'The Executioner' (1832) tells the story of a twenty-three-year-old individual who is denied any chance of a close, interactive relationship with his biological father. Forced to 'go on and prosper' into the world alone — and, crucially, without a blood parent to guide him — Godwin Jr.'s story warns of the dangers and destructions that supposedly arise when the boundaries of biological family are transgressed.[24]

This all but forgotten work, published only in the February issue of *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, offers a compelling insight into what could potentially be interpreted as Godwin Jr.'s reaction to his own experience of the distant relationship he had with his father; and, furthermore, of never being fully

Imagination (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019), pp. 3-18, and Simon Clewes, '"Albert's soul looked forth from the organs of Madeline": Anticipating Transness in William Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 76 (2021) <https://ronjournal.org/s/6433> [accessed 7 August 2022].

[24] William Godwin Jr., 'The Executioner', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1832, pp. 306-319, 483-495 (p. 308). The short story was published in two parts in the issue. All subsequent references to this story in this chapter are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

admitted — despite his claim of blood relation to its members — into the heart of the Godwin-Shelley writing circle. In tracing contrasts between Shelley's complication and destabilisation of the exclusive privilege granted to biological familial relation unit in *Frankenstein*, against that of her half-brother's definition of family in 'The Executioner' as one founded solely upon blood kin, I examine how those radical Godwinian philosophies dismissing the 'mere material ligaments' connecting humans to one another had a varied, diverse, and altogether fascinating afterlife in both the lives and the fiction of his biological daughter and his biological son.

'WHO WAS I? WHAT WAS I? WHENCE DID I COME?'

In 1819, William Godwin commends Shelley, and *Frankenstein*, for 'entitling' the young author 'to be ranked among those noble spirits that do honour to our nature'.[25] Describing her proudly as an individual whose celebrated talent now allows her to ascend far above 'the commonality and mob', he signs off this letter by affirming her as being 'formed' to 'belong to the best' (269-270).

Godwin's sentiment appears firstly to be an example of parent-child adulation and affection. Yet, Godwin wrote to Shelley here for the sole, and seemingly unsympathetic and unfatherly, purpose of 'expostulating with [her] on this depression' following the sudden death of her three-year-old son, William (269). 'I entreat you', Godwin instructs, 'do not put the miserable delusion on yourself, to think there is something fine, and beautiful, and delicate, in giving yourself up, and agreeing to be nothing'. He pleads with Shelley not to regard 'all the rest of the world'

[25] Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, II, p. 269. All correspondence subsequently referenced is cited from the same (unless otherwise stated), and given as page numbers in the text.

as 'nothing, because a child of two years old is dead' (ibid, 270). While Godwin offers little in the way of compassion for this young parent contending with the loss of their infant child (a child whom Godwin appears to not have known the correct age), his blunt sentiment appears motivated primarily to encourage Shelley not to now limit herself to this role of the grieving mother. When Shelley's husband Percy dies just four years later, Godwin would once again 'entreat' his daughter not to be 'cast down' in her disconnected situation as the grieving widow: 'if you cannot be independent, who should be?' (281-282).

Godwin repeatedly encourages Shelley not to locate her self-worth solely within that of being a wife or mother; to retain the ability to value herself, her talent, and her future potential outside of what he regarded as the inherent limitations bound up in these 'delicate' or feminine roles and relationalities of the familial unit. Godwin's keenness to appreciate Shelley outside of any family connection is witnessed after she dedicates *Frankenstein* to him. He swiftly resigns any contribution to her 'extraordinary' talent, affirming instead that 'you are a Wollstonecraft' (299). His describing Shelley as 'a Wollstonecraft' arguably appears less as Godwin marking out inherited similarities between mother and daughter. [26] He instead appears to celebrate Wollstonecraft and Shelley as talented authors, and as people, in their own, unique way, irrespective of any familial/blood relation they may have shared with each other or with himself.[27] If we then consider the way in

[26] The father could have been alluding in this moment an inheritance of talent passed from his late wife through to their daughter. Yet, Godwin repeatedly cautioned against ascribing any human quality or characteristic exclusively to what he saw as the reductive notion of these being 'innate' in a hereditary way. He was continuingly cautious that such assumptions would only further problematic and hierarchical ideologies of blood familial lineage, in addition to overlooking the potential within each individual human to learn, develop, and/or acquire new talents and skills across their lifetime irrespective of any lineage they may or may not have. For my previous discussion of Godwinian philosophies of innateness, see chapter one, pp. 64-65.
[27] While, as documented in my preceding chapter, Godwin's *Memoirs* of Wollstonecraft was problematic due to his feminised depiction of her as his wife, Godwin nevertheless passionately celebrates her as an immensely talented writer and thinker independent of any marital/familial role she occupied. Further in this 1819 letter to Shelley, Godwin separates humankind into 'two great

which Godwin had described his daughter as being 'formed' to 'belong to the best of' humankind, this statement is perhaps most accurately interpreted as Godwin's recognition of how Shelley had worked to form, nurture, and develop her writing and talent regardless of familial privilege or connection, and as part of what he had previously celebrated as her masterful ability to 'be independent'.

If Shelley was celebrated by Godwin for this ability, then William Godwin Jr. was deprecated by the father for his contrasting inability to do the same. 'He felt', Godwin described his son's (lack of) writing career, 'that he was not in the position that properly belonged to him, and that he was born to better things'.[28] Where Godwin Jr., at least according to his father, possessed this devout belief that his blood heritage should then directly confer his own 'position' in life, Godwin did not share this view. Describing 'a vocation to literature as a profession' as a 'precarious destination' for this so-described unoriginal thinker, when his son eventually had his first articles published in periodicals including the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Examiner* in 1823, Godwin appears to remain uninspired by Godwin Jr.'s efforts. 'I do not buy the papers in which his articles appear', the father wrote dismissively of his son's work — and, indeed, as he repeatedly did of their distant and unloving relationship more broadly.[29] It would not be until 1835, three years after Godwin Jr.'s death and just one year before Godwin's own, that the father would publicly bestow any praise upon his son and his literary capabilities. This year, Godwin edited,

---

classes': those whose limited existences are defined totally by their familial role, and who can only 'support a husband, a child', against those whose existences extend far beyond any domestic duty and who can instead 'support a world, contributing by their energies to advance their whole species' (269-270). Godwin declares Shelley to belong to the latter of these 'classes' (270).

[28] Godwin documents this within the 'Memoir' which he wrote as a preface for his son's posthumously published novel. See William Godwin Jr., *Transfusion; or, The Orphans of Unwalden* (London: John Macrone, 1835), I, p. xi. All subsequent references to the 'Memoir' and to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

[29] Kegan Paul, p. 257. In 1818, Godwin writes to Mary Jane Clairmont, confessing that he 'certainly cannot feel towards him exactly as I could wish to feel towards a son' (256).

prefaced, and published *Transfusion*.[30] In the father's introductory 'Memoir of His Life and Writings', he describes the 'extraordinary energy' of 'The Executioner' and the similarly 'extraordinary' and 'original conception' of *Transfusion*, lamenting that his late son 'was cut off just when he began to know himself'.[31]

Godwin's reference to how Godwin Jr. only began to 'know himself' as he approached his thirtieth-year highlights the father's philosophy that the journey to understanding oneself is formed not by looking to biological relation or blood lineage for guidance — or that which Godwin had dismissed as his son's misguided assumption that he was 'born into' a set, pre-determined 'position' in life. It is formed, as far as Godwin was concerned, by learning to appreciate ourselves and our potentialities as autonomous, unique, and ever evolving individuals.[32] In *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin describes the parent as the 'florist' to whom their child is a 'strange plant' (278). Genus plays little part in Godwin's metaphor: it is only as the child progresses and develops through their own life, learning about themselves and the world in ways not contingent on any blood connection, that the philosopher believed the child's 'stalk, and the leaves, and the bud' would then transform into 'colour', through which they would become 'more and more an individual' and 'open a wider field' for their own, unhindered potential to blossom in life.[33]

---

[30] In 1835 Godwin records briefly in his diary that he dedicated four days to editing *Transfusion* between January and May, but there is no more detail on this. See *William Godwin's Diary*, ed. by David O'Shaughnessy, Mark Philp, and Victoria Myers (2021) <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/index2.html> [accessed 2 August 2021].

[31] *Transfusion*, I, p. xii, xv.

[32] See, for a further example, Godwin's theory put forth in *Thoughts on Man* of how 'enterprise' and 'adventure' are essential for human development in order to remedy what he described as the 'repetition of rotary acts and every-day occurrences' (97).

[33] The essence, Godwin stresses in *Thoughts on Man*, of the parent's role as this 'florist' should only ever be to assist —if needed —their child with this journey; or that which he describes as the parent's 'abstract power' of suggesting, encouraging, and guiding, but never by directly demanding or commanding, and where the spotlight is only upon the child's agency and ability as an individual to take control of their own potential in life (278). See also pp. 279-284 of *Thoughts on Man* for further examples of Godwin's sentiment here.

Godwin Jr. appeared to be little interested in adopting his father's philosophical perspective of promoting individual ability and agency over and above blood kin and birthright. Not only did he seem to harbour this belief throughout his life that he had been dispossessed of a position alongside the members comprising the family writing circle. He was also continuingly reluctant to interact with — and learn from — these very members when it came to the practice integral to this celebrated family. Shelley often conversed with her father when it came to the editing and perfecting of her work.[34] Godwin Jr. appeared to have deliberately avoided ever having to do the same. The son would begin and remain on the margins of the circle throughout his writing career, typically working alone, and crafting his fiction with little to no input from either Shelley or Godwin. In an 1823 letter he wrote to his half-sister, Godwin Jr. appears ignorant to and set apart from the close bond Shelley shared with their father.[35] Further into the 'Memoir' of his son, Godwin described Godwin Jr. as a writer, and as an individual in general, 'inclined to be somewhat reserved and self-concentrated'. He briefly describes Godwin Jr.'s writing process as one in which he 'worked his way in silence' before presenting the finished work for publication, having sought no criticism, guidance, or opinions of any kind on his work from either Shelley or Godwin (ix, xvii). We could perhaps interpret Godwin Jr.'s reluctance as stemming from an anxiety of his family's judgments of his ability — an ability which would likely have been critiqued in ways unbiased to any sort of

[34] We can witness this perhaps most clearly during the construction of her novel *Valperga* (1823), which she sent to Godwin before its publication. Her husband Percy Shelley, in a letter to Godwin from that same year, writes that 'Mary would be delighted to amend anything that her father thought imperfect'; Godwin, however, returns a reply directly to Mary that he made only minor amendments, informing her that 'all the merit of the book is exclusively your own'. See Kegan Paul, p. 277, 279.
[35] I refer here to Godwin Jr.'s statement of: 'I am not aware how far my father may have informed you [...] as to particulars—relative to our affairs' when discussing the family's financial difficulties with Shelley. See Kegan Paul, p. 276. As Kegan Paul further documented, Shelley had, in fact, been in close correspondence with Godwin, even offering the all the profits from *Valperga* to aid his situation (p. 277).

privilege that may otherwise have been ascribed to his work through his blood connection to the writing family. It is perhaps reasonable to assume that Godwin Jr., in a comparable way to the sentiments vocalised by his stepsister Claire Clairmont,[36] likely found his life as one surrounded by a family of literary icons — where biological relation mattered little — to be deeply challenging rather than inspiring.

It is fitting, then, that 'The Executioner', Godwin Jr.'s only work of fiction published in his lifetime, would go to great lengths to spotlight and delineate the seemingly endless and devastating ramifications that abound when a son is denied a close, interactive relationship with his biological father — and where the son's being ostracised from privileges of blood connection leaves him all but inept to progress through life in any meaningful way. Perhaps it would be misguided to read the 1832 work as biographical. Yet, the life story of its protagonist Ambrose Foster, and the life story of William Godwin Jr., certainly appear to share numerous parallels when it comes to the experience of a blood, filial relationship which has been disrupted, and where there is a markedly distant relationship between biological son and father. Due to the relative obscurity of the 1832 work, and as it has yet to be studied in close detail, for the benefit of the reader a plot summary precedes my close analysis.

Ambrose spends his twenty-three years living in a remote cottage in the Fens, with only ever having met two people in his life: his elderly caretaker, and the brief, monthly visit of a man named Lockwood, who claims to be his parent. The story tells of Ambrose's discovery that Lockwood is not his biological father. Instead, he is revealed to be the nemesis of Ambrose's blood parent, Edward Foster, with

[36] In 1832, Claire Clairmont addressed this way in which blood relation mattered little to one's acceptance into, and place within, the writing circle: 'in our family, if you cannot write an epic or novel that by its originality knocks all other novels on the head, you are a despicable creature, not worth acknowledging'. See Clairmont's letter to Jane Hogg in Julian Marshall, *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1889), II, p. 248.

Lockwood having stolen Ambrose as a baby as revenge for Foster claiming the love of Ellen, Ambrose's deceased mother. When Lockwood leaves the cottage one morning and does not return, Ambrose sets out to leave the confines of his childhood home for the first time in his twenty-three years. Following a series of failures to find kinship with the various families he pleads for assistance from, he is thrown in prison, where he is reunited with a recently incarcerated Lockwood. After framing Foster for a crime punishable by death, Lockwood convinces Ambrose to be his executioner. Later, when he then tries to convince Ambrose to also be the executioner of Charles, Foster's son, the young man refuses, and Lockwood reveals his true identity, confessing that he was also the murderer of Ellen. The story concludes with Ambrose rescuing Charles from the gallows and into the safety of Europe, murdering Lockwood, and returning to his solitude, where he dreams of the ghost of Lockwood coming back to seek revenge upon him.

'The Executioner' is distinct from the Godwinian novel insofar as its plotline presents the family unit and blood relation as sacred, ultimately unchallengeable, and configures the individual who dares try and disregard its biological boundaries as the story's villain who must be vanquished. As we have witnessed in the father's work, and perhaps most prevalently in *St. Leon*, Godwin typically worked from the point of view of a protagonist breaking free of the confines of the blood family unit, with his novels highlighting domesticity's inherent limitations on individual agency and expression.[37] Godwin Jr. appears to reverse his father's established narrative arc. The protagonist is removed, against his will, from the blood family, and must then work his way back towards the safety of its biological boundaries in order for the story to reach its resolution. Ellen, Foster, Charles, and Ambrose represent

[37] See my reading of Godwin's portrayal of domesticity in *St. Leon* in chapter one of this thesis.

respectively the mother, father, son, and brother, each a victim of the destructed family unit at the hands of Lockwood, the outsider who violently intrudes on this domestic sphere through his false claim of blood relation.

Godwin Jr.'s presentation of the biological family against the non-blood outsider can be directly contrasted to Shelley's depiction of the De Lacey family in *Frankenstein*. In this section of the 1818 novel, it is the non-blood outsider — the Creature — who appears as the victim. He seeks only love and acceptance into their domestic sphere but is violently expelled. This contrast is perhaps illustrated most clearly in how Shelley and Godwin Jr. present their character's journey to understanding themselves, their individuality, and the wider significance this has with regards to human-human relationality and kinship. For Ambrose, his journey to knowing himself centres upon his privileged ability to resituate himself within the biological familial unit. For the Creature, his journey centres upon his having to conceptualise his selfhood outside of any blood privilege. After being spurned by the De Laceys, the Creature asks:

> What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to answer them. (2: 102)

After being abandoned by Lockwood, Ambrose asks:

> Where was I?—What was about?—Whither was I going—And how was I to find my father, of whom I did not even so much as know his name? (308)

On the surface, these internal monologues appear similar. Yet, there is an integral difference to their respective perspectives. Shelley invites her reader directly into the mind of the outsider: we witness first-hand the fear, obstacles, and trauma the Creature experiences as he is forced to contend with his expulsion. It is the De Laceys — the blood family — who appear as the primary destructive force within this moment of Shelley's novel. By contrast, Godwin Jr. keeps Lockwood perpetually at arm's length. The author works only from the perspective of the biologically privileged individual, Ambrose, who has the ability to work his way back from the margins of society and resituate himself within the domestic sphere due to his ability to claim blood relation. It is Lockwood — the non-blood outsider — who appears as the primary destructive force within Godwin Jr.'s story.

Throughout 'The Executioner', this destructive non-blood outsider is continually pitted directly against the destructed biological family unit. Ambrose, after learning of Lockwood's false claim of blood kin, disregards entirely any propensity this man now has to offer any 'paternal love' and subsequently labels him as 'the wretch, who, under the name of father, had seduced me to my undoing' (486, 490). The non-blood intruder is positioned as the active aggressor, this undoer. The biological family, by contrast, is the innocent and passive receiver, the destructed, the undone. It is upon the author's use of the term 'undoing' that we can uncover a more specific contrast between Godwin Jr.'s portrayal of (the sanctity of) biological relation — vs. (the unviability of) non-blood kin — with that of his father's fiction. In chapter one, I explored Godwin's advocacy for extrafamilial relationality in *St. Leon* and illustrated how this prefigurated Jack Halberstam's theory of familial 'unbeing' or 'unbecoming' in *The Queer Art of Failure*. In eventually acting upon his inescapable desire to break free from the family, and from his assigned duties within it, Reginald de St. Leon was able to understand, appreciate, and develop his selfhood

on his own terms, and outside the confines of any biological roles and blood relationalities.[38] In contrast to Godwin, Godwin Jr. presents the notion of transgressing familial boundaries not as an undoing in terms of an emancipation. Rather, the son presents the family itself as being violated, transgressed, and subsequently undone only to its decay.

Halberstam writes how 'undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world'.[39] He rereads non-biological relationality as places of potentiality. To undo family, Halberstam outlines, is to refuse any 'essential bond' between blood kin, and specifically a parent and child, in which this process of undoing is defined by its propensity to be a 'disruption of lineage rather than its continuation, the undoing of self rather than its activation' (124, 126). For Halberstam, undoing allows the individual the freedom to conceptualise who they are in ways unbound by any pre-determined notions of biological familial roles or heritage, a journey of self-discovery comparable to that which I examined in the latter stages of Reginald's story.[40] Godwin Jr. employs the term 'undoing' twice more in Ambrose's narration. Each usage — in contrast to the way in which Halberstam employs the term in relation to the positive expansion of kinship relation — highlights the protagonist's unchanging belief that the disruption of blood connection can only ever result in the debasement and degradation of human-human relation. Ambrose's initial reference to how Lockwood 'seduced me to my undoing' is joined by 'my irretrievable undoing' and, later, by 'my parents' undoing' (306, 488). Across these references, it is the biological

[38] I refer here to Reginald's desire to escape the 'torpor' of his male/masculine prescribed familial and marital duties as heir, father, husband, son-in-law, and so forth. See my previous examination of this in chapter one of this thesis, pp. 66-76.
[39] Jack Halberstam, *The Queer of the Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 2-3. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.
[40] See chapter one of this thesis, pp. 70-77.

family member (son, mother, father) — and more specifically the blood relation connecting these members — which is repeatedly the thing being actively undone: Godwin Jr.'s story positions the biological family as having a kind of original, essential quality, a quality that has been bastardised to its eventual decay by Lockwood's 'baneful influence' (306). Ambrose's reference to Lockwood as having only this 'influence' over the family marginalises and delegitimises his position as this non-blood intruder; Lockwood is suggested only to have the capacity — but not full ability — to affect the integrity of the material ligaments connecting the family members to one another. His attempts to undo are rendered eventually futile: Ambrose chooses to murder this non-biological parent and save his biological sibling from execution, in a world where blood kinship is shown to be always ultimately unchallengeable in its inherent superiority above alternative forms not privileged by biology.

(UN)DOING FAMILY, (UN)DOING GENDER

Godwin Jr.'s presentation of the sacredness and essentialness of what his father termed as the 'mere material ligaments' between humans speaks also to a preoccupation the 1832 story has with the gendered ideologies adhered to the sexual materiality of the human. 'The Executioner' is not just a story about glorifying blood parentage. It is specifically concerned with portraying the sacredness of the male-male bond between a biological son and his biological father.

Godwin Jr.'s story pays little attention to women characters. These comprise only Ambrose's caretaker, introduced as 'the crone' and then referred to continuingly only in this unnamed capacity, and his deceased mother, Ellen. Both characters feature only as distant presences who have little to no direct involvement with the

events of the main plotline. Godwin could similarly be — and has, indeed, been — accused of marginalising and limiting women in his fiction, given his repeated employment only of male protagonists.[41] Yet, my analysis examined how his nuanced depiction of key characters such as Marguerite in *St. Leon* through to the Marchioness and Mary in *Fleetwood* showcased progressive examples of individuals who were not bound to any ideological limitations associated with their materiality as female, and who embodied many of the qualities celebrated and encouraged in women by Mary Wollstonecraft in her 1792 *Vindication*.[42]

By contrast, women in 'The Executioner' are bound only to reductive and unchangingly feminine roles. The caretaker, for instance, is described by Ambrose as being 'old and withered' (306). Her materiality as both elderly and female comes to see her subsequently judged by the protagonist as this 'crone' who only ever 'exist[s] (paradox-like) more by sleeping than by the employment of any other function of the animal frame' (306); and, shortly after, as one who has apparently 'slept away her brains, if she ever had any' (307). Her entire personhood appears connected, as far as Ambrose is concerned, exclusively to misogynistic assumptions rooted in her sex, age, and physical appearance. At the other end of the story's reductive presentation of women is Ambrose's mother, Ellen. Where 'the crone' is maligned in the story for reasons appearing rooted only in her sex and advanced age, Ellen is celebrated only for her youth and for her appearing to conform to an ideological vision of female femininity. She is described as a 'young fancy', as 'fair', as full of 'happiness and loveliness', and as one who is in turn remembered as having been 'the truest, and faithfullest of her sex' (314-315). Ellen's femininity is presented as 'true' seemingly

[41] Once critic, for instance, argued that Godwin's utopia was 'womanless'. See Marilyn May, 'Publish and Perish: William Godwin, Mary Shelley, and the Public Appetite for Scandal', *Papers on Language and Literature*, 26: 4 (1990), 489-512 (p. 508).
[42] See chapter three of this thesis, pp. 136-138, 143-148.

only because it conforms to the gendered expectations placed upon 'her sex'. Across these brief depictions of his only female characters, Godwin Jr.'s capacity in 'The Executioner' to portray individuals who are not bound to what Wollstonecraft had exposed as those 'material shackles' imposed upon the female body appears all but null and void.[43]

This celebration — or what may be more accurately be described as a patronising belittlement — of Ellen's femininity, and specifically in relation to her materiality or 'sex' as female, comes in turn to inform the apparently indifferent way in which Ambrose treats his material connection to her as his (female) biological parent. The blood bond of father and son is treated throughout his story as sacred: Ambrose repeatedly verbalises his devastation that he was robbed by Lockwood of forming such a biological relationship with Foster, while simultaneously never offering the reader a clear reason as to why this blood, male-male bond would have been of such essential and unquestionable importance to his development from a young boy into an adult man. Any consideration of a comparable sacredness to the female-male blood bond of mother and son — or of the destruction that would ensue upon the male child if this bond were to be disrupted — is seemingly nowhere to be found in his narration. Lamentations centred upon 'my father' (in reference firstly to Lockwood, and then later to Foster following the blood parentage revelation) abound throughout Ambrose's narration. Any references to 'my mother' are, by comparison, scarce: Ellen is impersonally referred to by Ambrose only and continuingly by her first name, save for one, brief moment at the story's conclusion when he observes a material object, specifically 'the precious portrait of my mother' (492).

[43] See my previous discussion of Wollstonecraft's account of the 'material shackles' placed upon the female body, p. 155.

It is, perhaps, not particularly surprising that a story which seems to cling so steadfastly to traditional conceptions of blood kin and heritage would prioritise a male-male bond over the female-male. Queer theorists working to uncover historical conceptions of the family, and in particular Judith Butler and Eve Sedgwick, have repeatedly documented direct links between familial ideology and patriarchal ideology, exploring the gendered dogmas they intertwine. Butler has traced how the normative process of 'boys, boys becoming men, and men becoming fathers' has been presented within patriarchal regimes for centuries as diametrically opposed to 'the breakdown of family, the loss of strong father figures for boys, and the subsequent "disturbance" this is said to cause', and Sedgwick has highlighted how women, femininity and/or female relationality have comparatively been paid little, if any, attention.[44] If Godwin Jr.'s story can be read as supportive of such an ideological system which confines the materiality of the body and the material connections between bodies in deterministic, indubitable gendered binds, then Shelley's *Frankenstein* can be read as working to do quite the opposite in her disruptive depiction of the Creature, the De Laceys, and subsequently the Female Creature.

Following his rejection by Victor, the Creature selects this family as his site of learning about what he refers to as 'the strange system of human society' (2: 79). It is a 'strange system' in that it is alien to him, and — as the non-blood outsider — will remain as such. His entire worldview is configured through the family's 'patriarchal lives' (103). Through observing Safie, Agatha, Felix, and De Lacey, Shelley depicts the Creature as being initially influenced in two primary ways. Firstly, the privilege and legitimation one typically gains within this system of human society when they are

[44] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 89; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 1-20.

able to claim a material 'blood' relation to others (79). Secondly, how each individual within this system is prescribed a fixed, gendered, and pre-determined role based on their materiality as female or male, which then informs the relationality or 'binds' connecting them to others within the system. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, feminist readings of the novel have uncovered how Shelley's depiction of the family unit in *Frankenstein* called for 'a democracy in which women and men have equal rights and responsibilities', where the roles of mother, father, daughter, son, and so forth, each possess an 'incalculable value' regardless of the sex of that family member.[45] I argue that, by analysing this depiction of the De Laceys which we witness through the eyes of the Creature, we can observe how Shelley questions the very notion of assigning any kind of essential value specifically to blood relation and the respective roles occupied by women and men within a biological family unit.

The Creature, we are told, 'learned the difference of the sexes' before he then describes the distinct roles performed by 'the father', 'the mother', 'brother, sister, and all the various relationships which bind one human being to another' (82). Shelley's use of the term 'learned' to describe these roles and relationships rooted in the gendered characteristics attached to the materiality of the female and male body — which in turn inform the material connections between these bodies — is suggestive. That is, such phrasing could be seen to infer these roles and relations not as inherent. They appear in the Creature's narration as connections which have actively been constructed to form these specific 'bind[s]' of human-human relationality in ways that conform to a 'patriarchal' order such as the one he witnesses being performed in front of him by the various female and male members of the De Lacey family. The idea of these female/feminine and male/masculine roles

[45] See Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender*, pp. 65-66.

and relationalities as possessing an absolute or unmodified quality is called into question if the Creature concurrently has to actively undergo a process of learning and internalising in order to understand their apparent unquestionable and unalterable significance within this ‘strange system’. There are also a number of close similarities that can be uncovered between Shelley’s de-essentialised portrayal of the ‘learned’ patriarchal family and Butler’s description of the ‘formalized’ patriarchal family in *Undoing Gender*.[46]

Shelley’s use of ‘learned’ also draws semantic parallels with her father’s use of ‘learned’ in *Mandeville*, as well as his employment of ‘taught’ in *Thoughts on Man*. As I examined in chapter two, Charles Mandeville had intriguingly described how he had ‘learned’ to despise his own ‘loathsome corse’, as he then detailed how he dreamed of being liberated from his body to instead inhabit the female body of his sister Henrietta; a desire which I argued as having its basis primarily within Charles’s intolerable dissatisfaction with the masculine limitations that had been placed upon his male body.[47] I later explored how, in *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin appeared to describe the feminine/masculine, Chivalric romantic love roles prescribed to women and men not as something inherent or essential, but rather as roles actively performed by these respective parties comprising the union: the ‘knights’, he wrote, were ‘taught’ to love the ‘ladies’, with Godwin further describing this as a form of relationality which he saw as having been actively encouraged in service of ‘the scheme and arrangements of civil society’.[48] When then turning his attention back to his present moment of the early-nineteenth century, Godwin’s expansive and

---

[46] In their description of how the conventional familial unit becomes ‘formalized’, Butler lists ‘birth, child rearing’, ‘relations of emotional dependency and support’ and parent-child ‘generational ties’. See *Undoing Gender*, p. 103. Shelley’s description of the ‘learned’ patriarchal family similarly centres upon ‘the birth and grown of children’, parent-child ties, and specifically ‘how all the life and cares’ of the parent is seen by the Creature as being ‘wrapt up in the precious charge’ of their offspring (2: 82).
[47] See chapter two, pp. 113-115.
[48] See chapter three of this thesis, pp. 141-142.

progressive philosophy appeared to advocate for the liberation of romantic love from the confines of such gendered binds and boundaries that had continuingly been imposed upon the materiality of the female and male bodies in this way.[49] Like Shelley's de-essentialised depiction of her Creature's 'learn[ing]' about the gendered feminine/female, masculine/male roles performed by the De Laceys, Godwin similarly appears to portray the gendered roles prescribed to women and men as roles and relationalities that are 'learned' or 'taught', and not intrinsic.

Shelley highlights the limitations of relationalities which are pre-determined by prescribed roles based on the materiality of the body through the similarities — and, ultimately, the contrasts — she depicts between the Creature and the comparatively unnamed character referred to as 'the Arabian' or 'the stranger'. This character, later revealed to be Felix's romantic partner Safie, initially appears in his narration as a relatable other with whom the Creature identifies given her apparently similar position to him as a foreigner to the blood patriarchal family. 'Her presence diffused gladness through the cottage', he tells the reader, 'the cause of which I did not comprehend'. Further observing that this stranger 'was endeavouring to learn their language', he then decides that, in order that he too gain acceptance into their unit, 'I should make use of the same instructions to the same end' (2: 73). This notion of 'the same' to 'the same' represents the Creature's innocent, utopian, and untainted view of human-human kinship, inferring a kind of untroubled continuum whereby he hopes to go from othered/outside to embraced/inside simply by learning the language with which to speak to the De Laceys and communicate his feelings to them. However, he remains ignorant to a crucial difference separating Safie and himself: she has the privileged ability to enter the family sphere due to her romantic

[49] Ibid, p. 142-143.

relationship with Felix. The Creature remains othered by both his lack of blood kin and his lack of a romantic (female) partner through whom he could, like Safie, gain admission to — and claim a place within — a familial system which privileges and ascribes all meaning to blood kin and pre-determined roles prescribed to its female and male members. 'When I looked around', he later observes as he gets further acquainted with this familial scene, its members, and as he becomes growingly aware of his (un)relation to it, 'I saw and heard none like me' (2: 80).

When Shelley later depicts the Creature's attempt to gain acceptance into the family during his speech to De Lacey, his plea to the patriarchal head appears centred upon trying to expand its narrow, deterministic, and exclusionary boundaries. Fearful of making De Lacey aware that it is his own family he desires kinship from, and instead describing an imaginary family, the Creature begins by telling the elder man how its members 'are kind' but that 'unfortunately, they are prejudiced against me [...] where they ought to see a feeling and kind friend, they behold only a detestable monster' (2: 115). In this moment, Shelley seems to reconfigure the notion of monstrosity not as some inherent, unquestionable trait: rather, the Creature's position as this 'monster' in relation to the family is portrayed as something that has arisen out of ignorance, prejudice, and/or misinformation. De Lacey's response to this plea — 'if you really are blameless, cannot you undeceive them?' (116) — highlights this, especially if Shelley's employment of 'undeceive' is compared to her half-brother's aforementioned employment of 'undoing' in relation to the portrayal of kinship. Godwin Jr., to recall, seemed to present both blood relation and biological, female/male familial roles as having a fixed, essential quality in 'The Executioner' that the non-blood outsider had tried — but ultimately failed — to undo to its decay. By contrast, with Shelley's notion of 'undeceive', she turns away from the fixed binary towards the possibility of a more changeable, adaptable, and

inclusive quality to the notion of family, and human-human relationality more broadly, that could instead be undone from its biological and gendered binds to its expansion and progression.

Shelley focuses on the potentialities for relationalities outside an exclusionary system that privileges only biology and blood kin. Like Godwin, who declared that humans 'ought to prefer no human being to another, because that being is my father, my wife or my son', Shelley similarly employs this term 'ought' through the Creature's affirmation of how the De Laceys could expand and diversify their views: they 'ought to see a feeling and kind friend', but they cannot because of the impeding 'prejudice' they harbour. While Shelley and Godwin Jr. ultimately present their non-blood characters as spurned outsiders to the biological family, it is the journey to that rejection in *Frankenstein* which sets the 1818 novel apart from that which we witness within 'The Executioner'. Where Lockwood is instantly rejected and deemed unquestionably monstrous once his non-blood status is unmasked, the Creature's brief acceptance by De Lacey — which is immediately followed by his violent and unnecessarily cruel expulsion at the hands of Felix — reverses this narrative by juxtaposing the Creature's humanity against the monstrosity of the biological son.

It is significant that this site of relational potentiality in *Frankenstein* happens directly between the patriarchal head of the family, De Lacey, and the non-blood outsider, the Creature, to only then be destroyed by the biological son, Felix. For a brief, hopeful moment, the Creature is able to modify and expand this blood father-son relationship: De Lacey extends his paternal love and care to one whom he shares no biological relation. De Lacey is, momentarily, undeceived from any fixed conceptions of who or what family is, and specifically from this blood father-son bond — the male-male relationship which Butler and Sedgwick documented as underpinning the narrow, exclusionary, and gendered conception of family within

patriarchal history and ideology. Where Godwin Jr. portrays the disruption of a blood father-son bond as only destructive, Shelley's portrayal of such disruption in *Frankenstein* offers a tantalising glimpse of the potential when kinship is freed from the gendered ideologies attached to the materiality of the body, and the material connection between bodies these ideologies deterministically inform.

(PRO)CREATING 'TIES' AND 'CHAINS'

We can examine how Shelley's 'undeceiving' blood kin (the expansive breaking free of biological binds) and Godwin Jr.'s 'undoing' blood kin (the destructive disruption of biological binds) relates to the ways in which both authors depict a network of procreative 'ties' and 'chains' of human-human relation which underpin and continue such idealisation of the blood family, and which fix its female and male members in pre-determined roles.

The following passages from 'The Executioner' and from *Frankenstein* exhibit, at first glance, an apparent similarity in how they depict a network of biological human-human relation that has its basis in procreation. Towards the latter stages of Godwin Jr.'s story, when Lockwood reveals his murderous revenge plan to Ambrose, Lockwood declares: 'it was with joy that I learned that Foster had dared to marry, that all his ties of nature might be withered by my hand', before going on to specify his desire to kill 'his wife' and 'his only son—his dear Charles—his pride Charles' (489). When the Creature requests that Victor bring to life a Female Creature with whom he wishes to start a family, he declares: 'I demand a creature of another sex', before detailing how, with this sexually dimorphic companion, he will 'feel the affections of a sensitive being, and become linked to a chain of existence and events, from which I am now excluded' (2: 145, 150). Through their non-blood outsider's

respective references to 'ties of nature' and 'a chain of existence', both Godwin Jr. and Shelley point towards a system of human relation that binds individuals to the wider world which they inhabit through both sexual and blood relation, and ascribe a gendered identity to that individual. Foster's 'tie' to Ellen, Charles, and Ambrose underpins both his biological relation and his masculine identity in the story as the legitimated husband and father. The Creature's hope to become 'linked' to this 'chain' underscores his final, desperate attempt to move away from being the unintelligible outsider towards becoming legitimated — both as a romantic partner of a female companion and the father of their offspring — following his learning about this patriarchal 'system' and its roles for women and men.

Despite this apparent initial similarity, there is a contrast between the half-siblings' perspectives. Both their outsider characters are portrayed as set apart from these gendered binds, but in different ways. For Godwin Jr., Lockwood represents the damaging and diametric opposition to Foster's celebrated procreativity: the former gleefully wishes only to sever the 'ties' connecting husband and wife, father and son, purely to selfishly gratify his own destructive fantasies. Fantasies which, furthermore, appear in the text as essentially meaningless and unproductive outside of their singular intended purpose to cause unnecessary harm and self-serving destruction. The Creature wishes instead to manufacture a procreative 'chain' between himself and a female companion. In contrast to the way in which the biological and procreative 'tie' between Foster and Ellen appears as sacred and essential in 'The Executioner', entering into a male-female, reproductive relationship appears in Shelley's novel more as a half-hearted attempt by the Creature simply to conform and assimilate into this cruel patriarchal world he has been forced to live in through imitating the kind of roles and actions he has seen performed by the women and men of the De Lacey unit. Where Godwin Jr.'s non-blood outsider is only

destructive to these ties of biological kin, Shelley's non-blood outsider has, at least in his relation to the De Laceys, been destructed by such ties, as he tries then to (pro)create a familial chain of his own to foster some kind of social acceptance and kinship relation following his devastating rejection.

The reference in 'The Executioner' to Foster's 'ties' is prefixed by 'all', where these marital, filial, and sibling relations are described as 'all his ties of nature'. In doing so, Godwin Jr.'s story appears to infer an exclusive naturalising of biological family and procreative relations, while simultaneously casting the non-blood and non-procreative Lockwood as unnatural, othered, and, ultimately, monstrous. Lockwood — despite his actions as one who intends to murder — is only referred to as a 'monster' by Ambrose in the text after his non-blood identity has been revealed.[50] When blindly believing him to be his biological father, Ambrose implicitly assumes his plan to kill Foster is somehow justified, despite any discernible evidence to actually lend support to this. Ambrose initially refers to Lockwood's murderous plans inclusively as 'our revenge' (317), and later describes his 'obedience' to this man as something 'beyond choice or resistance' (483). In the role of the biological father protecting the family, Lockwood and his deadly motives are automatically assumed by Ambrose to be legitimate and unquestionable. Then, unmasked as the non-blood outsider disrupting the family, these identical motives are then automatically assumed only as monstrous by Ambrose — yet the only factor which has actually changed between these two scenarios is Ambrose's awareness of his (non) blood relation to this man, and nothing else.

This could be read as Godwin Jr. exposing the problems of — as opposed to blindly offering support for — the notion of automatic privilege and unquestionable

[50] Ambrose refers to him, for example, as a 'monster beyond belief' and as the 'wretch!—monster!—devil!' (490).

obedience being granted to biological relation and blood heritage. Yet, the way 'The Executioner' goes on to portray Lockwood following this revelation of Ambrose's parentage appears only to continue the story's unwavering ascribing of an inherent superiority both to blood kin, as well as the gendered roles this familial order prescribes to women and men. Ambrose, for instance, refers to Foster — a man whom he has met only once — as his 'real' father, and then refers to Lockwood —who he has been parented by for twenty-three years — only as this 'wretch' who was performing an 'imitation of [my] father' (490). The fact of material, blood connection is positioned in Ambrose's narration as the crucial factor which legitimates a human-human relation as instantly 'real' or authentic, and where the inability to claim such a connection sees the same relationship suddenly rendered only counterfeit or specious. Godwin Jr.'s use of 'real' to refer only to roles and relationships rooted in the biological and the procreative — in conjunction with his use of monstrous to refer only to relationships not rooted in these — draws parallels with the way in which queer theorists tracing heteronormative familial ideology have uncovered how notions of 'real men and women' have historically been associated with the 'natural' or 'genuine family' within the socio-political, and where those relations transgressing these biological boundaries have contrastingly been portrayed as 'their deviant, unnatural, and pseudo-counterparts'.[51]

This notion of the non-blood as the non-natural, an association which appears to lie at the heart of 'The Executioner', culminates in the moment when the unmasked Lockwood is hatefully described by Ambrose as 'some monstrous thing that nature had created only to shew how beyond herself she had the power to act' (483). In Ambrose's eyes, what appears to cast Lockwood as one who is truly

[51] Samuel H. Allen and Shawn N. Mendez, 'Hegemonic Heteronormativity: Toward a New Era of Queer Family Theory', *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10: 1 (2018), 70-86 (pp. 74-75).

‘monstrous’ is his lack of blood kin to Ambrose and his lack of a procreative relationship with Ellen. Due to his now inability to claim biological relation, Lockwood is cast ‘beyond’ these blood/procreative ‘ties’, divested of all masculine integrity as this ‘[un]real’ father and husband, and where he is now not even a man, not even a human, but only this ‘thing’ who is ‘beyond’ all of ‘nature’. In the deterministic world of ‘The Executioner’, to be cast outside biological ‘ties’ is not only to be marginalised, but to seemingly be justifiably divested of all meaning and integrity as a man, as a human, within this exclusionary system for whom the non-blood, non-procreative outsider is offered no space to claim a place.

Like Godwin Jr., Godwin, in *Thoughts on Man*, would similarly write about the ‘ties’ of human-human relationality rooted in the procreative. Quite unlike his son, however, Godwin would continually affirm the need to recognise how human kinship must always be open, expansive, and freed of any pre-determined ideologies tied only to blood relation. Some years earlier, in his 1793 *Enquiry*, Godwin had accepted the biological necessity of procreative human-human relationships, writing how these were an obvious requirement to ‘propagate their species’ (852). Yet, he concurrently refused to then ‘set a value’ of an inherent exclusive importance or superiority upon such procreative relations, or upon the blood connections these subsequently create.[52] As documented in the opening section of this chapter, Godwin stressed how human-human affection should never be guided solely (if, indeed, at all) by biological connection.[53] In *Thoughts on Man*, the philosopher develops this perspective originally put forth in the *Enquiry*: in his account of the formation of human-human ‘affection’ he discusses ‘those to whom we are bound by the ties’

[52] For Godwin’s discussion of this, see the *Enquiry*, pp. 851-853.
[53] So strong were Godwin’s views here that he also calls directly for the ‘abolition of surnames’ in the *Enquiry* (852).

(233). Unlike his son's reference in 'The Executioner' to 'all [the] ties of nature' to refer only to blood familial bonds, Godwin similarly employs the term 'ties' along with 'nature', but phrases this as 'the ties of a common nature, affinity, sympathy, or worth' (233-4). The father's consideration of the kind of 'nature' underpinning these human-human 'ties' expands far beyond Godwin Jr.'s use of 'natural' and 'ties' to refer only to the biological. Godwin moves towards a conception of kinship which recognises the independent 'nature[s]' of individuals and their relations to others. Within Godwin's utopian vision of the human-human tie, it is 'sympathy', 'affinity', and 'worth' — not blood relation or heritage — which figures as the primary driving force guiding relationality and kinship structures, and where relationships between individuals can be unhindered to reach their full potential away from any adherence or obligations to biological relation.

While Godwin does appear to suggest in *Thoughts on Man* that aspects of this individual 'nature' could potentially be innate — 'we are prepared', he writes, 'by the power that made us for feelings and emotions' (234) — this 'power' underpinning one's nature is not correlated with biological relation. Rather, as explored earlier in this thesis, when Godwin does consider any notion of innateness, he does so in a non-deterministic way that does not aim to explicitly categorise, or explain the 'mysteries' of human qualities, and especially not in relation to what he regarded as the limiting and deterministic ideologies of blood inheritance.[54] Godwin proposes such 'human nature' to be 'a theme of endless investigation' which we should always continually recognise as fluid, changeable, and essentially uncategorisable.[55]

[54] See chapter one of this thesis for my previous discussion of Godwin's philosophies of innateness, pp. 64-65. For further examples of Godwin's critique of the idealisation of blood familial relation, see *Thoughts on Man*, pp. 50-52.
[55] *Thoughts on Man*, p. 449. See chapter 'Of the Material Universe' for further examples of Godwin's philosophy of human nature (pp. 436-455).

Later in his discussion of human nature in *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin draws a firm line separating 'the difference between what we know of the material world, and what of the intellectual' (449). The material world, he writes, comprises what he terms as 'a chain of antecedents and consequents'. Explaining in more detail this notion of material precursors and successors, Godwin writes: 'they proceed upon a first principle, an impulse given to them from the beginning of things', as he then offers examples such as fire, water, momentum, and gravity to illustrate how the material world will 'continue unvaried' in this 'unalterable', 'deaf and inexorable' chain of continuation (449-450). The human world, however, is, according to Godwin, distinct from this immoveable chain of antecedents and consequents guided by this one singular 'impulse'. While the material world 'is unmoved by the consideration of any accidents or miseries that may result', he outlines, 'man is a source of events of a very different nature. [...] He acts in a way diametrically opposed to the action of inert matter', as he then recognises the changeability, fluidity, and diversity of human passion, writing that the human 'turns and turns again, at the impulse of the thought that strikes him, the appetite that prompts, the passions that move'. He concludes that 'it is therefore in a high degree unreasonable, to make that train of inferences which may satisfy us on the subject of material phenomena, a standard of what we ought to think respecting the phenomena of mind' and human nature more broadly (450).

Godwin is not writing about these 'antecedents and consequences' in any way connected explicitly to the biologically reproductive. He is, for the most part, writing only in relation to this 'inert' matter. Yet, embedded within this discussion, he also appears to concurrently call for the need to recognise the diversity and expandability of human 'passion', 'impulse', and 'appetite' beyond those aspects associated only with this material 'chain' of befores and afters, and that singular 'impulse' guiding

this chain of continuation. Godwin could be offering recognition here of those human passions that exist beyond the boundaries or chains of one specific system of antecedents and consequents: specifically, that of procreation and the resulting blood relation, or what he had previously referred to unenthusiastically as the 'propogat[ion] of the species' and the resulting 'material ligaments' this creates. His intriguing reference to this so-called 'very different nature' comprising the human — which he regarded as distinct to the reproduction of 'material phenomena' and its fixed impulses — suggests that he understood human passion and human nature to possess function, worth, and potentiality far beyond a straightforward reproductive ability.

To examine this further, we can mark out parallels between Godwin's reference to that 'chain of antecedents and consequents' and Shelley's before-quoted 'chain of existence' in *Frankenstein*. In the novel this idea of a 'chain' of befores and afters is introduced within the moment the Creature resorts to manufacturing a procreative relationship with a female companion as a final, desperate attempt to breed some sort of kinship to abate his intolerably disconnected situation. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar note that *Frankenstein* illustrates how 'alienation from the patriarchal chain-of-being [...] prefigures the hellish state in store' for the individual who finds themselves disconnected from all relations and privileges of biological family.[56] I would like to linger on this term 'chain' to argue that, in addition to recognising the trials and hardships faced by the queer outsider ostracised from the patriarchal chain-of-being, this term also signals Shelley's recognition of how the linkages within this chain can be deconstructed and imagined anew, especially when contrasted to her half-brother's employment of 'tie' to refer to the same connections.

[56] *Madwoman in the Attic*, pp. 227-228.

Where Godwin Jr. had employed ‘tie’ to describe — and to naturalise — the biological and the procreative, Shelley’s employment of ‘chain’ to describe these forms of human-human relation offers a subtle yet important difference. That is, where Godwin Jr.’s notion of a tie could be seen to infer something being bound or fixed, Shelley’s chain could be seen instead to infer something sequential, something that has been actively constructed of different parts to form the appearance of a whole.

Shelley’s depiction of the Creature’s formation of his procreative passion destabilises its essentialness by highlighting a socially constructed basis to this male-female desire. His hope to ‘become linked’ to this particular ‘chain of existence’ appears in the novel only after his ‘learning’ from the De Laceys — and, most immediately, his observation of the romantic attachment formed between Safie and Felix. ‘Felix seemed peculiarly happy’, the Creature first describes upon Safie’s celebrated arrival into the family sphere, ‘the cause of which I did not comprehend’ (2: 72-73). When, some weeks later, he eventually comes to ‘comprehend’ the romantic basis of their relationship, it is only then that he laments how ‘no Eve soothed my sorrows, or shared my thoughts: I was alone’ (109). While Shelley could be seen to depict the Creature’s initial confusion simply as a kind of childlike naivety, her depiction appears more suggestive: the very fact that the Creature has to scrutinise so closely this male-female romantic bond in order to understand what it is suggests that his own subsequent desire for a female and procreative companion is something acquired, and not innate. Thus, when the De Laceys expel him — and in doing so ‘had broken the only link that held me to the world’ (126) — the Creature can only think to repair this sever in the chain through forging his own male-female, reproductive bond, so that he may ‘become linked’ again to this patriarchal familial system that continues to figure as his sole blueprint for kinship structure.

Shelley's portrayal of the potential to deconstruct these biological links in this chain is something we witness perhaps most keenly in the creation, and subsequent destruction, of the Female Creature. 'I was now about to form another being, of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant', Victor states after having reluctantly agreed to the Creature's demand for a procreative mate (3: 41). Victor's eventual butchering of the Female Creature just moments later comes about directly because of this ignorance and, most pressingly, his fear that she 'may refuse to comply with a compact made before her creation' (ibid). His fear of the Female Creature's potential transgression from her sexual and gender assignment — with this 'compact made before her creation' referring to her being assigned only as a romantic/procreative partner for the Creature — sees Victor drastically rethink his endeavour. 'She, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal', the scientist tells us further, might, in reality, 'hate' and 'quit' her male counterpart (ibid). Yet, just moments later, Victor anxiously imagines an alternative futurity that further intensifies his compulsion to kill her: if the Female Creature were to adhere to this sexual and gender determination, Victor predicts that such success of the relation of his two creations 'might' result in a 'precarious' situation in which they spawn a population of 'daemon' children (42).

These anxieties which Victor projects onto the Female Creature centre upon his own deep discomfort with unknowing: she 'may' refuse, she 'might' comply — it is ultimately his inability to definitively categorise and know her which drives his compulsion to destroy her. Her death arises not from any inherent fault with her, as a potentially transgressive individual, but with her creator's fear, ignorance, and narrowmindedness — his inability to imagine or confront her existing in ways unbound and unknown. Yet, Victor's murder of his female creation does little, if anything, to abate his deep discomfort or his ability to know or control. Kate Singer,

Ashley Cross, and Suzanne L. Barnett argue that the Female Creature's death actually intensifies her 'thing-power' as a transgressive materiality. 'When the female creature is released from her feminine body into the capacious sea, she becomes once again a "thing" of vibrant matter', they write. Through this, Shelley 'introduces us to a new materiality' which challenges 'ideas of the subject, gender, and the body [...] offer[ing] the possibility to redraw genders, bodies, things [...]'.[57] I concur that deconstructing and redrawing the gendered roles ascribed to sexual materiality is central to this scene in the novel: Shelley not only exposes how one's materiality offers no guarantee of, or inherent connection to, their gender. She also de-essentialises, and exposes the intrinsic fragility of, those material linkages forming that procreative 'chain of existence' which adhere bodies into these gendered roles, but which are perpetually under the threat of deconstruction and transgression given their fundamental inability to inhabit all meaning.

Godwin recognised how the 'passions' and 'impulses' of individuals may deviate from what he elusively referred to as that material 'chain' of antecedents and consequents; Shelley recognised the expansive viability and potential within her Female Creature to have lived beyond her likely ill-fitting role limited to this procreative 'chain' and its assigned positions rooted only in sexual materiality, biological relation, and human propagation. In this brief moment in the 1818 novel, we could say that — quite unlike the Madeline/Albert entity witnessed in the tragic finale of her half-brother's *Transfusion* — Shelley, like her father before her, imagines the viable potential of sexualities and genders that break, transgress, and exceed that chain: sexualities and genders, that is, which are not assigned at birth.

[57] *Material Transgressions,* pp. 1-2.

KILLING THE CHILD: QUEER FURY

The Female Creature's death is the event which fatally brings about what Susan Stryker described as the Creature's spectacular 'disidentification with compulsory assigned subject positions'. As outlined in the opening section of this chapter, Stryker reread the Creature's furious and murderous destructivity as a counterreaction to his experience as the queer outsider who is continually marginalised and ultimately ostracised from an exclusionary familial and social order which he will never gain admittance or acceptance into. To bring my own reading to a close, and to examine the final connection between *Frankenstein* and 'The Executioner' which I will address during this chapter, I explore queer fury specifically in relation to the act of murdering and/or stealing children.

Both Shelley's and Godwin Jr.'s non-blood outsiders display comparatively furious emotion, and both take their fury out by committing similarly monstrous acts that directly undo the very biological bonds which they themselves have been ostracized from: the Creature kills William Frankenstein, Victor's infant sibling, and Lockwood murders Ellen in order to then steal baby Ambrose. Fury is aligned directly in both works with the non-blood outsider's killing, or at least actively disrupting the lives of, those infant beings who are the very products of procreative human-human relation. And, while we cannot know whether Shelley or Godwin Jr. possessed a specific awareness of these, we can trace how contemporary news articles, court reports, and political commentaries from the early-nineteenth century utilised imagery centred upon an 'innocent' child in relation to non-reproductive acts that transgressed the boundaries of the blood family. These publications typically did so as a means to convince their readers of the need to protect the family, and civilised society more broadly, from those individuals whom they portrayed as the inherently

destructive ‘monsters’ harbouring and indulging in ‘unnatural’ or ‘inhuman’ acts or desires beyond those associated exclusively with the procreative and the (blood) familial.[58]

Perhaps the more immediate comparison to be made here with Shelley’s and Godwin Jr.’s depiction of such children is with their father’s *Mandeville*. That which I proposed to be Charles Mandeville’s never-realised and infuriated eroticised passions for Clifford manifested ultimately as a murderous, child-stealing, frenzied imagining. Charles described his desire to ‘steal’ Henrietta’s and Clifford’s imaginary children, to ‘teach them to hate’ their mother and father, before detailing his ‘delight’ at the thought of ‘their infant fingers stream[ing] with their parents’ blood’.[59] One could read this child-stealing scene in *Mandeville* as offering support to the social and political attitudes witnessed in those contemporary commentaries, and specifically the way in which their writers demonised non-procreative desires directly through calling upon the need to protect the wellbeing of an imaginary child from the transgressive individual harbouring said desire. Yet, despite this monstrous vision entertained by Charles of what he would do to the offspring of Henrietta and Clifford, Godwin also went to great lengths in the 1817 work to depict the origins of his protagonist’s fury: he appeared to counteract the notion that Charles’s unhinged ferocity was inherent to his position as the transgressive outsider. His fury appeared in the novel as the tragic end result of his continuing marginalisation within a world that legitimated only male-female, procreative sexualities, and where his

[58] See, for instance, the description of how one man’s innocent ‘children’ were ‘in distresses’ as ‘an unavoidable consequence of his own debauchery and prodigality’ in ‘The King v. Edwards and Passingham’, *The Times*, 2 July 1805 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/archive> [accessed 7 August 2021]. See also how ‘unnatural’ and ‘inhuman’ ‘monsters’ are described as having ‘torn’ children from their families in ‘Letter’, *Morning Chronicle,* 26 July 1822 <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/morning-chronicle> [accessed 4 August 2021].
[59] William Godwin, *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Ontario: Broadview, 2016), p. 432. For my previous examination of this moment in the novel, see chapter two of this thesis, pp. 116-118. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

tormentingly passionate feelings for Clifford had no viable outlet.[60] Far from blaming his protagonist, Godwin appeared to pinpoint the exclusionary and prejudicial social attitudes confining Charles to this unbearably torturous state to be the ultimate destructive force in *Mandeville*.

As examined previously in this thesis, connections could be made between these imaginary 'children' of Godwin's 1817 novel and the figural 'Child' centralised in Lee Edelman's seminal *No Future*.[61] And, in a similar manner to her father's and Edelman's child, Shelley's depiction of the Creature's killing of the child can be seen to have its origins within the fatal effects of social ostracization as opposed to the notion of an innate monstrosity. George E. Haggerty has written along similar lines here to argue that the Creature's murderous rage is a 'queer construction' in which he is 'driven to destroy'.[62] Godwin Jr., in a sharply contrasting way to Shelley and their father, offers no comparative origin story of Lockwood's child-stealing fury. Instead, he portrays his monstrous and murderous behaviour only as irredeemably revulsive, painting Lockwood as an individual from whom society must be unquestionably protected from.

It is feasible to argue that 'The Executioner' lifts this major plotline directly from *Mandeville*. In Godwin's 1817 novel, as we have seen, Charles dreams of stealing Clifford's children, teaching them to hate their father, and subsequently convincing the child to become the murderer of its own biological parent — a plot line that Godwin Jr.'s 'The Executioner' duplicates and, in turn, repurposes (the body/soul swapping plotline of *Transfusion* can similarly be seen to have its origins

---

[60] See chapter two of this thesis, pp. 119-124.
[61] Ibid, pp. 108-112, 115-116.
[62] 'What is Queer about *Frankenstein*?', p. 124.

in *Mandeville*).[63] In Godwin's novel, such child-stealing fury functions primarily as a reaction: it is born out of that 'insupportable anguish' Charles experiences as the perpetually marginalised, ridiculed, and rejected outsider (321). By contrast, within Godwin Jr.'s story, child-stealing fury functions as an originator: Lockwood's actions seemingly have no discernible reason, justification, or motivation, no comparable emotional backstory, beyond this self-serving drive to hurt others and destroy life.

Take, for instance, the ways in which Godwin and Godwin Jr. communicate these characters' monstrous fury to their readers. While Charles describes his 'one vocation in life' as 'the destruction of Clifford', he simultaneously admits that 'I knew, knew too well, that that would be no cure for my misery', and where 'if I could have [...] given vent to the various emotions he had excited within me, I should have become a different man' (220). Godwin destabilises notions of a direct connection between Charles's desires for Clifford and his ensuing monstrous thoughts and actions. 'Destruction' appears to function instead as the only available outlet for 'vent[ing]' these unsatiated same-sex 'emotions' that consume Charles throughout the novel. This 'different man' he could have become were he only free to 'give vent' to his feelings begins — and remains — unrealised: this, arguably, is the true tragedy of Godwin's 1817 work.

When, in 'The Executioner', Lockwood describes his desire to destruct, he speaks only of being 'glad to the heart' that Foster had 'dared to marry [...] for I felt the more ties he formed, the more ways there would be to pierce him to the heart' (316). Godwin Jr. makes no effort to humanise Lockwood's monstrosity, or to make this character's destructive desires intelligible as anything other than abhorrent. He portrays him as a gleeful and spiteful individual who is simply 'glad' that he can

[63] I write here about the desire Charles displays to inhabit his sister's body and experience life as her. See my previous examination of this in chapter two, pp. 113-115.

cause so much harm to others — and where this destruction isn't delineated as a tragic and unnecessary result of oppressive wider social forces at play. Where Charles's fury is portrayed by Godwin as a construction from being perpetually damaged and rejected by society, Lockwood's fury is portrayed by Godwin Jr. as a kind of truth, where fury originates from within the inherently destructive nature of the non-blood outsider himself only to the detriment of social order.

In contrast to her half-brother and in similarity to their father's *Mandeville*, Shelley's child-focused fury in *Frankenstein* is arguably treated in the 1818 work as a direct result of the destructive and oppressive human world the Creature has been forced to inhabit. Having been repeatedly rejected, ridiculed, and ostracised, he desperately seeks only companionship and acceptance from the infant William, hoping that he 'had lived too short a time to have imbibed a horror of deformity' (2: 137). When this child devastatingly demonstrates nothing but revulsion, the Creature pleads 'I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me', with William's death occurring as the Creature anxiously 'grasped his throat to silence him' so that he may be heard and understood (137-138). It is only after he — seemingly mistakenly — kills the child, that the Creature realises 'I, too, can create desolation', a learned behaviour that he attributes to 'the lessons of Felix' (139-140). Once again, it is Felix, the legitimated, celebrated, accepted biological son, who seems to be positioned by Shelley as an individual to whom monstrosity is predominantly attached. The Creature's fury, by contrast, appears to be continually complicated throughout the novel as being a product of the monstrous actions and cruel treatment by the individuals such as Felix surrounding him within this exclusionary world he has been unwittingly born into. His 'desolation' and his monstrosity appear in the novel as a necessary counterreaction to this treatment within human society, in a comparative

way to the furious behaviour of Charles in the later stages of *Mandeville* — and, indeed, to the tormented and marginalised Godwinian protagonist more broadly.

*

Given what I have explored over the course of this chapter, it certainly appears feasible to assume that Shelley's most famous work was, at least in part, focused on re-evaluating the legitimacy of procreation and blood relation through exposing the destruction their exclusive privilege wields upon the queer outsiders who find themselves marginalised and ultimately ostracised within this patriarchal system. Like her father, both in his philosophical writings and in his fiction, it appears Shelley was keen to rethink kinship through recognising the diversity and expansiveness of human desires, passions, emotions — and lives more broadly — through advocating for the integral need for more awareness and inclusion.

Our ability to offer such a reading of Shelley and Godwin is partially reliant upon a concurrent ability to examine their influences and inspirations across their expansive work, lives, and correspondence more broadly. Godwin Jr.'s 'The Executioner', and, indeed, *Transfusion*,[64] both certainly appear to contrast sharply with the familial radicalism witnessed in the writing of his half-sister and their father. Yet, given how little we know about this elusive individual outside of these two fictional offerings, our inability to scrutinise Godwin Jr.'s work, influence, and inspiration in the way we can Shelley and Godwin should perhaps issue caution as to the extent to which we read these works as directly representative of the son's standpoint upon these matters. That is to say, whether Godwin Jr. really was an

[64] See Turner's 'Family Genius and Family Blood' for a detailed examination of the presentation of family and blood relation in Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion*.

individual who truly desired only to lend support to the problematic idealisation of blood kin, biological heritage, and sexual pre-determinism — or whether his fiction simply showcases one reaction to his difficult experiences within the family (and specifically with his father) — we may never fully know. Nonetheless, the capacity for the son's intriguing, if albeit limited, work to offer us this brief glimpse through an alternative window into the writing circle, its members, and their radicalism is continually compelling. Godwin may have labelled his son as the only one of the Godwin-Shelleys lacking the capacity to formulate an original thought. Yet, ironically, such a quality arguably gave this young individual his own kind of uniqueness and originality, at least within the family circle.

CHAPTER SIX

'MORE THAN' BLOOD: EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON'S RENEWAL OF THE GODWINIAN SAME-SEX DYAD

William Godwin attracted the attention of numerous younger authors across the latter half of his long writing career. Beginning with the well-documented relationship with a twenty-year-old Percy Shelley in 1812 and continuing over the next two decades with numerous individuals of a similar age, Godwin would adopt the role of what one of his early biographers described as his being their 'guide, philosopher, friend, almost more than father'.[1]

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, documented by Charles Kegan Paul as the final individual comprising this 'long series of younger friends',[2] made Godwin's acquaintance six years before the philosopher's death in 1836. With just two months in age separating William Godwin Jr. and Bulwer-Lytton (who was known at this early stage of his career simply as Edward Bulwer), Godwin's role as this 'more than' father figure to Bulwer appeared markedly closer than the blood father connection he shared with Godwin Jr. — and certainly in relation to his mentoring (or lack thereof) towards their early careers as writers. While Godwin had previously dismissed his own fledgling novelist son as that unoriginal thinker whose work he chose not to read,[3] he would by contrast praise — and indeed 'envy' — Bulwer and his very early literary efforts as being 'so divinely written that my first impulse was to throw my

[1] Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1876), II, p. 280.
[2] Ibid, p. 308.
[3] See my previous discussion of how Godwin described his son as the only member of the writing family who was not an 'original thinker' in chapter five of this thesis, p. 209, 213.

implements of writing in the fire'. The philosopher insisted that Bulwer 'engage yourself with your powers of mind for the real interests of mankind' through dedicating himself to publishing what the elder man understood to be his engaging, inspiring, and original work.[4]

Similarly to Godwin's passionate encouragement of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley documented in the preceding chapter,[5] the philosopher appeared keen to encourage Bulwer to 'carry the flag' for his radicalism and for his socio-politically disruptive and thought-changing literary endeavours.[6] For his part, Bulwer would repeatedly and publicly praise Godwin's path-breaking fiction. In an article published in the *New Monthly Magazine*, he describes emphatically Godwin's invention of the 'philosophical novel', admiring how the elder author's fiction had worked to 'break up the unpromising soil' of human society and its established norms and traditions in the wake of the Revolution. Bulwer details how he 'derive[d] certain rules and canons to serve as a guide' for his own efforts, subsequently styling himself as the 'renewer' of the philosophical — and more specifically Godwinian — novel form.[7]

Despite positioning himself as a Godwinian 'disciple' and flag bearer for the philosopher's radicalism,[8] Bulwer's connection to Godwin would, for many years, be consistently dismissed by scholars. If Godwin Jr.'s work and its connection to his father's remained for decades all but unstudied, then Bulwer's, by comparison, would

---

[4] Kegan Paul, p. 302.
[5] See chapter five, pp. 211-213.
[6] I quote here from Evert Jan van Leeuwen's 'Godwin, Bulwer and Poe: Intellectual Elitism and the Utopian Impulse of Popular Fiction', in *The Literary Utopias of Cultural Communities, 1790-1910*, ed. by Marguérite Corporaal and Evert Jan van Leeuwen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 47-66 (p. 54). Van Leeuwen's study uncovers how Bulwer would 'carry the flag' for Godwin's 'brand of individualist, intellectual utopianism and his gradualist reformist society'.
[7] See Bulwer's 'Dedicatory Epistle', in *Paul Clifford* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), I, pp. xii-xiv.
[8] Ibid. During his discussion of the Godwinian novel, Bulwer refers to himself as 'the disciple' (xiii).

be studied by critics only as a way to swiftly repudiate the idea that we could read his novels as anything other than 'shapeless' or 'shallow' imitations of their Godwinian predecessors.[9] One critic even went as far as to describe the Godwin-inspired elements comprising Bulwer's fiction as taking on the unfortunate appearance of 'one who has been dismembered and whose parts remain separate'.[10] In *Romantic Victorians* (2002), Richard Cronin suggests that Bulwer, as well as numerous novelistic contemporaries of Bulwer who remained comparatively understudied, suffered from this critical apathy because their careers gained traction within 'a shadowy stretch of time sandwiched between two far more colourful periods'; namely the Romantic and the Victorian, and specifically 1824 to 1840 — a period, Cronin writes, 'neglected by Victorianists and Romanticists alike'.[11] Cronin describes his study as a re-evaluation of these overlooked years, and one in which his readings actively 'evad[e] "Romanticism" and "Victorianism"' and 'the lumbering reifications that guard [their] borders'; his study, in turn, explores the opportunities to expand our understandings of and appreciation for the works, lives, and legacies of authors when we move away from the notion of fixed, unchangeable boundaries 'between' or 'within' literary periods (3-4). 'It may be that we are what history makes us, and that all writers are produced by their predecessors, but it is equally true that history is what we make of it, and that writers produce the writers who produce them', Cronin deftly observes (4-5). While his study doesn't go on to explore Bulwer's connections

[9] One critic, for instance, described Bulwer as a 'rather shallow' Godwinian. See Lawrence Poston, 'Bulwer's Godwinian Myth', in *The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton*, ed. by Allan Conrad (Christensen: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 78-90 (p. 78). Another described his Godwinian inspired novelistic career as 'rather shapeless'. See Bjørn Tysdahl, *William Godwin as a Novelist* (London: Athlone Press, 1981), pp. 163-164. For my previous discussion of the lack of scholarship on Godwin Jr., see chapter five of this thesis, p. 209.
[10] Tysdahl, pp. 163-64
[11] Richard Cronin, *Romantic Victorians* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 1-4. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

specifically to Godwin in any great detail, he nonetheless notes that the young author's fiction has a clear 'indebtedness to the Godwinian novel' (135).

Given this boundary-breaking approach Cronin adopts in his study of Bulwer and his 'Romantic Victorian' peers, it is fitting that scholars who have since paid closer attention to Bulwer's Godwinian connections pinpoint how both authors shared a particular interest with transgressing 'ideological boundaries' within their fiction.[12] Critics have recently come to recognise how Bulwer effectively used the novel form as a vessel through which to continue Godwin's radical campaign for socio-political change. 'Like Godwin', writes Evert Jan van Leeuwen, 'Bulwer was convinced that those who live too much within the ideological boundaries will not be able to effect the necessary reform'. Van Leeuwen's study traces the ways in which Bulwer's radical approach to his fiction was consistently concerned with portraying characters who transgress the boundaries of normativity and acceptability, through which the author would showcase the potentialities for individuals beyond the confines of morally, socially and/or politically imposed rules and limitations.[13]

Within this second chapter of 'Queer Kinship', I build on this recent reappreciation of Bulwer by bringing attention to the markedly transgressive — and markedly Godwinian — portrayal of one lesser-studied 'ideological boundary' found within his extraordinary, yet largely forgotten, novel *Devereux* (1829).[14] I examine

---

[12] Peter Liebregts has documented how both Bulwer and Godwin shared 'a vision of popular culture to be a major player in the process of gradual reform of an entire society', and Evert Jan van Leeuwen documents how each 'believed that their fictions would not only entertain but also improve the minds of the readers and consequently society as a whole'. See Peter Liebregts, 'Forward', in *The Literal Utopias of Cultural Communities, 1790-1910*, ed. by Marguérite Corporaal and Evert Jan van Leeuwen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 1-8 (p.3); and Evert Jan van Leeuwen, 'Godwin, Bulwer and Poe', p. 47.

[13] 'Godwin, Bulwer and Poe', p. 59.

[14] At the time of its publication, *Devereux* only received brief, largely disinterested treatment from critics. *The New Monthly Magazine*, for instance, noted the similarities between Bulwer's novel and the Godwinian novel, but criticised the 1829 work for being 'fashioned of slighter materials' and lacking 'the natural vigour' and 'solid magnificence' of Godwin's fiction. See 'Devereux', in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, London, Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1829, XXVI, pp. 391-92. Scholars working on Bulwer have continued to pay the novel little attention.

Bulwer's presentation of the boundaries of the blood family, biological relation, and what I propose to be his exposé of the damagingly gendered and deterministic implications for its central character whose desires fall far beyond the boundaries of social, familial, and marital acceptability. I focus upon the novel's unusually close, deeply loving — and, as I will argue, potentially incestuous — relationship existent between Aubrey Devereux and his blood-related elder male sibling, Morton. Through analysing how Godwin's 'more than' son depicts a Godwinian-inspired brother-brother bond which transgresses far beyond normative biological familial boundaries into something 'more than' a platonic affection, this second chapter of 'Queer Kinship' concurrently moves away from a focus upon Godwin's own blood family. I argue that Godwin's radical, interrelated rethinking of desire, love, and kinship uncovered within my study proved directly inspirational to this self-described disciple who lay beyond the boundaries of the Godwin-Shelley circle. I thus broaden the scope of my project here in order to trace more widely the philosopher's influence upon a new generation of young, original thinkers succeeding him and continuing his anarchistic legacy. This will further argue not only for the integral place that Godwinian philosophy and fiction occupies within queer Romanticisms; it will also consider how Godwin's queer influence potentially extended far beyond the Romantic era into the work of an author who would go on to outlive the philosopher by almost four decades.[15]

Like Godwin's largely ill-fated male-male dyads witnessed repeatedly across his numerous works, in *Devereux* Aubrey's increasingly furious desire for his brother

---

[15] While this chapter is focused only upon *Devereux*, Bulwer went on to write novels up until his death in 1873: my reading will, hopefully, function to lay the groundwork for any future readings which are focused upon uncovering queer Godwinian connections in Bulwer's later writings that postdate the philosopher's death. While relatively little work has been done on exploring these later Godwin-Bulwer connections, Lawrence Poston's study has examined the Godwinian elements within Bulwer's *Zanoni* (1842). See 'Beyond the Occult: The Godwinian Nexus of Bulwer's *Zanoni*', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 37: 2 (1998), 131-161.

has undeniably distressing, destructive, and ultimately tragic consequences. Yet, Bulwer's daringly sensitive — and seemingly undamning — portrayal of Aubrey's wildly transgressive passion appears almost unmissably Godwinian given the compassion and comprehension with which its author affords his confused and stifled same-sex desiring protagonist. The destructivity present at the core of this all-consuming bond is scrutinised throughout the novel in such a way which does not seek to place blame or causation upon Aubrey's transgressive passion in and of itself. Through analysing *Devereux* alongside queer theories of same-sex incest, I examine how Bulwer illustrates how the root of Aubrey's destructivity is a result of the wider domestic, social, and moral confines causing his unsatiated same-sex feelings to manifest in the upsetting, destructive — and ultimately incestuous and murderous — ways in which we see them unfold across the novel. I trace connections between Bulwer's portrayal of Aubrey's transgressive passion and Judith Butler's theory of same-sex incestuous love as a 'a shadowy realm of love'. Butler documents how, as a love 'that breaks all boundaries' of normative gender, sexuality, and kinship, same-sex incest is simultaneously a love that has 'no place in the name of love, a position within kinship that is no position [...] the unintelligible within the intelligible'.[16] My analysis explores how Bulwer pays similar attention to the ways in which boundaries of blood familial acceptability and normativity cast the queer individual who transgresses these into a shadowy, confusing, and torturous realm — a realm perhaps befitting for a novel published during that which Cronin described as the 'shadowy stretch of time' of the Romantic Victorian.

Devereux, in what we may term characteristically Godwinian fashion, can be read as a novel which calls for an expansion and revision of impeding domestic

[16] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 159-161. All subsequent references to this study are given as page numbers in the text.

regimes in order to accommodate those passions which fall outside of the suffocating norms and boundaries of the familial/marital, and, in particular, the male-female, procreative. Godwin appeared recurringly concerned with bringing attention to the damaging ways in which problematic ideologies of domesticity and the blood family fixed women, men, humans into restrictive roles rooted reductively in the sexual materiality of their bodies which, in turn, informed those 'material ligament[s]' they would then be expected and encouraged to (pro)create with others.[17] I now examine how Godwin's destabilisation of the gendered ideologies attached to the materiality of the body and the material connections between bodies was further explored — and, moreover, further transgressed — by Bulwer in *Devereux*.

Cronin's afore-noted observation that, through studying connections between authors across periods, we not only discern 'how writers are produced by their predecessors' but we also discern the ways in which writers 'produce the writers who produce them', is pertinent for Bulwer's exploration of Godwinian male-male passion within *Devereux*. Like Godwin, Bulwer employs a central same-sex passionate pairing. Yet, Bulwer does not simply reproduce the elder author's dyadic structure: where Godwin's same-sex passions appeared as extramarital and extrafamilial drives, Bulwer 'renew[s]' the male-male dyad by locating its two participants within the blood family unit itself.[18] Cronin further observes that mid-to-late nineteenth century authors would go on to sanitise the (brother-sister) incestuous suggestiveness often present within the work of their Romantic predecessors to 'a

[17] For my previous exploration of this within Godwin's fiction and influence, see chapter one and chapter five of this thesis.
[18] I quote here from Bulwer's description of himself as the 'renewer' of the Godwinian philosophical novel. 'I do not deceive myself with the idea that I have done any thing in the least original; I have only endeavoured to revive what had passed a little into neglect [...] the renewer, not the creator,—the furbisher of old pictures, not the artist of new', he writes. See 'Dedicatory Epistle', in *Paul Clifford*, I, pp. xii-xiii.

more sedate union between first cousins'.[19] Bulwer takes the opposite route to this: as a love shared between two brothers, Bulwer pushes the Godwinian theme of torturous, unsatiated same-sex passion to even more subversive depths, as the young disciple darkly advances Godwin's project of exposing the destructiveness of familial ideology upon the individual who cannot be accommodated within its boundaries.

I pay attention to how the young author juxtaposes the transition (and, indeed, lack thereof) from childhood to adulthood for these two noticeably contrasting siblings. Morton — portrayed in the novel as the 'masculine' and female-desiring elder brother — is afforded the free, easy, and socially legitimated ability to leave the childhood home, marry, and look forward to (pro)creating his own family in adulthood.[20] Aubrey — portrayed instead as the 'feminine' (1: 18) and male-desiring younger brother — is, by contrast, shown by Bulwer to be unable to explore, express, and live his passions and desires in the straightforward way in which he crushingly observes his brother being afforded the social privilege and safety to do so. As he gets older, Aubrey appears increasingly impotent to reconcile his inner desires with the limited forms of human relationality accepted within the marital and familial units; his feelings can seemingly claim no place and find no outlet within these domestic regimes which legitimate only a binary of fixed roles prescribed respectively to women and men. Aubrey's relentlessly confused, ungratified same-sex feelings do not grow and develop as they otherwise could — and certainly not in the way in which Morton goes on to do so within his married life with Isora.

Bulwer depicts Aubrey's continuing inability to express these desires as resulting in the subsequent fusion and confusion of brotherly love and eroticised

---

[19] *Romantic Victorians*, p. 14.
[20] Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *Devereux: A Tale* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829), I, p. 36. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as volume and page numbers in the text.

desire which we witness with an increasing prevalence as the novel unfolds. I explore how the younger sibling, unable to satiate his innermost passions, comes to believe his sole hope to gratify his intolerably frustrated feelings lies within the only male-male closeness he has been able to experience and access in his life: that of his brother's sibling love. What appears as the resulting incestuous passion is treated by Bulwer not as an abhorrent and monstrous thing only to be spurned. This brother-brother relation is portrayed by Bulwer as a desperate attempt by his protagonist to find some kind of outlet for his deeply-rooted desires in the cold, cruel, and ostracising world he has been forced to try and exist within. I previously documented how William Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion* — a novel which, like *Devereux*, features an extraordinary and original sibling-centred plot line — has been re-evaluated as a novel worthy of scholarly attention in relation to its remarkably conservative portrayal of the boundaries of biological family and biological sex.[21] I hope to now go some way to afford similar reclamation to Bulwer's remarkably transgressive portrayal of these same boundaries within his 'renew[al]' of the Godwinian novel, further uncovering the legacy of queer Godwin, and the legacy of queer Romanticisms, within and beyond the shadowy realm of the Romantic Victorian.

'FEMININE' SIBLING, 'MASCULINE' SIBLING

Before commencing my close analysis, given its relative obscurity I pause here to offer a brief plot summary of the 1829 work.

Following the death of their father, *Devereux* begins by detailing Aubrey's and Morton's 'inseparable' bond formed during adolescence. Morton becomes briefly

[21] See my previous discussion of the recent work on *Transfusion* in chapter five, p. 209.

captivated with Aubrey's 'faultless' and 'feminine' (1: 18) qualities, and Aubrey subsequently develops a deeply-felt attachment to Morton as he then relentlessly craves the exclusive 'masculine' attention of his older brother (36). The novel explores Aubrey's despair as Morton grows up, grows out of their youthful sibling bond, and departs the family home a short while later to pursue a new life in London to marry and begin a family of his own. With Aubrey begging his brother not to leave, Morton reassures him that it will not compromise their closeness, but he then rarely returns home, and eventually falls for and becomes engaged to Isora. Aubrey, who cannot bear to relinquish — or even share — Morton's masculine attention with his new fiancée, pleads with him upon his return to leave Isora and 'love *me only*' (84). When Morton does not perform his brother's wish, Aubrey's envy transforms into a frenzied hatred. With such a fragile emotional state being encouraged by the scheming Montreuil, their tutor and abbot who manipulates the brothers in an effort to gain access to their inheritance fortune, Aubrey stalks and eventually attacks the couple, fatally wounding Isora and injuring Morton, before fleeing. The novel then concludes with Morton being reunited with his brother: Aubrey confesses to the murder, explains his envious motivations, Morton eventually forgives him, and an exhausted Aubrey dies just moments after his confession.

An initial indication of the novel's tendentious treatment of ideological familial and sexual boundaries is signalled within that 'feminine' and 'masculine' dynamic which underpins the relationship formed by these young brothers. Morton, who narrates this opening part of the novel, describes to the reader how, during this early part of his life, he believed there was nothing 'more beautiful than the love of those whose ties are knit by nature, and whose union seems ordained to begin from the very moment of their birth' (1: 36). While, at this stage of their story, there is little to imply that their so-called brotherly 'love' is anything more than a familial

affection, Morton's subsequent description of how 'Aubrey and I were inseparable, and we both gained by the intercourse. I grew more gentle, and he more masculine' (71) suggests that their bond has begun to transgress, at least to some degree, the normative boundaries of brother-brother relationality.

In the early nineteenth century, novels centring upon close, loving, sibling bonds became increasingly commonplace, something which scholars have traced to the shifting public attitudes in the aftermath of the Revolution.[22] These relationships characteristically comprised a sister, a brother, and their deeply involved feelings for one another. Alan Richardson notes that novelists would repeatedly depict these closely connected female and male siblings observing — and learning from — one another's 'provocatively other' femininity and masculinity as 'a resource for androgynous self-transformation'; Richardson stresses that, while such novelistic portrayals could potentially be regarded as fuelled by incestuous desire, they most immediately reflected the emerging social mores encouraging women and men to adopt a limited amount of gendered qualities not traditionally associated with their biological sex, and to do so through observing their opposite-sex counterparts and, more specifically, siblings.[23] In the examples we can locate of such relationships in the fiction of this time, that which numerous authors pinpoint as affording such sister-brother bonds their close, loving quality is typically located in a 'something

---

[22] Leonore Davidoff has documented how, at this time, 'the symbolic dethronement of fathers in the forms of kings stressed instead the model of sibling relationships'. See 'The Sibling Relationship and Sibling Incest in Historical Context', in *Sibling Relationships*, ed. by Prophecy Coles (London: Karnac, 2006), pp. 1-31 (p. 27). See also Alan Richardson, 'Rethinking Romantic Incest', *New Literary History,* 31: 3 (2000), 553-572; and Jenny Diplacidi, *Gothic Incest: Gender, Sexuality and Transgression. (*Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), pp. 85-87.

[23] 'Rethinking Romantic Incest', p. 564. See also my previous discussion of how certain feminine qualities were, to a point, fashionable for men to adopt at this time in chapter one of this thesis, pp. 46-52.

beyond pertaining to their sexual difference', and the respective complementary gendered qualities of each opposite sex sibling.[24]

In *Devereux*, Bulwer reimagines this trope of ideological female-male sibling love as male-male: and, more specifically, as a complementary love shared between a masculine, elder male sibling and his feminine, younger brother. Morton's and Aubrey's androgynous self-transformation, their acquisition of these provocatively other gendered qualities from their sibling, is not dependant on that sibling's materiality as female or male. It is dependent simply upon their being feminine or masculine. To recall Morton's description of his and Aubrey's adolescent relationship dynamic, the elder brother explained their loving 'intercourse' as one in which 'I grew more gentle, and he more masculine'. Bulwer begins to depict a process in which Morton is attracted to, and is in turn learning, acquiring, and 'gr[o]w[ing]' these soft and gentle qualities directly from his relationship with his younger, feminine, male sibling. *Devereux* considers two types of feminine/feminised men here: Morton, the one who has acquired femininity, and Aubrey, the one in whom said femininity has originated. Bulwer does not portray femininity as provocatively other to Aubrey — as something that, as one whose materiality is male, he can only learn or acquire. Aubrey's femininity appears in the novel as something akin to original or intrinsic, an essential part of who he is — and, within the unfortunate events that will unfold, an essential part of his tragic fate.

In his portrayal of Henrietta's and Charles's relationship in *Mandeville*, Godwin uses this sibling bond as a springboard to, like Bulwer after him, complicate

[24] In the short story 'The Brother And Sister: An Italian Story' (1832), Mary Shelley details the close connection Lorenzo shares with his 'feminine' sister as being 'mingled [with] a something beyond, pertaining to their difference of sex'. See *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Short Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 166-189 (p. 170, 172). Alan Richardson has also examined how, in Coleridge's 'Brotherly and Sisterly Love' (1803), sibling affection is presented as 'greatly modified by the difference of sex' whereby the male sibling is 'made more tender'. See 'Rethinking Romantic Incest', p. 567.

and expand the deterministic opposite-sex sibling trope of the female/feminine and the male/masculine. While Charles is appreciative of Henrietta's feminine influence upon him in his early life, he does not exclusively equate such femininity with his sister's materiality as female. As he grows older, he sets about acquiring the love of a lifelong 'companion' with whom he can replicate the relationship dynamic that he has valued so dearly with Henrietta: 'my companion', Charles envisions, shall 'be [like] Henrietta, or the counterpart of Henrietta in my own sex, if that be possible'.[25] This 'own sex' consideration is positioned within his narration as something of an afterthought, an 'or', perhaps indicating a hesitancy as to the viability of a male companion being qualified to do so. Yet, it is also signalled as an expansive potentiality, where Charles appears open and welcoming to this imagined companion being female, male, or, more broadly, their simply being human. Like Aubrey's femininity in *Devereux*, Godwin's *Mandeville* can be seen to recognise genders which fall outside the ideological sibling boundaries of the female/feminine and male/masculine.

'MECHANICAL' MASCULINITY, 'FAULTLESS' FEMININITY

Developing this notion that Aubrey's femininity is positioned in *Devereux* as something which is, at least in part, unlearned and/or unacquired, we witness a more comprehensive description of the younger sibling's gender within this opening stage of the novel.

Morton begins this passage by briefly relaying to the reader his other brother's, his twin Gerald's, normative masculinity. He then uses this as a basis to

[25] William Godwin, *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Ontario: Broadview, 2016), p. 349. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.

which he contrasts — and praises — Aubrey's transgressive femininity. 'Gerald, was a tall, strong, handsome boy', Morton tells us, before then listing a series of non-physical qualities that he believes further showcases this brother's masculinity.[26] Morton subsequently clarifies that he 'cannot help thinking' that 'there was something common-place [...] that [Gerald's] talent was of the mechanical, yet quick nature, which makes wonderful boys, but mediocre men' (1: 17). Noticeable here is that Morton immediately de-idealises Gerald's masculinity: it is not depicted as an attribute which he, as a man, should exclusively be celebrated or rewarded for. Rather, Gerald's possession of these normative, 'common-place', and socially celebrated gendered traits appear within Morton's narration with a marked indifference. They are depicted unenthusiastically as only 'mediocre'. This draws comparisons with Caleb Williams's comparatively uninspired description of the socially admired and 'arrogant' masculinity of Barnabas Tyrrell in Godwin's 1794 novel.[27]

I draw closer attention to Morton's employment of 'mechanical' to depict this male masculinity. On the one hand, we could interpret this term to be in some way supportive of the aforementioned early-nineteenth century ideology that masculinity is integral to male materiality — as in, it forms a key or automatic part of the mechanics which comprise the machine of the man, of the male body.[28] Yet, the way in which it appears within Morton's narration arguably pushes more towards the

[26] Morton describes, for instance, Gerald's 'personal courage', his 'cool and determined mind', and his 'extraordinary quickness of ability' (1: 17).
[27] Caleb details how Tyrell's celebrated 'robustness' and 'vigour' rendered him 'insupportably arrogant, tyrannical to his inferiors, and insolent to his equals' and further comments how his masculinity drew 'unfeigned admiration' from those around him. Caleb, however, remains hesitant to offer such praise and admiration, remarking that Tyrell's social celebration arose 'not from love, but fear'. See *Things as They Are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (London: Printed for B. Crosby, 1794), I, pp. 40-45.
[28] See the discussion of the male/masculine, female/feminine complementary sibling bond ideology documented earlier in this chapter, pp. 258-259.

idea of the ‘mechanical’ in terms of its semantic connections to the predictable, the unimaginative, the perfunctory, and so forth. Comparisons can be drawn between Bulwer’s use of the term ‘mechanical’ with Godwin’s account of the ‘machine’ of the human put forward in his *Thoughts on Man*. As examined in chapter three of this thesis, the philosopher declared that one’s materiality should never be automatically — or, perhaps we could say, mechanically — assumed to determine any component of that person as an individual. ‘The machine which constitutes the visible man, bears no proportion to our thoughts, our wishes and desires’, he declared: a standpoint which I examined as the philosopher’s advocacy for individuals to be afforded the ability to not be confined by any gendered ideologies attached to the sexual materiality of their so-described ‘machine’.[29] Within Godwinian philosophy, the notion that women, men, humans are ‘born into the world’ with any kind of pre-determined or categorisable traits is repeatedly presented as, at best, misguided, and, at worst, harmful: an expansive understanding of the human body which could be seen to prefigure the way in which the materiality of the body is conceived of in queer, and specifically Butlerian, theories of sex and gender.[30]

Godwin, like Bulwer in *Devereux*, highlighted what he termed the ‘mediocrity’ that would likely befall those individuals who were heavily encouraged within society only to adopt a determined and limited number of qualities and characteristics. ‘As this condition of human society’, Godwin reflects in *Thoughts on Man*, ‘renders the social arrangement in the midst of which we exist […] its immediate tendency is to clip the wings of the thinking principle within us, and plunge the members of the

---

[29] See chapter three, p. 125.
[30] *Thoughts on Man: His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1831), pp. 28-29. All subsequent references to this work are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text. For my previous examination of the connections between Godwinian thought and Butlerian theory, see chapter one, pp. 57-60, 69-70.

community in which we live into a barren and ungratifying mediocrity' (123). Godwin stressed that it should instead be the 'aim' of each individual to 'look through the vast assemblage of their countrymen, of penetrating "into the seeds" of character, and determining "which grain will grow, and which will not," to apply themselves to the redeeming such are worthy of their care from the oblivious gulph into which the mass of the species is of necessity plunged' (ibid). For the philosopher, in a comparable manner to Morton's disaffected presentation of Gerald's 'common-place' qualities in *Devereux*, the onus is consistently placed upon encouraging individuals to explore and cultivate their individuality: to 'look through' the 'mass' of human society in order to reach one's full, unhindered potential, and escape these uninspiring and mediocre boundaries of the socially acceptable.

If Bulwer's presentation of Gerald's mechanical male masculinity is suggestive of connections with Godwin's non-deterministic philosophy of the human machine, then the presentation of Aubrey's 'feminine and faultless mould' develops this connection even more. 'My younger brother, Aubrey, was of a very different disposition of mind and frame of body [to Gerald]', Morton details. 'Thoughtful, gentle, susceptible, acute […] never before have I seen the countenance of a man so perfect, so glowingly, yet delicately handsome', he continues, before going on to list numerous physical and emotional qualities which further exemplify the younger sibling's femininity and draw Morton's keen attention.[31] The use of 'feminine' to describe Aubrey's gender — as opposed to feminised — suggests Morton does not judge his younger brother's gender as a lesser deviation from, or to its disadvantage

[31] Morton, for instance, describes Aubrey's 'taste for reading', his being 'the beauty of the three' siblings, his 'locks, soft and glossy, and twining into ringlets', and how his 'eyes were black and tender, as a Georgian girl's' (1: 18).

against, the notion of a male/masculine original.[32] The elder sibling instead portrays Aubrey's femininity in ways that position it as a progression from the mediocrity he previously observed with Gerald's masculinity, and in ways that exemplify his increasing attraction to and fascination with this younger sibling.

Morton describes here how Aubrey's feminine 'disposition' can be evidenced in both his 'mind' as well as his 'frame of body'. By marking out both the physical, as well as the mental/spiritual, qualities of his younger sibling, specific interactions — and potential contentions — with contemporary sex/gender medical theories can be traced. In *Human Physiology* (1835), John Elliotson declared indubitably that one's 'female' or 'male' sex automatically determined one's 'character', writing: 'the brain is of the same character as the rest of the body to which it belongs—the female mind exceeds the male in excitability as much as her body'.[33] In a lecture delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons in 1822, William Lawrence similarly declares that the mind 'is male or female, according to the sex of the body', with numerous other accounts further emphasising this 'inherent' and 'universal' distinction between women and men.[34] Judged in the light of these, Godwin's afore-described theory of how one's individual qualities cannot — and should not — be reduced to any pre-determined associations with the 'machine' or body of that individual suggests the philosopher may have written directly in reaction and opposition to these

---

[32] While novels that similarly focus on male-male, masculine/feminine, close sibling bonds are somewhat scarce during this era, Eve Sedgwick's detailed analysis of James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) brings attention to a similar brother-brother dynamic portrayed within a novel. What, for the purposes of this chapter, proves to be an interesting contrast to *Devereux* is the way in which Sedgwick shows how the feminine male sibling's femininity in *Confessions* is portrayed only as a damaging, destructive deviation from the male/masculine ideal of his brother. See *Between Men* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 97-117.
[33] John Elliotson, *Human Physiology* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1835), p. 36.
[34] William Lawrence, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man, Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons* (London: Benbow, 1822), p. 94. See also the description of the 'inherent' and 'marked and universal difference' between women and men outlined in William Hazlitt's 'Phrenological Fallacies', in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1933), XX, p. 253.

contemporary understandings of sex/gender. And, in *Devereux*, Bulwer can be seen to further develop this radical and reactive Godwinian standpoint through Morton's admiring depiction of Aubrey's male, feminine body and its (un)relation to his feminine mind. If medical accounts such as Elliotson's *Human Physiology* and Lawrence's *Lectures* emphasised this theory of the human 'body' — and, in turn, of that body's 'brain' or mind — as being only ever female/feminine or male/masculine, then Bulwer's decision to mark out both this male character's unmissably feminine 'mind' and feminine 'body' subverts such biologically deterministic understandings linking male materiality only to an innate masculinity.

Where we can trace these similarities between Aubrey's mental/physical femininity and Godwinian theories of body and mind, we can also mark out contrasts between *Devereux* and William Godwin Jr.'s markedly deterministic presentation of the female/male body and mind within *Transfusion*'s fatal final moments. After the act of the soul's transfusion has taken place, Godwin Jr. depicts Albert's 'healthy masculine spirit' as being unable to survive within the female body of his sister Madeline. It becomes, at once, an 'exiled' soul crucially separated from what is described unambiguously as the 'rightful mansion' of Albert's male body.[35] As previous work on *Transfusion* has suggested, the entity's subsequent death appears to come about because of an inherent fault within the transfused (and transgendered) body itself.[36] Godwin Jr. repeatedly depicts this female/male, feminine/masculine fusion as a destructive and, ultimately, unliveable 'failing mechanism'.[37]

---

[35] *Transfusion* (London: John Macrone, 1835), III, pp. 289-90, 292. All subsequent references to this novel are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.
[36] My own work on *Transfusion* has examined the ways in which we may read the transfused Madeline/Albert entity as transgendered. See 'Anticipating Transness in William Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 76 (2021) <https://ronjournal.org/s/6433> [accessed 7 August 2022].
[37] *Transfusion*, III, p. 291.

By contrast, within Morton's unwaveringly positive portrayal of Aubrey's male femininity, the younger sibling was openly admired by his elder brother as being both 'faultless and feminine'. Morton prefigures this direct reference to Aubrey as feminine by highlighting to the reader how his brother's gender is free of any apparent defect or error. This stands in contrast to that 'fail[ed] mechanism' witnessed with Godwin Jr.'s entity: once Albert's 'masculine spirit' had been removed from its male vessel — and, in doing so, had severed the 'energetic, true, entire' essential quality of its pre-transfusion self (3: 289-290) — it was no longer operational. *Transfusion* appeared to legitimise only male masculinity and female femininity as 'true' and liveable genders. Morton's marvelling at the faultlessness of Aubrey's femininity points towards *Devereux*'s recognition of how men — or, more accurately, a male body — can operate successfully without an original or essential masculinity, something which *Transfusion* appears largely hesitant to consider.[38] Where Godwin had declared in his *Thoughts on Man* that individuals need to be free to operate outside of any ideologies attached to their bodily 'machine' in order to reach their full potential, in *Devereux* Bulwer offers this example of a male character, a male body, which is admired as being both beautifully feminine and, concurrently, operationally faultless.

THE 'FEMALE HEART'

Morton's growing admiration of — and attraction to — Aubrey's physical and mental femininity is highlighted by the focus subsequently placed within his narration upon

[38] While Godwin Jr.'s focus remains predominantly upon the unviability of the entity's ability to survive, *Transfusion* does, arguably, also indirectly gesture towards how Albert is seemingly unable to transfuse back to his male/masculine original once this has been revealed as constructed.

the 'heart'. Morton describes his sibling's 'softness of temper' as being 'joined to his almost angelic beauty—a quality which, in no female heart, is ever without its value' (1: 148). The notion of a 'join' between Aubrey's mind — his emotional 'softness' — and his body — his physical 'beauty' — comes to be represented by this image of his heart, and, moreover, a heart that is viewed by Morton as like 'female'.

Scholars have previously explored how early nineteenth-century authors employed references to the heart as a way of portraying femininity as innate to female materiality. It also came to be a way in which the feminine could be signalled as essentially distinct from male materiality.[39] The notion of the blending of a female heart with a male heart through an opposite-sex romantic relationship was, further to this, often portrayed as an ideal love union that equally intertwined the feminine and the masculine — something which reaffirmed contemporary notions of an innate gendered distinction between female and male materiality dominant at the time of Bulwer's writing.[40]

Morton's description of Aubrey's heart thus appears — to some degree — to offer a further instance of *Devereux* containing a counter-narrative to the determinism of the female/feminine, male/masculine, given how this younger male sibling's femininity is marked out by Morton as being further exemplified in his brother's soft, angelic, and like 'female' organ. However, the fact that Morton, in doing so, concurrently categorises all 'female heart[s]' as intrinsically feminine suggests that — while he may appreciate Aubrey's individuality in ways unaffected by the gender binary — Morton nonetheless equates female materiality with an innate

[39] See Robert A. Erickson, *The Language of the Heart, 1600-1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 24; and Kirstie Blair, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 11.
[40] See, for instance, Blair's examination of Coleridge's 'The Exchange' and Tennyson's *The Princess* in *Culture of the Heart*, p. 112-114.

femininity, and in turn portrays all women as feminine. Morton, in this sense, now perceives his brother's gender as being 'like' female and in turn 'like a woman's',[41] in contrast to Aubrey previously being viewed and valued by his elder brother as a feminine individual regardless of any sexual materiality he may or may not have.

Morton's perceiving his brother and his brother's 'heart' as being like 'female' perhaps goes some way to explain why the elder sibling — who, at no other point in the novel, displays any kind of same-sex attraction — is so continuingly captivated by Aubrey, and why he subsequently shares a remarkably intimate moment with this male sibling.[42] A short while before Morton leaves for London, he reassures a deeply anxious Aubrey by reaffirming his feelings for him. 'We shall part, it is true, but not before our hearts have annihilated the space that was between them', (1: 32-33) the elder sibling promises. Later, as Morton is 'undressing' in his bedroom the night before his departure, he 'heard a gentle rap at the door, and Aubrey entered. He approached me timidly, and then, throwing his arms around my neck, kissed me in silence', an action which the elder sibling subsequently describes as making 'my heart melt' (70). This moment shared between the two siblings is depicted by Bulwer as a physical intertwining of Aubrey's and Morton's partly-nude, kissing, and embracing bodies, which, for Morton, gives rise to this deeply pleasurable sensation of his heart 'melt[ing]'/blending with his brother's. While this could signal an eroticised element to this night-time bedroom encounter — especially given those afore-noted early-nineteenth century literary associations of a blended heart signifying the emotional

[41] Morton further describes, for example, Aubrey as having 'an uncertain bravery, like a woman's' (1: 17-18).
[42] Depictions of male siblings appearing to desire their female siblings can be witnessed in numerous novels of this time. Jenny DiPlacidi, for instance, has documented how (primarily Gothic) authors often depicted young male characters as harbouring an unusually intense — and potentially sexual — desire for their sisters: in turn, her study examines how the brother's sibling attraction can be seen to represent his 'unconsciously desired qualities' for 'the familiar and recognisable' in a female counterpart, qualities which he would then go on to 'search for in a mate'. See *Gothic Incest*, p. 88.

and physical union between two lovers — Morton's narration only offers a limited insight into this night, and of his experience of their closely involved sibling bond more broadly, as he leaves for London shortly after. It is not until we later witness Aubrey's first-hand account of this moment, and of his experience of losing Morton's exclusive attention, that this brother-brother bond takes on an increasingly passionate, and potentially increasingly incestuous, quality.

Where, across this first section of the novel, Morton has displayed a certain level of attraction towards his brother — and more specifically that which he marked out as his brother's 'female', 'feminine', and 'like a woman' qualities — Aubrey's deeply-rooted feelings for Morton appear within his own narration in a markedly more intense and inextricable way. As a result of his brother's refreshingly positive love of him and his femininity, Aubrey, who had endured years of ridicule and derogation by others for his physical appearance and emotional proclivities,[43] becomes reliant on this connection with his brother and increasingly affected by the feelings his brother's love subsequently excites within him. Describing from his own perspective that encounter he had with Morton before he left for London during a speech given to his brother in the third volume of the novel, Aubrey declares how 'at that very moment my veins burnt with passion!—at that very moment my heart was feeding the vulture fated to live and prey within it forever. Thrice did I resolve to confide in you, and thrice did my evil genius forbid it' (3: 185). Like Morton, Aubrey centres his deeply excited feelings he experiences within their relationship upon his 'heart'. Yet, where Morton's positively described 'melt[ed]' heart conveyed that his own intimate feelings for Aubrey — whatever they may have been — had been sufficiently explored and expressed, Aubrey's unsatisfied and stunted 'heart' signifies

[43] Montreuil, for instance, is described as regarding and ridiculing Aubrey's femininity as an 'infirmity' (3: 180).

that his seemingly much deeper and more complex feelings for Morton remain, by contrast, unsatiated. Its 'veins' are 'burnt' with this unquenched desire. The ensuing reference to his heart as fated to forever 'feed the vulture' sees Aubrey depict this organ almost as something unalive — as a piece of carrion crucially dispossessed of an essential sustenance necessary to bring it to life by awakening and satiating this undisclosed but relentlessly ferocious 'passion'.

In close similarity to the torturous experience of the same-sex desiring Godwinian protagonist, in *Devereux* we see that, despite this male-male emotional/physical connection being positioned in Aubrey's narration as a desperate and essential need, it is concurrently dismissed as something never to be fully expressed. He passionately desires to 'confide' these deep feelings to Morton. Yet, like Charles Mandeville before him,[44] Aubrey appears wholly unable to open his heart to the man he feels so passionately for — the one action, moreover, that would seemingly offer a remedy to all his unbearable woes, but for which there is a seemingly immoveable blockage preventing such blissful relief. Godwin's *St. Leon* features an even closer connection to Bulwer's *Devereux* here, given that Godwin similarly centres such ungratified male-male desire upon the image of an unalive/unconnected heart. As Reginald imagines how he would react if he were to lose the kind of deeply-felt and exclusive love of another man which he dreams of possessing, he declares: 'our hearts, which grew together, suffer amputation; the arteries are closed; the blood is no longer mutually transfused'.[45] Like Aubrey, Reginald comes to perceive male closeness as something which, while not necessarily essential to the state of being alive itself, is nonetheless essential to that life having

---

[44] See my previous examination of how Charles declares he could be a 'man new made' if only he were free to 'have given vent to the various emotions [Clifford] excited within me' in chapter two of this thesis, pp. 102-105.
[45] William Godwin, *St. Leon*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 154.

any kind of hope, meaning, or joy beyond one's own 'heart', and beyond one's own disconnected existence. For both Godwin's and Bulwer's protagonists, these male-male, intertwined, heart-centred bonds transcend far beyond the boundaries of a sympathetic or friendship connection towards something altogether more involved, something altogether more entwined. Yet, concurrently, they also appear as something marked by both an inability to express them, and a fear of never being able to ever realise their need for this exclusive and continuous mutual 'transfus[ion]' of male-male love.

'DISEASE' AND THE 'DEMON': INTERNALISED MONSTROSITY

While both Devereux brothers are portrayed as closely connected to one another, there is a key difference between the nature of the attraction Morton experiences for Aubrey's 'female' femininity and the markedly deeper, more complex, and growingly passionate feelings Aubrey simultaneously experiences for Morton. Namely, the fact that Aubrey displays only a fear and anxiety of his feelings and passions ever being fully realised, whereas Morton simply looks forward with ease to the endless possibilities of further satiating his. 'You ask me my inducement to leave you? "The World" will be sufficient answer. I cannot share your contempt of it, nor your fear. I am, and have been of late, consumed with a thirst—eager, and burning', Morton tells Aubrey as the young sibling begs his brother not to leave the family home and desert their relationship; Morton by contrast only looks forward to exploring life beyond the blood family and encourages Aubrey that he must now similarly embrace the world outside of their sibling bond (1: 67).

Morton regards this 'World' through hungry eyes that discern only positives and potentialities for him to claim a place and quench this elusively described

passion or 'thirst' in ways that the limits of their brother-brother intimacy is seemingly unable to do. In doing so, he appears to position this adolescent relationship with the sibling he regards as like 'female', and whose femininity captivated him so keenly, almost as a kind of forerunner to those passionate, romantic relationships he intends to explore in the world beyond the blood family. *Devereux*, in this sense, can be seen to reflect — and, given Aubrey's sexual materiality, somewhat subvert — how the close sister/brother, female/male sibling bond was commonly conceived within the early nineteenth-century to act as a blueprint for romantic relationships in the 'wider sphere outside the family', and specifically that of marriage.[46] As Morton then sets about exploring his 'thirst', he falls romantically for, and shortly thereafter becomes engaged to, Isora.

For Aubrey, this same 'world' beyond their sibling bond is regarded unappetisingly only as 'hollow and cruel'. Unlike Morton, the younger brother can seemingly discern no possibility or viability that this place can offer any such space for one such as him. The nature of the close connection he has for Morton is seemingly unable to act as this forerunner to a passionate, romantic relationship beyond their blood bond. 'You know not what it is to feel for me, as I at times feel for you' (1: 48), the younger sibling laments to his brother. Bulwer depicts how Aubrey's passions become constrained, intensified, and problematically bound solely to this teenage bond with his brother seemingly due to their inability to develop otherwise. This is a feeling which Aubrey comes to regard his socially privileged, recently engaged elder brother as 'know[ing] not what it is to feel' such troubling emotions. In contrast to Morton's so-described 'burning' desires, Aubrey regards his passion — that which instead remains 'burnt' into his own heart — as something that can ever

[46] Davidoff, p. 21.

be expressed, explored, let alone even named, in that world which appears only as 'hollow' and devoid of meaning for him.

Bulwer's portrayal of this 'hollow' space in which Aubrey's stunted same-sex passion manifests itself as this immoveable adherence to his brother draws connections with that afore-noted 'shadowy realm' described by Judith Butler within their theory of same-sex incest. *Undoing Gender* was one of the first studies to pay close attention to homoeroticism and incestuous love: Butler's queer intervention moved away from dominant (primarily psychoanalytic) theories of incest that minimised or ignored same-sex relationships. These earlier approaches, Butler explains, had worked from a standpoint which prioritised 'norms of kinship' as 'the basis of its theorization', within which family position and normative gender roles had already been 'presuppos[ed]' by theorists.[47]

Butler argues that same-sex incestuous love, unlike the opposite-sex forms of incest upon which psychoanalysis had prioritised attention, cannot be analysed within these normative boundaries. It exists instead in an 'ontologically suspended mode' (60) that transgresses the very boundaries of normative kinship itself. As a 'love that breaks the boundaries of what will and should be liveable social relations', same-sex incest interrogates ideologies of what constitutes legitimate or illegitimate sexualities and genders, and simultaneously exposes the essential inability of normative kinship to inhabit all meaning (160). As Aubrey is forced to navigate his transgressive desires, we can discern how Bulwer, like Butler, recognises the essential limitations of normative kinship relationalities, as well as the torturous experience of the queer individual who is cast beyond its privileged boundaries to

[47] For Butler, psychoanalytic theorists 'attribute incestuous fantasy and its prohibition to the process by which gendered differentiation takes place'; they document how opposite-sex relationships have, as such, been paid much more attention than same-sex. See *Undoing Gender*, pp. 154-155.

this shadowy realm of unintelligibility. Morton's departure forces Aubrey to confront the restrictive and oppressive world beyond their sibling bond. Consumed by fear and hopelessness, Aubrey becomes fixated upon never being extricated from the safety of the brother-brother union, and these increasingly troubled emotions come to be more keenly observed following Morton's departure and his subsequent engagement to Isora. Aubrey relentlessly stalks Morton, and then devastatingly witnesses this romantic and marital union play out before his eyes.

Aubrey's keen envy of this male-female, socially legitimated romantic love is repeatedly centred upon trying to sever the romantic couple's connection, or that which he describes as his wish to 'detach Isora from Morton' (3: 220). This once again sees *Devereux* resonate with more recent theoretical approaches which explore the ways in which incestuous desire may manifest. In moving away from the dominant focus upon normative kinship relations within earlier psychoanalytic approaches to instead focus upon incest and 'otherness', Juan Eduardo Tesone writes along comparative lines to Butler to argue that incestuous desires can function to generate a state of de-structuring of normative social/familial relations.[48] This connects with the way in which Aubrey's desire for his brother comes to manifest as a specific desire to 'detach' his brother's socially legitimated connection to his fiancée. 'The family creates and institutes three types of relation', Tesone outlines, including the 'blood', 'marital', and 'filial'. 'Each person occupies a defined place, the one assigned to him or her in the family constellation', he continues, proposing in turn that incestuous desire can operate as part of the transgressive individual's desire to 'cancel the boundaries' which fixes them into these respective roles.[49] Aubrey's wish

[48] Juan Eduardo Tesone, 'Incest(s) and the Negation of Otherness', in *On Incest: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, ed. by Giovanna Ambrosio (London: Karnac, 2005), pp. 51-64.
[49] Ibid, pp. 53-54.

to ‘detach’ Isora from Morton’s romantic attention could be read erotically as a literal detachment of their bodies; there is also a perhaps more pervasive discomfort within Aubrey’s narration specifically to do with the fact that these lovers can gain access to the freedom and legitimation to explore their romantic bond through the marital contract. Aubrey’s envy is rooted in the fact that their love is privileged with such intelligibility in the social, in contrast to how he has been forced into that ‘hollow’ realm of confusion and unintelligibility. This is witnessed further when we observe Aubrey’s fixation upon Isora’s and Morton’s ‘*bridal night*’ and ‘bridal couch’ during further frenzied imaginings of detaching their love union (3: 233-234) These phrases draw close connections to the Creature’s threat to Victor that he ‘shall be with you on your wedding-night’ in *Frankenstein*, as Shelley similarly explores how her queer outsider’s desperate attempts to navigate this space of unintelligibility outside the social and the familial manifested as a desire to destruct the forms normative kinship relationalities he had been excluded from.[50] Like Shelley, and indeed like Godwin,[51] Bulwer recognises the ill effects that arise when only certain forms of relationalities are granted the privilege of social legitimation, and specifically in relation to the transgressive individual who is forced to try and make sense of their emotions and passions which fall far beyond the boundaries of acceptability and normativity.

Aubrey, in a similar manner to Godwin’s *Mandeville* protagonist before him, subsequently comes to perceive his unexpressed, unsatiated, and unintelligible male-male feelings as festering within him to a point of ‘disease’. Charles Mandeville, when describing his feelings for Clifford, had declared: ‘he is part of myself, a disease that

[50] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (London: Lackington,Hughes, Harding, Mavor, and Jones, 1818), III, p. 48. We also witness this in the Creature’s murder of infant William (see my discussion of this in chapter five of this thesis, pp. 245-246). All subsequent references to *Frankenstein* are to this edition and given as page numbers in the text.
[51] For my previous discussion of queer fury in the work of Shelley and Godwin, see chapter five, pp. 241-246.

has penetrated my bones' (273). Aubrey, when describing his feelings for Morton, declares: 'that was the disease that was in my blood, and in my heart', detailing to his brother that when 'you opened your heart to another [Isora], it stung me to the quick [...] I could not endure that ye loved another as ye loved me' (3: 179). Once again Aubrey's 'heart' — and its (dis)connection to Morton's — takes focus: Morton's romantic 'love' for Isora, and more specifically this image of him 'open[ing]' his heart to her, is positioned within Aubrey's narration as directly compromising the younger sibling's own feeling of heart-to-heart, exclusive connectivity to his brother which he has come to solely rely upon. This, in turn, sees Aubrey, like Charles and his own (dis)connection to Clifford, perceive his troubling passions as faltering and degrading to this diseased state.

Aubrey describes the specific ways in which the scheming Montreuil, desirous of fuelling this destructive passion between Aubrey and his brother, manipulated and aggravated this feeling. 'He spoke to me only of Isora and you', Aubrey tells Morton, with Montreuil having fixated 'glowing on her beauty' and convincing Aubrey that, by comparison to his fiancée, Morton 'had, in reality, never loved *me*' (3: 129). Montreuil — who appears intuitive to the precise nature of Aubrey's feelings for Morton given the specific ways in which he goes about inciting his envy — directs the vulnerable younger sibling's attention in two directions: firstly, upon Isora's feminine beauty, and secondly, upon her exclusive possession of Morton's romantic attention. Aubrey subsequently comes to contrast — and despise — his own femininity, and the nature of his own 'love' for Morton, to that of Isora. As we have seen within the reference to his 'disease[d]' heart and blood, Aubrey, in viewing his own, secret, and unexpressed feelings for his brother alongside the publicly known, openly romantic, opposite-sex love Isora and Morton enjoy with one another, reviles his same-sex passion as an infection running throughout and plaguing his body. He then comes to

regard the feminine body in which that blood circulates as similarly plagued and disordered.

Aubrey recounts his deep enjoyment of the way in which Morton used to be exclusively captivated by his femininity during their adolescent years, recalling how he used to vehemently 'praise the womanish softness of my face'. Aubrey then details how, when he was left alone by his brother and supplanted in Morton's affections by Isora, he had come to 'see that face in the glass, and known it not, but started in wild affright, and fancied that I beheld a demon' (3: 198). Aubrey's transition from the initially personalised reference to 'my face' to this detached reference to 'that face' signals the sudden sense of disconnection he now experiences towards his body — and specifically his visible femininity — following what appears as this deeply affecting loss of Morton's exclusive love to Isora. With the younger sibling subsequently comparing himself to Isora and her celebrated female/feminine 'beauty' that was pinpointed so 'glowingly' by Montreuil, *Devereux* depicts a process in which Aubrey comes to hate and de-legitimise his socially ridiculed male femininity only as this 'demon' whose physical form he is repulsed to come face-to-face with, and that he now feels in no way able to live his life, and his desires, within.

Aubrey perceives the vessel in which he has to navigate the world and navigate his desires as though he is wrongly living his life within a foreign anatomy — as though, like *Transfusion*'s Madeline/Albert entity, he is possessing an alien, distorted, incorrect body. *Devereux* perhaps draws more apposite comparisons here with Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and specifically the moment when the Creature feels confused and ultimately repulsed when coming face-to-face with his monstrous reflection in the 'transparent pool'. As Aubrey believes that he 'beheld a demon' in his own mirrored image, the Creature believes 'I was in reality the monster' who he believes he sees staring back at him from the water (2: 63-64). Like we have seen

with the Creature's self-perceived monstrosity and his ensuing murderous rage in the preceding chapter of this thesis, Aubrey violently reacts to the sense of confusion, marginalisation, and ridicule he has experienced as a result of society's treatment of this so-described demonic otherness. And he does so, like the Creature, by subsequently *becoming* this demon — by performing destructive, fatal actions akin to those which I have previously explored in this thesis as acts of 'queer fury'.[52]

The Creature's fatal attack on William actively severed the kind of domestic affection which he himself had been so cruelly denied a chance to experience.[53] And, as *Devereux* draws to its tragic climax, Aubrey, who has become unbearably consumed by his growingly ferocious envy of their legitimated love, finds himself manically believing that his sole relief to his ostracization is to be found in attacking Isora and Morton and, in turn, irrevocably bringing to fruition that 'detach[ment]' of their marital love that he has become so fixated upon achieving. 'I know not how I found your chamber', Aubrey describes to Morton during his confession, 'I stood in the same room with Isora and yourself. [...] O God! I know no more—no more of that night of horror—save that I fled from the house reeking with blood—a murderer' (3: 238). Bulwer depicts this dramatic scene as one in which Aubrey's possessed, demonic body is acting almost independently of his rational, conscious mind, beyond the younger sibling's ability to 'know' or understand the murderous actions that he is actively performing. All he does 'know', all he can seemingly remember as he re-treads this fateful night, is that it is his actions that have directly resulted in the death and near-death of this innocent married couple.

The way in which Bulwer portrays Aubrey and his transgressive passions, desires, and ultimately murderous actions may appear to be decidedly less-than-

[52] See chapter five of this thesis, pp. 243-246.
[53] See my examination of the Creature's murder of William in chapter five of this thesis, pp. 245-246.

positive: this character's love is portrayed as diseased, his male femininity is positioned as demonic, and the fury that these ultimately contribute to directly result in the violent death and destruction of a wholesome, loving marital union and its guiltless female and male participants. Given their similarities, it would not be unfeasible to assume that Bulwer could be writing in support of early-nineteenth century social and political commentators who declared male same-sex desire, as well as men who transgressed the ideological and acceptable boundaries of the male/masculine more broadly, to be inherently and indubitably 'disease[d]' and disordered. Commentators warned that such sexual and gender transgressions would prove fatally and directly harmful to the sanctity of marriage, family, and civilised social order, and from which society must be continually protected: a destructive fate which Aubrey Devereux indeed comes to realise over the course of the novel.[54] Yet, there is a key factor setting Bulwer's presentation of Aubrey's diseased desire, demonic femininity, and his furious, destructive tendencies within the novel which sets the 1829 work apart from the direct associative thinking witnessed in such damning accounts. Namely, the fact Bulwer instead goes some way to unpick — and destabilise — the notion that sexual/gender transgressions are inherently and directly destructive to the established order of human society and relationality. *Devereux*, like we have seen with Shelley's and Godwin's portrayal of the queer outsider in the preceding chapter of this thesis, instead brings attention to how — for

[54] In addition to the examples previously documented in this thesis of same-sex desire being declared a disease, and as something from which the family unit — and more specifically its innocent 'children' — must always be protected (see chapter five, pp. 241-242), we can also trace early-nineteenth century accounts that present same-sex desire as directly damaging to the sanctity of marriage. One court report, for instance, describes 'habits of intimacy' between men as 'a most wicked and diabolical nature' that would devastatingly 'alienate her affections from her husband'. See 'Law Intelligence', *Morning Chronicle*, 19 November 1804 <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/morning-chronicle> [accessed 5 May 2022]. Another report details how such desire, in its capacity to ruin what is glowingly described as 'domestic peace [...] must be considered as an offence of the deepest stain by which the heart of man can be blackened'. See 'The King vs. Edwards and Passingham', *The Times*, 2 July 1805 <www.thetimes.co.uk/archive> [accessed 7 August 2021].

those individuals who find themselves torturously at odds with these gendered boundaries of acceptability within human society — it is the externally imposed inability to freely and fearlessly express oneself and one's inner desires which is the true destructive force at work.

Take, for instance, Aubrey's final declaration to Morton as the novel reaches its closing stages. 'It was the knowledge that my love was criminal that made it assume so fearful and dark a shape', he explains, before going on to reveal his internalised belief that 'I knew it was a crime to love any of earth's creatures as I loved' (3: 193). Whether the younger sibling refers here to a same-sex 'love', an incestuous 'love', or a confused combination of the two, we cannot explicitly account for.[55] What we can discern from this statement is that any notion of Aubrey's 'love' being essentially or inherently diseased, disordered, or destructive is explicitly contested: it is only Aubrey's 'knowledge' that his desire has transgressed an externally imposed ideological boundary that has 'made it' furiously transform into this dark state. Further in their queer re-evaluation of incestuous love, Butler writes how, from that 'shadowy realm' that the same-sex transgressor was forced into, 'what emerges is a melancholia that attends living and loving outside the livable and outside the field of love'.[56] (160) This description aptly describes the process in which Aubrey's 'love' for Morton manifests itself in this destructive way due to its hollow existence in a space in which same-sex passion had no viable outlet to be openly expressed or lived as love.

Butler concludes their study by observing that 'the prohibition on incest', while apparently functioning to 'protect against a violation [...] sometimes becomes

[55] I refer to the fact that Aubrey describes his 'love' here in a generalised sense that does not explicitly state why exactly it is 'criminal'. His focus is instead placed upon delineating 'the intensity' (3: 193) of his feelings towards Isora, Morton, and his envy towards their love.
[56] *Undoing Gender*, p. 160.

the very instrument of that violation', exposing 'the aberration in normative kinship, an aberration that might also [...] force a revision and expansion on those very terms' (160). Across this chapter I have illustrated how Bulwer, in his role as the self-described renewer of the Godwinian novel, can be seen to call for such a revision and expansion of normative kinship comparative to that which Butler refers to here. Bulwer's construction of Aubrey's desperate declaration to Morton in this tragic concluding scene between the brothers positions that external force — those social and familial regimes which dictate which forms of love are and are not 'criminal' — as the destructor and the violator. 'Had you feared less', the elder brother declares, 'you might have confided in me, and you would not have sinned and suffered as you have done' (3: 242). It is this socially created sense of 'fear' — Aubrey's consciousness of the consequences if he were to ever to express his same-sex desires — that Morton understands to be the root cause of his brother's fatal destruction. Forced into an unguided and lonely existence in the shadowy realm beyond the safety and sanctity of normative and acceptable kinship, the 'dark and fearful shape' assumed by Aubrey's passion was predicated on its torturous inability to ever be anything else.

*

As *Devereux* draws to a close, Morton ponders his brother's plea for forgiveness, before asking the reader: 'who on earth shall withhold pardon from a crime, which on earth has been so awfully punished?' (3: 242). For all of its unmissable death, disaster, and destruction, *Devereux*, like the Godwinian novels that inspired it, seems actually to be a work primarily — if not only — about hope. Just as Charles Mandeville had looked forward to that alternative, utopian futurity in which he would have been free and fearless to 'have given vent to the various emotions

[Clifford] had excited within me' (220), *Devereux* concludes in very similar fashion with Morton's consideration of an emancipated future world in which Aubrey would not have enacted his ultimately tragic behaviour if only he had been free to express his deeply-felt passions. This poignant question Morton poses at the novel's close is thus fitting not only for the story of Aubrey Devereux, but for the stories of the tragedy-stricken characters witnessed across the writing of Godwin and his circle. From Godwin's Charles Mandeville, to Shelley's Creature, to Baillie's De Monfort, and the numerous other queer outcasts and outsiders witnessed across this thesis, their 'crime' originated in their tortuous — and inescapable — inability to love and to live in ways unhindered by the social, familial, and political forces curtailing their free ability to do so. Queers are not monsters, these authors continue to tell us. They are made so by monstrous constraints.

CONCLUSION

In order to most productively reflect upon my queer re-evaluation of Godwin and his circle, to appraise how this project contributes to the current and emerging conversations happening within both Romantic and queer studies today, and to look ahead to the exciting future of queer Romanticisms, I begin this conclusion by turning back to the very beginning of my academic studies.

I first became acquainted with the work of William Godwin in the late noughties during my time as an English Literature undergraduate. *Caleb Williams* was a set text on the first-year module 'Romanticisms': I was immediately struck at how this late-eighteenth century author, whom at that point I knew very little about, centred his novel upon a turbulent same-sex relationship which appeared to far exceed the platonic boundaries of the homosocial. I later proposed to the seminar group that we could potentially read the novel as a tragic story of unrealised romantic love between two men. I can still recall the silence that ensued, and the expression on the tutor's face when they paused, frowned, and replied: 'I'd be cautious with getting too carried away with *that* kind of reading'. Sufficiently cowed, I thought in that moment that I would most likely not be pursuing this apparently hazardous line of enquiry any further.[1]

Looking back on this a decade and a half later, it feels fulfilling to have written a thesis which argues not only for the existence of same-sex and non-normative forms of desire, love, and kinship across Godwin's fiction, but which argues that Godwin actively advocated for such relationships and, in doing so, inspired authors

---

[1] Like the paranoid Gothic studies which I outlined in the introduction to this thesis (pp. 1-5, 12-15), the seminar tutor's concerns were centred mainly upon what they perceived as the dangers of such a reading proving ahistorical.

connected to him to do the same. Despite the caution warranted in that seminar, I retained a belief that Godwin's fiction had the potential to be read as queer. Later in my undergraduate years, as I worked my way through the five-decade span of Godwin's major novels, I discovered that he was repeatedly committed to examining transgressive passions and unconventional relationalities. I came to see Godwin, in contrast to his established reputation within Romantic studies at that time as one who was ambivalent towards and even disdainful of the 'private affections',[2] to be an author who instead appeared recurringly fascinated with them. While I wanted to offer a queer rereading of his novels, I lacked the confidence to explore alternative interpretations: the dominance of the numerous paranoid readings of his fiction always led me back to wondering whether Godwin was indeed writing his novels only as cautionary tales.[3]

Some years later, upon returning to academia to complete a Master's in Sexuality and Gender Studies, I was introduced to the work of Heather Love. The majority of the queer scholars whose work I became familiar with were concerned predominantly with queer present and/or queer futurities, with a noticeable hesitance within the field to extend focus beyond the very recent past due to the difficult, problematic, and/or triggering nature of historical queer experiences and representations.[4] Love adopted an alternative stance within her study: instead of always moving on, queers must now re-evaluate, uncover, and reclaim histories of same-sex and non-normative desire to consider how this history continues to affect

[2] See chapter two for my previous discussion of Godwin's reputation within Romantic studies, p. 85.
[3] Critics repeatedly argued that Godwin wrote his novels as a way to issue caution towards transgressive and same-sex passions. For my previous discussion of this see the introduction to this thesis, pp. 1-5, 12-15.
[4] Love aligns this hesitancy within queer studies with the contemporary move to the mainstream in lesbian and gay culture, arguing that gay assimilation entails a loss of historical queer experiences associated with shame and the closet. For my earlier discussion of Love's work in this area, see the introduction to this thesis, see pp. 27-29.

us in the present. When Love, who felt backward as far as the very late-nineteenth century within her work, explained how historical authors had unfairly been 'held accountable for the realities they represented and often end[ed] up being branded as internally homophobic',[5] I instantly remembered Godwin. I remembered the seminar tutor who discouraged any interpretation of this author's fiction that suggested his portrayal of same-sex passion was anything other than cautionary, and I remembered the numerous paranoid readings of his fiction that openly labelled Godwin as a 'homophobic' novelist.[6] I then began to form a more comprehensive idea of what it was I wanted to suggest about his novels: Godwin wasn't portraying these transgressive passions as intrinsically and unchangeably ruinous — he was portraying these passions as having manifested as such because of their torturous inability to be expressed, explored, and lived. It was then that the basis of this thesis materialised: the initial aim of my re-evaluation of the paranoid approaches to Godwin was to argue that the disruptive portrayal of same-sex passion within his fiction could be read as advocative, and not homophobic.

In 2019, following my first ever conference presentation 'Homoeroticism in the Writing of William Godwin', an audience member asked: 'what's the political weight to this?'. 'I'm largely convinced by your readings in and of themselves,' they continued, 'but I wondered if you could speak more on the implications of these same-sex relationships in relation to Godwin's political and social views?'. I struggled to formulate a satisfactory answer to this on the spot: in that moment I realised that, in my near exclusive attentiveness to evidencing how male-male romantic passion was portrayed positively within the author's novels, I had neglected to then scrutinise

[5] *Feeling Backward* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 4.
[6] For my previous discussion of Godwin's reputation as a 'homophobic' novelist, see the introduction to this thesis, pp. 1-3.

how these dyadic relationships connected with Godwinian philosophy more broadly, and, in so doing, had likely circumscribed the effectiveness of my queer re-evaluation of his work. I could argue that Charles's problematic passion for Clifford in *Mandeville* was an unsatiated eroticised one, but what do we gain from such a reading? I could argue that Julian's love for Francesco in *Cloudesley* was a utopian romantic one, but how does our understanding of the novel, and of Godwin as a philosopher, benefit from this?

I went away to reflect on the most effective ways to explore how these same-sex passions within Godwin's novels could most effectively be analysed in communication with his political and philosophical discourse. Shortly after this, as the COVID-19 pandemic struck, I, along with many other doctoral students, found myself in unfamiliar and unexpected territory: I now had lots of time alone to think about my thesis, but limited or no access to the resources, conferences, and forms of communication that would traditionally nourish the research and writing process. While I initially regarded this isolation only as a hindrance, I came to appreciate how the experience of studying for a PhD during lockdown created a new, if albeit strange, space for thinking and reflection. As we were all forced to navigate this changing academic (and life) landscape in the coming weeks, months, and years, Romantic studies and queer studies consequently entered into a period of reflection and re-evaluation.

In June 2020, the BARS 'Romantic Futurities' virtual conference — the first BARS meeting to be held following the announcement of lockdown earlier that year — was focused upon 'prompting a more meaningful engagement with past and present' so as to 'contest and expand the traditional boundaries of Romanticism'; as

the world contended with ‘an uncertain future’, so, too, did the field.[7] This focus within Romantic studies upon challenging traditions and boundaries through formulating new approaches has since continued into the meetings of BARS and NASSR in 2021 and 2022, with the conference themes of ‘Romantic Disconnections/Reconnections’ and ‘New Romanticisms’.[8] As Romanticists shifted attention towards the future through considering the field’s changing relationship with — and relevance to — the socio-political issues of the present day, queer theorists working to form new approaches to queer started to shift attention towards the past. The Queer/Disrupt 2021 conference moved away from the previous dominant focus within the field upon queer present and queer futurities to (re)consider ‘the role of history in shaping our contemporary and future understandings of queer’ so as to then foster ‘new ways’ of thinking about and theorising queer that continue to expand and diversify its usage.[9] This focus within queer scholarly communities upon re-evaluating and developing our understanding of queer through engaging with the historical experience has continued to shape research in very recent years, with heritage projects such as OUTing the Past and Queering the Museum dedicated to ‘facilitating a comprehensive reading of our diverse past’ through ‘revealing and celebrating LGBTQ+ heritage’.[10]

[7] Andrew McInnes, ‘Should We Cancel Romantic Studies?’, <https://romanticridiculous.wordpress.com/2020/06/15/should-we-cancel-romantic-studies/> [accessed 4 Oct 2022]. McInnes’s review of the ‘Romantic Futurities’ conference explores how the field must continue to expand beyond ‘the confines of the traditional Romantic canon’ by embracing Black and trans studies in order that Romantic studies can respond to the far right politics dominant in our present moment (para. 9 of 15).
[8] ‘Romantic Disconnections/Reconnections’ (virtual, 12-13 and 16-20 August 2021); ‘New Romanticisms’ (Edge Hill University, 2-5 August 2022).
[9] ‘“Mainstreaming Queerness”: The New Queer Vanguard’ (virtual, 10-11 June 2021) <https://www.queerdisrupt.com/index.php/conference/> [accessed 2 October 2022] (para. 5 of 5).
[10] OUTing the Past: The International Festival of LGBTQ+ History (2022) <https://www.outingthepast.com/main> [accessed 14 October 2022] (para. 5 of 6); Out and About: Queering the Museum (2022) <https://rammuseum.org.uk/get-involved/community-and-outreach/out-and-about-queering-the-museum> [accessed 12 October 2022] (para. 1 of 14).

As I reflected upon my own research and its place within this strange, shifting, and unfamiliar landscape amidst the continuing effects of COVID-19, I felt as though this thesis had the potential to respond to both these 'new' approaches to Romanticism and these 'new' approaches to queer that had continued to gain traction since early 2020. I began to analyse Godwin's portrayal of same-sex passion within his novels directly in relation to his philosophies of the body, the mind, human relationality, materiality, kinship, love, domesticity, marriage, the family unit, and numerous other areas across his philosophical and political discourse that my close readings of his novels guided me towards; I worked to uncover a genealogy of counter-cultural thought extending from Godwin and those writers who inspired his novels, through to the influence that his fiction and radicalism had upon his circle in the early nineteenth century, and through to his anticipation of the work of queer theorists in the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This facilitated me to expand the usage of queer within this thesis beyond same-sex passion: I built upon previous scholarship on sexuality, gender, and kinship within Romantic studies — as well as the exciting work on queer Romanticisms emerging in more recent years — in order to argue for Godwin's place within a broader history of queer thinking and theorisation and, in turn, expand our understanding of the queer archive.[11] Despite the caution that had previously been issued from some Romantic scholars about the potentially anachronistic pitfalls of such an undertaking,[12] the more I pursued this line of enquiry the more I believed there was real potential within a queer rereading of Godwin's fiction, influence, and legacy to contribute to the calls for expansion and re-evaluation within both Romantic and queer studies.

---

[11] For an outline of the recent scholarship focused upon expanding the archive within queer studies, see the introduction to this thesis, pp. 38-39.
[12] Ibid, pp. 23-25.

While I originally intended to illustrate how Godwin's writing prefigured the theories of Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Lee Edelman, José Esteban Muñoz, and other queer critics, my research developed — and continues to develop — in ways that pursue a more interactive and productive approach to queer(ing) Godwin and his circle. 'It's interesting to see how Godwin's writing anticipates queer theory', a reviewer commented on an early draft of my reading of the disruptive presentation of domesticity in *St. Leon*. 'But have you considered the possibility that his work might then assist us to modify or expand our understandings of queer in the present moment?'. As I pursued this intriguing suggestion over the coming months, my research opened up to new trains of thought in which I aimed to put Godwinian philosophy into conversation with modern-day queer theorists: this culminated in the exciting discovery during the late stages of my doctoral studies that Godwin's work could guide us to respond to the current controversies and criticisms within queer theory levelled at both the antirelational/antiutopian and the relational/utopian approaches.

This more interactive approach to exploring connections between Godwinian philosophy and queer theory has most recently proved to be fruitful for thinking about how my research could most suitably contribute to Romantic studies in 2022, and, more specifically, to 'New Romanticisms' — the first in-person (hybrid) meeting of BARS and NASSR in three years. 'This conference has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and, therefore, its focus on new feels more urgent than ever', the call for papers outlined. 'What does it mean to study Romanticism today? How can Romantic studies appropriately and effectively respond to current debates about the relevance of Higher Education, social justice, climate change, and contemporary

culture more generally?'.[13] Over four days delegates were treated to a remarkable array of papers that each responded to this notion of 'new' in varied and diverse ways. I presented on the 'LGBTQ+ Romanticism' panel: it was a joy to finally be able to meet in-person with fellow scholars after years of limited interaction only through Twitter threads and Zoom calls.

As we each shared and discussed our research, it was inspiring to observe the diverse ways in which we were each contributing to this emerging community of queer and trans Romanticists; it felt like David Collings's and Michael O'Rourke's call to action back in 2004 was beginning to gain a more active and sustained response after years of hesitancy within the field to embrace and explore queer within (and beyond) the period.[14] My paper, 'Non-Binary Godwin', suggested that Godwin's theory of the (im)materiality of the body could assist us in formulating non-bioessentialist alternatives to the problematic dichotomy of AFAB and AMAB that have become increasingly prevalent within genderqueer and non-binary communities in recent years.[15] Comparing this to my last in-person presentation — the 2019 paper on homoeroticism in Godwin's novels which I delivered just a few months before the announcement of the first lockdown — felt like a suitable reflection of the journey my own approach to and understanding of queer Romanticisms had undergone in the three ensuing years of navigating a PhD and a pandemic.

I now look forward to the next hybrid meeting of NASSR in 2023: I am due to present my research on Godwin as part of an all-virtual panel on trans and non-

[13] Emily Paterson-Morgan, 'CFP (BARS/NASSR): New Romanticisms', <https://www.bars.ac.uk/blog/?p=3901> [accessed 1 October 2022] (para. 2 of 6).
[14] I refer here to the special issue 'Queer Romanticisms': Michael O'Rourke's and David Collings's call to action is outlined in the introduction to this thesis, pp. 29-30.
[15] Simon Clewes, 'Non-Binary Godwin', unpublished paper delivered at the conference 'New Romanticisms' (Edge Hill University, 2-5 August 2022). AFAB and AMAB refer to the process of being assigned/designated female or male at birth.

binary Romanticisms. This opportunity has been made possible only by the new approaches to conference design and deliverance that have materialised since the onset of the pandemic,[16] as Romantic studies continues to make strides towards increasing inclusivity and diversity not just in relation to subjects and materials, but in relation to the processes and applications of study.[17] While I am thrilled to have further opportunities to share my research, I am perhaps most excited to have the chance to see how the field of queer and trans Romanticisms has developed in recent — and will continue to develop in the coming — years, in addition to learning about the many other new ways in which scholars expand and diversify work in the field more broadly.

I hope that the re-evaluation of Godwin in this thesis has demonstrated how queering his writing has facilitated us to explore alternative interpretations of his fiction, philosophy, and influence in ways that expand and diversify our appreciation of the author and his circle — and, moreover, in ways that resist categorising, defining, or imposing boundaries upon our ability to formulate new approaches to authors, the periods in which they were writing, and the legacies which they leave. As Romantic studies continues to embrace 'open, inclusive, accessible, and diverse' approaches to scholarship, and as queer studies continues to embrace the expansiveness and indefinability of queer,[18] it is perhaps not unfeasible to suggest that Godwin would likely have approved of these approaches which actively encourage new ways of thinking about the links between past, present, and future in order to develop and diversify how, why, and whom we study. 'If the energy of our

[16] Due to presenters not all being able to present in-person, the new hybrid conference format allows for all-virtual panels to still take place.
[17] That is, hybrid and virtual conferences allow for greater accessibility than in-person only, as well as offering the opportunity for delegates to consume recorded presentations after the live event has taken place.
[18] Paterson-Morgan, para. 2 of 6.

minds should lead us to aspire to something more than dull repetition, if we love the happiness of mankind enough to feel ourselves impelled to explore new and untrodden paths, we must then not rest contended with considering society in a mass', Godwin stressed in a 1797 essay in which he explained why historical research must always work to uncover and represent human 'individualities'.[19] 'Laying aside the generalities of historical abstraction, we must mark the operation of human passions. [...] It is thus, and thus only, that we shall be enabled to add, to the knowledge of the past, a sagacity that can penetrate into the depths of futurity',[20] he continues — a plea which this thesis, and the 'new and untrodden paths' down which it has gone, has aimed to add to our own present-day understandings of William Godwin and his queer legacy.

[19] William Godwin, 'Of History and Romance', in *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2016), pp. 461-468 (pp. 462-463).
[20] Ibid, p. 463.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Alexander, Jonathan and Karen Yescavage, '"The Scholars Formerly Known as…": Bisexuality, Queerness and Identity Politics', in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Queer Theory*, ed. by Noreen Giffney and Michael O'Rourke (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 49-64

Allen, Samuel H. and Shawn N. Mendez, 'Hegemonic Heteronormativity: Toward a New Era of Queer Family Theory', *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10: 1 (2018), 70-86

Anderson, Robert, 'Godwin Disguised: Politics in the Juvenile Library', in *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert M. Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 125-148.

Baillie, Joanna, *Plays on the Passions*, ed. by Peter Duthie (Ontario: Broadview, 2001)

——, *A Series of Plays: In Which it is Attempted to Delineate the Stronger Passions of Mind* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821)

Baillie, Matthew, *Lectures and Observations on Medicine* (London: Printed for Richard Taylor, 1825)

Bataille, Georges, *Erotism: Death and* Sensuality, trans. by Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986)

Baumeister, Roy F., 'Masochism as Escape from Self', *Journal of Sex Research*, 25: 1 (1998), 28-59

Bell, Charles, *Idea of a New Anatomy of the Brain* (London: Strahan and Preston, 1811), p. 8.

Bieri, James, *Percy Bysshe Shelley A Biography: Youth's Unextinguished Fire, 1792-1816*, (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2004)

Blair, Kirstie, *Victorian Poetry and the Culture of the Heart* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Bray, Alan, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982)

'Brief Sketch of the Life of Mary Wollstonecraft', in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (New York: A. J. Matsell, 1833)

Bulwer-Lytton, Edward, *Devereux: A Tale* (London: Henry Colburn, 1829)

——, *Paul Clifford* (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830)

Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Printed for R. and J. Dodsley, 1757)

Burroughs, Catherine B. *Closet Stages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997)

Burton, Ralph Pollin, *Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin* (New York: Las Americas, 1962)

Butler, Judith, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (London: Routledge, 2014)

——, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 1999)

——, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004)

Cárdenas, Micha, 'Pregnancy: Reproductive Futures in Trans Color Feminism', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 3: 1-2 (2016), 48-57

Carlson, Julie, *England's First Family of Writers: Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Mary Shelley* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007)

——, 'Heavy Drama', in *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert M. Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 217-240

Chichester, Teddi Lynn, 'Love, Sexuality, Gender: On Love, Discourse on Love, and the Banquet of Plato', in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Michael O'Neill, Anthony Howe, and Madeleine Callaghan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 141-147

Clemit, Pamela, 'Introduction', in *St. Leon*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. vii-xxiii

Clewes, Simon, '"Albert's soul looked forth from the organs of Madeline": Anticipating Transness in William Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 76 (2021) <https://ronjournal.org/s/6433> [accessed 7 August 2022]

——, 'Non-Binary Godwin', unpublished paper delivered at the conference 'New Romanticisms' (Edge Hill University, 2-5 August 2022)

Collett, Cathy, 'Every Child Left Behind: *St. Leon* and William Godwin's Immortal Future', *European Romantic Review*, 25: 3 (2014), 327-336

Corber, Robert J., 'Representing the "Unspeakable"': William Godwin and the Politics of Homophobia', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 1: 1 (1990), 85-107

Cover, Rob, *Queer Youth Suicide, Culture and Identity: Unliveable Lives?* (London: Routledge, 2012)

Cronin, Richard, *Romantic Victorians* (New York: Palgrave, 2002)

Darwin, Erasmus, *Zoonomia; or, the Laws of Organic Life* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, 1796)

Davidoff, Leonore, 'The Sibling Relationship and Sibling Incest in Historical Context', in *Sibling Relationships*, ed. by Prophecy Coles (London: Karnac, 2006), pp. 1-31

'Devereux', in *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, London, Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1829, XXVI, pp. 391-92

DiPlacidi, Jenny, *Gothic Incest: Gender, Sexuality and Transgression* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018)

Edelman, Lee, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004)

Elfenbein, Andrew, 'Mary Wollstonecraft and the Sexuality of Genius', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 228-245

——, *Romantic Genius: The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999)

Elliotson, John, *Human Physiology* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, & Longman, 1835)

Ellison, Julie, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Erickson, Robert A., *The Language of the Heart, 1600-1750* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997)

Fincher, Max, *Queering Gothic in the Romantic Age: The Penetrating Eye* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Fink, Bruce, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017)

Foster, Travis M., 'Race, Sex, and God', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies,* 28: 2 (2022), 289-297

Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. by Robert Hurley, 3 vols (New York: Vintage, 1990)

Fraistat, Shawn, 'Godwin's Fear of the Private Affections', in *New Approaches to William Godwin*, ed. by Eliza O'Brien, Helen Stark, and Beatrice Turner (London: Palgrave, 2021), pp. 103-126

Friedman, Dustin, *Before Queer Theory: Victorian Aestheticism and the Self* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2019)

——, 'Parents of the Mind: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Aesthetics of Productive Masculinity', *Studies in Romanticism*, 48: 4 (2009), 423-446.

Fulford, Tim, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999)

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000)

Godwin, William, *Cloudesley: A Tale* (London: William Pickering, 1992)

——, *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793)

——, *Fleetwood*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001)

——, 'Of History and Romance', in *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2016), pp. 461-468

——, *Mandeville*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan (Ontario: Broadview, 2016)

——, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (London: J. Johnson, 1798)

——, *Of Population: An Enquiry Concerning the Power of Increase in the Numbers of Mankind* (London, Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1820)

——, *St. Leon*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994)

——, *Things as They Are; or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams* (London: Printed for B. Crosby, 1794)

——, *Thoughts on Man: His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries* (London: Effingham Wilson, 1831)

Godwin Jr., William, 'The Executioner', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, February 1832, pp. 306-319, 483-495

——, *Transfusion; or, The Orphans of Unwalden* (London: John Macrone, 1835)

Gold Jr., Alex, 'It's Only Love: The Politics of Passion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 19:2 (1977), 135-160

González, Octavio R., 'Towards a Black-Queer Critical Rhetoricism', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 28: 2 (2022), 311-316

Greenberg, David F., *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988)

Grimwade, Robert. 'Between the Quills: Schopenhauer and Freud on Sadism and Masochism', *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92: 1 (2011), 149-169

Haggerty, George E., *Queer Friendship: Male Intimacy in the English Literary Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

——, *Queer Gothic* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2006)

——, 'What is Queer About *Frankenstein*?', in *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*, ed. by Andrew Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 116-127

Halberstam, Jack, *The Queer of the Failure* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011)

Handwerk, Gary and A. A. Markley, 'Introduction', in *Fleetwood*, ed. by Gary Handwerk and A. A. Markley (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), pp. 9-39

Hayes, Jarrod, Margaret R. Higonnet, and William J. Spurlin, eds, *Comparatively Queer: Interrogating Identities Across Time and Cultures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)

Hazlitt, William, 'Phrenological Fallacies', in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. by P. P. Howe (London and Toronto: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1933)

Heydt-Stevenson, Jillian and Charlotte Sussman, eds, *Recognizing the Romantic Novel* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011)

Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: Edward Moxon, 1858)

Holmes, Richard, *Shelley on Love: An Anthology* (California: University of California Press, 1980)

Horner, Jim, 'Henry George on Thomas Robert Malthus: Abundance vs. Scarcity', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 56: 4 (1997), 595-607

Hume, David, *A Treatise on Human Nature,* ed. by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1874)

Hunt Botting, Eileen, *Family Feuds: Wollstonecraft, Burke, and Rosseau on the Transformation of the Family* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2006)

Johnson, Claudia L., *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)

Johnson, Nancy E., 'Wollstonecraft and Godwin: Dialogues', in *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, ed. by Pamela Clemit (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 101-116

Kegan Paul, Charles, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1876)

Kibbie, Ann Louise, *Transfusion: Blood and Sympathy in the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2019)

'The King vs. Edwards and Passingham', *The Times*, 2 July 1805 <www.thetimes.co.uk/archive> [accessed 7 August 2021]

Kock-Rein, Anson, '*Trans*-lating the Monster: Transgender Affect and *Frankenstein*', *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, 30: 1 (2019), 44-61

Kosofsky Sedgwick, Eve, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)

——, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008)

Laqueur, Thomas, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1992)

Lauritsen, John, 'Hellenism and Homoeroticism in Shelley and his Circle', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 49: 3-4 (2005), 357-376

'Law Intelligence', *Morning Chronicle*, 19 November 1804 <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/morning-chronicle> [accessed 5 May 2022]

Lawrence, William, *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology, and the Natural History of Man, Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons* (London: Benbow, 1822)

Lennon, Erica and Brian J. Mistler, 'Cisgenderism', *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 1: 1-2 (2014), 63-64

‘Letter’, *Morning Chronicle,* 26 July 1822 <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/morning-chronicle> [accessed 4 August 2021]

Letters From Percy Bysshe Shelley to William Godwin (London: Privately Printed, 1891)

Liebregts, Peter, ‘Forward’, in *The Literal Utopias of Cultural Communities, 1790-1910*, ed. by Marguérite Corporaal and Evert Jan van Leeuwen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 1-8

Love, Heather, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2007)

‘“Mainstreaming Queerness”: The New Queer Vanguard’ (virtual, 10-11 June 2021) <https://www.queerdisrupt.com/index.php/conference/> [accessed 2 October 2022]

Malthus, Thomas Robert, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: Penguin, 1970)

Maniquis, Robert, and Victoria Myers, eds, *Godwinian Moments: From the Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011)

Markley, A. A., ‘“The Success of Gentleness”: Homosocial Desire and the Homosexual Personality in the Novels of William Godwin’, *Romanticism on the Net*, 36-37 (2004) <https://doi.org/10.7202/011139ar>

Marshall, Julian, *The Life and Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1889)

May, Marilyn, ‘Publish and Perish: William Godwin, Mary Shelley, and the Public Appetite for Scandal’, *Papers on Language and Literature*, 26: 4 (1990), 489-512

McDayter, Ghislaine, 'On the Publication of William Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, 1798', *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History* (2012) <https://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=ghislaine-mcdayter-on-the-publication-of-william-godwins-memoirs-of-the-author-of-a-vindication-of-the-rights-of-woman-1798> [accessed 5 October 2021]

McInnes, Andrew, 'Should We Cancel Romantic Studies?' <https://romanticridiculous.wordpress.com/2020/06/15/should-we-cancel-romantic-studies/> [accessed 4 October 2022]

Mellor, Anne K., 'Righting the Wrongs of Woman: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria*', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 19: 4 (1996), 413-424

——, *Romanticism and Gender* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)

Mennel, Barbara Caroline, *The Representation of Masochism and Queer Desire in Film and Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Muñoz, José Esteban, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009)

Murphy, Carmel, 'Possibilities of Past and Future: Republican History in William Godwin's *Mandeville*', *The Keats-Shelley Review*, 28: 2 (2014), 104-116

Myers, Mitzi, 'Godwin's *Memoirs* of Wollstonecraft: The Shaping of Self and Subject', *Studies in Romanticism*, 20: 3 (1981), 299-316

Norton, Rictor, *Homosexuality in Eighteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook* (2022), <https://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/index.htm> [accessed 3 October 2022]

——, *Myth of the Modern Homosexual* (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 1997)

O'Brien, Eliza, Helen Stark, and Beatrice Turner, eds, *New Approaches to William Godwin: Forms, Fears, Futures* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021)

O'Donnell, Katherine, 'Effeminate Edmund Burke and the Masculine Voice of Mary Wollstonecraft', *Journal of Gender Studies*, 28: 7 (2019), 789-801

O'Rourke, Michael and David Collings, 'Queer Romanticisms: Past, Present, and Future', *Romanticism on the Net*, 36-37 (2004) <https://doi.org/10.7202/011132ar>

O'Shaughnessy, David, Mark Philp, and Victoria Myers, eds, *William Godwin's Diary* (2021) <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/index2.html> [accessed 2 August 2021].

Out and About: Queering the Museum (2022) <https://rammuseum.org.uk/get-involved/community-and-outreach/out-and-about-queering-the-museum> [accessed 12 October 2022]

OUTing the Past: The International Festival of LGBTQ+ History (2022) <https://www.outingthepast.com/main> [accessed 14 October 2022]

Paterson-Morgan, Emily, 'CFP (BARS/NASSR): New Romanticisms', <https://www.bars.ac.uk/blog/?p=3901> [accessed 1 October 2022]

Peacocke, Emma, 'Puppets, Waxworks, and a Wooden Dramatis Personae: Eighteenth-Century Material Culture and Philosophical History in William Godwin's *Fleetwood*', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 31: 1 (2018), 189-192

Philp, Mark, *Godwin's Political Justice* (London: Duckworth, 1986)

Pickering, Judith, *Being in Love* (New York: Routledge, 2008)

Poston, Lawrence, 'Beyond the Occult: The Godwinian Nexus of Bulwer's *Zanoni*', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 37: 2 (1998), 131-161

——, 'Bulwer's Godwinian Myth', in *The Subverting Vision of Bulwer-Lytton*, ed. by Allan Conrad (Christensen: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 78-90

Polwhele, Richard, 'The Unsex'd Females, a Poem to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature', Oxford Text Archive

<http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12024/3251> [accessed 6 October 2021]

Rajan, Tilottama, 'The Disfiguration of Enlightenment: War, Trauma, and the Historical Novel in Godwin's *Mandeville*', in *Godwinian Moments*, ed. by Robert M. Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 172-192

Ramsay, Alexander, *Anatomy of the Heart, Cranium, and Brain* (Edinburgh: George Ramsay and Company, 1813)

Richardson, Alan, *British Romanticism and the Science of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)

——, 'Rethinking Romantic Incest', *New Literary History*, 31: 3 (2000), 553-572

Robinson, Michael E., *The Queer Bookishness of Romanticism: Ornamental Community* (Washington: Lexington, 2021)

Schaff, Barbara, 'Joanna Baillie, *Plays on the Passions*', in *Handbook of British Romanticism*, ed. by Ralf Haekel (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), pp. 326-342

Sha, Richard C., *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009)

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 'On Love', in *The Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Harry Buxton Forman (London: Reeves and Turner, 1880)

Shih, Terence H. W., 'Shelley's Quest for Love: Queering *Epipsychidion*', *Romanticism on the Net*, 72-73 (2019) <https://ronjournal.org/files/sites/140/2020/06/RoN72-73_01.pdf> [accessed 6 February 2023]

Sigler, David, *Sexual Enjoyment in British Romanticism: Gender and Psychoanalysis, 1753-1835* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015)

Singer, Kate, *Romantic Vacancy: The Poetics of Gender, Affect, and Radical Speculation* (Albany: University of New York Press, 2019)

——, Ashley Cross, and Suzanne L. Barnett, eds, *Material Transgressions: Beyond Romantic Bodies, Genders, Things* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020)

Stryker, Susan, '(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies', in *The Transgender Studies Reader*, ed. by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1-18

——, 'My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage', *GLQ*: *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1: 3 (1994), 237-254

Tesone, Juan Eduardo, 'Incest(s) and the Negation of Otherness', in *On Incest: Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, ed. by Giovanna Ambrosio (London: Karnac, 2005), pp. 51-64

Thanem, Torkild and Louise Wallenberg, 'Buggering Freud and Deleuze: Toward a Queer Theory of Masochism', *Journal of Aesthetics and Culture*, 2: 1 (2010) <https://doi.org/10.3402/jac.v2i0.4642>

Thomas, Calvin, *Straight with a Twist: Queer Theory and the Subject of Heterosexuality* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000)

Tomalin, Claire, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992)

Trumbach, Randolph, 'The Birth of the Queen: Sodomy and the Emergence of Gender Equality in Modern Culture, 1660-1750', in *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. by Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989), pp. 129-140.

Turner, Beatrice, ‘Family Genius and Family Blood’, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 71: 4 (2017), 457-484

Tysdahl, Bjørn, *William Godwin as a Novelist* (London: Athlone Press, 1981)

van Leeuwen, Evert Jan, ‘Godwin, Bulwer and Poe: Intellectual Elitism and the Utopian Impulse of Popular Fiction’, in *The Literary Utopias of Cultural Communities, 1790-1910*, ed. by Marguérite Corporaal and Evert Jan van Leeuwen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), pp. 47-66

——, ‘Monstrous Masculinity and Emotional Torture in Godwin’s *Fleetwood; or, the New Man of Feeling*’, *Critical Studies,* 34 (2010), 117-139

Vestri, Talia M., ‘Where’s Queer?’, *Keats-Shelley Journal*, 68 (2019), 185-187

White, Melissa Autumn, ‘A Queer Migrant Politics of the Here and Now’, *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 21: 1 (2015), 177-179

Wollstonecraft, Mary, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Sylvana Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

Wollstonecraft Shelley, Mary, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor, and Jones, 1818)

——, ‘The Brother and Sister: An Italian Story’, in *Mary Shelley: Collected Tales and Short Stories*, ed. by Charles E. Robinson (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), pp. 166-189

Xiang, Zairong, ‘Transdualism: Toward a Materio-Discursive Embodiment’, *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, 5: 3 (2018), 425-442.