Genre and Politics in the Historical Fictions of William Godwin and Mary Shelley

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A submission presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the University of South Wales / Prifysgol De Cymru
for the degree of Masters by Research

July 2023

Abstract

This thesis seeks to contribute to the critical work regarding the historical fictions of William Godwin and Mary Shelley, specifically considering the importance of Godwin's unpublished essay on genre, "Of History and Romance" (1797), in the creation of a unique approach to historical fiction, the Godwinian historical novel. To do this, three texts will be examined through analysis of historical, social and political contexts and close readings. Due to the substantial span of thirty-five years between the earliest and the latest novel discussed, the introduction will provide an overview of the relevant historical context in which the authors were writing. More historical context specific to the years prior to the publication of each novel will be given in each of the novels' chapters.

Chapter I will examine William Godwin's *St. Leon; or, A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799), and is specifically concerned with Godwin's narrative choice of first-person confessional and the blend of genres, including the picaresque and the gothic.

Chapter II will explore William Godwin's second historical novel *Mandeville; or, A Tale of the Seventeenth Century* (1817). It will focus on Godwin's examination of individual motivation and the impact of trauma.

Chapter III will study Mary Shelley's *Valperga; or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca* (1823). This section will consider Shelley's use of historical figures, the gendering of the Godwinian historical novel and examine the insertion of two fictional women.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Professor Diana Wallace and Doctor Márta Minier for their invaluable time and expertise during the completion of this thesis. I would particularly like to acknowledge their support during, what proved to be, a difficult time to undertake a research degree.

Thank you also to my family, friends and colleagues for their continued support and enthusiasm, particularly my sister for her intense encouragement and belief.

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the formidable women in my life, without whom I would be lost, with whom I am rich beyond measure and whose presence in my life I am endlessly inspired by and grateful for.

Introduction

The work of William Godwin and Mary Shelley has long been celebrated. Both authors are regarded as influential and skilled writers, and their contribution to literature is undeniable. However, their historical novels have been overlooked. This thesis will argue that their works offers an extremely important contribution to the establishment and the development of the genre which pre-dates the work of Walter Scott. The title of this thesis is adapted from Pamela Clemit's pioneering book, *The Godwinian Novel* (1993), which analyses the unique nature of Godwin's novels and the work of authors that follow his approach to fiction. Here, this Godwinian approach is applied to historical fictions alone, specifically the implementation of the theories presented in Godwin's essay on genre "Of History and Romance" (1797). Through the work of Shelley, the evolution and the gendering of the Godwinian historical novel is explored. This thesis aims to highlight how both authors offer unique contributions and experimentations within their historical novels, to highlight the contribution of Godwin and Shelley to the genre, and their complex blend of the historical, geographical, psychological, social and political approaches.

The first novel considered is Godwin's *St. Leon; or, A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, his first venture into the genre, published in 1799. This work follows its Don Quixotesque protagonist, Reginald de St. Leon, a man from an aristocratic family who, after gambling away his family's wealth and being forced to flee his home, stumbles upon the secrets of the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone and therefore the power to create endless wealth and the potential for eternal life. A truly European novel, *St. Leon* depicts a protagonist who travels throughout the sixteenth century states of Europe, encountering largely self-inflicted calamity from angry mobs to imprisonment by the Spanish Inquisition. The second novel studied, *Mandeville; or, A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England*, is published eighteen years later in 1817. Considerably bleaker and significantly narrower, both in narrative style and geographically, *Mandeville* follows its unfortunate protagonist Charles who, after suffering the early childhood trauma of witnessing the murder of his parents during the Ulster Rebellion of 1641, struggles to find happiness in society and to make a meaningful impact on the political stage. Both novels take the form of first-person, confessional tales and are the truest implementation of the theories laid out in the essay "Of History and Romance". The third and final novel considered is Mary Shelley's *Valperga; or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, published in 1823. *Valperga* follows the life of historical figure Castruccio Castracani, from his youth to his despotic rule in Medieval Italy. Alongside Castruccio, Shelley offers an Enlightenment-inspired, female alternative to the tyrannical ruler through his childhood friend and ultimate countess of the Florentine region of Valperga, Euthanasia. Shelley's novel continues to develop the unique approach Godwin establishes, in theory through his essay on genre and then in practice through his fictions, by creating a gendered Godwinian historical novel.

William Godwin, born in 1756, was a prolific writer, both in terms of volume and variety. Best known as, but not confined to, a philosopher, he is most celebrated for his anarchical political publication *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793) and his first novel, a piece critical of tyrannical governance, *Things As They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794). His essay, "Of History and Romance", was written, according to a note in the manuscript, 'while the Enquirer [1797] was in the press, under the impression that the favour of the public might have demanded another volume' (359). *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners and Literature* (1797) was a collection of essays regarding Godwin's thoughts and analysis of society, politics, the role of the individual, the role of the state, and how these interact with one another in terms of education, manners and literature. "Of History and Romance" is a clear continuation of this. The essay functions as a blueprint for Godwin's subsequent historical novels and examines the relationship between history and Romance, that is, history and the novel. Godwin clearly lays out his ideas on the traditional study of history and the use of the novel not just to enhance the study of history but to focus on what Godwin believed to be the richer, more informative and therefore superior elements of history that traditional historiography neglects.

Building on the work of French novelist Abbé Prévost, Godwin divides the study of history 'into two principal branches: the study on mankind in mass, of the progress, the fluctuation, the interests and the vices of society; and the study of the individual' (359), firmly placing the highest importance and attributing the most value to the latter. As can be seen throughout Godwin's work, he is concerned with the progress of both individuals and nations, declaring that 'the study of the individual can never fail to be an object of the highest importance. It is only by comparison that we come to know anything of mind or ourselves' (361). During the Enlightenment period there was increasing interest in the workings of the human mind. William Brewer, in his 2001 book *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley*, explains:

> In his groundbreaking treatise *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1764), the philosopher Thomas Reid argues that the mind, like the body, may be analysed through dissection: […] During the Romantic period, a number of authors embraced the eighteenth-century project of dissecting the psyche's "powers and principles" and performed mental anatomies in their novels, dramas, and poems. (15)

Godwin's acknowledgement of the desire to know more of the mind in his essay makes clear his intention of examining the inner workings and motivations of his historical fiction characters. Godwin chooses to do this through an intimate first-person narration style in which the reader is given access to the protagonist's thoughts and feelings, and an insight into their motivations for the actions they take throughout their lives. This includes the power his protagonists have over themselves and the principles that guide them and how these alter when faced with challenges and trauma.

Godwin's separation of 'general' and 'individual' history, or as Prévost identified them, the general and the particular, is not to deny the benefit of the former. As the essay states:

> General history will furnish us with precedents in abundance, will show us how that which happened in one country has been repeated in another, and may perhaps even instruct us how that which has occurred in the annals of mankind, may under similar circumstances be produced again. (362)

Rather than pitting the two branches of history against one another, Godwin makes clear that both have their value, and that general history offers us the opportunity to see parallels between our own time and the past. This distinction between the general and the individual is accompanied by a distinction between the public and the private. Godwin declares:

> The men I would study upon the canvas of history, are men worth the becoming intimately acquainted with. It is in history as it is in life. Superficial acquaintance is nothing. […] I am not contented to observe such a man upon the public stage, I would follow him into his closet.
>
> […] He who knows only what day the Bastille was taken and on what spot Louis XVI perished, knows nothing. He professes the mere skeleton of history. The muscles, the articulations, everything in which the life empathically resides, is absent. (367-8)

The striking anatomical analogy used by Godwin illustrates the relationship between the public and private, the general and the individual. The use of the general to provide context takes the form of historical accuracies in Godwin's work, the detail and attention of which is replicated by Shelley. As a writer of history as well as fiction, Godwin's use of historical context in his works is meticulous, creating a rich and realistic general history in which to place the individual history of his protagonists. Notwithstanding the inclusion of the supernatural in *St. Leon*, the context remains immersive for the reader. Although Shelley's *Valperga* disrupts the historical context more obviously with her inclusion of a fictional female as ruler of Valperga, she too maintains a detailed historical context, meaning the disruption to the timeline is minor. Both authors accurately and carefully construct their historical skeleton in order to flesh out their protagonists' psychological developments.

Within the essay, Godwin challenges not only the usefulness of the traditional study of history, but also the status of historical truth itself. He states that 'there is nothing more uncertain, more contradictory, more unsatisfactory than the evidence of facts' (367) and further argues that 'the reader will be miserably deluded if, while he reads history, he suffers himself to imagine that he is reading facts.' He argues that the closest we can get to historical truth is through the rather tedious chronicles of places and dates, and that this is not worthy of such attention and reverence. It is important to acknowledge that our modern-day understanding of the study of history and the retelling of historical events and its main players is that it is extremely nuanced. This would not have been widely accepted in Godwin's own time, as he addresses in the essay. However, Godwin's approach to historical fiction and the relationship between history and Romance not only acknowledges the nuance in truth and the retelling of history but creates a narrative where the uncertainty of truth is integral to his aims. As Claudia Lindén explains:

> Wollstonecraft and Godwin both used the novel as a tool for their progressive political agendas and theorized the relationship between history, politics and fiction almost two centuries before the postmodern critique of history writing. Godwin provides an early argument for how historical writing can, and should serve the transformation for a different future. But most of all it acknowledges that the border between fact and fiction are always already transgressed when it comes to historical writing. (8)

Through his historical fictions, Godwin offers a critique of the understanding of truth whilst employing unreliable, and sometimes unstable, narrators to tell their own stories of the past. The ambiguity of Reginald de St. Leon's life span and Charles Mandeville's own disruption to the timeline of his story are two such examples of the complex nature of Godwin's narratives and evidence of the acute awareness around truth and reliability Godwin was writing with and which he theorised in his 1797 essay.

By all accounts 1797 was a busy and complicated year for Godwin, both professionally and personally. Alongside publishing *The Enquirer* and writing "Of History and Romance", Godwin also married Mary Wollstonecraft, their only child together, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (later Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley), was born, followed shortly by the death of Wollstonecraft in September, just eleven days after the birth of their baby. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley would go on to write her first novel, and her most celebrated work, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* in 1818. Published when she was twenty years old, *Frankenstein* is a proto-science fiction novel, sharing themes of trauma, monstrosity and wounding most closely aligned with those found in Godwin's *Mandeville,* which had been published the year prior. Godwin continued to influence and admire Shelley's work through his own publications and his edits to, and comments on, the manuscripts she sent him. *Valperga*, her first historical novel, was no exception. This work too follows the blueprint of Godwin's essay, using the historical novel to perform a psychic dissection of the historical figure of Castruccio. However, unlike Godwin, Shelley elects for a third person narration style, aligned more closely to the work of Walter Scott.

Walter Scott is largely considered to be the originator of the European historical novel because of the seminal critical work by Georg (György) Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, published in 1937. However, many critics before and since acknowledge other works of fiction, often influenced by the work of earlier French authors, including their influence on the work of Godwin and Shelley, as also being part of that genre within Europe. As Richard Maxwell explains in his book *The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650-1950* (2009):

> During the eighteenth century, French historical fiction crossed to England via the work of William Godwin and Sophia Lee, and others, but it was a slightly later experiment that provided

> the most influential anglophone adaptation, initiating the genre's second life. Drawing from books by Lafeyette, Prevost, and other experiments, Scott's *Waverley* epitomised their form and spirit. (3)

It is important to note that Scott's *Waverley*, the novel that established Scott's style within the genre and would go on to influence the work of many other authors, was published almost fifteen years after Godwin's *St. Leon,* in which Godwin was establishing his own style of historical fiction and further developing his unique approach to the novel first showcased in *Caleb Williams*. By the time Mary Shelley published *Valperga*, Scott had published a further six novels. As Pamela Clemit discusses in her important work *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley*, published in 1993:

> While following her father's extension of the Godwinian novel into the realm of history, Mary Shelley departs from his subjective narrative mode in favour of a more capacious form that will embody her developing preoccupation with the anatomy of political, social, and cultural certainties. Drawing on Scott instead, she adopts an impersonal third-person narrative voice to present the main story of Castruccio's rise to power. (176)

Crucially, this narration style also allows space for Shelley's fictional women, who, unlike Godwin's protagonists, actively partake in the political world around them. Although Shelley offers a clear gendering of the Godwinian historical novel, her work maintains the principle of Godwin's essay "Of History and Romance". She tracks the psychological development of her historical protagonist and follows him and her fictional characters 'into the closet' in order to better understand their motivations and influences.

It has long been acknowledged that Godwin's approach to the novel is distinct. Clemit discusses this early recognition and the 'original genre of fiction in the Romantic period' (1) that is the Godwinian

Novel. Clemit declares Godwin's triumph 'one of technique' (1) and explains the combination of sophisticated elements present in *Caleb Williams* as follows:

> This innovative blend of philosophy and fiction proved so distinctive in its aims and methods that nineteenth-century reviewers wrote of 'the Godwin school' of novelists, who, 'by common master, a common philosophical as well as political belief, common training … and many specific resemblances in manner and style, are proclaimed to be one.' (1)

Despite this early acknowledgment by some that Godwin was doing something unique and innovative within fiction, it has largely been unexplored, particularly in comparison to the attention Godwin and Shelley's most famous works of genius, *Political Justice* and *Frankenstein* respectively, have received. When Clemit published *The Godwinian Novel* in 1993, the work was considered pioneering, demonstrating the lack of attention the other works of these authors had prior to this. The attention their most celebrated works have received is, of course, justified. However, it can certainly be said that the acclaim and fame garnered from these works has narrowed the critical view of both authors and meant that their contribution to the genre of historical fiction has only been explored by a narrow group of academics. Herein lies the main motivation of this thesis: to add to the critical work on the historical fictions of Godwin and Shelley, and to contribute to a rebalancing of the academic work regarding their wider contributions to literature.

It is also worthy of note at this stage that the private lives of the authors concerned have also contributed to an uneven approach to their work. The fame both authors and their contemporaries gained from their work was significant, and with it came public interest in their personal lives. This is perhaps truer of Mary Shelley than Godwin as the reputation of her inner circle, with husband Percy Bysshe Shelley and their friend Lord Byron, have led some critics to read Shelley's work as largely biographical. This rejection of Shelley's originality of thought has restricted the study of Shelley as an acutely politically and socially aware author in the work of some. This has been exacerbated by Godwin's involvement in the editing of Shelley's manuscripts, although, where *Valperga* is concerned, Godwin's role was to condense the text rather than affect plot or function. The publication of *The Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1798, the year after her death, was heavily criticised for its unflinching account of the life of Wollstonecraft, causing Godwin to fall out of favour with many of his contemporaries.

Nonetheless, the work of those around Godwin and Shelley was, of course, of great influence and inspiration and can clearly be seen in the historical fictions studied here. Particularly worthy of mention at this point is Sophia Lee's novel *The Recess; or, A Tale of Other Times*. Published in 1783, this work of historical fiction predates Godwin's first and imagines two daughters of Mary, Queen of Scots. Godwin and the Lee family were acquainted, with Lee's work appearing on a reading list in Godwin's diary. Most obviously, Lee's use of the historical romance to invent female characters and place them in historically and politically important positions is a technique used by Shelley in her historical novel *Valperga*, decades later.

Equally influential were the social and political events of Godwin and Shelley's own time. The novels studied within this thesis span over 25 years, during which Europe faced significant changes and challenges. Most significant were the events of the French Revolution. Beginning in 1789, the revolution saw widespread revolt against the *ancien régime* which included the symbolic storming of the Bastille and the execution of Louis XVI. The revolution in France, despite its violence, condemned by most political and social commentators, sparked a new hope for radical thinkers in England who yearned for progress at home. Radical thinkers like Godwin abhorred the oppressive British government that was unashamedly elitist and who prevented the masses from fulfilling their potential. For Mary Wollstonecraft, the revolution which she had witnessed first-hand when residing in Paris, offered the opportunity for the new governance of France to include women's education in legislation and further women's rights. The rise of Napoleon soon after the conclusion of the French revolution would prove bitterly disappointing to radicals and Enlightenment thinkers in England, made worse by increased censorship from the paranoid government of William Pitt, epitomised by the Gagging Acts that sought to prevent and punish seditions meetings and anti-government publications. The disappointment and loss of hope can be tracked through the chronology of the novels studied in this thesis and will be explored further in each individual chapter relating to the historical context in which each was composed and published. Aware of the threat of censorship and punishment but still desperate to comment on the political and social upheaval their nation was experiencing, authors turned to covert criticism techniques. The novel was able to offer writers like Godwin and Shelley, and many of their contemporaries, a safe distance from which to criticise the ruling classes of their day. The historical novel in particular offered the distance of time, sometimes paired with a geographical distance, through which the author was free to admonish those in power and exercise their own ideologies in a partially fictional world.

Significantly in the work of Godwin and Shelley, this distance offered by the historical novel was used to create moral tales. These were not only concerned with the mistakes of the past but used the novel as a tool to learn from history in the present day. In Godwin's essay "Of History and Romance", he addresses this opportunity:

> But, if the energy of our minds should lead us to aspire to something more animated and noble 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 contented with considering society in a mass, but must analyse the materials from which it is composed. It will be necessary for us to scrutinise the nature of man, before we can pronounce what it is of which social man is capable. Laying aside the generalities of historical abstraction, we must mark the operation of human passions; must observe the empire of motives whether grovelling or elevated; and must

> note the influence that one human being exercises over another, and the ascendancy of the daring and the wise over the vulgar multitude. 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. (362-3)

Godwin's philosophy on the study of history and his belief that progress lies in the study of the individual and of the mind is apparent here. Godwin, and subsequently Shelley, use the historical novel as a tool to dissect the individual, to deepen their understanding of the mind and to experiment with the political and social ideologies in a fictional sphere.

One of the major issues addressed in Pamela Clemit's work is a lack of unity between Godwin's fictional techniques and his radical political philosophy. However, along with the work of Clemit, there are a number of academics that have contributed to the volume of critical work on Godwin and Shelley. These critics, perhaps most notably, William Brewer and Tilottama Rajan, have contributed significantly to the growing interest in the historical fictions of Godwin and Shelley. There has been a slow but steady increase in academic interest in Godwinian texts in more recent times, with both Oxford and Broadview Press releasing new editions of all three historical fictions studied here. Broadview have published scholarly editions introduced by Brewer and Rajan. Other notable contributors to the academic conversation are as follows. The work Betty T. Bennett has produced on Mary Shelley has been extensive and includes significant biographical work and an edited collection of essays, *Mary Shelley in Her Times* (2000). Co-editor of this work was Stuart Curran, an established authority on British romanticism and editor of the Oxford University Press edition of Mary Shelley's *Valperga*, reprinted for the first time since its first edition in 1997. The importance of William Brewer's and Tilottama Rajan's work around the psychological novel has been particularly noteworthy and helpful to this thesis. As recently as 2021, a new publication of a collection of essays titled *New Approaches to William Godwin: Forms, Fears, Futures* highlights the continued and growing interest in this work.

The way in which this thesis hopes to contribute to the work of such academics is through a close analysis of each text, discussing them chronologically to better represent the development of the Godwinian historical novel. It will consider their contexts, both in terms of their formation and the context of their historical settings and will address the authors' use of narrative structure and literary devices from the Gothic and the Romantic period. This analysis will be accompanied throughout by the consideration of the Godwinian theory set out in the essay "Of History and Romance", examining how Godwin and Shelley exercise the study of the individual and the relationship between their own political philosophy and their exercises in fiction.

Chapter I: A Godwinian Fable – William Godwin's *St. Leon*

INTRODUCTION

By the time Godwin published his first historical novel, *St. Leon; or, A Tale of the Sixteenth Century* (1799), he had already published his most celebrated works, *Political Justice* (1793) and *Caleb Williams* (1794) and received great acclaim for their genius. He had also published *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), an unflinching look at the life of his late wife Mary Wollstonecraft, the honesty of which was heavily criticised by his contemporaries. Nonetheless, *St. Leon,* following a year later, the first of two novels that best embody the theories set out in his essay on genre "Of History and Romance", was well received by Godwin's contemporaries. As Pamela Clemit discusses in her introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of the novel, Byron 'found Godwin's second novel, *St. Leon*, more exciting and innovative than his first. In addition, William Hazlitt gave equal weight to *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon*.' (vii). Despite this positive early reception, the novel fell out of print in 1831, and was not published again until the early 1990s.

This chapter, through close analysis and political and historical context, examines Godwin's approach to the historical novel. It will pay particular attention to the way in which Godwin weaves together the conventions of multiple genres: the historical novel, the picaresque and the gothic. This will be achieved by exploring the depiction of key events in the novel such as the influential scenes of the Field of the Cloth of Gold and the protagonist's imprisonment by the Spanish Inquisition, as well considering the gothic character of Bethlam Gabor alongside narrator Reginald and their representation of Godwin's political and philosophical ideas. It will also, throughout, refer to Godwin's "Of History and Romance" in order to highlight Godwin's implementation of the theories laid out in the essay on genre. Before beginning, the political and social context in which Godwin was writing will be considered, as well as a precis of the novel.

The French Revolution had reached its conclusion the month prior to the publication of *St. Leon*. After a series of bloody and violent events, much British admiration for the revolutionaries and the hope attached to their actions that had begun a decade prior had waned. Despite his condemnation of the mob and violent action, Godwin's alignment with the political sentiments of the revolutionary spirit remained firm and perhaps further concentrated to the concerns of family and domestic life after his marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft and the birth of their daughter. At home in England, Pitt's government, increasingly fearful of radicals, anti-government sentiment and a largely imagined threat of riots, amplified by the revolution in France, had legislated against seditious meetings and acts of treason (1795). Godwin, unlike some of his contemporaries, managed to avoid arrest during this time of censorship, partly due to his theoretical and philosophical approach to politics and his exploration of these political ideas being presented in fiction. The historical novel offers Godwin the distance through which to explore his political philosophy, his theories on genre and his exploration of the individual. With these motivations in mind, Godwin creates a unique, distinctly Godwinian approach to the historical novel.

St. Leon is a first-person confessional tale, following the life of French aristocrat Reginald de St. Leon, a sometimes hapless and delusional protagonist who gambles away his family fortune and who, through a chance meeting, is given the secret to the elixir of life and the philosopher's stone. The narrative is ordered chronologically and begins with Reginald divulging his upbringing, including the death of his father when he was an infant. Left solely under the care of his mother, with his father's reputation as a gallant member of the military to uphold, his mother's affection towards him, and the care he received in his youth are noted. This is contradicted somewhat by Reginald's statement, 'My mother loved my honour and my fame more than my person.' (4). Through much of his life, Reginald too values reputation and the privilege's afforded to his family name, following his mother as one 'full of the prejudices of nobility' (4). At twenty years old, after Reginald has spent a short time in the military serving members of the French nobility, a career made fruitful by the feudal order established in France at the time, his mother dies. Reginald is left entirely responsible for his estate and spends the next two years gambling and in the company of various women. Soon after, he meets Marguerite de Damville and, after promising her father that he will not ruin her or their families through his gaming habit, he ceases gambling, and they marry. Despite his love for his wife and children, the stability of family life does not last long.

Reginald's personal misfortunes begin in earnest when, away from his family in Paris and struggling with his gambling habit, he loses his family fortune and plunges himself, his wife Marguerite and their four children into destitution. Reginald, wracked with guilt to the point of incapacitation, struggles to respond to their new situation as Marguerite takes control and sells their belongings to pay the debts. The family move to Switzerland. In awe of his wife's strength and the adaptability of his children, bolstered by their happiness, Reginald comes round to the simpler way of life and its fulfilment of his family's needs. In volume II, after moving to Lake Constance, the novel takes on its supernatural identity. Reginald meets an old man, who passes on the burdensome secrets of eternal life and unlimited wealth. This decision to accept this knowledge, knowing it will mean needing to keep it secret or face his own death, plunges Reginald into a life full of suspicion and secrets, ultimately and tragically resulting in abandonment by his son, the death of his wife and the decision to fake his death to his daughters. Even when Reginald reconnects with his son, disguised under a different name and appearing to be younger than his own child, he is rejected and once more, and finally in the narrative, isolated.

A GENERAL HISTORIAN

Considering the influence of Godwin's essay "Of History and Romance", the focus on the individual and the examination of their motivations and psychological development is clearly demonstrated through the narrative choices made in *St. Leon*. Following the first-person narrative established in *Caleb Williams* (1794), Godwin continues his use of this style to offer a more intimate look at his protagonist. Writing of Godwin's essay on genre, Richard Maxwell explains that, according to Godwin's theory:

> ...individual or particular history takes, above all, a biographical form. What makes biography so effective is that it allows us to estimate realistically the social capacities of humankind. If we see close up what people are truly capable of, then we can decide how the machine of society itself should be directed. […] Getting to the heart of history and learning how to use it is less a matter of establishing facts than it is of presenting truths about human nature in a vivid, circumstantial manner. (71)

Maxwell highlights the wider concerns of Godwin's writing, not just to tell the story of an individual, but through them and their individual experiences, to be able to explore society around them. In *St. Leon*, Reginald offers what the Broadview edition's cover notes identify as a 'philosophical fable', a warning for the reader, laying bare the errors of its author and the life lessons hard learned through what the Oxford World Classics edition's cover notes identify as a 'confessional tale of obsession and spiralling pursuit'. Of course, the autobiographical approach to the novel raises issues regarding reliability and makes for a complex narrative when considering the retelling of this individual history.

Reginald, in his role as narrator of his own story, attempts to convince the reader of his impartiality and therefore the truthfulness of his account. In chapter II of the novel, Reginald addresses the scepticism the reader may have after writing of his success on the battlefield in his youth:

> It may seem contrary to delicacy to speak with the freedom of my own praises; but I am at my present totally changed and removed from what I was, and I write with the freedom of a general historian. It is this simplicity and ingenuousness that shall pervade the whole of my narrative. (22-23)

Reginald explicitly attempts to separate from his past self in the eyes of the reader, allowing himself praise and criticism with apparent objectivity. Reginald declares himself as taking of the role of a 'general historian', and an ingenuous one, relaying events with innocence and absence of bias. The 'general historian' is a direct reference to the ideas explored in Godwin's "Of History and Romance". In his essay on genre, Godwin describes 'general history' as the retelling of facts and information that chronicles events. *St. Leon* is, of course, not only a general history, it is primarily an individual one. The merging of the two roles Reginald takes on, as general *and* individual historian, demonstrates the relationship between the two and reflects Godwin's own theories on history laid out in his essay. Godwin is not dismissive of general history and, as a writer of history himself, Godwin's historical context in the novel is meticulous, clearly demonstrating the importance of historical accuracy and its inclusion and its role in the lives of individuals. Reginald's dual role highlights the necessary relationship between the two branches of history and how they cannot be separated.

In the opening pages of the novel, when explaining to his readers the reasons for writing down an account of his life events, Reginald supposes that his audience would wonder at this but fails to give an answer, stating that the reasons will become clear to the reader if they grant him patience to get there. He does, however, state that 'The immortality with which I am endowed seems to put out of the question the common motives that relate to posthumous fame' (54). As the first chapter moves on to describe his youth, it is clear that fame was once very much in the mind of Reginald and is a motivating factor for many of his choices, often to his detriment, but the narrative's function as a fable makes clear the folly of this.

Reginald's awareness of his role as narrator and his declaration to the reader, is one way in which Reginald is distanced from history itself. Pamela Clemit describes St. Leon as a 'bystander on history' (xi), someone looking from the outside in. Despite Reginald's role as autobiographer for his own retelling, Clemit continues, 'the novel presents a panoramic view of the religious and political upheavals of sixteenth-century Europe,' (xi). In this sense, Reginald's role as general historian is clear. The episodic nature of the novel offers insight into multiple social and political contexts through an individual's experience. Reginald does not influence the history around him, rather he is an observing and, more often than not, a victim of the political and social environments he travels through.

Reginald's distance from history reflects Godwin's own distancing through his use of the historical novel. Through his use of a different period and of a European setting rather than one set in England (despite its expansive geography, the novel never ventures to British shores), Godwin is able to distance himself from the contentious and often dangerous politics of the day, while still clearly dealing with it. Despite the genre's infancy during this time, the benefit of a different historical and geographical setting for radical political theories to be explored was clear. Richard Maxwell discusses the use of geography in *St. Leon* in his essay in *The Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period* (2008), writing that 'the geographical and historical novel are shown to go hand in hand' (73). Importantly, Maxwell specifically connects the geographical expansion of *St. Leon* to the expansion in the timeline, or potential timeline, when Reginald gains possession of the secret of the elixir of life. Godwin creates a potentially infinite timeline. Maxwell writes: 'Since Godwin sends the new St. Leon to Hungary and Turkey, he expands his book's spatial range almost as suddenly, almost as shockingly, as its timeline, and at virtually the same moment' (72-3). The supernatural abilities send Reginald into a life of secrecy, fleeing suspicion from individuals and states, exiling him to multiple locations, the unwelcome consequences exchanged for supernatural powers. Through these circumstances, Reginald is increasingly isolated in the course of the novel. As well as the geographical distance he covers separating him from his home, the distance between his family grows until he, appearing much younger than his own children, is unrecognisable to those he was once close to. Despite the potential for an expanded timeline not being explored, instead covering just two generations, Reginald's potential immortality creates distance through the passing of time from his own history. His isolation creates a detachment from the real world and therefore his view of individuals in it, and his first-hand experience of the events he retells gives the insight into the motivations that drive him as an individual.

Godwin's use of his first-person narrator to relay the events and effects of general history on the individual is clear early in the novel, as a young Reginald witnesses the events of The Field of the Cloth of Gold. At the age of fifteen, after spending much of his time being educated on works of classic literature, Reginald is sent to witness the historic meeting of Frances I of France and Henry VIII of England. The scenes Reginald describes are of extreme wealth, a spectacle of pomp and ceremony, where 'every person of distinction might be said to carry an estate upon his shoulders' (5). The historical event was both a show of wealth and competition between the states, with activities such as jousting being a key feature of the event, as it was to serve a symbol of the peace between France and England, celebrating the friendship between the two kings. An entire town was erected for the event that lasted more than two weeks. However, despite appearances, as the National Archive explains, 'despite Wolsey's efforts, the universal peace of 1518 dissolved by the summer of 1521. […] A three-year war with France then followed'. As Clemit accurately describes, 'this theatrical display seems like the last fling of a decadent feudal order' (xi). The impact of these scenes is significant for Reginald, as he declares that 'it irritated to a very high degree my passion for splendour and distinction' (5). However, the deceptive nature of the scenes means that Reginald is seduced by an illusion.

The events of the Field of the Cloth of Gold could be described as a form of historical fiction itself and draw parallels with an event in Godwin's own time. The Glorious Revolution of 1688 is an important part of British history that helped characterise the British, and specifically English, reaction to the French Revolution. Considered a rather civilised revolution, the events of The Glorious Revolution neatly culminated in the Bill of Rights (1688). Some even claimed the revolution was bloodless. This claim was far from the truth. Although this may be closer to the truth for those in England who chose to turn a blind eye to the bloodshed, to the Scottish and the Irish, this claim was outrageous. Mark Philp's work

Reforming Ideas in Britain: Politics and Language in the Shadow of the French Revolution, 1789-1815 (2017) is a useful resource in understanding Godwin's work during this period. Philp makes clear that, 'the French Revolution was seen immediately as speaking to an English experience (the Glorious Revolution of 1688), and that, having made this connection, events in France provided a running and, it was assumed, relevant commentary on British politics' (18). Godwin and his contemporaries responded in earnest to the events that were unfolding across the channel, many quickly turning their attention to reform in Britain. As with the Field of the Cloth of Gold, the Glorious Revolution was a carefully orchestrated series of events, fuelled not by the seeking of liberty for the people of Britain, but by the rivalry of the Catholics and the Protestants. As Godwin declares in "Of History and Romance", 'The reader will be miserably deluded, while he reads history, he suffers himself to imagine that he is reading facts' (370). Through this event and Reginald's reaction to it, Godwin comments on the unreliability of general history.

Along with the Field of the Cloth of Gold's significance in relation to the unreliability of general history, it also marks, as Clemit points out, the end of the feudal order in France and the age of chivalry. Despite this, Reginald is greatly impacted by the scenes of the event and his meeting of Frances I. Reginald, largely kept from scenes of royal and military prowess until witnessing these events, becomes obsessed with this symbol of departure from such an age. After the event, Reginald declares:

> I never shut my eyes without viewing in imagination the combats of knights and the train of ladies. I had been regarded with distinction by my sovereign; and Francis the First stood before my mind the abstract and model of perfection and greatness. I congratulated myself upon being born in an age and country so favourable to the acquisition of all that my soul desired. (8)

Using a protagonist consumed by chivalry and with an age that has long passed, is a clear link to the picaresque novel *Don Quixote*. Published in 1605 and 1615, Cervantes' work was long-established as a classic of Western literature and most certainly read by Godwin. The rogue Don Quixote, deeply attached to an age of knights and damsels in distress, is followed on his hapless journeys that are painfully out of place to those around him. A comedic novel exploring the delusions of its protagonist it shares many things with Godwin's *St. Leon*. As with Don Quixote, misfortune follows Reginald, self-inflicted much of the time, and his attempts to restore his honour and eventually help those around him with his unlimited wealth fail miserably. With their anti-heroes and their geographically sprawling adventures both novels share a picaresque approach, as well as most obviously being set within the same period of time. There is too, a direct reference later in the novel when Reginald refers to a woman responsible for divulging the secrets of his alchemy to the village as 'Dulcinea' (265), referrring to the renamed Spanish peasant and love interest of Don Quixote.

Reginald's affiliation with this age of decadence, of pomp and gallantry, is something that drives many of his decisions and reactions throughout the novel. Reginald's access to this world, and his alliance with it is seen by Reginald as a birth right, despite losing his family wealth through his own reckless actions. The obsessive clinging to an age that has passed and the benefits that come with that age for those aristocrats such the St. Leon family is, of course, a wider comment by Godwin on the futility of holding onto the past. Reginald, for most of the novel, describes how he desires to restore his standing in society, to return symbolically to the past. He is unsuccessful and in the process of pursuing this, Reginald loses everyone close to him. Ultimately, the version of Reginald we have telling the story is aware of these mistakes. Although forced to through circumstance, Reginald learns that the age which he clings to no longer exists and the events of the novel slowly strip back the illusion he witnesses at the Field of the Cloth of Gold resulting in a more modern man, with a clear view of what is important and should be valued.

THE GOTHIC

The novel is, of course, as most historical fictions are, a mixture of genres. One dominant genre of *St. Leon,* and one that the novel transforms into later in the narrative, is the gothic. The novel includes several devices of the gothic, perhaps most obviously, the scenes of Reginald's imprisonments. Although Godwin largely spares the description of imprisonment on a physical level, Reginald does lament the psychological impact of his incarcerations in some detail. As we know from the reading lists in his diary, Godwin had read the work of Matthew Lewis and Ann Radcliffe prior to completing *St. Leon*. The influence of Radcliffe's work is especially noticeable in Reginald's imprisonment by the Spanish Inquisition in the later stages of the novel. As Brewer explains, 'in the opinion of some contemporary readers, the depiction of the Inquisition in *St. Leon* is heavily indebted to *The Italian*' (20). The issue of governments and religious institutions overextending their powers over the people they claim to serve is a theme in Godwin's fictions, including *St. Leon,* as established and cemented by the work of Radcliffe, Lewis and their gothic contemporaries. The Inquisition was a common feature of gothic novels, along with the suspicion and religious fanaticism, which reflected the paranoia and oppressive behaviours of Pitt's government in Godwin's own day.

After Reginald's son leaves the family home, tired of his father's lies and deception, the St. Leon family make their way to Spain, Marguerite's health deteriorates further and, in Barcelona, she dies. After finding care for his daughters and buying back the family home he lost to his gaming with the riches created from the philosopher's stone, Reginald tells his children he will travel through Asia, but instead makes his way to Madrid. It is here that Reginald encounters further suspicion and suffers the wrath of the Spanish inquisition after being followed by two of their agents as he honed his alchemy skills further. Reginald goes willingly with the agents after receiving a request to visit the holy office and even recalls how little concern he had regarding the inquisition's actions against him: ‘I believed that the inquisition itself would not venture to proceed criminally against a man whom nothing criminal had been alleged.’ (310). Reginald is gravely mistaken. Without a criminal charge, the Inquisition persecutes Reginald anyway, on suspicion alone.

Although the influence of gothic authors and the use of gothic tropes is clear, as Brewer explains, ‘Godwin focuses on the themes of institutional oppression and social isolation rather than horrifying his readers with the grisly details of incarceration.’ (20). Choosing to focus on the experience of imprisonment itself and the psychological effects of this on Reginald, clearly demonstrates Godwin’s interest in the study of the mind of an individual stated in his essay on genre. Rather than the horror of the physical environment, elements of general history chronicling the brutality of the Inquisition, the novel explores the effects on individual psyche by the overbearing forces of the Inquisition. The superstition and suspicion that drives the actions of the Inquisition is something Godwin also writes about in *Enquiry*:

> All punishment for the sake of restraint is punishment upon suspicion, a species of punishment the most abhorrent to reason, and arbitrary in its application, that can be devised. (477)

The Spanish inquisition were renowned for their cruel methods of torture and execution. The main purpose of torture was to evoke confessions to the crimes against the Catholic faith which the accused had been charged with. If a confession was obtained, the punishment would be considerably less so than if the accused was found guilty through means of evidence. In Reginald’s encounter with the Inquisition, the inquisitors are deliberately vague about the reasons for his imprisonment and hold Reginald prisoner without providing evidence against him. As Reginald explains: ‘It is presumed that he who is a corrupt member of the Church of Christ in one point is unsound and unfaithful in others.’ (311). The Inquisition’s incarceration of Reginald rests solely of the suspicion of the so-called defenders of the

Catholic faith and their hope to expose him as a defiler of the holy mother in any and all ways. Reginald, although also assured of his release, partly due to his arrogance, identifies the lack of reasoning and rationale in relation to his imprisonment and therefore the need or justification for holding him. Although he is guilty of practising alchemy, there is no evidence to prove it, and he is shocked by the savage methods of the Inquisition.

Criticism of religious fanaticism and overbearing religious groups can be found in many of Godwin's works, both fiction and philosophy alike. The historical novel allows Godwin the distance to criticise these organisations without commenting directly on the issues of his own day. His criticism is clear, nonetheless, as Reginald's narrative is scathing about the conduct of the Inquisition, stating that 'The great adversary of mankind was incessantly watchful for the destruction of souls; and, while he spread abroad his delusions, it was folly to imagine the evidence alone was powerful enough to counteract them.' (315). Godwin's anarchical ideologies that dismissed the idea of wide-reaching control of the public such as the church and the government and their desire to control the masses are evident here. Sentenced to death by the inquisitors, Reginald is led to Valladolid to be executed with almost thirty other 'victims of pious and inquisitorial tyranny' (337). After a commotion is caused in the crowd, he manages to escape, shortly after which he witnesses the mass execution from afar.

The events of the French Revolution, particularly during the Terror which saw angry and violent protests in the streets of Paris and the execution of several members of the establishment, increased fear of mob mentality and, even for those in favour of the revolution on an ideological basis, the violence which ensued was widely condemned, even with an understanding of the reasoning. Godwin, although critical of both sides in some regards, despised the 'mob'. He expresses this in *Enquiry*:

> There is nothing more barbarous, blood-thirsty and unfeeling than the triumph of a mob. It should be remembered that the members of such associations are ever employed in cultivating

> a sentiment peculiarly hostile to political justice, antipathy to individuals; not benevolent love of equality, but a bitter and personal detestation of their oppressors. (180)

Godwin's statement here, as well as the representation of the mob in *St. Leon*, is somewhat problematic. While Godwin states that the members of a mob have 'antipathy to individuals' he also states that they are acting on 'personal detestation'. Godwin championed the individual's sense of duty and personal judgement, believing that if all men acted on their intrinsic duty to society, mankind would progress, supported by prioritising reason and a rational rather than passionate approach. Godwin uses this image of the mob when describing the procession to execution for the Spanish Inquisition, but also on a much smaller scale earlier in the novel.

The scenes of the mob are played out during Reginald's time in Italy. Staying in a village outside Pisa, Reginald uses his time to hone his alchemy skills. He is supported by his servant Hector, a black man previously enslaved by the jailor of Reginald's first imprisonment, and tensions build when Hector puts misplaced trust in a romantic interest of his, divulging information about Reginald's activities to her. The woman repeatedly seeks the information from Hector, and when in possession of it, relays it to her first lover, Agostino. Agostino is angered by the interest of his former lover in another man, and even more upset that her choice of lover is black, as Reginald writes, 'whom his pride regarded as belonging to an inferior species of beings' (268). Agostino sets out for revenge on the house of St. Leon. Reginald initially notices the villagers becoming nervous in his presence which serves to separate and isolate him from those around him. He remarks that 'they fled my approach, deserted the streets, and carefully shut themselves up in their house, till I passed.' (269-70). Agostino escalates his crusade against the family and one morning, after hearing the sound of a musket and seeing torchlight moving away from the property the night before, Reginald's faithful dog Charon is found dead. After the death of Charon, Hector becomes aware of his error and both he and Reginald travel to seek the advice from the marchese Filosanto. Reginald writes that the marchese is acquainted with the Italian character better than himself. He also describes him as 'a man universally admired for subtlety of reasoning, vigorousness of comprehension, and refinement of taste. In the structure of his mind he was scarcely Italian.' (279). Despite the events Reginald and Hector relay to him, the marchese sees 'nothing of the facts' (280) and convinces Reginald, who finds himself influenced by the 'gigantic powers of his mind' (279), that 'the days of such superstition … were long since past', that Italians were 'living at the very centre and source of Catholic imposition, they saw deeper into the mystery' (280). He is wrong and after Reginald and Hector return home, the villagers are now vocal and confrontational in their superstitions of him, Reginald attempts to reason with them. Here Godwin highlights the problematic nature of Reginald's treatment of the mob. In the heated exchange, Reginald asks the villagers the reason for their actions against him. He is accused of being 'a wizard, a necromancer, a dealer in the black arts' (283). The accusation even ventures into the absurd, with villagers asking 'did not you bewitch my cow? did not you enchant my child? have you not killed my daughter?' (285). Reginald responds to the crowd and rebuffs their accusations: "For myself, I have no belief in the existence of such an art." (284). In order to protect his powers, Reginald lies to the villagers, or is at the very least purposefully evasive in the answer he gives. For Godwin, the truth was key to rational thinking, reasoning and open debate. Honesty, in the mob exchange, is denied by Reginald, and therefore, his ability to rationalise with the mob fails. In his essay, titled "Lying with Godwin and Kant: Truth and Duty in *St. Leon"*, Peter Melville describes Reginald as inheriting 'an immortal (and deeply tragic) legacy of dishonesty' (19). The scenes of the mob follow the departure of Reginald's eldest son Charles from the family unit, after disowning his father due to his dishonesty. Melville states that the stranger's legacy 'obligates [Reginald] perpetually to obscure the truth' (19). In accepting the stranger's secrets Reginald commits himself to a lifetime of deceit. His experience with the mob is as a direct result of his dishonesty, and the selfish commitment to conceal the truth of what the mob suspects. The tragedy of this commitment is the devastation it causes for those who are close to him. After consulting with the marchese, Reginald feels that he 'had too easily participated the feelings and apprehensions of a poor uninstructed negro' (280) and does nothing to address the threat that Hector is a direct victim of when he is beaten by the mob shortly after the death of Charon. Reginald values the opinion of the 'intellectual' marchese over the feelings of Hector, and despite the violence shown against his servant, does not feel, perhaps due to the familiar protection of his status and his whiteness, that he will fall victim to the same. This proves to be fatal; the marchese is proven to be mistaken, the mob returns, and Hector, motivated by guilt and his unwavering duty to the family he serves, perishes in the attack. The family are forced to flee to safety, taking refuge with the marchese in Pisa, and from there, they watch their home burn. Seduced by the promise of untold riches and immortality, Reginald choses the secret to unlimited wealth and riches over honesty to his family and to his fellow man. This is the biggest barrier to Reginald's Godwinian progress and duty. And for Reginald, despite, in his acceptance of the secrets, being motivated in part by restoring his lost inherited status, as Melville makes clear, he 'must act dishonourably in order to regain his honour' (26). His dishonourable behaviour continues and begins the trail of destruction that leads to the death of Charon and Hector in his encounter with the mob.

Towards the end of the novel, Godwin offers his own gothic monster in the form of Bethlam Gabor. Gabor appears as an unlikely companion of Reginald's, grossly disfigured from war and vengeful for the murder of his family and the destruction of his home. Reginald befriends Gabor, only to be betrayed and imprisoned by him for the use of his alchemy. While admitting his initial admiration for Gabor, Reginald, with the benefit of hindsight, describes Gabor as such:

> If ever on the face of the earth there lived a misanthrope, Bethlem Gabor was the man. Never for a moment did he forget or forgive the sanguinary catastrophe of his family; and for his own misfortunes he seemed to have vowed vengeance against the whole human race. He almost hated the very face of man; and, when expressions of cheerfulness, peace,

> and contentment discovered themselves in his presence, I could see, by the hideous working of his features, that his spirit experienced intolerable agonies. (400)

Gabor is consumed by his desire for revenge, twisted in character by his unrelenting hatred for those who murdered his family and eventually hates man altogether and angered by Reginald's eventual acceptance of his mistreatment by others. Gabor also bears facial scars that distort his features and serve as physical manifestations of his hatred. This gothic figure is reimagined in Godwin's second historical novel in the tortured title character in *Mandeville*. This, Godwin's second historical novel, tracks the psychological development and creation of a Gabor-like character, consumed by thoughts of revenge on his enemies. Like Reginald, Gabor is also isolated from society and actively others himself. Despite this, Reginald become accepting of his fate and that which has passed, after the realisation that the gifts from the stranger of eternal life and unlimited wealth were rather a curse.

As well as clearly drawing on the gothic work of Lewis and Radcliffe, it is also clear that Godwin's *St. Leon* inspired Mary Shelley's most acclaimed work. There are clear similarities with Frankenstein's monster, the Gothic traits of the novel, in descriptions of surroundings and imprisonments, but most significantly in Reginald's descriptions of himself and his struggles. Perhaps most obvious is the personal and emotional transition Reginald faces once in possession of the secrets of the stranger: 'I possessed the gift of immortal life; but I looked on myself as a monster that did not deserve to exist.' (323) Reginald battles with his identity once he becomes otherworldly and removed from society by the secrets he is in possession of. Particularly in the latter stages of the novel, once Reginald has lost his family and appears a stranger to them, he longs for a connection to the outside world. The outside world becomes a dangerous, fearful place in which Reginald is denied an existence free of suspicion and risk of incarceration. The longevity of Reginald's life and the lasting memories of human connection being the depletion of his family unit, make his isolation even more tragic. Reginald even begins to separate himself in definition from others around in: ‘It has often been a subject of melancholy and complaint among mortals,’ (351).

Reginald’s final cause of isolation is the most painful. After fleeing the imprisonment of Bethlam Gabor, he comes across his son who now appears older than Reginald and who has changed his name to Charles de Damville to separate himself from the disgrace of the St. Leon name. This meeting comes after Reginald has visited his daughters at his family home and informed them that their father is dead, presenting them with a death certificate. He does this to free his eldest daughter of the shame of his actions which are preventing her from marrying the man she loves. After the loss of his own domestic happiness, Reginald seeks to right the wrongs he has caused and allow his daughter the same happiness he once felt with his wife Marguerite. This is what he has come to value most highly, as demonstrated by his thoughts he recalls when facing execution: ‘The stranger had given me immortality, and in a few days I was to expire in excruciating torches. He found me tranquil, contented, in the midst of simple, yet inestimable pleasures’ (339). He too attempts to secure the domestic happiness of his son when he learns of his love for Pandora, a poor orphan, left penniless after the death of her father, who cannot marry Charles, a high-ranking officer in the army, due to her financial position. In Reginald’s hapless, Don Quixote-esque fashion, he instead creates suspicion that Pandora is in love with him. Reginald is unable to tell Charles the truth, bound to secrecy by the supernatural powers he has chosen and laments what he has become:

> It was my fate, since the visit of the stranger of the lake of Constance, to rejoice for moments and to lament for years. I could not at first ascend to that purity and eminence of friendship to forget myself; I could not but painfully feel the contrast between me and my son. […] This very deceitfulness of my countenance was a bitter aggravation to my remorse. […] But I was all a lie; I was no youth; I was no man; I was no member of the great community of my species. The past and the future were equally a burden to my thoughts. To

> the eye that saw me I was a youth flushed with hope, and panting for existence. In my soul I knew, and I only knew, that I was a worn out veteran, battered with the storms of life, having tried everything and rejected everything, and discarded forever by hope and joy. (448)

This final encounter with his lost family completes his gothic othering. He speaks of himself as separate from humanity, destined to remain that way. This is Reginald's final lesson to his reader as he compares the character of his son with his own, dedicating the last few pages of his narrative to celebrating his son's virtues and morals. Although separated from his son, Reginald's praise for the man Charles is, ends the novel with hope of change and progress being made and lessons learned. The unhuman exile that Reginald becomes is destined to wander alone and lamenting his past self and wiser to the real pleasures of life and the valuable virtues.

CONCLUSION

Following on from Godwin's unique approach to the novel in *Caleb Williams*, specifically the use of first-person narrator, in *St. Leon* the blend of genres and the study of individual motivations is successfully carried through to the historical novel. As Clemit states: 'Godwin's experiments in philosophical biography equally support his contention that readers would be 'better employed in this studying one man, than in pursuing the abridgement of universal history in sixty volumes.'' (81). *St. Leon* is a clear application of the theories of history and romance laid out in Godwin's essay on genre. Godwin's exploration of the individual, whilst adhering to historical accuracy, and the use of general history to examine the impact the two branches have on each other, is exercised through Godwin's approach to narrative and his philosophical and political approach to fiction, focused, as ever, on improvement for both and progress. While there is much more to explore within the novel, including the Wollstonecraft inspired character of Marguerite and the presentation of Hector, from both a duty and race perspective, *St. Leon* is a complex novel, clearly of great literary merit and importance to the development of the genre.

CHAPTER II: Dissection of the Mind - William Godwin's *Mandeville*

INTRODUCTION

Godwin's second historical novel, *Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England*, was published in 1817. Described in the cover notes of the 2016 Broadview edition as 'a novel of psychological warfare', the story follows the troubled life of Charles Mandeville, an English royalist, attempting to navigate his own internal warfare against the backdrop of Cromwellian England. Mandeville's narrative sits between two major historical events of the seventeenth century: the execution of Charles I in 1649, taking place when Mandeville is 11 years old, and the Restoration of the Stuart Monarchy in 1660. Godwin's decision to place the narrative *between* historical events rather than in and around them presents this novel, as Rajan points out, as a 'missed encounter with history' (12).

The novel comes a substantial eighteen years after the publication of *St. Leon* (1799), Godwin's first venture into the genre, and three years after the publication of Scott's *Waverley* (1814). The impact of Scott's work on the genre needs to be acknowledged here, and so too does the appearance of Scott's novel in Godwin's reading list in 1815. Despite this, *Mandeville*, as with *St. Leon*, puts into practice

Godwin's much earlier work on genre, his essay "Of History and Romance" (1797). In the eighteen years since the publication of *St. Leon*, Godwin had faced career difficulties and Britain experienced another period of unrest and war. The adoration and reputation Godwin had gained after his publication of *Political Justice* in 1793 was in decline, resulting in a struggle to support himself financially. Britain had seen a series of prime ministers, including a second term of William Pitt the Younger. The Napoleonic Wars had begun in 1803, which included the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and ended in 1815, shortly after the Battle of Waterloo. And, in early 1817, Britain again cemented in law the Gagging Acts, making permanent the Treason Act of 1795 and reinforced the Seditious Meetings Act of the same year.

Perhaps more interestingly regarding *Mandeville*, the year 1800 brought the Parliamentary union of Ireland and Great Britain. Despite the majority of the novel being set in England, Mandeville begins by telling of his early childhood experience of being smuggled away by an Irish maid, narrowly escaping from the violence of the Ulster Rebellion (1641) in which both his parents, English occupiers in Ireland, perish. This traumatic event acts as a spectre throughout Mandeville's life, vividly revisiting him in times of incapacitation, and setting the tone of conflict that plagues him throughout. In the essay "Godwin, Ireland, and Historical Tragedy" (2021), David O'Shaughnessy explains Godwin's interest in Irish affairs. O'Shaughnessy highlights Godwin's only trip out of England, his six week stay in Dublin in 1800, his reading of *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Rebellion in 1641* in 1758 along with a host of other historical texts and his sympathies with the Irish persecution by the English which even including a publication under his pseudonym, 'To the People of Ireland', advising against accepting union with Britain, published in 1786:

> [Godwin's] 1820 reply to Malthus, *Of Population*, declared that 'The unhappy and beautiful country of Ireland has at all times been the victim of English ascendancy, and the unsparing rigour of English despotism' before lamenting 'The barbarism and ignorance in which we plunged our sister island.' (17)

Godwin uses the Ulster Rebellion of 1641, being well versed in the troubled relationship between Britain and Ireland in his own day, to light the touch paper of Mandeville's burning vengefulness which he carries with him, and which escalates to the close of the novel. In the last scenes of Mandeville's narrative, after attacking his sister's marriage carriage as she weds his nemesis and the embodiment of all his ill-fate, Clifford, we are left with Mandeville relishing the gruesome sight of the physical manifestations of his 'eternal war': 'a deep and perilous gash' he shall carry to his grave (447).

This chapter will argue that through a steadfast commitment to his own version of the historical novel, Godwin creates something radical and new. Godwin presents a typically complex narrative that subverts traditions of the historical novel, at a time when the conventions of the genre, by modern-day standards, were barely established. The chapter will take a closer look at Godwin's use of history, particularly his interest in Ireland, the exploration of trauma and the relationship between general and individual history. The use of Gothic imagery to create a novel much darker and less hopeful than Godwin's first historical novel will also be explored. In contention with Rajan's statement that Godwin fails to do something radical with the genre, I will argue that Godwin is experimental within historical fiction. Godwin delves deeper into the individual psyche and, through his tortured protagonists, uses the genre to explore the collateral damage that general history leaves behind.

IRELAND TO ENGLAND

As is the expectation with a Godwinian novel, *Mandeville* deals with many political and social issues, including not only those of the historical period in which the novel is set, but also those of Godwin's own time. However, *Mandeville* is also a novel deeply concerned with the psychological. This is extensively addressed in William Brewer's book *The Mental Anatomies of William Godwin and Mary Shelley*, (2001). As Brewer points out, it is important to note that Godwin is not writing with the knowledge of the psychological as we know it today. Therefore, when discussing Godwin's use of what we would today identify as the psychological, this will instead be referred to as the study of the mind or psychic dissection. Despite a lack of understanding of the mind in a psychological sense during the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment saw the influential work from many scholars and scientists. For example, Thomas Reid, author of *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* (1764), explored the idea that 'the mind, like the body, may be analysed through dissection' (15). Godwin's chosen method of 'dissection' in this case is the novel.

In the essay, "The Half-Mangled Narrator: The Violence of Psychic Dissection in William Godwin's *Caleb Williams"*, Eric Parisot draws a comparison between the Enlightenment and Godwin's work. Parisot states that 'Enlightenment philosophies of the mind' clearly influence Godwin's work, 'not only facilitating the adoption of dissection as a literary trope, but also the transformation of the literary sphere into a theatre fit for clinical experimentation and enquiry' (18). As Parisot discusses, this approach to Godwin's fictions can clearly be seen in *Caleb Williams*, and so, by the time *Mandeville* is published, almost 23 years later, this is well established in Godwin's work.

Godwin's use of the novel as a way of studying the mind, exploring individual motivations and the inner workings of his characters, falls soundly in line with his preference for individual history over the general. In her article titled 'The Study of the Mind: The Later Novels of William Godwin', Mona Scheuermann states:

> There is a strong argument to be made for Godwin as the first psychological novelist; in any case, his focus was increasingly toward the psychological rather than the social in all the novels from *Caleb Williams* on. It was in *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville*, however, that he gave his psychological explorations freest rein, and it is in these novels, therefore, that we can most

> clearly perceive his departure from the channels already established in the novels of his contemporaries. (17)

Here Scheuermann notes a progression in Godwin's writing, one that leans further into the study of the mind. This shift can also be noted between the two Godwin texts studied in this thesis. With this progression, in contrast to Reginald as narrator in *St. Leon*, *Mandeville* offers a narrator consumed by 'obsessional hatred' (27), as Brewer calls it. Godwin addresses more complex emotions and mental afflictions in Charles Mandeville and produces a darker novel in comparison to the *Don Quixote* type story of *St. Leon*. *Mandeville* is a tale much more aligned with Gothic tropes of madness, monstrosity and isolation.

The use of a first person, confessional narrator is also by this time an established literary trope of Godwin's work. It is, of course, the most suitable type of narrator for a confessional tale that seeks meaning in the motivation of the individual. Charles Mandeville, like Caleb Williams, takes on the role of the psychic surgeon of his own stories, retelling his life thus far and analysing the motivations of not only his own actions, but those around him. As Parisot points out, when writing about *Caleb Williams*, 'he is, simultaneously, the enlightened inquisitor *and* the victim' (19). This probing of the former self (19), also true of Charles Mandeville's narrative, is only possible with a first person, confessional narrator.

For Charles, much of his narrative is plagued by the lasting effects of his childhood trauma. As was pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, via Rajan, this novel is set between historical events. This separation from major historical events compounds Charles' feeling of isolation throughout his narrative. Charles is, however, directly involved in one historical event, the Ulster Rebellion of 1641. The scenes Charles witnesses here are described in detail in Volume I but continue to appear in retrospect during bouts of illness as Charles navigates his early life.

At just three years of age, Charles witnesses the murder of his parents during the violence of the Ulster Rebellion. Charles' parents were among the 'civilized strangers' from England, who settled in Ireland 'to reclaim the wild Irish from what might almost be called their savage state' (66). The events of the rebellion, taking place in October of 1641, were brutal and bloody. The Catholics of Ireland, unhappy with the control exerted over the region by the English Protestant settlers, began the rebellion by attempting a coup to gain control over the English administration. By 23rd October, the rebellion had begun with rebels capturing multiple regions of the North of Ireland, eventually spreading South. Protestant settlers were captured, and some were killed, an occurrence more common in Ulster than other regions.

Charles' retelling of the events surrounding his parents' death begins like an general historiography rather than a personal history. The history told up to the events of the rebellion is, in typical Godwin fashion, detailed and accurate despite the biased narrator. The first few pages set up the political and religious tensions in which the conditions for the bloody rebellion were created. Through this, Charles declares, 'These things I can state impartially now', before interrupting his narrative with: 'I am not, however, writing a piece of national history' (70). This direct awareness Charles displays as narrator reveals an agenda to write his story, not to relay the details of general history, but of his individual history. It also points to the confessional nature of Charles' tale, a distinguishing feature of the Godwinian novel. Moreover, these statements help draw comparison with the emotional effect Charles' personal history has on him. The narrative makes a clear shift from general to individual in these first two chapters. Details move to murder and torture, including such events as those of Portendown, 'the most tragical scene of these inflictions' (77), the mass drownings of over one hundred people. The scenes described are violent and those at Kinnard, where Charles and his parents were held captive with several others, create a visceral reaction in Charles, silencing him and halting his narrative: 'I cannot go on with the narrative.' (80). He halts his story, momentarily, as the individual effects of the general collide. The debilitating effect of these traumatic memories is seen throughout the novel: 'I do not remember the scene distinctly in all its parts; but there are detached circumstances that belong to it, that will live in my memory as long as my pulses continue to beat.' (79). The 'horrible concert' of 'piercing shrieks' (79) Charles recalls here revisit him later in life.

Charles only survives the massacre because of the actions of his Irish nurse maid, Judith, who manages to escape the scene by presenting Charles as her own child. Judith travels with Charles through Ireland, fending off suspicious rebels until she decides to head to Dublin for help. It is here she finds the Presbyterian Minister, Hilkiah Bradford, who mercilessly takes the child from Judith, who begs so passionately to stay with Charles that she is removed from Dublin by the English settlers. After escaping Ireland and arriving in England, Charles takes up residency with his uncle, Audley Mandeville, with Hilkiah as his teacher and religious guide. The Mandeville house is a typically Gothic location which intensifies Charles' isolation after the loss of his parents and the separation from the motherly figure of Judith:

> The dwelling-place of my uncle was an old and spacious mansion, the foundation of which was a rock, against which the waves of the sea forever beat, and by their incessant and ineffectual rage were worked into a foam, that widely spread itself in every direction. The sound of the dashing waters was eternal, and seemed calculated to inspire sobriety, and almost gloom, into the soul of every one who dwelt within the reach of its influence. (84-5)

The house is solitary and depressing and acts as a negative influence on the mood of those who occupy it. As Charles introduces us to Audley, his uncle and owner of the house, he states that the Mandeville Mansion is chosen as Audley's place of dwelling, out of his many, much nicer properties, as it 'suited the frame of his mind' (86). Audley Mandeville offers an insight into Charles' potential future. After losing the love of his life, Audley separates himself socially and physically from those around him, isolating himself through his grief and living much of his life as an outsider, observing rather than taking part in that which happens around him.

As William Brewer points out in *Mental Anatomies*, Godwin uses the novel to explore the make-up of his characters:

> In accordance with Lockean and Hartleian psychology, Godwin and [Mary] Shelley often have the narrators of their works describe, in painstaking detail, the series of associations that motivate their actions and determine their fates. (24)

As we see from our introduction to Audley, this is not something reserved only for the protagonist. In these early chapters, Charles makes clear his awareness of how people's experiences create the person themselves. This awareness is indiscriminate and is applied to both positive and negative actions or attributes. When discussing Audley's father, a cruel and unreasonable figure who shuns his son for not meeting his expectations, Charles states that 'His countenance and figure bore strongly the marks of the hardships he had endured.' (86). This recognition and dissection of other characters is also what Charles applies to his own life and character. Godwin's use of the novel as a psychic dissection of his characters also gives his narrators a motivation for writing. The protagonists write their confessional tales as a way of understanding themselves, as well as those around them.

Charles lives under the Mandeville mansion roof from the age of three to twelve years old. The gloomy disposition of his uncle and the oppressive environment are confounded by his education singularly delivered by Hilkiah Bradford. Hilkiah's teaching of Charles, despite including such topics as poetry, revolve almost exclusively around religion. Even when teaching poetry, Hilkiah is solely interested in mentions of scripture or religious teachings. As Charles states, 'I saw the singleness and simplicity of his heart.' (112). Godwin consistently presents troublesome religious figures in his work, as seen in *St. Leon* with the oppressive actions of the Spanish Inquisition. Here, Godwin uses the novel to comment on protestant fanaticism, rigid and exclusive religious views and their influence on individual lives. For Hilkiah:

> there was but one subject, that, whenever it occurred, inflamed his blood, and made his eye sparkle with primitive and apostolic fury; and that was, the corruption of evangelical truth, […] the spring and main movement of his religious zeal lay in this proposition, "that the Pope is Antichrist." (113)

As O'Shaughnessy points out, throughout his work, both fiction and philosophy, Godwin warns of the dangers of religious fanaticism. When discussing Godwin's play *St. Dunstan*, completed in 1790, O'Shaughnessy states: 'That play made clear the dangers of religious fanaticism to the individual and to the state' (19). In *Mandeville*, Hilkiah's role in Charles' education is dominating and does not allow differing opinions or debate. Charles recalls: 'I was well prepared to be a ready hearer of this doctrine: for, had not my father and my mother fallen untimely victims under the daggers of Irish Catholics?' (113). Godwin uses Hilkiah to demonstrate the perpetuation of conflict and hatred. The religious conflict in the Ireland of Godwin's time can be traced back through the history he identifies in *Mandeville*, drawing an obvious comparison between the two and confirming his political intentions in writing *Mandeville*. The relationship between Hilkiah and Charles demonstrates the inherited nature of conflict throughout history.

NARRATIVE FORM AND VOICE

Godwin's choice of a first-person confessional narrator presents a number of issues in relation to reliability. In Charles, Godwin creates a protagonist who is acutely aware of his role as narrator and these issues of reliability some of which are addressed early in the novel and remain present throughout. On the issue of recalling his childhood memories, Charles addresses the potential for manipulation of his own history. Godwin uses Charles' recollection of the events of his childhood to highlight the problematic retelling of history. Of the recurring mental images Charles sees of the memories of fleeing Ireland, he admits the following:

> All this of course came mixed up, to my recollection, with incidents that I had never seen, but which had not failed to be circumstantially related to me. It would indeed have been difficult for me to have made a separation of the two; what I had heard, had been so fully detailed to me, and had made such an impression upon my juvenile fancy, than if I had actually seen it. (110)

As O'Shaughnessy summarises when discussing Charles' retelling of the ghostly apparitions in the river at Portendown, on which there were several recorded sightings by the public in real life, Godwin illustrates how 'individual narrative evolves in a general historical 'truth" (27). Godwin presents the idea that history is neither fixed nor factual, and that Charles, as the storyteller, is aware of this. Godwin uses historical fiction to tell a history that would otherwise never be told and to be cautious with the accuracy and truth of historiography. Even with this awareness, Charles caveats his statement with 'to my recollection', identifying the innate unreliability of memory and how it has the potential to be altered and influenced. This idea is something extensively explored in Godwin's essay "Of History and Romance".

A key issue to explore when considering Charles' reliability as a narrator is his motivation for writing. This, too, is something that Charles addresses early in the novel. When discussing the peculiarities in his disposition, Charles declares: 'I cannot help it. The purpose of these pages is, to be made the record of truth' (109). This early declaration of honesty is important for Charles, it both asks the reader to believe him and states his motivation to write, at least in part. Shortly after this, Charles states the following: 'I am aware, that in what I now record I am relating a strange story; but it is necessary to the illustration of my future life.' (131). Here Charles expresses the understanding that the events of his early life have a significant impact on what happens later. It can be said therefore that Charles uses the narrative, in part, to explain his later behaviour. It is also a recognition that without this explanation, his behaviour and thoughts later in the novel would be far more difficult for the reader to understand and, importantly, believe. It would perhaps be too far a stretch to say that Charles is using the narrative to excuse his behaviour, he is, of course, extremely self-critical throughout, but it can be said that there is an attempt to justify what transpires later in the novel. This exploration of individual motivations is an important aspect of Godwin's use of the historical fiction genre, and, for Godwin, offers a truer understanding of human nature than traditional history. This is how Godwin believes historical figures should be explored and where he places the most value in using the past to educate ourselves on the future.

We also see in this section of Charles' narrative his almost academic approach to his own story. Charles goes on to state:

> The moral of Aesop's fable of the lion and the man is applicable here. We see everywhere the monuments of human achievements; but the lions have no historians and no statuaries of their own. All those persons who have produced practical treaties on the art of education, have been men. The books are always written by those who are the professors of teaching, never the subjects. (131)

This consideration aligns Charles' narration with the study of the mind that the Enlightenment period was concerned with. Charles is aware of and inspired by other moral, cautionary tales. We see this too in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where the monster is given a voice and where understanding of the 'subjects' is prioritised over the view of them from outside. The motivation for Godwin and Shelley to use their narrators and their historical novels to explore that which general history cannot is made clear here.

Beyond being individually motivated, Charles also indicates here that he sees his story as being part of a wider rebellion against the status quo of historiography. As previously discussed, Charles is an absolute outsider in this novel, completely unable to position himself in a politically or historically significant role. Charles' role is that of the lion in the Aesop fable, unable to be part of history and unable to write about it as others have. Charles' decision to write his story is an attempt to rebalance the role of man and lion, the insider and the outsider, the powerful and the weak. This is, of course, one of the major functions of historical fiction as a genre, to write about those throughout history that would otherwise be ignored, figures who sit outside of history like Charles Mandeville. This fable also functions as a reinforcement of the unreliability of history. Although Charles' story told in a first-person narrative is completely one-sided, so too has all of history written before his.

What is also an interesting aspect of this comparison made by Charles, is the implication that perhaps Charles is the 'subject' of history or sees himself as thus. Prior to this section of narrative, Charles describes himself as a visionary. He records that he frequently had long visions of which he states:

> In these moods I sometimes imagined that every thing around me was engaged in a conspiracy against me, that I was, in some inexplicable way, a captive, whose genuine destiny led to higher things… (130-1)

Here, Charles admits that he sometimes believed himself to be destined to make an impact on history and do something important. Charles implies that he is potentially the subject of history, perhaps not the natural writer of history, but one who will be written about. These aspects of Charles' story are important to consider when addressing his unreliability as narrator. Part of what motivates Charles to tell his story is his ambition. Does this ambition drive him to create a story that is worthy of being considered history? Charles presents himself as an honest narrator, and this is reinforced for the reader in some regards because Charles uses his narrative to berate his own actions and thoughts as much as he does those of others, taking on the role of the psychic dissector. This contrasts with the narrative of *St. Leon*, where Reginald attempts to use the narrative to minimise his own wrongdoing and shies away from responsibility. Charles' ambition and his belief that others were 'engaged in a conspiracy' against him means that he is potentially impacted by his motivation to exaggerate the injustices he faces and to justify his, not totally unfounded, paranoia.

THE TRAUMATIC PAST

At the age of twelve, Charles is sent to study at Winchester School, at the request of his uncle. Charles is pleased to leave the intolerable rhetoric of Hilkiah; however, the environment of Winchester School is equally singular and extreme in its political views as Hilkiah with his religious ones. As Charles explains, 'There was not I believe one boy in Winchester school that was not a royalist' (155). The absolutism of the environments in which Charles spends his early years reflect the tensions in Godwin's own day. As Charles writes, 'Parties at this time ran very high in the English nation' (154). The fear the government of Godwin's time felt is demonstrated in actions such as reinforcing and renewing the so-called Gagging Acts. Winchester school is carefully chosen by Godwin for the historical links the school has with the royalist cause. In Charles' narrative, he describes the events in Winchester a year and a half before his arrival, during which King Charles I passed through the city 'as he was conducted from Hurst Castle to London for his trial' (154). The city received King Charles with 'great respect', which the boys of the school were granted permission to watch. The scenes of King Charles riding through the streets on horseback with crowds of spectators' echo those which occurred when William of Orange arrived during the events of the Glorious Revolution in England in 1688. Importantly, they are influential on those who witness the events in *Mandeville*, the boys of Winchester school, as the scenes of the Field of the Cloth of Gold at the beginning of Godwin's *St. Leon* do on Reginald. Charles comments on the impact of the events on his classmates:

> And the melancholy catastrophe that so shortly after followed, caused the whole to make an indelible impression on their memory. […] Mankind is so weak an animal, that they cannot be prevented from looking upon a king as a species of god; comets appear in the heavens to illustrate his birth, and the world labours with tempests and earthquakes when a monarch dies; (154)

Charles' scathing criticism of the glorification of the monarchy here further illustrates his isolation from the world around him.

Despite this abhorrence of the way in which the boys at Winchester worship King Charles, Mandeville admits a similar, initial, admiration for a boy named Clifford. A fellow student at Winchester and a 'royalist to the core' (172), Charles' first impression of Clifford is full of gushing admiration:

> His countenance was beautiful, and his figure was airy. […] There was a vivacity in his eye, and an inexpressible and thrilling charm in the tone of voice, that appeared more than human. […] For a short time envy itself was disarmed and I, like the rest, admired a spectacle, so new to me, and so beautiful in itself, that I was wrapt in self-oblivion. (158)

Charles describes this as 'a brief intoxication' (159) and explains that eventually 'the solemn tone of my true character speedily returned to me' (159). Charles cites envy and pride as his initial reasons for his dislike of Clifford. Godwin draws on the Gothic trope of doubling for this integral relationship in the novel. Clifford and Charles are opposites in many ways, with Clifford being skilled in areas where Charles considers himself to be fundamentally flawed. One such skill pertinent to Charles' story is Clifford's ability to communicate extremely effectively, to win over those around him and captivate and influence his audience. This is contrasted with Charles' introverted nature and his inability to verbally challenge

Clifford later in the narrative. Charles constantly reminds his readers of his ineffectualness in this area. After Clifford regales his fellow students with a speech declaring his gratitude for being born into an impoverished branch of a noble family and declaring the rich man the real ‘slave’, Charles declares:

> I was not like Clifford. I could not put my soul into my tongue, and witch all hearers with my eloquence. […] I felt my deficiency with fierce and burning impatience. Why should this youth steal away the souls of his companions with glozing words, and I have no tongue to check his mistakes, and expose his sophistries? Why should error thus intrepidly bolt forth its apophthegms, and I sit timidly in my corner, unable to utter the truths that were fermenting in my bosom? (168-9)

Charles’ inability to speak freely is, of course, a major motivation for writing his story. He is unable to challenge Clifford in any meaningful way from the time he meets him. Godwin uses his protagonist as narrator of his own story specifically to challenge those he is unable to challenge directly. This becomes a source of agony for Charles, and as his hatred deepens and his interactions with Clifford become less and less favourable, his inability to challenge Clifford intensifies.

During these early years in the school, the idea that Clifford is not only passively an aggravation to Charles, but that he is actively working against him becomes an obsessive thought for Charles. Obstructed from befriending Clifford due to his solitary nature, exacerbated by his isolated upbringing, Charles instead aligns himself with a boy called Waller, eldest son of William Waller, ‘the famous parliamentary general’ (174) and the ‘acknowledged leader of the presbyterian royalists’ (180). The influential incident begins with a book of prints ‘of the most odious nature, and least of all to be forgiven in the walls of Winchester school.’ (176). The prints contain satirical images of members of the royal family and were found within Charles’ apartment. The book is found by Mallison, an associate of Clifford, who Charles describes earlier in the narrative as ‘[possessing] the art to turn the careless and good-humoured effusions of Clifford into lampoons' (160). The book of prints is passed onto Clifford and an assembly of prefects come together to deliberate the issue. As he and Waller are questioned by the other students on the origin of the prints, Charles declares his ignorance. Waller, however, visibly distressed during the event, claims the prints were brought to his attention by Charles, their owner. Waller claims he discouraged Charles from possessing them but had eventually convinced him of the error of his ways. Charles simply denies the claims and naively believes his denial will be enough to exonerate him from suspicion.

Charles, when first introducing his reader to his relationship with Waller, declares: 'I chose this lad because I could manage him as I pleased.' (175). However, despite this, after being briefly dismissed from the room of questioning, Waller convinces Charles to take the blame for possessing the prints. Waller states that he initially saw no harm in his amusement at the prints, but after seeing that the prefects 'considered it as an affair of so heinous a nature' (182), he could not take the blame. Waller claims that Charles can admit to owning the prints as he is 'answerable to no one' (182) but that Waller's father, a prominent figure in the royalist cause, would never again speak to him if he was to find out. Waller pleads with Charles: 'I will have a brand upon me like Cain, to mark me out to every creature that lives. I shall have a stain, that no penitence or penance can ever remove.' (182) What Waller fears here foreshadows Mandeville's fate regarding the royalist cause. The potential repercussions for possession of the book of prints are severe. As with Hilkiah's teachings, Charles finds himself in yet another environment of extreme views, and extreme consequences for apparently stepping outside of those views. This is something we see repeatedly in *St. Leon*, whether in relation to a village mob or the Spanish Inquisition. As Rajan points out, 'Though Mandeville seems a staunch Royalist, he becomes one only when a child at Winchester College, and for the most arbitrary reason' (33). After this incident, Charles is forced to demonstrate his loyalty to the Royalist cause again and again, not because he is loyal to the cause, but in order to atone for being thought of as guilty of this crime in the eyes of others around him. Charles' political and social alignments are determined largely by circumstance. The novel presents a politically and socially inauthentic landscape. Charles' treatment, paired with Waller's assertion that he would be ostracised from his father if the prints were found to be his, creates an environment where the motivations of individuals for their political and social actions are difficult to navigate. Charles' critical voice relating to political and religious extremes is very much that of Godwin. Throughout Godwin's political and philosophical writings and his literary works, there is criticism of all forms of extreme ideology, and a variety of examples of mob-like behaviour. His criticism of this mob mentality in its various forms, and as we see here in the prefects' trial, aligns with Charles' narrative and his shock at the ferocity of the reaction he receives. Godwin shows how the extreme nature of environments such as Winchester school is effective in creating social and political outsiders.

Godwin further separates Mandeville from his peers by contrasting their expectations of the outcome of such an indiscretion. Charles states that he was 'far from anticipating the possibility of such ingenuity of malice and degradation' (184), stating that his 'imagination had proved sluggish' in his prediction of the reaction that unfolded. Waller, on the other hand, in his pleas to Charles, demonstrates a clear understanding of the gravity of the situation. This dissimilarity highlights Charles' lack of understanding and connection to the world which he is attempting to navigate. He is ill-equipped to steer his way through the complex and confusing politics that surround him. The motivation for Waller's being in possession of the prints is merely a juvenile amusement at the satirical nature of the cartoons and is not a factor of the issue. The lack of nuance jars with Charles' desire for the truth:

> I had not shaped out to myself the idea of actual punishment, and still less had conceived all the insulting words and things, that might be addressed to me. I flinched and writhed with anguish at these, as they successively rose before my unanticipating spirit; […] I would have given the world, to have published the undisguised truth at once. (184-5)

Charles' choice of words here draws the reader's attention back to his motivation for writing his story. Through this incident, Godwin is able to present the complexities of human motivation and the way in which a politically sensitive environment affects truth and nuance. Essentially, Charles writes to challenge the generally accepted history, not just of this incident but also those to come, in an individual way that is accessible to him.

One final aspect of this incident that is important to the rest of Charles' narrative, is the incapacitating power the stress of this social rejection has on him. Godwin, as well as Shelley in *Valperga*, draws on the gothic trope of episodic fainting and utilises gothic imagery to add to the foreboding. Charles states that the indignity he faced 'haunted him' (185). He writes: 'It mixed with all my dreams and all my reveries; if a moment of festivity or peace came over me at unawares, it was presently poisoned by the withering recollection' (185). Charles is unable to escape the overworking of his mind, the rumination of the events and, soon after, is physically debilitated by the emotional exertion. This extreme reaction and fixation on the events create the first of a number of visceral reactions to social isolation or rejection that Charles suffers.

> My blood boiled within me. The whole surface of my body burned, so that every one that approached me, and touched my flesh, suddenly snatched away his hand, as if it had been scorched with fire. I was in a raging fever. Before the close of the day I was conducted to my bed, which I did not leave for weeks. (185)

This type of visceral reaction to the overwhelming nature of Charles' mind is something that reoccurs throughout the novel. Charles is further silenced by these episodes and further separated from those around him. Throughout this first instance, Charles affixes the blame for his suffering solely at the door of Clifford. Despite acknowledging that Clifford's response of throwing the book of prints into the flames spared Charles the potential of worse punishment by Mallison, he is unable to separate the resentment.

What follows in the narrative is a seething and vengeful berating of Clifford's character. Even with the truth of Clifford's contribution to the event, Charles states: 'I could not persuade myself to view it in that light.' (186). Clifford offers Charles a single entity in which to pour his hatred and distain for the world around him, including what we may consider in today's terminology as Charles' unresolved childhood trauma. Charles makes an important distinction between Clifford and the others who are most certainly more deserving of his fixation: 'My nature would not permit me to hate the rabble, the mere chaff and refuse of the threshing-floor' (186). Labelling Mallison and Waller as 'inferior opponents' (186), Charles identifies what he considers a worthy adversary in Clifford, stating his pride as a motivating factor in the choice. Charles writes that, 'whatever I was compelled to admire, I was compelled to hate' (186). The issue of Clifford is presented as inevitable and, in this incident, and the reinforcing feverish episode, Charles views their lives after as intertwined. The formative event is where volume one of *Mandeville* comes to an end, with Charles declaring, 'Clifford and I were two luminaries that could never shine in the same sphere' (169).

THE IMPACT OF GENERAL HISTORY ON THE INDIVIDUAL

After an unhappy time at Winchester, Charles moves on to Oxford. During his time here, Cromwell becomes Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England in the year 1653. Describing Cromwell's position as 'uneasy' (192), Charles becomes aware of a plot designed to take the opportunity of this precariousness to reinstate the king. This provides Charles with an opportunity to, as he writes, launch himself 'onto the busy scene of the world' (200). He is introduced to Colonel Penruddock after being recommended to his service by Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper, a distant relative of a boy at Oxford Charles had accompanied at his deathbed. From this introduction, Charles is positioned by Penruddock to take up a role as secretary to the commander-in-chief. With Charles' connection to Sir Anthony, a man with political fluidity and whose commitment to the royal cause is questionable, Charles is rejected for the position by Sir Joseph Wagstaff, who promises the role to another boy. Whilst awaiting the decision of Wagstaff, Charles sees the boy who will take up the post he was in no doubt was his: 'It was Clifford!' (205).

The painful humiliation failing to be alleviated by Penruddock, Charles again reignites the idea of himself and Clifford being bound in destiny and declares that 'only death could dissolve the chains that bound us.' (209). As he marches back to confront Clifford, he speaks to himself of an 'eternal war' (210) that he wishes to pronounce with his enemy. Clifford presents to Charles the opposite, apologising but announcing in the presence of the others involved in the affair that even his own removal from the post would not help Wagstaff overlook Charles' inadequacies along with acknowledging Charles' inability to cope with such a humiliation. The position of secretary is short-lived however. The enterprise of Wagstaff failed, resulting in the death of Penruddock and ending with Wagstaff's own escape to the continent. Charles returns to Oxford. This series of events is short in the grand scheme of the novel, yet demonstrates the significance of the malice Charles bears Clifford.

It initially appears that Charles' introduction to Penruddock will be far more influential on Charles' life. Charles admires him and feels as though opportunities are available with these new connections. However, as Godwin does with several historical figures and characters that also could support Charles' endeavours to make a political and social impact, their presence in his story is fleeting and they are often declared dead by Charles shortly after they enter his narrative. The inclusion of these characters is not merely perhaps to demonstrate Godwin's keen understanding of history, rather that, as characters of some historical significance, they represent the general history of the novel. General history shapes Charles' individual history, and this is, of course, a novel about the impact the general has on the individual. Charles' life is affected directly by these general historical figures for the worse. Waller's father is the reason Waller cannot bear to take the blame for the prints, Penruddock and Cooper set

Charles up for the humiliation of failing to gain the secretary role. The general history happening around Charles, has an increased negative effect on Charles' internal peace. Before being drawn into the throng of the royalist enterprise Charles comments that he 'enjoyed a season of comparative tranquillity at Oxford' (205). When Charles is drawn into the general history, this quietude is violently interrupted for Charles and the internal effects are irreversible.

A consistent theme throughout the novel is that of irreversible damage, of scarring and disfigurement, both internal and external. While at Oxford, Charles finds companionship in a boy of similar disposition to himself by the name of Lisle, rejoicing, 'Thank God, I have a companion, that hates the world as much as I do!' (214). Despite their shared misanthropy, Charles acknowledges the effects of the loss of Lisle's father but argues that the fact that Lisle still had the attention of his nurturing mother makes this different from his own experience:

> My education had been extremely different from his. I may be said never to have known father or mother. […] My character was withered: not chilled; but dried, and stiffened, and changed to a yellow, death-like hue, like the confected carcases of ancient Egypt. It was scorched with too much heat; a heat that operated, not like the life-giving beams of the sun, but like the suffocating, pestilential sirocco of the desert. (219-20)

As Rajan explains, 'given the novel's emphasis on wounding, his [Charles'] body is a kind of archive' (33). In this extract, we see Charles' acknowledgement that this irreparable internal scarring begins with the extremely early death of his parents. The 'scorching' of his character is not counteracted in the aftermath of his parents' death early enough to repair the damage. Charles goes onto explain, 'I had never seen a female, with whom I had held frank and familiar intercourse, till the visit of Henrietta' (220). This later introduction to the warm-heartedness of his sister serves to highlight not just the difference between his own and Lisle's characters, but also reinforces the devastating effects of being separated from Judy before leaving Ireland. With hindsight, Charles questions, 'What but the accident of birth or education had made us to differ from those we loathed and despised?' (220). Here, Charles presents the idea that we are victims of circumstance, that the individual is moulded and at the mercy of the conditions in which they are born and raised.

This permanent marking is not only found in Charles' use of scarring and disfigurement but also in the pattern of his thoughts. During what seems a period of little significance in regard to events in Charles' life, the thoughts of the events that had unfolded remain alive in his mind. In volume I, Charles declares that the book of prints incident 'haunted' him, and here, after the humiliation regarding the role of secretary, Charles discloses, 'my mind did not fail to be greatly disturbed with the recollection of the scenes through which I had lately passed' (221). The agonies of these ruminations go further than mere thought, 'Waking and sleeping, by day and by night, I actually saw them' (221). The lasting effect of these distresses lives vividly in Charles' mind.

After seeing the presence of Mallison near his boarding at Oxford, Mandeville is shunned by Lisle when meeting in the street. Mandeville follows Lisle to discover he has been informed about the book of prints and that Charles was a spy responsible for the failing of Penruddock's enterprise and is therefore an enemy of the royalist cause. After a passionate rebuke from Lisle, a staunch royalist, Mandeville declares Lisle unjust and takes leave of his friend. After this, another short-lived companionship, ended by the poisonous actions of Mallison, Charles declares that he 'has no place in the world of mankind' (231) and suffers another, more extreme episode which sees him fleeing his chambers to wander the forest. He is found sometime later by passers-by who take him to 'a receptacle for lunatics' (233) nearby. Such institutions were not established in the seventeenth century for the treatment of patients as much as they were for the containment of them. As discussed previously, the Enlightenment interest in the workings of the mind and the potential remedying of mental illnesses was far off being explored. As Brewer explains, 'Mandeville cannot determine whether his attendants are more interested in restraining or curing him' (135). Mandeville is beaten during his outburst in this period of illness, 'I had been turned into a coward, the veriest slave that lives, trembling at a look' (234). Despite this, Mandeville's sister, Henrietta, is at his side to offer comfort. During this debilitating episode of mental distress, Mandeville describes the re-emergence of his childhood trauma to his mind:

> Ireland, and its scenes of atrocious massacre, that one might have expected to be obliterated from the tablet of my memory, presented themselves in original freshness. My father and mother died over again. The shrieks, that had rent the roofs of Kinnard fourteen years before, yelled in my ears, and deafened my sense; and I answered them with corresponding and responsive shrieks. (234)

Despite Charles' earlier acknowledgment of the great impact losing his parents had on him, here he appears a little unaware of the lasting impact the actual events of Ulster themselves have. When in his most vulnerable state, these are the most powerful memories that overtake his mind and his visions. As Brewer continues, 'in Godwin's and [Mary] Shelley's work, the primary cause of madness is generally a ruling of passion, which is intensified rather than engendered by the imagination' (135). Despite Charles' conscious imagination focusing on Clifford as a source of hatred and agony, when removed from this focus, his imagination retreats to the traumatic events of his childhood. Through this period of madness, Godwin reinstates the novel as firmly an Irish one, identifying the troubles of Ireland which still raged during Godwin's own time as his focus through this novel.

Fainting spells and debilitating bouts of madness can be counted among the many gothic influences in Godwin's historical fictions and appear in Shelley's *Valperga* through her character Beatrice. *Mandeville*, in comparison to the other novels considered in this thesis, draws more extensively on the gothic in order to create the bleak and harrowing narrative. In the second volume we see the most striking gothic image of the novel, one with the clearest link to Godwin's focus on Ireland and the novels intent. Shortly before this bout of illness, while ruminating on the issue of Clifford, Charles compares their eternal war with the torture perpetrated by Mezantius, the Etruscan tyrant:

> In the same manner as, in the world of human creatures, there exist certain mysterious sympathies and analogies, drawing and attracting each to each, and fitting them to be respectively sources of mutual happiness, so, I was firmly persuaded, there are antipathies, and properties interchangeably irreconcilable and destructive to each other, that fit one human being to be the source of another's misery. Beyond doubt I had found this true opposition and inter-destructiveness in Clifford. Mezentius, the famous tyrant of antiquity, tied a living body to a dead one, and caused the one to take in, and gradually to become a partner of, the putridness of the other. (230)

The repulsive image had first been used by Godwin's 1786 letter "To the People of Ireland" (described in the introduction to this chapter) pleading with the Irish people to reject union with Britain. Ireland, in Godwin's view being the living body, which would no doubt be doomed by its entwinement with England. By using this image, as Rajan explains, Charles 'is sub-textually aligned with Ireland as a victim of oppression' (36), much in line with his description of himself as a 'slave' during the time he spends in the asylum. As Trumpener explains, in *Mandeville*, along with other early historical novels, 'the effects of civil strife […] are concentrated in the schizophrenic loyalties, unbalanced mind, or sacred body of the nurse.' (218). Here, Godwin concentrates the strife between Ireland and England in the mind of Mandeville and the relationship between himself and Clifford.

Mandeville spends a significant amount of recovery time in the company of his sister, Henrietta. The impact Henrietta has on Charles is significant, he describes her as the 'most pleasing vision' and declares that in her presence he 'could not fail to become peaceful virtuous and happy' (242). Henrietta is even capable of getting Charles to reconsider his hatred of Clifford. She entreats him to forgive and befriend

Clifford, questioning the foundation for Charles' dislike of him, something Charles himself has identified as often being of rocky foundations. In a happier disposition Charles is receptive to these pleas and makes amends with Clifford when they are reintroduced briefly. Charles is even able to tolerate the telling of Clifford's time in his role as secretary. Despite his efforts, motivated by his love of Henrietta, Charles is unable to sustain his peace with Clifford. On departing his company Charles declares 'All I asked was, but Clifford would stand out of my sun. That surely was a small matter. If by fair means he would not yield to this, I might obtain it by force.' (271).

Whilst situated in the rural setting of Hampshire for his recovery, Charles comes to appreciate the simplicity of rural life, and sees great changes to his happiness. The environment, separate from the political and social workings of the 'real world', Charles enjoys 'the fresh feel of the morning air' which 'breathed new life into him' and left him thoroughly satisfied (272). Charles draws a contrast between this idyllic rural life and the busyness of his entrance onto the stage of general history:

> This seems of all things most exactly to answer to the idea of the poet, of a life spent in dulcet idleness, for getting all, and by all forgotten, wrapped in happy, yet an enviable obscurity, full of enjoyment, yet leaving no marks behind that it had ever been. (272)

The idealised rural life is a recurring image throughout Godwin's literary works. Here, in contrast to the dominant language of scarring and disfigurement is the idea that a life lived this way leaves no mark. The world of general history, in comparison to that of obscurity, does not damage, does not leave the scars Charles falls victim to.

It is not long, however, before Charles' feeling of misanthropy and rage against Clifford reoccur. Charles declares, "Clifford is my fate. Present or absent, walking or sleeping, I can never get rid of him." (273). Charles then suffers the embarrassment of the potentially life influencing meeting with Marquis de Gavres, the Marquis relays the story of Charles' apparent dishonour during Penruddock's royalist enterprise, unaware that the subject of that story is in the room, thus reliving the humiliation again and being reminded that he is unable to escape what has become a general truth. Charles then, on returning to his uncle's house, is faced with his uncle's failing health and the ill-intentions and cruel tactics of Mr Holloway, who was attempting to profit from the Mandeville estate, encouraged by Audley's failing health. After ensuring the estate remains with the Mandeville family and the employees of the household are supported, Audley Mandeville dies.

> His death was without convulsion, without a groan, a sigh. […] Audley Mandeville was certainly not the most useful of mankind. He was engaged in no illustrious acts, either of the intellectual, or philanthropy. If you ask his history, the reply maybe made in the words of Shakespeare's Viola, a blank; and much of the lines that follow, might with the strictest propriety form the epitaph on his tomb. (309)

Despite the solitary nature of Audley, he remained a consistent connection available to Charles. The impact of his death is greatly felt and Charles signals, 'I was now, more than ever, a detached creature on the face of the earth. The death of Audley Mandeville therefore produced a revolution in my mind and is to be regarded as forming an epoch in my history.' (310). Volume II concludes with Charles' gratitude for his remaining relative, his beloved sister.

The Subversion of the Marriage Trope

Despite his affections for his sister, Henrietta would produce the final blow to Mandeville. Charles receives the news that Clifford is converted to Catholicism, and he later visits the house of the Montagu's where Charles and his sister are staying. During his stay, Charles once again hears the name of Clifford. Charles reveals that his sister Henrietta and Clifford are to be married. What is most interesting about this series of events in the novel, is Godwin's use of the narrative structure. Despite our protagonist narrating his individual history as it has passed, Charles does not use this knowledge of all events that have unfolded in order to tell his story chronologically. Charles relays the news of Henrietta and Clifford's engagement in his own timeline, he then dedicates a chapter of his narrative to retrospectively retell the events of Clifford and Henrietta's relationship. This narrative choice by Godwin invites the reader to question what has been told of Clifford and Henrietta prior to this revelation in Charles' narrative. This aligns the reader with Charles' feelings of betrayal. As Claudia Linden explains, 'the difference in reading as, not only about, puts the reader in an effective connection with the past' (11).

The news of Clifford and Henrietta's marriage aligns with the early stages of the civil war. As Trumpener explains, 'the repressed trace memory of the 1641 Ulster plantation uprising surfaces again during the first phases of civil war to cause complete mental collapse' (225). Charles again suffers mentally, including bouts of violence and sickness. The union of his last remaining relative and trusted support, with his arch nemesis, is too much for Charles to take:

> Clifford then was to marry Henrietta. I thought it too much that he lived; And he was to marry my sister- this hateful thing, this loathsome spider, this execration to the latest posterity, this thing, not less hateful in the eyes of God, then of Mandeville. I would have sooner seen her spotted with the plague; I would have sooner seen her barked and crusted over with the foulest leprosy; sooner, 10,000 times sooner, I would have followed her to the grave - done that she should touch this man. (430)

Charles declares his 'soul is chaos' (430), and despite the physical ill-health, he is rejuvenated when his mind settles on the idea of vengeance. 'I will pursue them for ever; they shall feel me.' (431).

Despite the historical novel being in its infancy, one emerging convention, as seen in Scott's *Waverley* was the use of marriage to conclude the novel and signify the union of the warring sides found in the historical backdrop. As Trumpener describes:

> The early national tale represents an ambitious attempt to map new political phenomena. Yet its emphasis on union, compromise, and coexistence, on the resolution of cultural differences within a family expanded and reconstituted by fostering or intermarriage, often means the stylization and simplification of political conflict. (218)

Godwin's views on the political landscape are anything but simple. As a philosophical writer, and so to as a novelist, Godwin is acutely aware of the intricacies, difficulties, and nuances of a political and social landscape. Given this novel's focus on the complex relationship between Ireland and England, and Godwin's fears for the union of those two nations, the convention of marriage as resolution is unavailable to him. Instead, through Mandeville's rage, Godwin subverts the convention of the symbolic marriage and attacks the simplicity and naivety of this ending.

Despite his pleas to his sister, Henrietta decides to fulfil her commitment to Clifford. This is seen as absolute rejection by Charles. 'I shrunk from no violence, I was willing to engage in the widest scene of blood and devastation, rather than suffer that event to take place, which I regarded with more horror than the destruction of millions.' (442). In a desperate act to prevent the marriage, Charles attacks the carriage which Henrietta and Clifford occupy on the day of their wedding. In his attack on the couple Clifford remains unharmed, but Charles receives 'a deep and perilous gash, the broad brand of which I shall not fail to carry with me to my grave' (447). The internal struggle and emotional scarring Charles experiences are now reflected in physical form.

> The sword of my enemy had given a perpetual grimace, a sort of preternatural and unvarying distorted smile, or deadly grin, to my countenance. This to some persons appear a trifle.

> I ate it into my soul. […] Even as certain tyrannical planters in the West-Indies have set a brand with a red-hot iron up on the negroes they have purchased, to denote that they are irredeemably a property, so Clifford set his mark up on me, as a token that I was his forever. (447-8)

For Charles, this solidifies the eternal war between himself and Clifford. As Rajan notes, there was something triumphant in Charles' final act of violence: 'Now Clifford is indeed tied to Mandeville, as the dead body of England is tied to a living body. Or perhaps not a living body but a body that lives on, […] because Clifford has hurt Mandeville, he is at last guilty; he will never be good again. The figure that is Clifford has been ruined, disfigured.' (43). This final act of violence draws the narrative to an end. In the timeline of historical events, the restoration follows shortly after the end of Charles' narrative.

CONCLUSION

Through *Mandeville*, Godwin creates a narrative in which general history and individual history collide. As Lindén explains, *'Mandeville* prepares the way for a new psychological novel, which studies the historical formation of a personality' (225). Charles Mandeville is Godwin's literary representation of the collateral damage general history, such as civil war, political and social instability, can create for the individual. There is no neat ending for *Mandeville*, as with *St Leon*. Instead, Mandeville's narrative reads like a modern-day villain origin story. The narrative ends with Charles still in his youth but horribly disfigured, leaving the reader to imagine the future of this newly formed 'monster'. Mandeville takes his place as a branded social and political outcast. The influence on Shelley's work, namely her ground-breaking science fiction *Frankenstein*, published just a year later in 1818, is clear. Godwin's creation of Charles Mandeville, shaped by the backdrop of fraught Irish history, paves the way for Shelley's *The Modern Prometheus*. Godwin's influence on Shelley's work is undeniable in this instance, but so too is his influence on Shelley's *Valperga*.

CHAPTER III: Gendering of the Godwinian Historical Novel - Mary Shelley's *Valperga*

INTRODUCTION

In 1823, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley published *Valperga: or, The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*, her first historical fiction. The novel came five years after the publication of Shelley's most celebrated work, the proto-science fiction, *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Promethius* (1818), and four years after the novella *Mathilda* (1819). From her personal letters, it is clear *Valperga* was first conceived well before its publication while Shelley, along with her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley and her stepsister Claire Clairmont, resided in Marlow, Buckinghamshire. In a financially precarious position and suffering ill-health, the family, along with Clairmont and her daughter Alba, left England in early 1818 for Italy. Late the same year, Shelley's daughter Clara died, followed by her son William in 1819. After the birth of her fourth child, Percy Florence, Shelley's time in Italy was dedicated to intellectual pursuit, including writing, editing and, as June Blumberg points out in her book *Mary Shelley's Early Novels* (1993), becoming 'preoccupied with local and national politics' (77). The first public mention of Shelley's historical fiction in England came in a letter Percy Bysshe Shelley (PBS) sent to his publisher in 1821, seeking interest to publish.

Despite the novel coming twenty-four years after Godwin's *St. Leon* (1799) and almost ten years after Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), the historical fiction genre was still very much in an early stage of development. Scott continued to publish historical novels, such as *Rob Roy* (1817) and *Ivanhoe* (1820), and thus continued to establish his version of the genre. Shelley, however, like Godwin, was not strongly influenced by the work of Scott, and was not intent on replicating Scott's style. Rather, Shelley continued to follow the Prévost style of historical novel and, more consciously, the style of historical novel established by Godwin through his essay "Of History and Romance" and the two works studied in this thesis. In the years since the French Revolution, an event that created significant hope of reform for Enlightenment thinkers and liberals such as Godwin and Wollstonecraft, the initial excitement and hopefulness had waned, the feeling of this was greatly exacerbated with the rise of Napoleon. Even before Napoleon's rise to power, Wollstonecraft in particular expressed dissatisfaction with the missed opportunity to include of women's rights in revolutionary France. As Donna Robson explains:

> Mary Wollstonecraft wrote her seminal *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) inspired by a consciousness of her historical moment, as a response to the French legislators' disregard of women's rights in framing the new revolutionary constitution. She hoped to place female

> education and political rights on the agenda so that women, too, might contribute to the ‘progress of knowledge and virtue’ (Wollstonecraft 1792/1989: 66).

Although Napoleon would later advocate for education for all, an issue incredibly important to both Godwin and Wollstonecraft, and later to Mary Shelley, women were essentially ignored in Napoleon’s Civil Code of 1804. A series of invasions followed as Napoleon sought to expand French control and exercise his military prowess and seemingly insatiable ambition. His ambition too often outweighed the execution of his military exploits and led to the countless deaths of his soldiers. The disappointment over the missed opportunity to reform and the conflict that followed, conflict familiar to Shelley throughout her life, can be found in her work, of which *Valperga* is particularly despairing.

In 1815, Napoleon was defeated at the Battle of Waterloo, and sent into exile, ending his rule of France. In England, the cost of war and the subsequent borrowing had been crippling. One example of the unrest which followed was the protests carried out by Luddites in their attempt to protect workers from the consequences of new industrial machinery being used in textiles. The changes England and much of the world were undergoing were significant. With the second Earl of Liverpool, Robert Jenkinson, as Tory Prime Minister, fear of further unrest resulted in the suspension of Habeas Corpus, and six acts being introduced which suppressed anti-government speech and the right to protest. This legislation followed the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 which led to the death of fifteen parliamentary reform protesters by the military. Shelley’s personal letters during this period make clear her distain for the English governance. In a letter to her friend Maria Gisborne, in January of 1820, she wrote:

> Are you yet reconciled to the idea that England is become a despotism? The freedom with which the newspapers talk of our most detestable governors is as mocking death on a death bed. […] The rich alone support the government - the poor, and middling classes are, I believe, to a man, against them - but we have fallen, I fear, on evil days. There are great spirits

> in England. So there were in the time of Caesar and Rome. Athens flourished but just before the despotism of Alexander- will not England fall? I am full of these thoughts.

Mary Shelley's acute political awareness, although obvious in such private letters and seemingly inevitable given her parentage and her literary contemporaries, has too often come second to the focus on the influence of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Godwin on her work.

The purpose of this chapter, in part, is to acknowledge the overtly political nature of Shelley's work and to add to the more recent critical work that seeks to rebalance the commentary on Shelley's literary contribution, particularly regarding historical fiction. The intrigue, and often scandal, that surrounded the lives of Shelley's parents Godwin and Wollstonecraft, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and other close associates has been ever-present and has often narrowed the critical reading of Shelley's work. This, as Blumberg identifies in her critique of Elizabeth Nitchie's analysis of Castruccio as a character almost entirely based on Byron, 'trivialises and underestimates Shelley's skills as a writer of fiction' (84). So to, this chapter will examine Shelley's *Valperga* as a gendering of the Godwinian historical novel, not solely as a work so heavily influenced and edited by Godwin and Percy Bysshe Shelley that it is mere replication. Through *Valperga*, Shelley offers a complex picture of political tension and an accomplished contribution to the genre, continuing and evolving the unique Godwinian style, in her voice.

This chapter will first look at Castruccio Castracani as an historical figure, the work Shelley is influenced by, and the way she approaches the telling of his story. Secondly, Shelley's fictional version of Castruccio will be considered with an examination of his moral development and Shelley's psychological dissection of his character in a Godwinian fashion, following the blueprint of his essay "Of History and Romance". And finally, the principle fictional female characters, Euthanasia and Beatrice, will be explored, specifically regarding the alternative to the tyranny of Castruccio, presented through Euthanasia, and the way in which the female characters interact with each other.

CASTRUCCIO CASTRACANI: THE HISTORICAL FIGURE

It is perhaps unsurprising, considering her political awareness and involvement, that Shelley would choose Castruccio Castracani as the historical figure and anti-hero of her first historical novel. In her book *Mary Shelley's Early Novels*, published in 1993, Jane Blumberg discusses the similarities between the time in which Shelley was writing and the historical time frame and location of her novel.

> The atmosphere surrounding the composition of *Valperga* was highly charged politically, specifically with reference to contemporary Italy. Shelley places her story in the Italy of the late Medieval city states; this period in Italian history had political parallels with Shelley's present. During both periods the country seemed to be straddling a fence between the victory of nationalism and liberty (and also in Shelley's day liberalism) and the continued domination of an opportunistic, despotic power. (79)

Shelley, like many other writers in the genre, takes advantage of the distance historical fiction creates between the past and the writer's present. This allows Shelley to explore her own contemporary political ideologies and criticisms in a coded way. The safety of distance in time, amplified by the geographical distance both in the novel and in Shelley's own location when writing, created a safer space for criticism during times of censorship, still active in England during this period. It is inevitable then that Shelley's fictional work would reflect her acute political awareness and her active involvement in the conversations surrounding liberalism and the struggles of the people both at home in England and in Italy.

In the preface to the work, Shelley cites Machiavelli's 'romance' concerning Castruccio as the most well-known source, as well as Sismondi's *Histoire Des Republiques Italiennes Du Moyen Age* (1773-1842), of which Shelley had read the early volumes. Also included is a short summary of Castruccio's life, identifying the ongoing conflict between the Ghibelines (the Ghibelines being the faction with which the Castruccio family was affiliated) and the Guelphs, who were responsible for his exile from Lucca at a young age. After gaining military experience serving as condottier for the French, English and the Lombards, Castruccio's military success results in him overthrowing the Lord of Pisa in 1316 to become Lord and protector of Lucca. Castruccio continued his military action under emperor Louis IV and by 1325, along with a series of other Italian cities, almost all of Tuscany was under his control. Castruccio's death came a few years later in 1328. The rapidity of Castruccio's military rise, his extreme ambition, but ultimately the short-lived nature of his rule, in part aligns his career and impact with that of Napoleon, which Shelley was experiencing first hand.

The work of Sismondi and Machiavelli were the major sources of information regarding Castruccio at the time. As the Oxford edition of the novel points out in the footnote of the preface, the work of Machiavelli was considered an accurate account. However, in the preface, Shelley calls it 'Machiavelli's romance', therefore suggesting the work is fiction, going on to state that the reader can find 'detail of his real adventures' (5) in Sismondi's work. Immediately, through the preface, Shelley is acknowledging the mixture of both history and romance in these works. This is particularly interesting when considering the subtitle of the novel: *The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca*. The title closely resembles that of Machiavelli's work, *La Vite di Castruccio Castricani da Lucca* (1532), and thus presents Shelley's text as biographical. Both Machiavelli and Sismondi's works serve different purposes when retelling the story of Castruccio's life. Machiavelli offers a forgiving portrait of Castruccio as a ruler led by his innate attributes for warfare and suggests that, as Kari E. Lokke explains, his need to develop these natural talents 'absolves him from any responsibility for the effects of despotic rule.' (117). Furthermore, Machiavelli 'distinguishes resistance to Castruccio's rule as stemming from envy, not his tyranny.' (117). In contrast, Sismondi's work, like that of Godwin, focuses on the moral lessons within the stories of historical figures. This is continued by Shelley through her condemnation of her protagonist and his desire for power, and her offering up of an alternative through Valperga and its ruler Euthanasia. As Kari E. Lokke explains:

> Shelley witnessed the betrayal of the French Revolution and the French republic by Napoleon's imperial policies. Accordingly, through its glorification of Florentine republican politics, her Valperga implicitly condemns Napoleon. (58)

Described by Percy Shelley as 'a little Napoleon', Castruccio too is condemned by Shelley as a despotic ruler who, crucially, had choices available to him and consciously chose to be a despot. Further to Shelley's preference for the work of Sismondi, the novel, and specifically the home of Euthanasia's republic, is set in Florence, of which Sismondi considered to be the capital of republican values.

To counteract the narrative of Castruccio as a man bound to rule by his nature, Shelley explores his moral development rather than solely his military conquests. This is a clear continuation of the Godwinian historical novel, in which the primary concern is the private life and thoughts of the protagonist, rather than military exploits and political gains. Particularly comparable to Godwin's treatment of Charles' evolution in *Mandeville*, Shelley tracks and reasons Castruccio's development into the ruthless leader he becomes, crucially, signalling clear opportunities for him to take a different, less destructive path. This idea is also explored by Lisa Kasmer in her book *Novel Histories: British Women Writing History, 1760-1830*:

> In delineating Castruccio's moral development, Shelley refutes Machiavelli's contention that through his own virtu, Castruccio fashioned himself into a conqueror. Instead she shows this character to be thoroughly unnatural. […] unscrupulous lords tutor Castruccio in the ways of tyranny through which Castruccio comes to desire domination, overpowering in his mind the 'voice of his better reason' (257) […] Through her portrayal of Castruccio, then, Shelley presents

> the pursuit of domination, the 'ruling passion of his soul' (269), as the perversion of sympathy. (117)

Castruccio's behaviour is an act against his nature. This is further contrasted by Shelley's principle fictional character, Euthanasia. The oppression Castruccio then creates is felt inwardly and outwardly. The Napoleon-like character, lacking in sympathy and consideration for those who pose a threat or create an obstacle to his will for power, is created rather than merely supported along an already laid path.

In his introduction to the Oxford publication of *Valperga*, Stuart Curran discusses Shelley's use of Sismondi's work:

> *Valperga* bears the mark of more than an immersion in local Italian history and culture. It reveals a deep ideological identification with [Sismondi's work] that was written against Europe's post-Napoleonic careen into authoritarian politics [...]. Mary Shelley's assimilation of its ideas deliberately projects them into a resistant culture. (xx)

Here, Curran acknowledges several important aspects of the novel. Firstly, Shelley's ability to create a level of authenticity for the historical setting; secondly, the clear alignment with the work and ideas found in Sismondi's work; and lastly, that *Valperga* is a political novel.

To tell this story of Castruccio's life and Valperga, Shelley opts for a third person narrator, rather than the first-person narrator used in both of Godwin's novels. This narrative choice is more aligned with that of Walter Scott's historical fictions at the time, of which a significant number had been published by the time *Valperga* was finalised. Shelley also moves away from the intimate and all-consuming narrative offered by Reginald de St Leon and Charles Mandeville, and, with it, the confessional tale. What is retained from the Godwinian novel, however, is a deep interest in the motivation of each of the protagonists and, perhaps more importantly in *Valperga*, their motivation when interacting with each other. Shelley follows each of the characters 'into his closet', as prioritised by Godwin in "Of History and Romance" in order to look at individual motivations and feelings, while placing great importance on the relationships between them, and the affect they have on each others' lives. This narrative style also serves to decentralise the focus of the novel away from the male historical figure and opens a space for Shelley's fictional female characters, a significant use of the historical fiction genre for women writers. Despite a similar narration choice to Scott, Shelley's work is far more concerned with an examination of the characters, rather than nationalistic celebration of historical figures based on their political exploits. As Clemit puts it, this is a move from a 'subjective narration mode in favour of a more capacious form that will embody her developing preoccupation with the anatomy of political, social, and cultural certainties.' (175-6). A significant part of Shelley's political, social and cultural concerns are with the position of women in society and how they fare in a world dominated by male, despotic rulers. The first of the three volumes focus largely on Castruccio's life, as the subtitle of the novel promises. However, as we shift to the second and third volumes, the effects of the life of Castruccio on others, most significantly the lives of Shelley's fictional, female additions, Euthanasia and Beatrice and the fate of Valperga, become the prime concern of the tale.

VALPERGA AS A GODWINIAN HISTORICAL NOVEL

The novel begins with the story of Castruccio's exile from his native Lucca, much like the traumatic beginnings of *Mandeville*. The long-standing rivalry between the Guelphs and the Ghibelines, and the allies of each faction, reach a particularly zealous period. Castruccio, at age eleven, and his parents, are displaced from their homeland and the palace in which his father grew up. Unable to remain safe in their home, his mother suggests Valperga as a refuge for Castruccio while both parents stay behind. On his way to Florence, the young Castruccio witnesses further effects of the ancient rivalry that has displaced him from his home.

> ...not a day passed without brawls and bloodshed. […] Little Castruccio saw many of his dearest friends among them; and his young heart, moved by their tears and complaints, became inflamed with rage and desire for vengeance. (61-2)

As Clemit points out, ‘Mary Shelley’s study of Castruccio’s character as it is moulded by the feud between the Guelphs and the Ghibellines owes much to Godwin’s treatment of the effects of hereditary ‘party spirit’ on the individual.’ (175-6). Shelley outlines a context in which conflict leads to lasting trauma and violence:

> It was by scenes such as these, that party spirit was generated, and became so strong in Italy. Children, while they were yet too young to feel their own disgrace, saw the misery of their parents, and took early vows of implacable hatred against their persecutors: these were remembered in after times. The wounds were never seared, but the fresh blood ever streaming kept alive the feelings of passion and anger which had given rise to the first blow. (62)

Here we see the clear recalling of Godwin’s opening to *Mandeville*, where that which is witnessed by the protagonist in their youth, marks their psyche and permanently impacts and alters them. Here too, Shelley utilises the imagery of physical wounding to symbolise the psychological damage. The representation of wounding and scarring is common in the work of Godwin and Shelley, most graphically in their works *Mandeville* and *Frankenstein* respectively.

This early focus for Shelley confirms *Valperga* as a psychological novel, deeply concerned with the inner workings of her protagonists and the development of the historical tyrant beyond the actions of his rule. A year into their exile, Castruccio’s mother dies leaving him solely in the care of his father who nurtures in him an adventurous disposition. In chapter two, Castruccio is witness to yet another traumatic scene.

When a visitor to Ancona declares that ‘preparations were made to exhibit Hell, such as it had been described in a poem now writing by Dante Alighieri’ (65) on the first of May to receive news of the other world, Castruccio is captivated. The source for this event is also found in Sismondi's work cited in Shelley’s preface. The influence of Dante’s work on the novel is also clear through her fictional character Beatrice, who appears later in the novel. Castruccio is unable to contain his curiosity and, without speaking to his father, he leaves Ancona, and arrives in Florence five days later. The streets, lit with torches, ‘moved legions of ghastly and distorted shapes, some with horns of fire, and with hoofs, and horrible wings; [..] screams and demonic laughter.’ (66). The Arno filled with ships, ‘hung with black cloth’ (66), and the bridge of Carraia, holding a great number of people. During this scene, of which Castruccio ‘felt a chill of horror run through his frame’ and which ‘appeared for a moment as a reality, rather then a representation’ (66), the bridge collapses, plunging those stood on it into the water. Castruccio flees the scene in horror and haste, declaring “I am escaped from Hell!” (67). In her book *“All the World’s a Stage” Dramatic Sensibility in Mary Shelley’s Novels* (2002), Charlene E. Bunnell explores this scene. Writing of Castruccio and discussing the influence of Shakespeare’s work on Shelley, as it also influenced Godwin, Bunnell explains the ‘uncanny merging of life and art […] the illusion becomes a reality of horror as the bridge collapses, killing many and causing an incredible commotion in the streets of Florence.' (124)

In the context of Godwin’s “Of History and Romance”, this is an important observation. The value Godwin places on the work of romance authors over that of historians, explored in his essay on genre and subsequently practiced in his historical novels, is a merging of history and romance, fact and fiction, the individual and the general. The merging of ‘life and art’ too demonstrates Shelley’s awareness of and use of the dualities and the genre in which she is writing. Bunnell continues:

> The theatrical re-enactment [the scenes Castruccio witnesses] warns us and the unheeding Castruccio that representation can all too often become a reality for which one is unprepared.

> The message is not unlike the one Victor Frankenstein learns: some things are not for us to know or perform. (124)

As Castruccio matures and Shelley traces his psychological development, the idea of representation becoming reality deepens.

After the fire on the Arno has been, rather swiftly forgotten, Castruccio spends the rest of his youth and his early adulthood under the tutelage of a series of his father's associates, all with connections to the military and courts from around Europe. As with both Godwin's historical fictions, those the young protagonist encounters as they mature are influential in their later years. Castruccio's time with these men is a time spent learning the art of politics and war, focused on way to advance and harness ambition. Of these men, Guinigi, the 'military peasant', accompanies Castruccio for one year. Guinigi, who 'thought only of the duty of man to man' (32), contrasts with Castruccio, both in his youth and later in the novel. We also see the effects of the life Castruccio later forces others to endure through Guinigi as, although living a peaceful, contented life, his 'heart sickened, and the banners of triumph or the song of victory could not drive from his recollection the varieties of death, on the grounds of torture that occasion such exultation to the privileged murderers to of the earth.' (32). Guinigi prioritises peace and affection over all else and questions Castruccio's desire for involvement in politics and warfare. In response, Castruccio makes clear his ambitions:

> I would rather, while alive, enter my tomb, than live unknown and unheard of. Is it not fame that makes men gods? Do not urge me to pass my days in indolence; I must act, to be happy, - to be anything. My father did not wish me to become a farmer and a vinedresser; but to tread in his steps, and go beyond them, and that is my purpose, which I would die to attain. (35)

As William Brewer indicates, 'Ambition is presented […] in *Valperga* as a passion that gradually destroys whatever virtues the protagonists once possessed.' (116) Despite Castruccio's opportunities to see and understand alternatives, he maintains the early level of passion throughout, even 'at the expense of love' (116), and, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, at the expense of both Beatrice and Euthanasia.

EUTHANASIA AND BEATRICE

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Shelley's novel is the inclusion of two fictional, female characters. One of earliest examples of this approach to an historical novel is Sophia Lee's *The Recess*, in which she imagines two daughters of Mary Queen of Scots. *The Recess* (1785) was published almost forty years before Shelley's historical novel but is a work Shelley was almost certainly aware of and influenced by. Lee's novel is, of course, significant in the development of the historical novel. The likelihood of this is increased by the social connection between Godwin and Lee herself and her sister Harriet. Work by both sisters appears in Godwin's diary as read works, so the influence of Lee's work on Godwin too is almost inevitable. Although, like Godwin, Lee opts for first-person narrations and Shelley does not, the inclusion of two fictional female characters placed at the centre of the story alongside established historical figures aligns *Valperga* with Lee's historical fictions. As Tilottama Rajan argues:

> Shelley's bold insertion of two fictitious women into an historical narrative makes *Valperga* one of the earliest examples of the counterfactual history later envisioned by Virginia Woolf when she imagines Shakespeare's sister. (9)

This, in addition to Shelley's continuation of the Godwinian approach to historical fictions, makes for a unique contribution to the genre. Although the genre was in its infancy during the period of time *Valperga* was written and published, Shelley demonstrates a clear intention to develop it further. Shelley's awareness of genre is further compounded, as a number of critics have identified, by her clear response through her novel to the work of Scott. As Rajan points out: *Valperga* is 'a trenchant critique of the male values of nationalism and conquest in Scott's *Waverley'* (13). Shelley's inclusion of two contrasting female protagonists is not only a statement regarding the exclusion of female figures from history but a clear critique of that which had been not only included but celebrated and praised by the likes of writers and historians such as Scott. Through her fictional, female characters, and most clearly through Euthanasia, Shelley presents an alternative to this.

Castruccio is upset by Euthanasia's repeated refusal to agree to his terms, claiming she has forgotten their original agreement and friendship. As Twigg explains, he conveniently forgets the condition that he would never dishonour himself, and 'he hides his own failure from himself, and expects Euthanasia to hide these failures through her complicity with his project.' (492). Twigg argues:

> The material compensation he promises would disguise her sacrifice as gain. In the role of a redemptive figure, Euthanasia would also act as intermediary between Castruccio and those he would rule. Castruccio's persistence in holding Euthanasia to her vows, in spite of his violations that negate her promises, reveals his need for such a mediator. (492)

Castruccio's selfish need for Euthanasia supersedes his need for power and control.

Twigg draws a contrast between Euthanasia's redemptive role and Beatrice's potential as a redemptive figure for Castruccio. As Twigg points out, Euthanasia's desire to remain true to her morals makes her useful to Castruccio, but 'Beatrice's involvement in the corrupted system makes her less valuable to Castruccio as a redemptive figure.' (492). Beatrice's character, in many ways, is in direct contrast to Euthanasia's.

Euthanasia is a sympathetic and Enlightenment based ruler, significantly different from Castruccio as ruler – therefore Euthanasia acts as an alternative model for power. She offers an example of power without violence and deadly ambition, creating a peaceful rule where her court and her subjects are happy. This is, of course, violently disrupted by Castruccio as his drive for absolute power overtakes his love and respect for Euthanasia. Beatrice on the other hand is not a steadfast ruler who is bound to her rationality and is in a position of power to impact others around her. Instead, Beatrice is a woman led by her emotion and by her feeling, typically a Shelleyan (Percy Bysshe Shelley) women of passion. She is not therefore able to affect others, but rather is greatly affected by that which happens around her. As Rajan discusses, 'Shelley was not unaware of the tensions between Wollstonecraft's rationalism and her passionate life; indeed those tensions are apparent as a difference between […] Euthanasia and Beatrice.' (11).

In Godwin's novels, the fictitious characters, although surrounded by thoroughly detailed historical context, remain in positions where they lack opportunity and power to influence that history or the historical figures. In Shelley's *Valperga*, both fictional women are closely involved with Castruccio. Euthanasia in particular is in a position of power, and therefore, theoretically able to influence Castruccio's actions. As discussed in chapters I and II, particularly in relation to *Mandeville*, the fictional protagonists Godwin includes fail to engage effectively with the history that surrounds them. In Shelley's work, however, these fictional characters are entirely immersed and affected, even if they cannot influence.

CONCLUSION

Through her gendering of the Godwinian novel, and specifically through her fictional female character Euthanasia, Shelley creates a utopian ideal that, although ultimately unsuccessful, offers an alternative to the tyranny of Castruccio. As Kasmer explains: 'Linking history and the imagination, Shelley moves beyond the historical past entirely to envision *Valperga*, a political community outside the limits of current political reality.' (113) Godwin had inspired a keen and thorough study of history in Shelley, which is clear in her fictions. The influence of Godwin's historical novels is also clear through *Valperga* and is an important continuation of the Godwinian historical novel and an important development in gendering the genre.

Whilst maintaining the political and philosophical elements of Godwin's work, Shelley creates a novel responsive to how the genre had developed since the publication of *St. Leon*, decades before. With a Godwinian approach, Shelley manages to step away from his narrative choices and still maintain a novel interested with the psychological development of its characters. Her inclusion of two prominent fictional women in the novel opens the Godwinian historical fiction to the discussion of women's place in history.

Conclusion

The historical novels of William Godwin and Mary Shelley are significant and sophisticated works of fiction, the value of which to the development of the genre is clear and worthy of critical attention and recognition. The works studied here span almost twenty-five years from the publication of Godwin's *St. Leon* in 1799 to Shelley's *Valperga* in 1823. The novels are part of a body of work published during the early development of the genre which have been comparatively neglected but that contribute to the establishment of historical fiction as we consider it today. Within that contribution comes a unique Godwinian approach to fiction. The cchapombination of the historical, the psychological and the political he pioneered created complex, cross-genre works. Despite the undeniable success and acclaim Godwin and Shelley have received for their contributions to fiction and philosophy, their work within historical fiction has been overlooked and overshadowed by the success of their other work and the work of others within the genre itself, particularly Scott. What has been explored in this thesis is the value of their contribution to the development of the genre through the implementation and development of the Godwinian historical fiction. Both Godwin and Shelley, interested and engaged in history and politics both at home and abroad, write their historical novels purposely, expanding and exploring the possibilities of the genre, testing its ability to offer an imagined world for their philosophical ideologies to play out, distanced from the oppressive governance they were writing under.

From *St. Leon*, through *Mandeville*, to *Valperga*, we are able to track the tropes of historical fiction being established and both authors' response to the literary work around them. This is particularly obvious when examining how Mary Shelley's work maintains the theoretical approach of Godwin's essay "Of History and Romance" whilst responding to the work of Walter Scott as he offered his own significant contribution to the genre. The importance of Godwin's essay on genre as the foundation of each of the novels cannot be denied, with each novel exploring the importance of individual history, challenging the established historiography of the time and examining human motivation, with both authors interested in progress, exploring the potential for improvement of the self and of society.

There is, of course, a significant amount of work still to be done on these novels and with these authors. Given the complexity of the works, the entirety of their value cannot be covered in this thesis alone. Alongside the novels studied here, are a number of other historical novels by both Godwin and Shelley that should be considered. Of note, particularly in continuing the study of the evolution of the Godwinian historical novel, is Mary Shelley's second historical novel, *Perkin Warbeck* (1830). This work is still out of print, highlighting the lack of attention these works have received.

The more recent critical work on these authors, their historical fictions, and the Godwinian approach to the genre is encouraging. Although this work is dominated still by a small group of academics, their work serves to highlight the significance of Godwin and Shelley's work. Godwin's unique approach to the historical novel is an important part of the development of the genre. Equally, the way in which the Godwinian approach evolves and responds to the changing literary work of others and the political and social environments in which both Godwin and Shelley were writing helps shape the genre as we know it today.

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