This dissertation has been microfilmed exactly as received

MYERS, Mitzi, 1939-
ASPECTS OF WILLIAM GODWIN'S REPUTATION IN THE 1790'S,

Rice University, Ph.D., 1969
Language and Literature, modern

University Microfilms, Inc., Ann Arbor, Michigan

Mitzi Myers 1969

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
RICE UNIVERSITY

ASPECTS OF WILLIAM GODWIN'S REPUTATION IN THE 1790'S

by

Mitzi Myers

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Thesis Director's signature:

[Signature]

Houston, Texas

May 1969
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNOTATED CHRONOLOGY OF GODWIN'S LIFE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### I. GODWIN RESPLENDENT: THE RECEPTION, CONTEXT, AND PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL JUSTICE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. PROSPECT: THE RENOWN OF POLITICAL JUSTICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL JUSTICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: FIRST IMPRESSIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. THE REFLECTIONS CONTROVERSY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. THE PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL JUSTICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE WRITING AND BASIC PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL JUSTICE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. THE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION IN POLITICAL JUSTICE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| NOTES | 117 |

### II. GODWIN EMBATTLED: THE WORKS AND THE REPUTATION IN A CHANGING CONTEXT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. PROSPECT: FROM RENOWN TO NOTORIETY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. GODWIN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHANGING POLITICAL CLIMATE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: SHIFTING OPINIONS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR AND FULL-SCALE SUPPRESSION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. THE STATE TRIALS AND CURSORY STRictures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. THE RECEPTION OF Caleb Williams 164
5. THE TRIUMPH OF THE CONSERVATIVES AND THE CONSIDERATIONS 175

C. THE ATTACK OF THE ANTI-JACOBINS

1. GODWIN'S WORKS IN THE ANTI-JACOBIN PERIODICALS AND POETRY 181
2. GODWIN'S WORKS IN THE ANTI-JACOBIN NOVELS 203
3. GODWIN'S DEFENSE AND THE VERDICT OF TIME 221

NOTES 241

BIBLIOGRAPHY 262
PREFACE

The Spirit of the Age was never more fully shown than in its treatment of this writer--its love of paradox and change, its dastard submission to prejudice and to the fashion of the day.
William Hazlitt, The Spirit of the Age (1825)

William Godwin (1756-1836) is a man of many reputations, as any writer who publishes over so many years and in so many areas must be. Godwin's career as an author extended from 1783 to 1835: during that period he appeared diversely as a philosopher, a novelist, an essayist, a biographer, a historian, a dramatist, and the writer of sermons, children's books, and minor miscellanea. His association with a number of eminent figures, such as Shelley, gives still another dimension to his reputation. Godwin the author is best known in the role of the anarchist philosopher--for Political Justice (1793)--and of the psychological novelist--chiefly for Caleb Williams (1794). This study is an examination of Godwin's reputation, with particular emphasis on these two roles, in relation to the milieu in which his most important works made their initial appearance: the re-creation of the social, political, and intellectual context of
the 1790's receives close attention. Godwin's reputation in the nineties is paradoxical in its extremes of fame and notoriety: it presents the spectacle of a mild-mannered reasoner who became the focus of extravagant commendation and equally extravagant detestation. As the philosopher of perfectibility, Godwin embodied the hope and promise of the opening years of the French Revolution: the congruity between his abstract theories and the contemporary mood won him a measure of renown that would have been unlikely for so weighty a work in a less politically fervid period. Godwin was tenacious of his aspirations for man, but England as a whole was not: when his ideas and the climate of opinion diverged in the later nineties, he became the target of widespread abuse. Though the course of contemporary events accounts for the basic pattern of Godwin's reputation, these happenings do not fully clarify the way his audience came to view him: a further explanation lies in the works themselves—in the susceptibility to variant interpretations of Political Justice and in the candor of his memoir of his wife (1798). But if these factors were damaging to Godwin, he early won recognition as a psychological novelist; and the reputation of his fiction continued relatively untainted through the years of reaction.

The opening section of the first chapter deals with the initial reception and instantaneous fame of Political
Justice; the second reconstructs the background against which the treatise originally appeared and accounts for its impact; the third presents the essential principles of Godwin's philosophy and suggests some of the problems in interpretation of his theories. The various contemporary misinterpretations and misrepresentations of Godwin as both philosopher and man are examined in the second chapter, which documents extensively Godwin's shifting reputation during the decade following the publication of Political Justice: his infamy, like his earlier renown, is shown to be closely connected with the events of the time. After the furor of the Revolution died away, Godwin's fame rested more on his fiction than on his philosophy, which was often distorted into a parody of itself; however, in recent years, a re-evaluation of Godwin's achievement in many areas has begun.

My research was substantially complete before the appearance of Burton R. Pollin's massive Godwin Criticism: A Synoptic Bibliography (Toronto, 1967). Professor Pollin attempts to list and summarize every book, article, and review that so much as mentions Godwin between 1783 and 1966—well over 3000 entries. I regret that my own work was carried on without the benefit of this inventory. No doubt I have neglected many valuable references; but, in any case, my aim was not to cover the whole field of Godwin's reputation
and influence, but to treat several related aspects of that topic chronologically and circumstantially. Professor Pollin's primary arrangement, however, is that of an alphabetical catalogue. **Godwin Criticism** gathers the materials for a comprehensive chronological survey of Godwin's reputation and influence, but the "truly thorough appraisal of the circulation and influence of Godwin's works and ideas" called for in the introduction (p. xxxvi) remains to be done: this study may serve as a contribution toward that appraisal.
ANNOTATED CHRONOLOGY

Including a detailed chronology of Godwin's life and major works seems perhaps the best way to keep the text itself free from digression and still provide facts relevant to a thorough understanding of his characteristics and achievement. Because Godwin is most often discussed as mature philosopher or Shelley's aging father-in-law, this chronological commentary emphasizes his formative years and the events and personal relationships that shaped and modified his views. Godwin's major writings for adults are briefly noted: a lengthy bibliography, including his books for children, appears in Burton Ralph Pollin's *Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin* (New York, 1962). Despite inaccuracies, it remains the most nearly complete list of Godwin's writings.

Godwin's first major biographer, C. Kegan Paul, published in 1876 *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, consisting of letters and manuscripts culled from the vast collection of Sir Percy Florence Shelley—enough with his connective commentary to fill two fat volumes. After Sir Percy's death in 1889, his collection was divided into three parts, two of which are now in the Bodleian.
The remainder is the property of James Richard Scarlett, eighth Baron Abinger; this material is the portion of the family papers dealing with Godwin and includes the daily journal he kept for forty-eight years, along with many letters to and from him. Some formerly unpublished material (including items from the Abinger collection) concerning Godwin appeared in the first of two volumes of *Shelley and His Circle* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), ed. Kenneth Neill Cameron; these volumes, the first of a projected eight, cover 1772 to 1822. Since the Abinger papers remain largely unpublished, however, Paul's volumes are still the basic source for Godwin's later biographers, Ford Keeler Brown, George Woodcock, and Rosalie Glynn Grylls.¹

Godwin, at various times in his life, set down autobiographical essays and fragments: from these Paul quotes extensively. At one period Godwin evidently intended to bind all these fragments into a whole, but later noted on one of the manuscripts: "I shall probably never complete it. My feelings on the subject are not what they were. I sat down with the intention of being nearly as explicit as Rousseau in . . . his Confessions."² Although he never completed a formal autobiography, Godwin showed an interest in the confession form—both real and fictional—throughout his life.

For the record of Godwin's early years, Paul relies
on an autobiographical sketch which he dates 1800, but which Cameron (on the evidence of a letter) places probably later than 1809; the fragment is the only reliable document providing extensive information about Godwin's childhood and early youth. The sketch, like Godwin's other self-analyses, demonstrates the same penetrating psychological insight which is the most distinctive characteristic of his fiction. As Edmund Wilson remarks, "the stories that people tell about their childhood are likely to be profoundly symbolic even when they have been partly or wholly made up in the light of later experience."  

1756 William Godwin was born 3 March 1756 in Wisbeach, Cambridgeshire, a son and grandson of Dissenting ministers, the seventh of thirteen children.

Brought up in a rigidly pious atmosphere, the intellectually precocious child early turned to books: "I remember, when I was a very little boy, saying to myself, 'What shall I do, when I have read through all the books that there are in the world?'"  

Pilgrim's Progress and James Janeway's Account of the Pious Death of Many Godly Children were a somberly exhilarating introduction to literature: such glorious
martyrs "strongly excited my emulation. I felt as if I were willing to die with them, if I could with equal success engage the admiration of my friends and mankind." The passion for esteem Godwin reveals here shows how early there developed in him what was to be the impelling idea of his life: a fervent desire to aid humanity so outstandingly as to win universal gratitude and acclaim.

His earliest teacher outside his own family was the mistress of a dame's school at Guestwick; she, like all those about him in his youth, "was much occupied in the concerns of religion." Under her guidance, he read the entire Bible, gaining before he was eight an extensive familiarity with its phraseology and manner; he believed in later life that this instruction was a great influence in the formation of his character.

Godwin felt the most characteristic features of his youthful mind were "religion and love of distinction." Determining to be a minister at eight, he preached to a schoolmate "of sin and damnation, and drew tears from his eyes."
Godwin was sent to Samuel Newton, a Dissenting minister in Norwich, for private tutoring. Here he adopted Newton's creed, which was "drawn from the writings of Sandeman, a celebrated north country apostle, who, after Calvin had damned ninety-nine in a hundred of mankind, has contrived a scheme for damning ninety-nine in a hundred of the followers of Calvin." Of himself at this time Godwin later noted, with characteristically acute self-observation, that he was "penetrated with curiosity and a thirst after knowledge," "had scarcely any pleasure but in reading," and had a "vocation to literature" that was "decisive." "Add[ed] to this principle of curiosity was a trembling sensibility and an insatiable ambition, a sentiment that panted with indescribable anxiety for the stimulus of approbation."

In view of Falkland's reaction to Tyrrel's assault in Caleb Williams, Godwin's feelings when Newton administered his first birching deserve mention: "it had never occurred to me as possible that my person, which hitherto had been treated . . . as something extraordinary and sacred, could suffer such ignominious
violation. The idea had something in it as 
abrupt as a fall from heaven to earth."\textsuperscript{12}

Not all of Godwin's awakenings at Norwich 
were of so rude a kind, however:

the books I read here with the greatest 
transport were the early volumes of the English translation of the 
Ancient History of Rollin. Few bosoms 
ever beat with greater ardour than 
mine did while perusing the story of 
the grand struggle of the Greeks for 
independence against the assaults of the Persian despot; and this scene 
awakened a passion in my soul which 
will never cease but with life.\textsuperscript{13}

Like his thirst for approbation, Godwin's fervor 
for liberty was one of the shaping forces of 
his life and thought.

1771

In this year the fifteen-year-old left 
Newton and served for a time as usher in a small 
school at Hindolveston, near Guestwick; while 
here he read all of Shakespeare "and planned 
an epic poem of Brute."\textsuperscript{14}

1773

Godwin came to London in April planning to 
enter Homerton Academy, but he was rejected on 
suspicion of Sandemanianism; he therefore en-
tered Hoxton College, near London, in September 
1773.\textsuperscript{15}

In the late eighteenth century, the
Dissenting academies were in many ways more progressive than the universities. In the inclusiveness and modernity of their offerings they could lay claim to uniqueness: liberal learning, not theology, was the core of the Dissenting curriculum, which included Hebrew, natural science, ethics, mathematics, logic, oratory, poetry, and the Latin and Greek classics, with particular emphasis on history, philosophy, and the science of politics.  

Hoxton was one of the best Dissenting theological academies, where two of the outstanding scholars of the day, Abraham Rees, editor of Rees' Encyclopedia, and Andrew Kippis, best known as editor and principal author of the second edition of Biographia Britannica, were among Godwin's teachers; Kippis was his personal tutor. Rees and Kippis were noted liberals as well as noted scholars. The often-remarked connection between religious and political dissent was especially conspicuous at Hoxton, where the political opinions of Kippis were not too much more conservative than those of Thomas Paine.  

Godwin at first resisted any broadening
of his early religious and political views: though "indefatigable in my search after truth. . . . all my inquiries terminated in Calvinism." Of Hoxton he later wrote:

the prevailing opinions were those of Arminius and Arius, but I endured the fiery trial, and came out in my twenty-third year as pure a Sandemanian as I had gone in. . . . a little time before . . . my entering the Dissenting College at Hoxton, I had adopted principles of toryism in government, by which I was no less distinguished from my fellow-students then by my principles of religion. I had, however, no sooner gone out into the world than my sentiments on both these points began to give way; my toryism did not survive above a year, and between my twenty-third and my twenty-fifth year my religious creed insensibly degenerated on the heads of the Trinity, eternal torments, and some others.

Godwin's stubborn adherence to his views in the teeth of all opposition, as well as his insatiable craving for distinction, no doubt led to the situation he recorded in a fragment discreetly omitted by Kegan Paul: "Newton, my schoolmaster, and the young men at Hoxton College almost with one voice pronounced me the most self-conceited, self-sufficient animal that ever lived."
1777

Well before his graduation from Hoxton in January 1778, Godwin was preaching twice every Sunday at neighboring churches and in 1777 became minister of the Dissenting congregation at Ware in Hertfordshire. Although Godwin was never officially ordained and his ministerial career was short, it must have constituted a significant formative period in his life: the dedicated young conservative who preached at Ware was in a very few years metamorphosed into a radical, some of the seeds of Political Justice already germinating in his mind. 21

It was at Ware that Godwin met Joseph Fawcett, first among those who at different periods profoundly impressed him: "the four principal oral instructors to whom I feel my mind indebted for improvement were Joseph Fawcet, Thomas Holcroft, George Dyson, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge." 22 Fawcett's probable influence on Political Justice is indicated in Godwin's remark that one of Fawcett's "favourite topics was a declamation against the domestic affections [Godwin's term for those feelings and affections directed only toward the good of a small private group, like the family, instead of toward the
good of humanity in general], a principle which admirably coincided with the dogmas of Jonathan Edwards, whose works I had read a short time before."23

1779

Godwin left Ware in August and went to live in London for four months, his already "insensibly degenerated" religious creed making him waver in his allegiance to the ministry as a career.24

1780

At the beginning of 1780, however, he left London to serve as a minister once more, this time at Stowmarket in Suffolk.25

1781

This year marked a broadening of Godwin's intellectual horizons; he spent much time in reading and in pondering what he had read. The 1793 preface to Political Justice indicates it was about this time that he "became satisfied, that monarchy was a species of government essentially corrupt," a conviction he owed "to the political writings of Swift and to a perusal of the Latin historians."26

Another intellectual landmark of 1781 was Godwin's introduction to d'Holbach, Rousseau,
and Helvétius by Frederick Norman, a new resident of Stowmarket "deeply read in the French philosophers." Norman was influential in giving Godwin's thought its lasting radical bent.

1782

In April 1782 Godwin "quitted Stowmarket, in consequence of a dispute with my hearers on a question of Church discipline. My faith in Christianity had been shaken by the books which Mr Norman put into my hands, and I was therefore pleased in some respects with the breach that dismissed me": he abandoned his formal Calvinism with his clerical garb and became for a time a Deist. Godwin's expulsion, decisively pointing him toward literature as it did, can be considered one of the turning points of his life. During the remainder of the year, he lived in Holburn and began a writing career, which was to continue actively for fifty-four years, by composing a life of Chatham.

1783

But this step toward a new vocation did not mean Godwin had totally abandoned the idea of becoming a minister, for he spent the first seven months of 1783 preaching as a pastoral
candidate at Beaconsfield. While there he became a Socinian, which he remained until 1788, through reading Joseph Priestley's Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion. Though he briefly considered setting up a school, Godwin was also continuing his literary career. The History of the Life of William Pitt, Earl of Chatham appeared in January 1783. This same year he also published A Defence of the Rockingham Party, in Their Late Coalition with the Right Honourable Frederick Lord North, a pamphlet in fervent support of the Foxite Whigs; An Account of the Seminary that will be Opened on Monday the Fourth Day of August, at Epsom in Surrey, for the Instruction of Twelve Pupils in the Greek, Latin, French, and English Languages, a prospectus too advanced to entice a single parent; and The Herald of Literature; or, A Review of the Most Considerable Publications That Will Be Made in the Course of the Ensuing Winter: with Extracts (postdated 1784), a series of parodiac reviews convincing enough to delude Godwin's biographers Ford K. Brown and George Woodcock into thinking that he really was discussing books he had somehow obtained.
before publication. Whatever aesthetic satisfaction Godwin may have felt in writing The Herald of Literature was his only reward: John Murray paid him nothing for it, though he did give the young writer employment on his English Review.

That Godwin was yet interested in a ministerial career may possibly be indicated by the publication in December 1783 of the small volume Sketches of History, in Six Sermons; this is the only one of his early works bearing his name on the title page. The six sermons—on the resignation of Aaron, the degeneracy of Hazael, and the arraignment, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and character of Jesus—show the writer perhaps more interested in style and rhetoric than theology; they were favorably reviewed except for the statement "God himself has not a right to be a tyrant," seemingly a portent of his later philosophical system.

In January Godwin's second political pamphlet, Instructions to a Statesman, Humbly Inscribed to the Right Honourable George Earl Temple, appeared. Here he continues his support
of the Foxite Whigs by attacking George Grenville, who had played an important part in the fall of the Fox-North coalition cabinet.

Godwin later called 1783-1784 "probably the busiest period of my life; in the latter end of 1783 I wrote in ten days a novel entitled Damon and Delia, for which Hookham gave me five guineas, and a novel in three weeks called 'Italian Letters,' purchased by Robinson for twenty guineas, and in the first four months of 1784 a novel called 'Imogen, a Pastoral Romance,' for which Lane gave me ten pounds." 37 This offhand reference, Godwin's sole specific mention of his early novels, indicates no very high opinion of his initial attempts at fiction; he was content to include them among "things of obscure note . . . I am rather inclined to suppress" in later years. 38

In contrast to these hasty efforts, Godwin lavished time and attention on his later fiction, as his prefaces to these works reveal. He wrote slowly and carefully, often revising extensively for subsequent editions. About his mature fiction, Mary Shelley remarks that "Mr. Godwin always required twelve months and
usually a year and a half for the composition of a novel.\textsuperscript{39}

Kegan Paul noted in 1876 that the three early novels "appear to have vanished into nothingness as well as forgetfulness," and later writers on Godwin long continued to echo the assertion.\textsuperscript{40} Careful searching has very recently unearthed two of the missing works, however: Jack W. Marken located two copies of \textit{Imogen} in 1952, and Burton R. Pollin discovered a single \textit{Italian Letters} in the Bristol University Library in 1963.\textsuperscript{41} Both works have now been republished, complete with extensive commentary.

Godwin's earliest prose fiction, \textit{Damon and Delia, A Tale}, remains lost. The book was probably published early in 1784, for it was quoted in the \textit{English Review} of February 1784.\textsuperscript{42} The excerpts and commentary from this magazine and Mary Shelley's remarks in a fragmentary unpublished biography of her father are the only sources of information about \textit{Damon and Delia}.\textsuperscript{43}

Godwin's three-week effort, \textit{Italian Letters: or, The History of the Count de St. Julian}, is the only one of his nine novels using the epistolary
form. Published 10 July 1784, the book had a generally favorable critical reception, though it evidently soon dropped out of sight.\footnote{44}

*Imogen: A Pastoral Romance from the Ancient British* was published by William Lane the day after Robinson brought out *Italian Letters*.\footnote{45}

Despite these diverse literary sallies of the early eighties, Godwin admitted that "for the most part I did not eat my dinner without previously carrying my watch or my books to the pawnbroker to enable me to eat."\footnote{46} Only toward the end of 1784 did he begin to achieve some financial security, by being "installed . . . writer of the historical part of the New Annual Register at the stipend of 60 guineas."\footnote{47}

The *New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics, and Literature*—edited by Dr. Andrew Kippis, Godwin's former Hoxton tutor, and published by George Robinson, who was to bring out many of Godwin's later works—was a liberal journal aimed at countering the conservative *Annual Register* by providing a rival version of yearly events in many fields. Godwin wrote the detailed "British and Foreign History" section of the *New Annual Register* for
seven years, a lengthy stint which focused his attention on historical and political events and gave him a practical groundwork for the theories of Political Justice. The New Annual Register brought Godwin some outward recognition as well as inner experience, since the registers were widely read and reputedly written: for several years Godwin's opposite number on the Annual Register was Edmund Burke.

During 1785 and 1786, Godwin, in addition to his other journalistic labors, was a leading contributor to the short-lived Political Herald and Review, which had been founded by Fox and Sheridan to disseminate the views of the Whig opposition. Godwin's sarcastic criticisms of Pitt's ministry decried absolute government, but do not reveal the want of faith in any government whatsoever found in Political Justice. When the journal expired at the end of 1786, Sheridan sought to revive it under Godwin's editorship and offered him a stipend from party funds. Fearing that this attractive proposal might hinder the intellectual independence he always prized, Godwin declined.

During the later eighties, as the Sheridan
incident demonstrates, Godwin was making the first of that impressive range of acquaintances and friendships which fill his diaries with references to almost all the famous and once-famous through a forty-year period. On 6 April 1788, Godwin began the diary he continued to the end of his life; the thirty-two little note- books contain terse accounts of how much he wrote and what he was reading each day, as well as a record of the people he met and his engagements. The journal, only brief portions of which have yet been published, contains important information about Godwin's methods of composition and revision. 52

1785-1791

By 1785 Godwin had met Thomas Holcroft, self-educated actor, dramatist, novelist, and translator, soon to become his most intimate friend. This friendship with Holcroft, the second of Godwin's "four principal oral instructors," had a significant effect on both men. Under Holcroft's influence the vestiges of Godwin's once rigorous Calvinism finally faded into atheism about 1791, and Godwin in return stirred Holcroft's latent republicanism. 53
Holcroft's extraordinary energy was a literary catalyst as well as a religious solvent: "my mind," Godwin wrote later, "though fraught with sensibility, and occasionally ardent and enthusiastic, is perhaps in its genuine habits too tranquil and unimpassioned for successful composition, and stands greatly in need of stimulus and excitement. I am deeply indebted in this point to Holcroft." 

Godwin called this year "the main crisis of my life." In the summer he gave up his connection with the New Annual Register, and abdicated, I hope for ever, the task of performing a literary labour, the nature of which should be dictated by anything but the promptings of my own mind. I suggested to [George] Robinson the bookseller the idea of composing a treatise on Political Principles, and he agreed to aid me in executing it. . . . It was my first determination to tell all that I apprehended to be truth, and all that seemed to be truth, confident that from such a proceeding the best results were to be expected.

In November at one of the weekly dinners of Joseph Johnson, the famous liberal publisher and bookseller, Godwin met Mary Wollstonecraft for the first time. The two parted "mutually
displeased with each other," according to
Godwin; they met only occasionally in the year
that intervened before Mary left for Paris. 56

1793

An Enquiry concerning Political Justice,
and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happi-
ness appeared in February and was an immediate
success. 57

1794

The first edition of Things as They Are:
or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams was pub-
lished in May.

On 21 October Cursory Strictures on the
Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to
the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794 appeared in the
Morning Chronicle; it was soon reprinted as a
separate pamphlet. Both publications appeared
anonymously.

1795

Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr.
Pitt's Bills, concerning Treasonable and Sedi-
tious Practices, and Unlawful Assemblies was
published under the authorship of "A Lover of
Order."

Godwin spent much time in revising Political
Justice and Caleb Williams. Second editions
of the novel and of *Political Justice*, which was now entitled *Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness*, appeared. Though postdated 1796, the two works were actually published at the end of 1795.\footnote{58}

1796

Godwin renewed his acquaintance with Mary Wollstonecraft in January. Mary had been abroad much of the time since the end of 1792. During those years, she had become the mistress of the American Gilbert Imlay, borne him a daughter (Fanny), and made two attempts at suicide in despair over the breakup of the liaison. By mid-August, Godwin and Mary were lovers.\footnote{59}

1797

The revised, third edition of *Caleb Williams* appeared, as did *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature in a Series of Essays*. *The Enquirer* is the chief repository of Godwin's opinions on education; in such matters as his repeated insistence on respect for the student as a person, his views still seem pertinent. The essay entitled "Of Avarice and Profusion," in which Godwin presents an ideal society characterized by "cultivated
equality" (p. 176), is historically important. T. R. Malthus stated that his own Essay on Population owed its origin to this essay: he wanted to prove that Godwin's ideal society was impossible because of the encroachment of a rising population on the available means of subsistence. 60

Godwin married Mary Wollstonecraft at Old St. Pancras Church 29 March; they decided upon marriage, to which both were originally averse in principle, because of Mary's pregnancy. On 30 August, Mary was delivered of a daughter, who was named for her mother and was to become the wife of Shelley. Mary Wollstonecraft died 10 September, leaving a stricken Godwin with two tiny girls to care for.

The revised, third edition of Political Justice appeared.

Godwin edited Mary's Posthumous Works and published Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman. A revised second edition of the latter appeared the same year.

The Memoirs reveals the importance of Mary to Godwin's intellectual development. His
happy marriage with the essentially intuitive Mary brought him firsthand knowledge of the joys of the "domestic affections," and led to several other important modifications of his doctrine. Godwin changed his views significantly on the hereditary qualities of character, on the importance of the feelings, and on the nature of virtue and of motives to action.61

1799

Godwin's second major novel, St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century, was published. St. Leon is important in the progress of Godwin's thought. The private or domestic affections, which in 1793 had been presented as hostile to universal benevolence, and which in 1798 had been found merely capable of coexisting with it, appear in the preface of this novel as "inseparable from the nature of man, and . . . the culture of the heart." Godwin continues,

True virtue will recommend to us individual attachments. . . . since it is the object of virtue to produce happiness, and since the man who lives in the midst of domestic relations will have many opportunities of conferring pleasure . . . without interfering with the purposes of general benevolence. Nay, by kindling his sensibility, and harmonising his soul, they may be expected . . . to render him more prompt in the service of strangers and the public.62
1799-1800

These years mark significant changes for Godwin in religion and literature.

During this period, Godwin's acquaintance with Coleridge ripened into a warm friendship; Coleridge was the fourth and last of those whom Godwin lists as having been his "principal oral instructors." Recording the change in his religious creed from atheism to theism, Godwin gives credit to Coleridge:

My theism . . . consists in a reverent and soothing contemplation of all that is beautiful, grand, or mysterious in the system of the universe, and in a certain conscious intercourse and correspondence with the principles of these attributes, without attempting the idle task of developing and defining it--into this train of thinking I was first led by the conversations of S. T. Coleridge.

Godwin also developed important new literary interests at this time, which significantly contributed to his later novels; Coleridge's influence may perhaps be seen here too. Godwin writes:

A great epocha, or division in my life, which may as well deserve to be recorded as almost any other event, is that at which I began to read the old English authors. . . .

It was not till 1799 that I broke in upon my rule of confining my English reading principally to the
moderns. The only considerable exception to this rule was Shakespeare.

. . . I got possession of a copy of Beaumont and Fletcher; and . . . I found in them a source of sentiment and delight of which I had not before had the smallest conception. This opened upon me a new field of improvement and pleasure, and engaged me in a course of reading which, from that hour . . . I have never deserted.

. . . on the present occasion a new world was opened to me. It was as if a mighty river had changed its course to water the garden of my mind. I was like a person who, for many years, had subsisted on a slender annuity, and had now an immense magazine of wealth bequeathed to him.63

1800

Godwin's blank verse drama, Antonio: A Tragedy in Five Acts, was published. He had spent much of the past three years on it. Holcroft, Sheridan, Lamb, and Coleridge had offered suggestions, and the leading parts were taken by Kemble and Mrs. Siddons; but the play was still a dismal failure.64

1801

Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, Preached at Christ Church, April 15, 1800. Being A Reply to the Attacks of Dr. Parr, Mr. Mackintosh, the Author of An Essay on Population and Others, marking further changes in Godwin's views, was published.

On 21 December, after a courtship of
several months, Godwin married his neighbor Mrs. Clairmont, a widow with two children, including Jane (Claire), who was to become Byron's mistress. The second Mrs. Godwin, whom most of Godwin's friends thoroughly disliked, introduced herself to Godwin by addressing him from her balcony with, "Is it possible that I behold the immortal Godwin?" \(^{65}\)

1803

On 28 March, Godwin's son William was born.


1804

The second edition of *Chaucer* appeared.

1805

Godwin opened his publishing business, specializing in works for children; this venture later ended in bankruptcy. \(^{66}\)

*Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling,* Godwin's third major novel, was published and brought charges of inconsistency on his view of marriage, just as *St. Leon* had caused similar
accusations on his attitude toward domestic affections, despite Godwin's attempts in the preface of each to forestall such criticisms. The preface to Fleetwood is decidedly disingenuous in playing down Godwin's earlier virulent attacks on marriage; his opinions had undergone a major change on this point. Godwin not only gives high praise to marriage in Fleetwood he also gives further weight to the importance of private affections in such passages as: "... too much independence is not good for man. It conduces neither to his virtue, nor his happiness. The discipline which arises out of the domestic charities, has an admirable tendency to make a man, individually considered, what man ought to be."67.

1807

Godwin's prose drama, Faulkener: A Tragedy in Five Acts, was published. The work was performed 16 December at Drury Lane, with somewhat more success than Antonio.68

1809

Godwin's Essay on Sepulchres: or, a Proposal for erecting some memorial of the Illustrious Dead in all ages on the spot where their remains have been interred, containing a eulogy
of friendship which is often quoted, appeared.

1812

Shelley wrote Godwin in January, and met him in London in October, the beginning of the famous--and complex--relationship. 69

1814

On 28 July, Shelley and Godwin's daughter Mary eloped, with Jane Clairmont accompanying them, and Mrs. Godwin in pursuit.

1815


1816

On 11 October, Fanny Imlay committed suicide, and on 9 November, Harriet Shelley drowned herself. 70 Harriet's body was recovered on 10 December, and on 30 December, Mary Godwin and Shelley were married.

1817


1818

Godwin published a pamphlet called Letter of Advice to a Young American on the Course of
Studies it might be most advantageous for him to pursue. 71

1820 Of Population: an Enquiry concerning the Power of Increase in the Number of Mankind, Being an Answer to Mr. Malthus's Essay on that Subject, a project on which Godwin had been engaged for many years, was finally published.

1822 This year was one of catastrophe: the bankruptcy which Godwin had been expecting for some time occurred, and Shelley was drowned in Italy.

1823 The revised edition of The Enquirer appeared.

1824-1828 Godwin's History of the Commonwealth of England: from its Commencement to the Restoration of Charles the Second, in four volumes, was published.

1830 Cludesley: A Tale, Godwin's penultimate novel, was published.

1831 Godwin's volume of essays, Thoughts on Man, His Nature, Productions, and Discoveries: Interspersed with some Particulars respecting the Author, appeared; it marks important
philosophical developments.

The Bentley "Standard Novels" editions of Caleb Williams and of St. Leon were published.72 Godwin's son William died of cholera.

1832

The "Standard Novels" edition of Fleetwood appeared.

1833

Godwin published two pieces of fiction: Deloraine, his last novel, and the "Fragment of a Romance," Colburn's New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal, XXXVII (Jan. 1833), 32-41.73

In April, Lord Grey conferred on Godwin the sinecure post of Yeoman Usher of the Exchequer, with residence in New Palace Yard.74

1834

Godwin published Lives of the Necromancers: or, an Account of the most eminent persons in successive ages, who have claimed for themselves, or to whom has been imputed by others, the Exercise of Magical Powers.

1836

Godwin died on 7 April.

1873

Godwin's Essays Never Before Published, from an unfinished series of essays on religious subjects which he was still working on when he
died, appeared posthumously. He had wanted to call the collection *The Genius of Christianity Unveiled.*
NOTES

1 The Life of William Godwin (London, 1926); William Godwin: A Biographical Study (London, 1946); and William Godwin and His World (London, 1953), respectively. Cameron includes a good brief sketch of Godwin's life, I, 7-22; see also II, 892-913 for further discussion of the provenance of the Abinger manuscripts.


5 Paul, I, 356-357.

6 Paul, I, 7-8.

7 Paul, I, 8.

8 Paul, I, 9.

9 Paul, I, 10.

10 Paul, I, 10-11. The Glasites or Sandemanians were an extreme fundamentalist sect founded by John Glas (1695-1773) and his son-in-law Robert Sandeman (1718-1771). Glas and his followers were expelled from the national Church of Scotland for opposition to any form of church government. The aim of the sect was to duplicate exactly the customs of the New Testament churches. See D. Macfadyen, "Glasites (Sandemanians)," Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh, 1913), VI, 230-231, and Frederic Harold Young, "Sandemanianism and James," The Philosophy of Henry James, Sr. (New York, 1951), pp. 20-28. The rigorous intellectualism, with the burden of responsibility for his own salvation placed upon the understanding of each individual, the liability of members' property to conscription for any need of the poor or the church, and the opposition to any form of institutionalized authority are the features

11 Paul, I, 11.
12 Paul, I, 11.
13 Paul, I, 12.
14 Paul, I, 14.
15 Cameron, I, 25.


17 Ford K. Brown, p. 11; Cameron, I, 7, 33-34.
19 Paul, I, 16.

20 Quoted by Rosalie Glynn Grylls, William Godwin and His World, p. 34, from the Abinger collection.

21 Cameron, I, 23.
22 Paul, I, 17.

23 Paul, I, 17. The principle of impartiality or objectivity, as a kind of axiom of reason, lies at the heart of Godwin's philosophy: man is capable of acting in accordance with truth, justice, and the good of mankind in general, instead of being driven by self-love to place his own interests first. As Godwin says in Political Justice, "we are able in imagination to go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part. We can then make an estimate of our intrinsic and absolute value; and detect the imposition of that self-regard, which would represent our own interest as of as much value as that of all the world beside" (I, 427). (See also I, 125-137, and I, 421-438. Citations from
Political Justice, unless otherwise specified, are to the volume and page in Enquiry concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness, ed. F. E. L. Priestley, 3 vols. [Toronto, 1946]. The first two volumes are a photographic facsimile of the third edition; the third volume contains Priestley's introduction and notes and chapters from the first edition of 1793 which were omitted from subsequent editions.) Godwin's idea of virtue is essentially social, and always involves the subordination of subjectivity to an impartial, objective view. This objectivity naturally demands that the general affection or universal benevolence that has humanity for its object come before purely private affections. Edwards sees such affections as not true virtue, but only a kind of "secondary virtue." (See Priestley, III, 25, and D. H. Monro, Godwin's Moral Philosophy [London, 1953], pp. 9-31.)

24 Paul, I, 18.
26 PJ, I, ix.
27 PJ, I, ix; Paul, I, 19.
28 Paul, I, 19, 26. Cameron prints and discusses a manuscript dealing with Godwin's dismissal: "The manuscript establishes that the reason for that expulsion, which Godwin does not mention, was the opposition to his administering of the sacraments" before ordination (I, 33).
30 This work was so popular that it went through two editions and was pirated in Ireland. (See Jack W. Marken, "William Godwin and the Political Herald and Review," ENYPL, LXV [1961], 518.)
32 See the cautious attitude of the Monthly Review, LXX (January 1784), 79. Woodcock finds that in An Account "the key ideas of Political Justice already exist in embryo" (Anarchism, p. 63).


35 Marken, "Canon," p. 179; the work was postdated.


37 Paul, I, 20-21. The purchase prices are typical for the time; J. M. S. Tompkins finds that "the usual payment for a library novel seems to have been between five and ten guineas, and the profit could be doubled by a judicious dedication. Sometimes the bookseller gave as much as twenty guineas" (The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800, 2nd ed. [Lincoln, Neb., 1961], p. 9). Godwin's first major novel, Caleb Williams, seems to have brought him £84 in 1794. (See Johannes Meyer, William Godwins Romane [Leipzig, 1906], p. 17.)


40 Paul, I, 100.


43 Cameron reports the sale of a copy of Damon and Delia by a London bookdealer in 1955, but gives no further information (I, 338).


Paul, I, 21.


See Ford K. Brown, pp. 28-29.

For a full discussion of Godwin's connection with this journal, see Marken, "William Godwin and the Political Herald and Review," pp. 517-533.

Paul, I, 24.

For further information about Godwin's diary, see Grylls, p. 60; Paul, I, 59; and Cameron, I, 120-121.

Paul (I, 25) states that Godwin met Holcroft in 1786, but publishes letters (I, 49) dated 1785 which indicate an already developed friendship. For the mutual influence, see Paul, I, 65, and I, 357. All of Godwin's biographers discuss the relationship at some length. The best account of the development of Godwin's religious views is David Fleisher, William Godwin: A Study in Liberalism (London, 1951), pp. 136-145.

Paul, I, 361.

Paul, I, 67.


See Ch. ii.

See Ford K. Brown, p. 104.

The relationship of Mary and Godwin is covered in detail in Godwin and Mary: Letters of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, ed. Ralph M. Wardle (Lawrence, Kan., 1966); Ralph M. Wardle, Mary Wollstonecraft: A Critical Biography (Lawrence, Kan., 1951); and Godwin's Memoirs. See also the discussions by Godwin's biographers.

For a full discussion of the complex question of the development of Godwin's later thought, see Priestley, PJ, III, 81-100; and Fleisher, pp. 109-135.

St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century (London, 1831), p. x. This edition, the last English edition published during Godwin's lifetime, was No. 5 in Bentley's "Standard Novels" series.

Paul, I, 357-358; I, 354-357, for theism and literature, respectively.

See Ford K. Brown, pp. 183-192, for a fuller account.


See Sue Taylor, "M. J. Godwin & Co.," Horn Book, XX (1944), 78-87; this article is not listed in Godwin Criticism.


The lengthy story of the Godwin-Shelley relationship is treated in detail by the biographers of each. Misinterpretations of this relationship long blighted Godwin's character, but the general view now is that Godwin was acting only in accordance with the principles he had long held regarding property: the wealthy have a moral duty to supply the virtuous and needy.

For the tragic story of Fanny (daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay), see Burton R. Pollin, "Fanny Godwin's Suicide Re-examined," Etudes Anglaises, XVIII (1965), 258-268.


73 See Burton R. Pollin, "William Godwin's 'Fragment of a Romance,'" Comparative Literature, XVI (1964), 40-54.

74 See Paul, II, 321-322.

75 Ford K. Brown, p. 351.
I

GODWIN RESPLendent: THE RECEPTION, CONTEXT, AND PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL JUSTICE

A. PROSPECT: THE RENOWN OF POLITICAL JUSTICE

I had risen . . . like "a star" upon my contemporaries without being expected.

_Thoughts on Man_ (1831)¹

In that dawn when it was bliss to be alive, William Godwin shone supreme, the philosophical morning star. In 1825 in his _Spirit of the Age_, William Hazlitt recalls that five-and-twenty years ago he was in the very zenith of a sultry and unwholesome popularity; he blazed as a sun in the firmament of reputation; no one was more talked of, more looked up to, more sought after, and wherever liberty, truth, justice was the theme, his name was not far off . . . . No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as the celebrated _Enquiry concerning Political Justice_. Tom Paine was considered for the time as a Tom Fool to him; Paley an old woman; Edmund Burke a flashy sophist. Truth, moral truth, it was supposed, had here taken up its abode; and these were the oracles of thought. . . . Mr. Godwin indulged in extreme opinions, and carried with him all the most sanguine and fearless understandings of the time.²
When it is considered that Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Hazlitt, Henry Crabb Robinson, and, later, Shelley, were only the most famous of many "sanguine and fearless understandings," Hazlitt's well-known statement appears less rhetoric than sober truth; the roll call of other important Godwinists of one degree or another includes James Macintosh, Basil Montagu, Thomas Holcroft, William Hone, John Thelwall, "Perdita" Robinson, Mary Hays, James Ballantyne, and Joseph Gerrald.  

In fact, virtually the entire liberal intelligentsia of England was strongly impressed upon the appearance of An Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and its influence on Gener- ^Virtue and Happiness in February 1793; Godwin emerged from relative obscurity as a busy London Hack to become with almost Byronic speed the outstanding radical social philosopher of the time. 4 A contemporary journalist records that Political Justice "was scarcely published when it was everywhere the theme of popular conversation and praise. Perhaps no work of equal bulk ever had such a number of readers; and certainly no book of such profound inquiry ever made so many proselytes in an equal space of time." 5

The proselytes were no less enthusiastic than numerous. Godwin became, Coleridge wrote years later, one of "the captains and chief men" in the world's admiration.
Enthusiastic young people labeled themselves Godwinians, styled Godwin "the Great Master," and wrote poetry in his honor. 6 "'Throw aside your books of chemistry,' said Wordsworth to a young man, a student in the Temple, 'and read Godwin on Necessity!'"; Coleridge panegyrized the philosopher in a sonnet as one "form'd t'illumine a sunless world forlorn"; Southey "read, and all but worshipped" Godwin's book. 7 In 1794 Coleridge, Southey, and their fellow Pantisocrats erected their utopia on the foundation of Political Justice, Robert Lovell writing to Holcroft that "from the writings of William godwin and yourself, our minds have been illuminated." 8 Crabb Robinson testifies to "a powerful effect on the youth of that generation" when he calls Godwin's treatise "the book that gave a turn to my mind, and in effect directed the whole course of my life. . . . No book ever made me feel more generously. I never before felt so strongly, nor have I ever since, I fear, felt so strongly the duty of not living to one's self and that of having for one's sole object the welfare of the community." 9

Nor was such fervor as Robinson's confined to one class or one country. In spite of Pitt's assertion that "a three guinea book could never do much harm among those who had not three shillings to spare," Political Justice found a large working-class audience; even the respectable
Gentleman's Magazine had to admit it was "so popular, that the poorest mechanics were known to club subscriptions for its purchase."

In Ireland and Scotland, records another journalist, "people of the lower classes were the purchasers. In many places, perhaps some hundreds in England and Scotland, copies were bought by subscription, and read aloud in meetings of the subscribers." In addition, the uncompromising denunciations of monarchy and aristocracy in the fifth book were circulated in cheap pamphlet form. Many working-class readers who might not otherwise have had access to Godwin's book could read the portions reprinted in Daniel Isaac Eaton's Politics for the People: or, A Salamagundy for Swine, and in Thomas Spence's Pig's Meat: or, Lessons for the Swinish Multitude before the two radical booksellers were arrested by the government for publishing seditious libel in these periodicals. Political Justice was also drawn on extensively for The Manual of Liberty, a compendium of political quotations put out by another radical publisher, Henry D. Symonds. Other laborers besides the young tailor Francis Place, later to become a famous political leader, found in Political Justice "the most grateful kind of knowledge." Such knowledge the fourteen-shilling 1796 edition later allowed many more of the "swinish multitude" to own for themselves.

In addition, every circulating library possessed at
least one copy, so that by 1794 Godwin himself notes that his position was a singular one: there was not a person almost in town or village who had any acquaintance with modern publications that had not heard of the "Enquiry concerning Political Justice," or that was not acquainted in a great or small degree with the contents of that work. I was nowhere a stranger. The doctrines of that work . . . coincided in a great degree with the sentiments then prevailing in English society, and I was everywhere received with curiosity and kindness. If temporary fame ever was an object worthy to be coveted by the human mind, I certainly obtained it in a degree that has seldom been exceeded.

Almost forty years later he recalls with pride: "I had a numerous audience of all classes, of every age, and of either sex. The young and fair did not feel deterred from consulting my pages."

The periodical reviewers of 1793, who helped shape the opinions of many among this "numerous audience," were generally favorable to Political Justice, though some journalists express reservations about the extremes to which Godwin carries his logic. The comments of the New Annual Register, to which Godwin had long contributed before he began his masterpiece, are typical of the praise the work received from even those moderate liberals who condemned republican excesses and championed limited monarchy and the English constitution. The journal gives quite a detailed summary of Godwin's book, because, says the reviewer, "it
has greatly excited the public attention, and is likely to
give rise to numerous interesting disquisitions in morals,
jurisprudence, and politics." Godwin is lauded for his
"well-informed, bold, and vigorous mind" and "the best and
most praise-worthy motives." But though the philosopher
"has advanced much valuable and instructive matter, which
is recommended by great ingenuity of argument, energy of
diction, and perspicuity and correctness of language," the
critic regrets that he cannot "subscribe, without exception
to Mr. Godwin's opinions," since "some of his positions and
projects we consider to be fanciful and extravagant."

Like the New Annual Register, most of the journals
of the day summarize at length, and many quote extensively
from the work under consideration; the early reviewers of
Political Justice typically present Godwin's theories with
an objectivity soon to be denied the philosopher. Indeed,
in a scrupulous attempt to be impartial, Godwin's close
friend Thomas Holcroft, writing for the Monthly Review,
presents a lengthy three-part account with an almost total
absence of commentary; he recommends everyone to read the
work and decide for himself. Holcroft admits that the au-
thor argues "in direct opposition to many of the received
opinions and common practices of mankind," but maintains
that "the tone of virtue is uniform . . . so that the reader,
who may take offense at the writer's doctrines, cannot but
applaud his motives."

Most of the journalists intersperse their reports with opinions on particular issues. Along with the majority of the first reviewers, the *Analytical Review* finds much to praise and a few points to censure:

the execution is, on the whole, entitled to approbation. . . . The arrangement of his ideas is, in general, methodical and perspicuous; and his arguments are, with a very few exceptions, stated with force, succinctness, and accuracy. . . . among several extravagant and Utopian ideas, we have found much close argument, judicious observation, and profound thought. If his ardent enthusiasm in favour of truth and liberty, with a sanguine anticipation of the perfection of human nature, have betrayed Mr. G. into a few extraordinary and chimerical positions, though we may be disposed to smile at their singularity and extravagance, we can scarce censure the principle in which they originate.

The utopian extravagances cited by this commentator include "several very fanciful ideas, such as, that infirmity and disease may, by the omnipotence of mind, be entirely banished from the human body; that sleep may likewise be expelled; and that, by the exertion and consequent improvement of our intellects, we may render ourselves immortal in the present state." The reviewer also reprobrates Godwin's "insinuations, with respect to public worship and a future state," but nevertheless will "cheerfully bestow on Mr. G.'s Enquiry that praise which we conceive it deserves."

The *Literary and Biographical Magazine*, and *British Review* opens its generally favorable critique by referring
to the "great expectations" formed of *Political Justice* even before its publication. The article particularly praises Godwin's "aborrence of aristocracy" and finds him (rather misleadingly) "a very persuasive advocate for a pure democracy." With some prescience, this critic several times stresses the conflict of the times with Godwin's principles, for the philosopher has "advanced many things new, and many which, in the present humour of the people of this nation, will be thought romantic, especially those who are, or pretend to be, enamoured of the English constitution." Typically, this magazine concludes by finding in *Political Justice* "many excellent chapters on various subjects of political economy, interspersed with much extraneous and metaphysical matter."

The general commendation of Godwin's book was not confined to the more liberal periodicals. Even the conservative *Critical Review* asserts that "the public are under considerable obligations to the very ingenious author of this elaborate treatise," and the reviewer himself is "pleased and instructed with many parts of the work." Though this journalist cannot agree with such doctrines as Godwin's "predilection for republican government" and his necessitarianism, he observes that *Political Justice* will be useful even to those whose opinions differ. Godwin's analysis of the aims and methods of past governments, his insistence on
the principle of sincerity, and his hostility to revolutions effected by violence instead of by reason are among the parts of the work praised. The *Critical* is sorry to see "wild and visionary principles" multiply toward the conclusion of *Political Justice*: Godwin's views on perfectibility, marriage, and immortality are cited as "disgraceful eccentricities." Nevertheless, the reviewer strives to be "impartial" and asserts in the concluding section of the article that "the man who would deny to our author the praise of both ingenuity and information, must be destitute of common sense or of common honesty." The book may be "singular," and "very unequal," but it contains "valuable matter," despite its "alloy of error and absurdity."

Among the reviews of 1793, the *British Critic* alone finds nothing of value in *Political Justice*. This avowed organ of the Tory and High Church group foreshadows the tone of later attacks on Godwin's work. As a tool of the ministry, the *British Critic* is unalterably opposed to innovation in any form and begins its article with a sarcastic assault on modern pseudo-philosophers. The reviewer professes astonishment that there could exist "a person so wildly extravagant as to write and publish, and even one or two to commend so perfectly chimerical a book," and predicts total neglect for a work which is "merely . . . Mr. Burke's ir- ical satire upon civil society, and Swift's exaggerated
descriptions of the depravity of man, advanced into a grave system." Like many of the later critics of Political Justice, this journalist censures the misuse of "talents so considerable" in perverted logic: Godwin's error is "to take for granted one or two extravagant absurdities, and then to reason justly and correctly from them, as if they were undisputed truths." The philosopher is an Icarus and a Jesuitic purveyor of "poison," for which the "antidote" is the "knowledge of the unsubstantial basis on which the whole is founded." The reviewer of course attempts to provide this antidote, reserving his greatest derision for the utopian speculations which terminate Godwin's treatise. The book must be regarded, he concludes, "as a complete refutation of Helvetius, Rousseau, the author of Systeme de la Nature, and some English writers of equal extravagance, by a fair reductio ad absurdum; by showing demonstratively, to what nonsense and extravagance their doctrines, when pursued, must lead." 18

The views of the British Critic were to have their day, but for the moment the popularity of Political Justice continued unabated. In five years three editions were called for, two of them immediately pirated in Dublin and the second in Philadelphia. As provocative in the United States as in England, Godwin's ideas were a controversial issue in the continuing debate between Jeffersonians and
Federalists. Godwin personally sent a copy of Political Justice for the members of the French National Convention to read; and Benjamin Constant, regarding it as "one of the masterpieces of the age," later made a French translation. By 1803 the first German version had appeared.

B. THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL JUSTICE

The doctrines of that work . . . coincided in a great degree with the sentiments then prevailing in English society.

William Godwin

A full understanding of the startling impact of Political Justice and of the equally startling fluctuations of Godwin's reputation in the last decade of the eighteenth century requires some knowledge of the contemporary political, social, and intellectual climate. As the philosopher himself points out, his book "was the child of the French Revolution," and his reputation was strikingly connected with the shifting political situation. A close examination of this connection will be one of the major purposes of this study. The link between Godwin's repute and current events is frequently noticed by commentators of the period. A
reviewer of 1815 concisely summarizes the course of Godwin's fame in saying that "the circumstances of the times, in spite of the author's intention, transmuted a philosophical treatise into a political pamphlet. It seemed to be thrown up by the vortex of the French Revolution, and it sunk accordingly as that whirlpool subsided." 23

The creator of this philosophical flurry had spent a long literary apprenticeship before producing his masterpiece at the age of thirty-seven. Settled in London six years before the French Revolution and a decade before Political Justice, the former Dissenting minister had tried his hand at a wide range of literary genres—biography, political pamphlets, sermons, satire and parody, fiction, translations, and political and historical articles for contemporary periodicals. 24

Throughout these hardworking Grub Street years, Godwin never forgot the goal he had set for himself as a child: idealistically ambitious, he had always yearned to make himself famous by some outstanding service to humanity. 25 Chided by a cousin for having "commenced Novel writer" though "so capable of turning your thoughts to some thing that would have been for the good of mankind," Godwin wrote his mother reaffirming the early self-dedication that had led him to the ministry: "I know of nothing worth the living for but usefulness and the service of my fellow-creatures."
The only object I pursue is to increase, as far as lies in my power, the quantity of their knowledge and goodness and happiness."26 In preparation for this object, Godwin throughout his life devoted himself with unremitting application to "a rule of study which I adopted at College, . . . to divide my days into several parts, adapting a particular species of study to each part."27 Each day he examined himself to see whether he had conformed to his rule of living every hour "to the best account."28 With such strong incentive and careful preparation, only some focus was wanting to call forth Godwin's utmost powers.

The French Revolution provided that focus and marked the turning point of his career. Looking back on 1789, he writes: "this was the year of the French Revolution. My heart beat high with great swelling sentiments of Liberty. I had been for nine years in principles a republican. I had read with great satisfaction the writings of Rousseau, Helvetius, and others. . . . and I could not refrain from conceiving sanguine hopes of a revolution of which such writings had been the precursors."29
1. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, and how much the best! 30
Charles James Fox

Godwin was not alone in his "sanguine hopes" for the outcome of affairs in France. From the outbreak of the French Revolution in June 1789 to the publication of Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France in November 1790, the English people viewed the events across the Channel with almost universal favor. 31 If writers for the press may be accepted as typical, many saw the States General as carrying on a legitimate and praiseworthy struggle for liberty against a despotic government and thought that the French were heirs of their own Glorious Revolution creating a constitutional monarchy on the English plan. The self-satisfied reflections of the Oracle for 16 July 1789 epitomize this view: "how thankful we should be, who already enjoy what other nations have to fight for—the Government under which we live is such, that the meanest are protected by its laws, and at liberty to act and speak (consistent with decency) as they like and think." 32 Less complacent, the Analytical Review exclaims: "what are the macinations of
despots, or the intrigues of worthless statesmen, when compared to the object now before us? A nation of 24 millions of people raising their unanimous voice in favour of liberty and the rights of human nature."  

The newspapers representing the views of the ministry as well as those of the opposition assume the role of disinterested spectator and praise the progress of events in France.  

More extravagantly enthusiastic, Dissenters, constitutional reformers, exhilarated youths, and radical intellectuals beheld what seemed the incarnation of the New Jerusalem and thrilled with faith in a glorious future for humanity. Major John Cartwright, the "Father of Reform," brands the merely lukewarm "degenerate," for the French "are not only asserting their own rights, but they are also asserting and advancing the general liberties of mankind."  

Hazlitt later remembers nostalgically that

the love of truth and virtue which seems at all times natural to liberal-minded youth, was at this time carried to a pitch of enthusiasm... A new world was opening to the astonished sight. Scenes, lovely as hope can paint, dawned on the imagination: visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses... Nothing was too mighty for this now-begotten hope: and the path that led to human happiness seemed as plain—as the pictures in the Pilgrim's Progress leading to Paradise. Imagination was unable to keep pace with the gigantic strides of reason, and the strongest faith fell short of the supposed reality.  

Even Southey, who soon renounced the visions of his youth, could not forget their power, and long after writes that
"few persons but those who have lived in it can conceive or comprehend what the memory of the French Revolution was, nor what a visionary world seemed to open upon those who were just entering it. Old things seemed passing away, and nothing was dreamt of but the regeneration of the human race." Wordsworth's famous description of the joyous expectation aroused by the Revolution is only the most frequently quoted of numerous contemporary accounts similarly proclaiming that

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! 0 times,
In which the meagre, stale forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!

Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,
The beauty wore of promise.

What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!

Such fervor naturally led to more organized expressions of approbation: societies dedicated to liberty and constitutional reform sprang into being and old groups received new life in the first hopeful years of the Revolution. Dissenters and constitutional reformers were eager to infuse their waning causes with a new inspiration from France.

Though the Society for Promoting Constitutional Information,
the London Corresponding Society, the Society of the Friends of the People, and their sister organizations throughout England were to acquire a notoriety of their own, it was a convivial dining and discussion group which first provoked political controversy.

The members of the London Revolution Society, one of many clubs dining annually in celebration of the Glorious Revolution, were naturally predisposed to greet the extension of liberty in France with warm approval. On 4 November 1789, Dr. Richard Price, a well-known Nonconformist minister and political writer, preached to a group of members, mostly Dissenters, at the Old Jewry Meeting House, what was to become one of the most famous sermons in history: "A Discourse on the Love of our Country." Price's sermon is largely a statement of his political philosophy, built around what the Revolution Society took to be the three great principles of government established in 1688, but in his peroration he reveals the millennial psychology of the time:

what an eventful period is this! . . . I could almost say, Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge, which has undermined superstition and error--I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever; and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the idea of it.--I have lived to see THIRTY MILLIONS of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice; their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects. . . . And now
methinks, I see the ardour for liberty catching and spreading; a general amendment beginning in human affairs; the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience.39

Thus stimulated, the Revolution Society at their formal meeting, presided over by Earl Stanhope, drew up an address of congratulation to the French National Assembly. Later receiving thanks from its president, the Society published his letter, their own address, and Price's sermon—thereby goading Burke into a fury and instigating a pamphlet war that raged for more than three years.

2. THE REFLECTIONS CONTROVERSY

Mr. Burke's pamphlet... is a work that may seem capable of overturning the National Assembly, and turning the stream of opinion throughout Europe.

William Windham40

To Burke's fulmination the "Discourse" owes its fame: Price's political philosophy remains embedded in the pages of the Reflections, and the minister and his libertarian colleagues are themselves preserved forever in the amber of Burke's prose as "the little, shrivelled, meager, hopping,
though loud and troublesome, insects of the hour."\textsuperscript{41} Burke's focus is indicated in his title—*Reflections on the Revolution in France and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event in a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris*: he seeks to refute the Revolution Society's interpretation of the events of 1688 and to demonstrate that the English constitution rests on hereditary principles totally different from the philosophy inspiring the French Revolution; the importance of French affairs lies for him in their threat to England. Profoundly distrusting the admirers of the Revolution, Burke means "to set in full view the danger from their wicked principles and their black hearts. . . . to do my best to expose them to the hatred, ridicule, and contempt of the whole world."\textsuperscript{42} In this aim Burke was eventually successful: his cataclysmic interpretation of the situation in France began by rendering the enthusiasms of the liberals suspect and ended by becoming the majority view of the nation. In the next few years, the almost psychotic intolerance toward innovation that Burke expresses gripped more and more of England.

Burke's pronunciamento created a sensation on its first appearance in November 1790, selling seven thousand copies, at five shillings each, its first week, and reaching its twelfth edition by 1793.\textsuperscript{43} The *Reflections* initially
won praise mostly from Burke's enemies; many of his associates in the opposition thoroughly disapproved of the book, and the pamphleteers who immediately entered the fray were almost to a man against Burke. Though the admirers of the Revolution were to be ultimately converted or silenced, they were not to be dismissed so contemptuously or quickly as Burke thought. Whig liberals, radicals, and Dissenters sprang up on every side eager to repel Burke's attack; before the end of the year there were eleven replies to the *Reflections*, including those of David Williams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Capel Lofft, Joseph Towers, George Rous, and Robert Wollsey. Later noteworthy contributors to this war of words are Joseph Priestley, James Mackintosh, Thomas Christie, Henry Mackenzie, Christopher Wyvill, Arthur Young, Joel Barlow, Samuel Parr, and John Thelwall; but the most influential anti-Burke pamphlet is of course Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, Part I of which appeared in March 1791 and was in turn deluged with replies. Paine's work, distributed under the auspices of the London Society for Constitutional Information and similar groups, achieved an enormous—and rapid—circulation: by the end of November 1791, Paine claimed 56,000 copies sold in England and Ireland. The publication of Paine's Part II in February 1792 provoked additional replies, so that some sixty publications refuting Paine are extant, along with seventy answers to Burke.
Stretching from the utopian dreams of 1789 through the imposition of Pitt's repressive measures to the outbreak of the war with France, this lengthy pamphlet war both shaped and mirrored English opinion on the Revolution and its relevance to English affairs: the fierce polemic contributed to the crystallization of opinion on both sides by providing popular reformers with a lucid and plausible doctrine in Paine's *Rights of Man* and by giving the defenders of the status quo an emotionally stirring philosophical justification for their fear of change in Burke's *Reflections*. Burke is the first to claim that the Revolution menaced English institutions and that those who praise France must also yearn to reconstruct England on her model; but by 1793 the innocent ardors of 1789 were tantamount to treason, such a constantly changing aspect did the French Revolution present to those watching it from England. Through 1790, there was criticism of the excesses of the revolutionists, though many Englishmen felt such evils might be unavoidable to a thorough reform of French institutions and the setting up of a constitutional monarchy. But as the Revolution became more plainly and violently republican, conservative alarm mounted in England; when blood really began to flow in Paris, popular opinion began to coincide with Burke's. The years of the *Reflections* controversy, filled with political polemic and reform agitation at home
and disquieting events abroad, mark a major hardening of attitudes pro and con toward French principles and English government.

C. THE PRINCIPLES AND PROBLEMS OF POLITICAL JUSTICE

1. THE WRITING AND BASIC PRINCIPLES OF POLITICAL JUSTICE

Even almost from boyhood, I was perpetually prone to exclaim with Cowley,—
"What shall I do to be forever known,
And make the age to come my own?"
1832 Preface to Fleetwood (p. vi)

During these stimulating years, spent in a London fermenting with political and philosophical speculations, Godwin was working out his own ideas. Even before the outbreak of the Revolution, he had begun his acquaintance with prominent liberal and radical leaders: his articles for the Whig reviews made him known to Sheridan and his group, and his friendships in Dissenting and literary circles brought him into contact with the most advanced thought of the day. By
1798, Godwin was an intimate friend of Thomas Holcroft, self-educated former stableboy become actor, dramatist, novelist, translator, and freethinking liberal. Having begun in 1785 to correspond with Joseph Priestley, the voluminous writer, leader of Rational Dissent, and discoverer of oxygen, Godwin now saw him frequently in London, as he did also his former Hoxton teachers Andrew Kippis and Abraham Rees, members of the Revolution Society. The names of many other leading liberal thinkers and politicians of the time sprinkle the pages of Godwin's diary for the early years of the Revolution: Thomas Brand Hollis, Richard Price, Tom Paine, Sheridan, Fox, Earl Stanhope, John Horne Tooke, Helen Maria Williams, Joseph Towers, Capel Lofft, Mary Wollstonecraft, Joseph Johnson, John Thelwall, James Mackintosh, David Williams, Joel Barlow, Joseph Gerrald, and Dr. Samuel Parr. Since Godwin's friends were chiefly radical intellectuals, Whig liberals, and Dissenters, almost every one was a combatant of Burke, a member of the Society for Promoting Constitutional Information, or a member of the Revolution Society--sometimes all three.

Although the hostility to political associations he was to present formally in Political Justice prevented his becoming a member himself, Godwin often attended their meetings and dined with their members, as he did on the day following that fourth of November when Dr. Price delivered his
famous sermon. Always an interested observer, Godwin occasionally took a more active part in political matters. Among his papers is the draft of a letter from the Revolution Society to the French revolutionists, evidently a part of that exchange of sublime sentiments with the Jacobins which later redounded so much to the discredit of the political societies.

Early in 1791, Godwin, Holcroft, and Brand Hollis worked to get Paine's Rights of Man before the public after Joseph Johnson, despite his reputation as a publisher of radical sympathies, had backed out at the last moment. Holcroft and Godwin had of course read the work in manuscript before J. S. Jordan finally issued it. In a characteristic note to Godwin, Holcroft exclaims, "Hey for the New Jerusalem! The Millennium! And peace and eternal beatitude be unto the soul of Thomas Paine"; but Godwin's praise, though great, was measured. Paine's distaste for monarchy, aristocracy, and the English constitution Godwin shared, but he had already gone beyond Paine's panacea of representative government and was evolving his own scheme for the betterment of mankind, one transcending the political and moral principles of the republicans. Godwin's solution to the problems of government was not to be political in the republican mode at all, but moral and, in a sense, religious.
Although the French Revolution came to Godwin as the confirmation of long-held principles rather than as an original inspiration, it certainly served to rivet his attention to political topics. All through 1790, Godwin was formulating the theories of Political Justice, threshing out his ideas in constant conversations with Holcroft. In 1791 came the "main crisis" of Godwin's life: he proposed a "treatise on Political Principles" to the publisher George Robinson, who agreed to finance the project. Giving up his position of seven years on the New Annual Register, Godwin began his task in September 1791.

Marking as it does the conclusion of the Reflections controversy, Godwin's study of "Political Principles," though without his specific confirmation, has often been considered as another answer to Burke. Certainly Godwin was keenly interested in the current battle of the books: besides his personal involvement with Paine and other opponents of Burke, he stresses in the original preface to Caleb Williams (1794) the supreme importance of the questions raised by the controversy, and he refers to Burke and Paine in the course of Political Justice. But Godwin's focus is on ultimate principles rather than on the refutation of particular points: Political Justice can only be considered a reply to Burke in the sense that it is a comprehensive philosophy opposed to that formulated in the Reflections. Yet despite
Godwin's effort to rise above partisan politics and compose a work based on universal principles, the major irony of his philosophical reputation lies in its involvement with political events.

Never composing more than six or seven pages a day and often merely a sentence, Godwin labored from the fall of 1791 into January 1793 before he was satisfied with his treatise. Godwin himself states that the "original conception" of his book lay in "a feeling of the imperfections and errors of Montesquieu," but his ideas changed and developed as he went along. The logically developed structure of philosophical anarchism was only worked out in the process of writing the book. "When a man writes a book of methodical investigation, he does not write because he understands the subject, but he understands the subject because he has written," Godwin later states in The Enquirer (1797): he is surely speaking from personal experience. Writing out of a conviction that "my object of building to myself a name would never be attained, by merely repeating and refining a little upon what other men had said," Godwin is determined to produce a work bearing "the undisputed stamp of originality" and "entertained the vain imagination of 'hewing a stone from the rock,' which by its inherent energy and weight, should overbear and annihilate all opposition, and place the principles of politics on an immovable basis."
Exactly what constitutes the "immoveable basis" of Godwin's philosophical system has often proved a matter for dispute among his readers and interpreters. In its review of 1793, the ultraconservative British Critic asserts that nothing could be easier than to give a full and just account of Political Justice in a very few pages, and a large number of the more than three thousand entries in Burton R. Pollin's inclusive bibliography of Godwin criticism (1967) bear testimony to the continuing proliferation of oversimplified expositions of Godwin's principles in the pages of literary, political, and philosophical histories. Recent studies of Godwin's complex blend of originality and eclecticism have made such simplicity of outlook impossible for the discerning modern reader, however. Godwin's theories appear easy to give an account of only at first glance: his comprehensiveness of investigation into the nature of man and society and his eclecticism in mingling basically incompatible philosophical traditions preclude a too simple summation of his principles. Any present-day analyst of Political Justice must feel a kinship with the Analytical reviewer's distress at trying "to give a complete detail of the very numerous topics" or "to enter into a particular examination of the truth of his positions." Like him, "the utmost we can attempt" is a discussion within narrow limits.
Godwin intends **Political Justice** to correct and supplement Montesquieu's *Esprit des Lois* (1748), to incorporate into political theory the ideas furnished "by the recent experiments of America and France," to condemn existing abuses and destroy all error with reason, and to formulate the one impartial and infallible principle of justice to compass every moral duty. Godwin's goal is a full investigation of the proper role of man in society; to him politics is first of all "the proper vehicle of a liberal morality."

His system of ethics is meant to provide a guide to both universal and individual correction and betterment: he aims at "designing the combined and simultaneous improvement of communities and nations" and, as a "subordinate purpose," at "producing a work from the perusal of which no man should rise, without being strengthened in habits of sincerity, fortitude and justice." **Political Justice** is a book designed to change the world, and its creator is imbued with a sense of high moral mission. Speaking of himself in the third person, Godwin says: "The duty he conceives himself most bound to discharge, is the assisting the progress of truth." 62

In attempting to assist "the progress of truth," Godwin sets himself a wide-ranging task. Feeling that the *Esprit des Lois* (one of the most influential political works of the century) has serious flaws as a work of political
philosophy, Godwin adopts a method differing from that of Montesquieu: truth is to be discovered not by analyzing or comparing existing governments, but by investigating the basic moral principles relevant to all government. As the complete title of Godwin's treatise shows, the real significance of political justice lies in its influence on general virtue (or morals in the second and third editions) and happiness. Godwin is in essence a philosopher of morals rather than of politics. 63

Only when the magnitude of Godwin's undertaking is understood can the difficulties he encounters in working out a coherent philosophical system be fully appreciated. As Godwin's modern editor, F. E. L. Priestley, puts it, "a political philosophy presupposes a moral philosophy; a moral philosophy rests upon metaphysical and psychological presuppositions." 64 Godwin himself sees his task as at once simple and complex; in his preface to The Enquirer (1797) he postulates "two principal methods according to which truth may be investigated":

the first is by laying down one or two simple principles, which seem scarcely to be exposed to the hazard of refutation; and then developing them, applying them to a number of points, and following them into a variety of inferences. From this method of investigation, the first thing we are led to hope is, that there will result a system consentaneous to itself; and, secondly, that, if all the parts shall thus be brought into agreement with a few principles,
and if those principles be themselves true, the whole will be found conformable to truth. This is the method of investigation attempted in the Enquiry concerning Political Justice.\(^6^5\)

These one or two simple principles from which Godwin hopes to produce his consentaneous system are perhaps best formulated in the famous five propositions which he adds to the second (1796) edition of Political Justice: "sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error: Sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated: Truth is omnipotent: The vices and moral weakness of man are not invincible: Man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement."\(^6^6\)

Although these propositions contain the fundamental assumptions on which Godwin's theory of rational perfectibility is based, they are not specifically stated in the original edition. In his thoroughgoing revision of what he himself calls the "crude and unequal performance" of the 1793 edition, Godwin makes major changes in the first four books of his treatise.\(^6^7\) The first chapters of the original edition were sent to the printer before later ones were written and before Godwin had thoroughly resolved a number of basic questions.\(^6^8\) Initially, Godwin evidently intended to present "a sound political institution" as one of his three principal causes of moral improvement: literature,
education, and political justice. But in the course of writing, Godwin came to see more clearly that "the grand instrument for forwarding the improvement of mind is the publication of truth" and that "government even in its best state is an evil." To resolve the contradictions of 1793 in the treatment of government and to provide a thorough foundation for the theory of rational progress which he now envisioned more distinctly, Godwin revised his whole treatise, omitting contradictory and incomplete chapters and replacing them with new ones. Of the chapters added in 1796, perhaps the most important is Book I, chapter v: "The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions." This chapter is a careful elaboration of the fundamental bases of the doctrine of rational perfectibility, and it is in this chapter that Godwin propounds his five propositions.

Unlike the French thinkers and the utilitarians with whom he is often classed, Godwin sees man as basically rational: because man's mind is plastic and capable of change and because his actions are fundamentally determined by reason instead of by the fluctuations of passion, progress is possible. Godwin begins his key chapter, which might better have been entitled "The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Rational Opinions," by carefully analyzing the nature of involuntary, voluntary, and imperfectly voluntary actions. Because his whole scheme is based on
the capacity of man to act in accordance with his rational opinions, Godwin wants to prove that the understanding guides voluntary actions, which comprise the significant actions of life. Every voluntary action is "performed for the sake of its consequences" and "in every voluntary action there is comparison and judgment. Every such action proceeds upon the apprehended truth of some proposition." Man acts not from passions or impulses, but from ideas: "voluntary action is occasioned by the idea of consequences to result." An involuntary action, on the other hand, "takes place in us, either without foresight on our part, or contrary to the full bent of our inclinations." In the 1798 edition, Godwin defines a voluntary action as one in which "the event is foreseen previously to its occurrence, and the hope or fear of that event forms the excitement, or, as it is most frequently termed, the motive, inducing us, if hope be the passion, to endeavour to forward, and, if fear, to endeavour to prevent it." This foresight which is basic to voluntary action "is not an affair of simple and immediate impulse: it implies a series of observations so extensive as to enable us from like antecedents to infer like consequents."  

To provide a basis for his theory of perfectibility, Godwin has to maintain the supremacy of reason and its force as a motive: motive, in fact, is in *Political Justice*
mainly equivalent to a view of the consequences to result. If reason is not stronger than the passions or the senses, then for Godwin man is in a hopeless plight. Godwin later modifies his original assertion of the supremacy of reason and admits that he had dismissed the power of feeling too lightly. But even in the text of the final (1798) version of Political Justice reason retains its impelling quality: it not only judges an action or an end as good but irresistibly drives man toward the achievement of the judged good. Man's very nature is reason; if he acts according to his true nature, he "must bring everything to the standard of reason." Since reason controls voluntary actions, man must strive to make all his actions voluntary: he is never to relax into an inanimate machine, but ought always to be ready to give a reason for his actions. Godwin enjoins such self-examination as a moral duty, for he maintains that "all the most important occasions of our lives, are capable of being subjected at pleasure to a decision, as nearly as possible, perfectly voluntary." The more of his actions man can make wholly voluntary, that is, wholly under the direction of his understanding, the better he can become.

Having demonstrated that "the voluntary actions of men are in all instances conformable to the deductions of their understanding," Godwin proceeds to deduce certain
corollaries from this thesis. These corollaries are the five propositions, already cited, which really contain the gist of Godwin's doctrine in Political Justice: he finds the five "in part synonymous with each other"; they "are even little more than so many different modes of stating the principal topic of this chapter."  

In discussing this principal topic, Godwin wants to demonstrate not only that the voluntary actions of men originate in their opinions but also that these opinions concern what is good or desirable. He assumes both that to think a course of action or an end is desirable is necessarily to desire it and that to desire something is to think it is desirable. He does not admit the possibility of seeing something as good or desirable and not desiring it in Political Justice, for the will cannot be separable from the understanding if rational perfectibility is to work. If there are important points "in which . . . knowledge and the thinking principle in man cannot be brought into contact, if, however great be the improvement of his reason, he will not the less certainly in many cases act in a way irrational and absurd, this consideration must greatly overcloud the prospect of the moral reformer." Fortunately, this is impossible; for, according to Godwin,

when the understanding clearly perceives rectitude, propriety and eligibility to belong to a certain conduct, and so long as it has that perception, that conduct will infallibly be adopted. A
perception of truth will inevitably be produced by a clear evidence brought home to the under-
standing, and the constancy of the perception will be proportioned to the apprehended value of
the thing perceived. Reason therefore and con-
viction still appear to be the proper instrument,
and the sufficient instrument for regulating the
actions of mankind. 89

Reason for Godwin has an appetitive power, urging man toward
the good. He believes that

passion is so far from being incompatible with reason, that it is inseparable from it. Virtue,
sincerity, justice, and all those principles
which are begotten and cherished in us by a due
exercise of reason, will never be very strenu-
ously espoused, till they are ardently loved;
that is, till their value is clearly perceived
and adequately understood. In this sense noth-
ing is necessary, but to show us that a thing is
truly good and worthy to be desired, in order to
excite in us a passion for its attainment. 90

To the contention that men may know the error of
their behavior and still not forsake it, Godwin replies by
trying to set up a distinction between two kinds of knowl-
edge. Because the voluntary actions of men originate in
their opinions, man infallibly chooses and pursues whatever
has the strongest inducements in its behalf. In Godwin's
scheme, it is impossible to choose evil, to commit a crime
at the moment that it is seen in its enormity. Such a case
involves a struggle between knowledge and error or habit,
and as long as "knowledge continues in all its vigour, the
ill action cannot be perpetrated." 91 Only when the knowl-
edge or foresight escapes from the mind can the ill action
prevail. Thus the cure for vice and weakness lies in
strengthening knowledge, replacing α knowledge that may fall away with a more secure kind: "knowledge in this sense, understanding by it a clear and undoubting apprehension, such as no delusion can resist, is a thing totally different from what is ordinarily called by that name, from a sentiment seldom recollected, and, when it is recollected, scarcely felt or understood." To Godwin, vices and moral weakness are not invincible because they "are founded upon ignorance and error; but truth is more powerful than any champion that can be brought into the field against it; consequently truth has the faculty of expelling weakness and vice, and placing nobler and more beneficent principles in their stead." 

In Political Justice, Godwin generally follows the Socratic doctrine that virtue is knowledge and that vice is simply error, a miscalculation of consequences attributable to ignorance of the truth. Either the consequences anticipated do not occur or consequences foreseen as good turn out to be bad: the cure for both cases is increased knowledge and experience. When man has gained enough knowledge and become objective enough to see all the effects of his actions, his anticipations will become scientifically accurate and vice will disappear. Godwin is anxious to prove that "mind is a topic of science" and that there really exists a "ground of inference from moral antecedents to their
consequences." Godwin, like many other eighteenth-century thinkers, wants to create a science of morals based upon laws as unalterable and predictable as the laws of the physical universe were felt to be. He says explicitly that "politics is a science" and also asserts that "the man who is acquainted with all the circumstances under which a living or intelligent being is placed on any given occasion, is qualified to predict the conduct he will hold, with as much certainty as he can predict any of the phenomena of inanimate nature."  

Because Godwin's whole plan of rational progress is based on the indivisibility of the will and the understanding, the question of necessity and free will is closely linked with the question of progress. Godwin's doctrine of necessity is one of the most famous parts of Political Justice, and one of the most common assertions made about the philosopher is that he totally disbelieves in free will. Although conceding that Godwin's attitudes toward determinism are sometimes contradictory, Priestley states a convincing case for Godwin as essentially an upholder of free will. This Priestley does by citing Bergson's distinction between two types of determinism: "in one the mind is determined by past experience, by a push from behind as it were, in the other [the Platonic] the mind is determined by its view of the future." If the will is independent of
the understanding, then knowledge may not control action; to insure its doing so, Godwin is driven to assume a kind of determinism or necessity. Godwin's determinism, however, is Platonic, is based on ideas about the future; in asserting this kind of determinism, Godwin is simply restating his basic principle that the voluntary actions of men result from their opinions. Godwin is primarily concerned to show that voluntary actions are determined by a judgment of the future, that there is an "essential conjunction between motives and actions," and this kind of rational, teleological determinism is, according to Priestley, essentially the same as the doctrine of free will. When viewing the future, man can transcend his biases and impartially consider alternatives; when he does so, "the will is determined by what it perceives to be the superior goodness of the alternative chosen. This ability to be determined solely by the good is all that the advocate of free will can fairly claim."

Though the most characteristically Godwinian version of necessity emphasizes prediction, determination by a view of the future, Godwin also lapses at times into a more fatalistic type of determinism: "in the life of every human being there is a chain of events, generated in the lapse of ages which preceded his birth, and going on in regular procession through the whole period of his existence, in consequence
of which it was impossible for him to act in any instance otherwise than he has acted."\textsuperscript{104} He asserts the impossibility of anything's having happened otherwise than it has actually happened: "the doctrine of necessity teaches, that each event is the only thing, under the circumstances, that could happen."\textsuperscript{105} Uncharacteristically, Godwin even argues for the moral irresponsibility of the criminal: "The man is propelled to act by necessary causes and irresistible motives. . . . The assassin cannot help the murder he commits, any more than the dagger."\textsuperscript{106} Such untypical remarks have often been taken for the whole of Godwin's necessitarianism.

Godwin denies that the doctrine of necessity leads to moral inertia: the recognition that man is "the passive instrument of causes exterior" to himself is somehow supposed to make his constancy in the pursuit of virtue "more uniform."\textsuperscript{107} In what Hume calls "this reconciling project with regard to the question of liberty and necessity; the most contentious question, of metaphysics, the most contentious science," Godwin fares as ill as many another metaphysician.\textsuperscript{108} As Basil Willey expresses it, "Godwin tries to eat his cake and have it; nothing could have been otherwise, yet we both can and must make it otherwise!"\textsuperscript{109} Godwin values necessitarianism because it assists him to "survey all events with a tranquil and placid temper," it
enables him to attain a more humane attitude toward weak and criminal actions (as in his views on punishment), it assures him that his pronouncements on truth and justice must inevitably improve his audience, and it authorizes him to believe in perfectibility.\textsuperscript{110}

Once Godwin establishes that man not only can but must do the good when it is clearly perceived, he enlarges on the nature of this good. Godwin's doctrine of necessity and his faith in man's basic rationality provide the foundation for his belief in perfectibility. Though his opponents endlessly derided him for envisioning such a chimera as a perfect man, the philosopher himself is careful to indicate precisely what he means by perfectibility: "it is not meant that [man] is capable of being brought to perfection. But the word seems sufficiently adapted to express the faculty of being continually made better and receiving perpetual improvement."\textsuperscript{111} The perpetual improvement Godwin anticipates for man "consists in approaching as nearly as possible to the perfectly voluntary state."\textsuperscript{112} Since voluntary actions for Godwin are based on rational opinions, man will improve through increasing his rationality and achieving a more nearly complete objectivity. Virtue is to be attained by replacing feeling with reason, by substituting an impartial view for a subjective, selfish one.

Godwin sees man as not only essentially rational but
also basically unselfish and benevolent; he emphatically rejects the hypothesis of self-love, which is to him a French doctrine. In Political Justice, man is not the hopeless victim of egoistic self-love, not a being who is driven by passions and who must be coerced into doing good by exterior rewards and punishments. Godwin's whole philosophy is grounded in the belief that man is capable of objectivity and disinterestedness, that he is capable of being determined by a rational judgment of the greater good of one course than another. The utilitarian school, with which Godwin is often linked, denies the possibility of achieving such objectivity and sees man as inevitably egoistic, inevitably motivated by sensual pleasure and pain. The question, according to Priestley, is a psychological one: whether man can be motivated by reason.

"Nothing," states Priestley, "could be more completely antipathetic to Godwin's whole thought than "the utilitarian view of man as fundamentally egoistic: "in his scheme, man must be rational, capable of disinterested behaviour, capable of preferring the pleasures of virtue to those of the senses, of conducting himself for the general good according to the dictates of conscience, reason, and immutable justice. If man is not such a being, rational progress is a chimera."

To Godwin, man is not inevitably selfish, but
essentially a social being who is able to become wholly unselfish and to adopt justice as the one rule of conduct. Godwin cites the golden rule as "a comprehensive maxim" on his subject, but objects that this maxim of loving our neighbors as ourselves "is not modelled with the strictness of philosophical accuracy." The philosopher's criticism of the Biblical injunction and the philosophically accurate illustration of justice immediately following provoked Godwin's conservative critics almost past bearing. This illustration, one of the most famous—or notorious—parts of Political Justice, concerns Archbishop Fenelon, the composer of Télémaque. Godwin, judging by impartial justice, finds the archbishop of more worth to society than his valet: therefore, "if his palace were in flames, and the life of only one of them could be preserved," there is no question "which of the two ought to be preferred." For Godwin, there is still no question even if the valet should be the rescuer's own brother, father, or benefactor. Family or "domestic" affection and personal gratitude for him form "no part either of justice or virtue." Any person's "moral worth, and his importance to the general weal [is] the only standard to determine the treatment to which he is entitled." The doctrine Godwin presents here is summarized in the famous term "universal benevolence," which is so often associated with his name. Assuming justice "as a general appellation for all moral duty," Godwin defines it as "that impartial
treatment of every man in matters that relate to his happiness, which is measured solely by a consideration of the properties of the receiver, and the capacity of him that bestows. Its principle therefore is . . . to be 'no respecter of persons.'"  

As Godwin's Biblical allusion indicates, *Political Justice* is, in Hazlitt's phrase, "a metaphysical and logical commentary on some of the most beautiful and striking texts of Scripture." Usefully summarizing Godwin's central precept of rational, universal benevolence, Hazlitt continues:

> he places the human mind on an elevation, from which it commands a view of the whole line of moral consequences; and requires it to conform its acts to the larger and more enlightened conscience which it has thus acquired. He absolves man from the gross and narrow ties of sense, custom, authority, private and local attachment, in order that he may devote himself to the boundless pursuit of universal benevolence. Mr. Godwin gives no quarter to the amiable weaknesses of our nature, nor does he stoop to avail himself of the supplementary aids of an imperfect virtue. Gratitude, promises, friendship, family affection give way, not that they may be merged in the opposite vices or in want of principle; but that the void may be filled up by the disinterested love of good, and the dictates of inflexible justice. . . . All minor considerations yield, in his system, to the stern sense of duty.  

Elaborating on the parallel between Christianity and Godwin's philosophy, Hazlitt remarks that Christ too did not make friendship and private affection paramount in formulating the golden rule. "Moreover," he goes on,
the answer to the question, 'Who is thy neighbour?' added to the divine precept, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,' is the same as in the exploded pages of our author--'He to whom we can do most good.' In determining this point, we were not to be influenced by any extrinsic or collateral considerations, by our own predilections, or the expectations of others, by our obligations to them or any services they might be able to render us, by the climate they were born in, by the house they lived in, by rank or religion, or party, or personal ties, but by the abstract merits, the pure and unbiassed justice of the case. . . . we came at once to the grand and simple question--'In what manner we could best contribute to the greatest possible good?' This was the paramount obligation in all cases whatever. 120

Godwin was virulently attacked for sacrificing personal attachments on the altar of universal benevolence, but a selfish subjectivity is for him the root of all evil: "the true crime, in every instance, is in the selfish and partial propensities of men, thinking only of themselves." 121

Godwin emphasizes the possibility of--and the necessity for--achieving objectivity; virtue for him always entails replacing a selfish, prejudiced view with an impartial, objective one. He maintains that

we are able in imagination to go out of ourselves, and become impartial spectators of the system of which we are a part. We can then make an estimate of our intrinsic and absolute value; and detect the imposition of that self-regard, which would represent our own interest as of as much value as that of all the world beside. The delusion being thus sapped, we can, from time to time at least, fall back in idea into our proper post, and cultivate those views and affections which must be most familiar to the most perfect intelligence. 122
This ability of man to become an impartial spectator is the foundation of the rational benevolence which Godwin sees as both man's greatest pleasure and highest duty.\textsuperscript{123}

Godwin's primary assumptions about the nature of man lead him almost inevitably into formulating the philosophical anarchism for which he is famed. If man is capable of rational, impartial, and altruistic behavior, and if the rule of justice informs him that "there is no sphere in which a human being can be supposed to act, where one mode of proceeding will not, in every given instance, be more reasonable than any other mode," then there is no need for restrictive institutions like government.\textsuperscript{124} Society for Godwin is separate from government; he is not advocating anarchy, but anarchism: that is, society functioning without governmental or institutional regulation.\textsuperscript{125} The final form of society he envisions will be one in which voluntary self-regulation for the good of all makes external regulations superfluous. Because reason and virtue depend on "the cultivation of knowledge," "institutions calculated to give perpetuity to any particular mode of thinking or condition of existence, are pernicious."\textsuperscript{126} The problem of social organization is not ultimately to be solved by changing one mode of complex government for another. Instead, man is to be enlightened; once he understands his moral duties, the simplest possible form of government will
suffice. Both problem and solution are moral—not political—matters. 127

Godwin dislikes government and all organized institutions, even marriage, because they perpetuate error and stifle the free exercise and development of the individual understanding which is essential to progress. 128 He is always concerned with working out some kind of viable relationship between individualism and what he calls co-operation. "The proper method of hastening the decline of error," he says, "is not, by brute force, by laws, or by imitation; but, on the contrary, by exciting every man to think for himself. From these principles it appears, that every thing that is usually understood by the term cooperation is, in some degree, an evil." 129 Government is of course the worst of co-operative, coercive institutions because of its extensive power, and Godwin begins and ends his treatise with considerations of government—as it is now and as it will be.

His first three chapters are devoted to an examination of the present "evils existing in political society": he elaborates on the ideas that "the history of mankind is little else than a record of crimes" and that "man is of all other beings the most formidable enemy to man." 130 He suggests that government will always "insinuate itself in its effects into our most secret retirements" and asks,
"may it not happen, that the grand moral evils that exist in the world . . . are to be traced to political institutions as their source, and that their removal is only to be expected from its correction?" If vice is only action based on erroneous opinions, if mind has an inherent tendency to discover and correct error, and if government constitutes the worst impediment to this virtuous mental activity, then we can see why Godwin believes that "grand moral evils" can only be removed through the correction of government. Godwin's mode of correction, as we have seen in examining the basic principles of Political Justice, is essentially a moral one. His concern is not really with politics in the usual sense; instead he harks back to the original meaning of "political" and is primarily interested in the duties of the citizen, understood as the just man in a society based on reason. What interest he has in government is largely a negative one: to determine what kind will be least damaging to the progress of reason and truth. The utopian anarchistic state grounded in moral and social equality about which he theorizes at the conclusion of his treatise is to come about not through any organized political action but through rational appeals and the communication of truth: perfectibility is to be a lengthy, gradual process, not the speedy result of a revolution or a change of government. 132
Political Justice, then, has a negative and a positive aspect. Godwin is presenting both a critical exposition of things as they are and a utopian program for things as they should be. The whole great system "consentaneous to itself" that Godwin hoped to evolve from the "one or two simple principles, which seem scarcely to be exposed to the hazard of refutation," is developed in two thick volumes of four books each. After presenting the dilemma of man in the first three chapters of Book I, Godwin devotes the rest of his first volume to formulating the theory of rational perfectibility that we have already examined. In doing so, he considers, among many other matters, psychology, justice, equality, duty, the social contract, promises, legislation, obedience, revolutions, tyrannicide, truth, sincerity, free will and necessity, self-love and benevolence, and good and evil. Having laid this elaborate groundwork in the first volume, he begins the second volume by launching into a lengthy attack on existing forms of government: monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy are all found wanting. In the course of this extensive critique of government as it is presently constituted, Godwin devotes whole books to his theories of crime and punishment and of property. He exposes the erroneous theoretical bases of current evils and, applying his doctrine of rational progress, produces alternatives. Naturally, Godwin's wholesale
rejection of the existing establishment--government, laws, classes, property, religion, and all--produced endless attacks on Political Justice, as did his final speculations on the concrete form the society of the future will take.

The eighth and last book of Political Justice--"Of Property"--contains several of the doctrines most frequently associated with Godwin's name both in his own day and in our own, including his well-known statements about marriage. In preparation for his discussion of the future "simple form of society without government," Godwin devotes most of this book to a comprehensive discussion of property. Again applying his universal rule of justice, he concludes that "every man has a right to that, the exclusive possession of which being awarded to him, a greater sum of benefit or pleasure will result, than could have arisen from its being otherwise appropriated." Equal and impartial justice demands that "the good things of the world" be seen as "a common stock, upon which one man has as valid a title as another to draw for what he wants." This valid title, however, constitutes only a passive right: no man has the positive right to seize what he needs by force. Instead, he who has is under a moral obligation to share with him who needs; the possessor can, of course, only be convinced of this duty through reason, not compelled by law. Strictly speaking, the possessor's property is not his own: "every
shilling of his property, and even every, the minutest, 
exertion of his powers, have received their destination 
from the decrees of justice. He is only the steward."137
"The true object that should be kept in view," according to 
Godwin, "is to extirpate all ideas of condescension and 
superiority, to oblige every man to feel that the kindness 
he exerts is what he is bound to perform, and to examine 
whether the assistance he asks be what he has a right to 
claim."138 Godwin thus characteristically sees the problem 
of property as a problem of morals, not of politics or of 
economics. Citing the Bible, he notes that "the doctrine 
of the injustice of accumulated property, has been the foun-
dation of all religious morality."139 Holders of inherited 
wealth have in reality been bequeathed only "a mouldy patent, 
which they show, as a title to extort from their neighbours 
what the labour of those neighbours has produced."140 How-
ever, though "accumulated property is usurpation," Godwin 
advocates only a gradual "revolution of opinions."141 Only 
reason, not laws or force, can change the present system 
of inequality. Godwin firmly believes that a just attitude 
toward property is "a truth of that nature, which is accus-
tomed to sink deep in the human understanding, insensibly 
to mix itself with all our reasonings, and ultimately to 
produce, without shadow of violence, the most complete revo-
lation in the maxims of civil society."142
The new society that will emerge after the enlightenment of human opinion will be free of "positive institution"; there will be no inequality of rank or wealth and no government as we know it. The eventual abolition of the present "established administration of property" is essential to the realization of Godwin's idyll, for oppression, servility, fraud, envy, malice, and revenge are inextricably connected with the current system. All of these vices are obviously hostile to the "intellectual and moral improvement" which is Godwin's goal for man. Cataloguing the benefits attendant on a system of equality, Godwin says that

in a state of society, where men lived in the midst of plenty, and where all shared alike the bounties of nature, these sentiments would inevitably expire. The narrow principle of selfishness would inevitably vanish. No man being obliged to guard his little store, or provide, with anxiety and pain, for his restless wants, each would lose his individual existence, in the thought of the general good. No man would be an enemy to his neighbour, for they would have no subject of contention; and of consequence, philanthropy would resume the empire which reason assigns her. Mind would be delivered from her perpetual anxiety about corporal support, and free to expatiate in the field of thought which is congenial to her. Each would assist the enquiries of all.143

Once complex government and accumulated property, its offspring, are dispensed with, war, crime, punishment, and poverty will disappear. And since the wants of reasonable men in a state of equality will be few, the amount of labor required will be much less than in our complex society:
Godwin concludes that half an hour a day per member of the community would suffice to supply everyone with necessities.

Godwin attempts to forestall future attackers by bringing up possible arguments against his proposed system of equality and then refuting them. In doing so, he is led to consider the relation of independence and co-operation to the future state. Finding "the due medium between individuality and concert" is always for Godwin a major concern. Though he believes that "human beings are formed for society" and his whole system of ethics is pre-eminently a social one, he also maintains that independence and individuality are absolute goods. In his discussion of these points, Godwin makes an important distinction between two kinds of independence, the natural and the moral, a distinction to which his contemporary critics paid no attention. Natural independence, "a freedom from all constraint, except that of reasons and inducements presented to the understanding, is of the utmost importance to the welfare and improvement of mind." But moral independence is always injurious, for in any given situation justice demands a certain kind of conduct as preferable to all others. Man must be free to use his reason, but he does not therefore have the right to choose any course of action he wants. To act as one pleases "without being accountable to the principles
of reason" is "highly detrimental to the general welfare."\textsuperscript{146} Nothing could be further from the lawless, relativistic individualism often connected with Godwin's name than what the philosopher actually says.

In his reflections on co-operation, Godwin asserts, as we have seen, that everything usually understood by the term involves an evil in some degree. Because he so earnestly desires men to learn to think for themselves, Godwin is suspicious of anything that seems to him to hinder this self-development. Rejecting the "clock-work uniformity" of common labor, he speculates on whether the labor of many in unison will always be necessary. Perhaps the complicated machines of the future will enable one man to do what only many working together can now effect: his illustration is a plough which could "be turned into a field and perform its office without the need of superintendence." He cites Franklin as another believer that "mind would one day become omnipotent over matter," and predicts the end of the necessity of manual labor.\textsuperscript{147} Detractors of Political Justice never tired of ridiculing this example and quotation: they got more mileage out of Godwin's self-tilling plough than he could ever have anticipated.

Since Godwin carries his antipathy to co-operation so far as to suggest that plays and concerts might not exist in the new society, it is not surprising that he also assails
marriage. Though this attack occupies only a few pages and is of very minor importance to Godwin's basic system, it received a disproportionate amount of attention from his contemporaries and remains one of the best-known parts of Political Justice. Because this section was a major target for attackers and also because the philosopher significantly modifies his views in successive editions of Political Justice, his statements concerning marriage require attention.

Godwin's initial criticisms of marriage are rephrased with less positiveness in the later editions of Political Justice. His own happy marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797 obviously led him to reconsider his original remarks, but he continues to point out the deficiencies of the received system of marriage in the 1796 and 1798 editions as well as in that of 1793. First of all, cohabitation is an evil because it tends to check independence of judgment and the cultivation of the individual understanding. Moreover, obliging two people to act and live together over a long period of time "is to subject them to some inevitable portion of thwarting, bickering, and unhappiness" because the wishes and inclinations of two people inevitably diverge. But the evil of marriage at present extends even further: it is commonly entered into "under circumstances full of delusion" by thoughtless young people, who are thereafter compelled to "make the best of an irretrievable mistake."
The victims must pervert their intellects and try to persuade themselves that their "first crude opinion" was right. "Thus the institution of marriage is made a system of fraud; and men who carefully mislead their judgments in the daily affair of their life, must be expected to have a crippled judgment in every other concern." These particular arguments, which are here quoted from the third edition of 1798, differ little in all editions.\textsuperscript{148}

In the 1793 edition, Godwin is prone to apply his universal rule of justice with some rigor: even in love, "all attachments to individuals, except in proportion to their merits, are plainly unjust." The idea that one must have a companion for life is the "dictate of cowardice" and comes from the unfortunate "desire of being loved and esteemed for something that is not just."\textsuperscript{149}

Another statement found only in the first edition is the famous remark that "marriage is law, and the worst of all laws." Because of a contract from which we cannot escape, we are obliged to disregard what our understanding may tell us of the worth of one woman in comparison with another and to consider law instead of justice. "Add to this," he continues, "that marriage is an affair of property, and the worst of all properties."\textsuperscript{150} The 1796 and 1798 versions are modified to read: "marriage, as now understood, is a monopoly, and the worst of monopolies," in which a man
maintains his possession of a woman "by despotic and artificial means." It will be noticed that "as now understood" focuses the criticism more clearly on the evils of the present system, instead of the evils of marriage abstractly considered.

This same tactic Godwin applies in considering the fate of marriage in the future. Where the first edition says positively that "the abolition of marriage will be attended with no evils," the second has "the abolition of marriage in the form now practised, will be attended with no evils," and the third is even more hesitant: "The abolition of the present system of marriage, appears to involve no evils." Godwin by no means expects this abolition to lead to an era of lust and depravity. So far is he from advocating promiscuity, as he was continually accused of doing, that he expects the future state of equality to diminish greatly the sensual appetites, perhaps eventually even render them unnecessary. He thinks it likely that each man will choose a partner to whom he will adhere as long as the union continues to be the choice of both, but it will be a marriage in which there is "room for repentance."

Friendship between the sexes will not be restricted in the future as it now is by the artificial monopoly of marriage in which one man prevents a woman from having useful contact with other men. Instead, "I shall assiduously
cultivate the intercourse of that woman, whose moral and intellectual accomplishments strike me in the most powerful manner." No difficulties will arise if others feel the same preference, for "we may all enjoy her conversation; and, her choice being declared, we shall all be wise enough to consider the sexual commerce as unessential to our regard. It is a mark of the extreme depravity of our present habits, that we are inclined to suppose the sexual commerce necessary to the advantages arising from the purest friendship." 153

From considering the nature of marriage in a state of equality, Godwin passes on to the children of such marriages and their education. Even sex is to be regulated "by the dictates of reason and duty": reasonable men will propagate children not because of pleasure, "but because it is right the species should be propagated" (1793 only). 154 Logically, should propagation cease to be right, then reasonable men would cease to propagate; and Godwin does indeed come to this conclusion in his discussion of immortality in all three editions. In the first and second editions, he ponders whether a father would know his own children in the future, but "it may be affirmed that such knowledge will be of no importance." Indeed, the spirit of democracy will lead, "and that probably at no great distance," to the abolition of surnames; only the family pride of an aristocratic
society makes such matters important. Supplies and care to maintain the children of a society of equality will "spontaneously flow" to the needed quarter (all editions). The education of these children will be greatly altered from that of the present; it will not aim at producing "adepts in the egg-shell" to gratify the vanity of parents. Children will not be vexed with premature learning, "lest, when they came to years of discretion, they should refuse to be learned." Their minds will expand "in proportion as occasion and impression shall excite" and not be deformed "by being cast in a particular mould." No one will learn anything "but because he desires it, and has some conception of its value."  

The inhabitants of the utopian future will not only be virtuous and happy because freed from the restrictions of society as presently constituted, but they will also free themselves from the restrictions of their mortal natures. As with the statements on marriage, Godwin becomes less outspoken on this point in the later editions; but he never ceases to envision a form of immortality for men on earth. He is careful to stress more than once that his speculation is "eminently a deviation into the land of conjecture"; and that if he is wrong, the system to which he appends it is "in all reason, as impregnable as ever."  

Repeating the quotation from Franklin concerning the
omnipotence of mind over matter, Godwin incautiously remarks that "in whatever sense he understood this expression, we are certainly at liberty to apply it in the sense we shall think proper"; this reflection was withdrawn after the first edition, perhaps because of the inordinate amount of ridicule it excited. But Godwin continues to assert that the mind can eventually become omnipotent over the body. He details the respects in which the mind influences and controls the body now and predicts that presently involuntary motions, such as the circulation of the blood, may one day become voluntary. In the first and second editions, Godwin cites sleep as one present infirmity of the body that we can learn to banish. And if we banish sleep, "death's image," we can also banish death. "We are sick and we die," he writes in 1793 and 1796, because "we consent to suffer these accidents." Though this consent now is perhaps "unavoidable," we can "with stronger motives and clearer views ... uniformly refuse it." Even at present, the wise man probably possesses the capacity "of expelling the seeds and first slight appearances of indisposition." In 1793, Godwin prophesies that men in the future "will perhaps be immortal." In 1796 and 1798, he withdraws the offending word, but the idea remains as the "presumption, that the term of human life may be prolonged, and that by the immediate operation of intellect, beyond any limits which we are
able to assign."162 Since these men will have advanced beyond gratification of the senses and will no longer require procreation to continue the race, they will cease—or later, "probably cease"—to propagate.163 "The whole will be a people of men, and not of children. Generation will not succeed generation, nor truth have, in a certain degree, to recommence her career every thirty years."164

As an epitome of the aim and scope of Political Justice, Godwin's final description of the earthly millennium deserves quotation:

there will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice, as it is called, and no government. Beside this, there will be neither disease, anguish, melancholy, nor resentment. Every man will seek, with ineffable ardour, the good of all. Mind will be active and eager, yet never disappointed. Men will see the progressive advancement of virtue and good, and feel that, if things occasionally happen contrary to their hopes, the miscarriage itself was a necessary part of that progress. They will know, that they are members of the chain, that each has his several utility, and they will not feel indifferent to that utility. They will be eager to enquire into the good that already exists, the means by which it was produced, and the greater good that is yet in store. They will never want motives for exertion; for that benefit which a man thoroughly understands and earnestly loves, he cannot refrain from endeavouring to promote.165

If Hazlitt had in mind such passages as this one, well might he write that "the fault, then, of Mr. Godwin's philosophy, in one word, was too much ambition—'by that sin fell the angels!'"166
2. THE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION IN

POLITICAL JUSTICE

"His definition of the sort of conduct to be pursued gathers up in one sentence the loose strings of hedonism, utilitarianism, and rationalism."


Godwin is accurate in seeing the entire complex structure of Political Justice as the result of "laying down one or two simple principles . . . and then developing them, applying them to a number of points, and following them into a variety of inferences."167 As we have seen, from one basic premise, "that the voluntary actions of men are in all instances conformable to the deductions of their understanding," Godwin evolves the five propositions that form "the foundations of moral and political system."168 To recapitulate, these partly synonymous propositions are: "sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error: Sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated: Truth is omnipotent: The vices and moral weakness of man are not invincible: Man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of
perpetual improvement." To Godwin, his principles seem self-evident and "scarcely to be exposed to the hazard of refutation"; he says about the first of the five propositions that it "is so evident, that it needs only be stated, in order to the being universally admitted." But the assumptions about man on which these principles are based remain, as we have seen, unproved or unexamined. What he is attempting in Political Justice is an objective, logically developed exposition of the implications of what are to him universally acceptable axioms.

That he was amazingly successful in this logical tour de force has always been admitted, even by such detractors as the 1793 reviewer for the British Critic. The initial sparsity of attacks on Political Justice in the critical reviews, according to one eighteenth-century journalist, can be attributed to perplexity at the close argument of the work:

the principles contained in Political Justice had all the appearance and many of the effects of self-evident axioms. To understand the terms, and adopt the propositions of the work, were so nearly inseparable, that it was a fact that some very great and learned men, in expressing an abhorrence of its doctrines, could not conceal the secret that their detestation of Political Justice was chiefly occasioned by its subtlety in eluding their zeal to detect the radical error, which, from certain propositions they held to be infallible, they were sincerely persuaded lay somewhere in the work. Political Justice at once tortured their feelings and baffled their reason.
Thomas Green, another contemporary writer, similarly asserts that Godwin's "view of justice and our obligation to it is so logical that no decisive refutation or even masterly review has been forthcoming." Though writing toward the end of the 1790's when Godwin was being subjected to a barrage of criticism from the anti-Jacobins, Green and the anonymous journalist are nevertheless generally accurate in their remarks. Contemporary evaluation of Godwin's theories is not usually based on discussion of his philosophical system qua philosophical system: instead, it is typically moral and emotional rather than philosophical and logical in its approach. Though Godwin is not a trained metaphysician and erects the whole structure of his work on a foundation of heterogeneous materials, he shows, as a modern interpreter of Political Justice points out, "considerable ingenuity in concealing the contradictions from himself and from the readers of his day."\textsuperscript{171}

The stereotype of Godwin the remorseless logician has thus become a staple of the Godwin myth. As one of many modern instances, we might take Leslie Stephen. Stephen, who is one of the first twentieth-century critics to deal extensively with Godwin, though no admirer of the philosopher's rationalism, writes: "Godwin ... might well pass for a great philosopher. He dealt in what is called 'inexorable logic'... Godwin's Utopia, though liable to
collapse at the first touch of common-sense, appeared to enthusiasts to be solid because self-consistent. . . . the logical architecture leaves nothing to be desired if we will allow the architect to use for his material what is really mere moonshine. 172 Without asserting that Godwin's tenets are "mere moonshine," it must be observed that his five fundamental propositions are neither as simple nor as irrefutable as he conceives them to be, nor is his system as "consentaneous to itself" as he wishes to believe. 173 It is possible to present a brief general account of Godwin's basic principles without enlarging on his adherence to conflicting philosophical traditions and his ambiguous or contradictory definitions of such essential terms as truth, reason, and virtue, but a full understanding of Political Justice and its reputation requires cognizance of the complexities involved in interpreting it.

Misunderstandings and misinterpretations of Godwin's theories have abounded from the first fame of Political Justice to the present; Godwin's staunchest followers and bitterest critics alike have turned his doctrines to their own purposes. "From the quarry of Political Justice," says a modern biographer of Godwin, "can be picked out passages to show that he was an advocate not only of liberal humanism but of utopian socialism, anarchism and communism, as well as distributivism and Victorian self-help." 174 In addition,
Godwin has been variously, and contradictingly, labeled as essentially a utilitarian, a sensationalist, an empiricist, a skeptic, an associationist, and a Platonic rationalist. He has even been called the first important materialist.\footnote{175} Only quite recently has Political Justice begun to be intensively analyzed on its own merits, and, even so, such careful and sympathetic recent students of Godwin's thought as F. E. L. Priestley (1946), David Fleisher (1951), D. H. Monro (1953), George Woodcock (1946 and 1962), and Burton R. Pollin (1962) have produced studies which differ widely in interpretation and emphasis.

The reasons for the many misunderstandings, oversimplifications, and divergent interpretations that characterize accounts of Godwin's philosophy are several. First, Godwin's most striking philosophical conclusions are typically formulated in aphoristic phrases which lend themselves to oversimplification. Godwin, therefore, has often been described as an inhuman exponent of pure reason or as a naive optimist by those writers who take his recurrent phrases about universal benevolence, the omnipotence of reason, the immutability of truth, and the perfectibility of man out of their explanatory context and erect them into the whole of his system. The same oversimplification and neglect of actual sources have led to the presentation of Godwin as a mere codifier of the principles of the French
Enlightenment, and Political Justice as only a patchwork of ideas from Locke, Helvétius, Rousseau, d'Holbach, Paine, and others. 176 In this view, Political Justice is a kind of repository of eighteenth-century liberal commonplaces: "an attempt to frame into a systematic whole the principles gathered from these various sources, and dogma," "the very lunacy of revolutionary speculation."177

Another bar to accurate statement of the meaning of Godwin's principles--more serious than the liability of his ideas to facile oversimplification--lies at the heart of his system. Godwin's modern editor, F. E. L. Priestley, finds an unresolved conflict between two opposing strains of philosophy running throughout Godwin's theories. Priestley believes that a Platonic rationalism forms the real basis of Godwin's moral philosophy and that his empiricism has been greatly exaggerated; but he is nevertheless forced to admit that on several important points Godwin "adopts uncritically . . . doctrines at variance with the main tenor of his thought" and that "on the fundamental questions of moral philosophy" his point of view is "seldom free from contradictions."178 There are several ways out of the dilemma which Godwin's doctrines pose for the modern interpreter: he can concede that Political Justice is derived from diverse philosophical traditions, but assert that its real foundation is either Platonic rationalism or empirical
utilitarianism; or the interpreter can gloss over contradictory elements and maintain that Godwin is merely prone to rhetorical exaggeration or is simply adopting the terminology of the day without accepting its apparent implications. Godwin's contemporaries, on the other hand, as we shall see in the following chapter, usually avoid confronting this dilemma, as one must for a full understanding of Political Justice, by simply seeing in the work what they wish to see—and then praising or blaming.

In the attempt to derive a unified and self-consistent system from Political Justice, some recent commentators play down the Platonic strain in Godwin's thought, which Priestley emphasizes, and stress instead various elements of his empiricism and utilitarianism. Priestley maintains that "Godwin's utilitarianism is not even skin deep; it amounts to very little more than a use of the phraseology of utility as a substitute for 'duty to mankind,' and 'love of one's neighbour,' so that the doctrines of Christian liberty and equality reappear in secular dress." D. H. Monro, however, finds Godwin to be not only a utilitarian, but also the only early advocate of the greatest happiness principle whose "utilitarianism is free from the inconsistencies in which both Bentham and Mill entangled themselves." Elaborating on such statements from Political Justice as "the end of virtue is to add to the sum of pleasurable sensation,"
Monro argues "that Godwin was not a confused and half-hearted utilitarian, but an exceptionally clear-sighted one, who has been much neglected by the historians of utilitarianism." David Fleisher also attempts to rehabilitate Godwin as a utilitarian: he takes as his starting point Godwin's own avowals of utilitarianism and tries to reconcile "the empirical and relativistic implications of a code which defines the good in terms of the happiness of the greatest number" with "Godwin's frequent references to the invariability of moral truth." Fleisher, like Priestley, grants that "Godwin's moral principles are really borrowed from diverse ethical systems" and that "the strain of this attempt is visible in his system"; but Fleisher still believes that Godwin "does attempt to base these [moral] principles formally on the utilitarian ethic." While both see Godwin as primarily a utilitarian, though not a typical one, Fleisher and Monro expound quite different versions of his philosophy.

On almost every major point of Godwin's theories, a similarly wide variety of opinion has been expressed. The vital elements in Godwin's psychology are for Fleisher his sensationalism and associationism; but Priestley suggests that though "it was perhaps impossible for Godwin to adopt anything but the prevailing sensationalism . . . here again he is faced with implications which are not compatible with
his fundamental beliefs." Priestley also asserts that "the part played by association in Godwin's psychology is far less important than is often supposed." 182

The very important problems of the function and nature of reason and of the definition of truth in Godwin's philosophy are inseparable from the question of his empiricism. As Godwin's five fundamental propositions indicate, no terms are more integral to his system than "reason" and "truth." Indeed, the first of these statements--"sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error"--has been called by Ford K. Brown the single axiom of the whole work. 183 In the following two propositions, we find that "sound reasoning and truth are capable of being so communicated" and that "truth is omnipotent." On virtually every page of Political Justice, Godwin continues his appeals to reason and truth, yet he never formally defines reason, nor are his statements about truth completely consistent. Because Godwin is not wholly successful in synthesizing the rationalistic and sensationalistic bases of his philosophy, his statements about truth and reason bear the marks of their divergent origins. At times, Godwin apparently sees reason as deductive, as the power to construct logical arguments. In contrast to this view of reason as fact-finding perception, he writes of reason at other points as if he considers it
intuitive and self-evidencing. The problem of determining the meaning of reason in *Political Justice* is made even more complex by the three variant editions (1793, 1796, 1798).

The Platonism of the first edition is overt: for example, Godwin writes that "one of the first inferences therefore from the doctrine of voluntary action, is the existence of the understanding as a faculty distinct from sensation."184 Although this particular passage is omitted after 1793, many passages which seem to indicate an intuitive view of reason remain: in the 1798 edition Godwin states, for instance, that "understanding, particularly as it is concerned with moral subjects, is the percipient of truth."185 Priestley suggests that Godwin tries to conceal the cleavage between the extreme Platonism and the equally extreme Helvétian empiricism of the first edition by muting the more obvious examples of each in successive editions.186 He contends, however, that the primary function of reason for Godwin--its volitional power or force as a motive--remains fundamentally different from that of the sensationalists. Priestley concludes that "reason to Godwin . . . always means something more than a faculty of apprehension" or cognition and is essentially Platonic, intuitive, and appetitive.187 Other critics too have found in Godwinian reason more than fact-finding perception: Monro compares
reason in Political Justice with Spinoza's scientia intuitiva; and Murry thinks Godwin's reason the same as Blake's truth, which "can never be told so as to be understood, and not be believ'd." In commenting on Murry's remarks, Priestley states that "Godwin's final attitude is most probably that of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Reason as reasoning is distinguished from, but not altogether antithetical to, Reason as intuitive perception, equated with Imagination."  

Commentators who wish to see Godwin's empiricism as the real foundation of Political Justice must minimize or explain away these Platonic aspects of Godwinian reason. Referring to the same changes which Priestley uses as evidence of Godwin's effort to unify Political Justice, Burton R. Pollin "wonders why Godwin sedulously attempted to eliminate outspokenly Platonic passages in the second edition and, especially, in the third, in favor of a greater use of utilitarian language." The implication is that Godwin either changes his mind or did not intend to make reason essentially Platonic and intuitive in the first place. Pollin states that "an apparently intuitional view of reason was not uncommon among the radicals of Godwin's circle, but it was often more rhetorical than analytical." Feeling that Priestley and others "amplify the undeniable strain of Platonism out of proper proportion," Pollin believes that
"Godwin's customary approximation of reason in Political Justice" is "the discursive intellect which investigates, analyzes, compares, infers, generalizes, and corroborates in experience."\textsuperscript{192} Perhaps because Pollin is particularly interested in Godwin's views on communication as the means of moral improvement, he finds "the element of argument or verbal reasoning . . . especially characteristic of Godwin's rationalism."\textsuperscript{193} But he is also forced to admit that Godwin inextricably entangles "the parlance if not the substance of the empirical psychology with the epistemology of a priori rationalism."\textsuperscript{194}

Like the interpretation of reason, the meaning of truth in Political Justice is a vexed question. As we have seen, one of Godwin's fundamental propositions concerns the omnipotence of truth, and the pages of his treatise are studded with such phrases as "immortal and ever present truth," "immutable truth," and "abstract and immutable justice."\textsuperscript{195} In 1791, the year in which he began Political Justice, Godwin was reading Plato, and the transcendental implication of the phrases quoted from the 1798 edition is even more explicit in the 1793 version of the work.\textsuperscript{196} In this edition, Godwin asserts that "truth is in reality simple and unifo-m" and "is in all its branches harmonious and consistent."\textsuperscript{197} Apparently suffused with Greek philosophy, he states:
Truth may be considered by us, either abstractedly, as it relates to certain general and unchangeable principles, or practically, as it relates to the daily incidents and ordinary commerce of human life. In whichever of these views we consider it, the more deeply we meditate its nature and tendency, the more shall we be struck with its unrivalled importance. . . .

The truths of general nature, those truths which preceded, either substantially or in the nature of things, the particular existences that surround us, and are independent of them all, are inexhaustible. Is it possible that a knowledge of these truths, the truths of mathematics, of metaphysics and morals, the truths which, according to Plato's conception, [Godwin's footnote: "See the Parmenides." ] taught the creator of the world the nature of his materials, the result of his operations, the consequences of all possible systems in all their detail, should not exalt and elevate the mind? The truths of particular nature, the history of man, the characters and propensities of human beings, the process of our own minds, the capacity of our natures, are scarcely less valuable. The reason they are so will best appear if we consider . . . the tendency of truth in conducing to the perfection of our virtue. 198

Priestley finds in such passages "a preference for the transcendental view, for a belief in a separate world of universals, existing independently of the Creator, and serving as a formal cause in the process of creation." 199

The doctrine of the Timaeus is present in other passages of Political Justice, according to Priestley. 200 In the 1796 edition, Godwin writes: "upon the hypothesis of a God, it is not the choice, apprehension or judgment of that being, so properly as the truth which was the foundation of
that judgment, that has been the source of all contingent and particular existences. His existence, if necessary, was necessary only as the sensorium of truth and the medium of its operation."²⁰¹ We also read in this edition that "the office of the principle, whether mind or whatever else, to which the universe owes its existence, is less that of fabricating than conducting; is not the creation of truth, and the connecting circumstances and events which had no original relation to each other, but the serving as a medium by which truth, the nature of which is unalterable, might become an active and operating principle."²⁰²

Although Godwin deletes several of his overtly Platonic statements on truth from the third edition of *Political Justice*, many apparently transcendental formulations remain, as we have seen. Godwin often repeats the seemingly utilitarian, relativistic axiom that morality is nothing but a calculation of consequences; but he never concludes that such a calculation is constitutive or right or wrong: "private judgment and public deliberation are not the standard of right and wrong; they are only the means of discovering these."²⁰³ "The most crowded forum, or the most venerable senate, cannot make one proposition to be a rule of justice, that was not substantially so, previously to their decision. They can only interpret and announce that law, which derives its real validity from
a higher and less mutable authority."²⁰⁴ "Men cannot do more than declare and interpret law; nor can there be an authority so paramount, as to have the prerogative of making that to be law, which abstract and immutable justice had not made to be law previously to that interposition."²⁰⁵

From such passages as these, Priestley concludes that absolute truths are essential to Godwin's system of thought.

He places Godwin not among the French materialists or the utilitarians but in the tradition of the English Rational Dissenters, with which the famous Richard Price is also connected. The Rational Dissenters carry on the Platonic rationalism of Ralph Cudworth and Samuel Clarke.²⁰⁶

Priestley claims:

the only mode by which a scheme of perfectibility through rational means can operate is this: that it be assumed that the rational structure of the universe is virtue itself; that courses of action should be selected by the individual as a result of a judgment of the logical consistency of such courses with a system of immutable truths; that such a judgment should become a motive once it is seen to fit in with the larger system. All progress demands some external standard towards which progress is made, and to which all is relative; rational progress demands as this external standard a scheme of absolute truths, truths which can be discovered by a process of reasoning. This is, in essence, Godwin's doctrine of progress; it is also, in essence, Platonic.²⁰⁷

Other critics disagree with Priestley's interpretation of Godwinian truth. Pollin, for instance, speaks of "the frequent rhetorical hypostatization of truth in which
[Godwin] indulges" and of Godwin's "banishment of all authority superior to that of individual reason." He again stresses the fact that Godwin deletes many passages which are Platonic in tone from the third edition of Political Justice. Monro, who strives to make Godwin a consistent, if unorthodox, utilitarian, concludes that "to talk of truth vanquishing prejudice is merely to say that a true opinion replaces a false one, and to say that an opinion has conquered is to say that we believe it to be true. . . . there seems no escape from the conclusion that our opinion about what is true is determined by some quite irrelevant factor." Yet, he complains, "Godwin wants 'truth' to come in at some indefinite point as a quite undetermined factor, in the way that the anti-determinists want 'free will' to come in."²⁰⁹

Although, as we have seen, much may be said on each side in these problems of interpretation, any analyst of Political Justice must ultimately cease to be objective and must decide for himself which evidence weighs more heavily. It seems to me fruitless to claim that Godwin's system is wholly self-consistent, even without taking into account the exceedingly complex question of the changes in his views after the final revised edition of Political Justice. Though Godwin's undeniable levy on incompatible philosophical traditions makes it possible to construct a case for his system as either essentially Platonic and rationalistic or
essentially empirical and utilitarian, it seems to me that Priestley's arguments for a basic Platonic rationalism are generally convincing. Though Priestley may sometimes over-emphasize Godwin's Platonism, his exposition of Political Justice is painstaking and coherent; and he draws on a wide philosophical background to support his position. Priestley has the merit of taking Godwin's claims for reason and truth as seriously as the philosopher himself obviously takes them.

Godwin, however, undoubtedly does leave what appears to me a basically Platonic philosophy open to radically different, relativistic interpretations. Indeed, such interpretations can be abundantly illustrated from among his contemporaries, and it is difficult to defend Godwin's system against some of its attackers if that system is regarded as fundamentally relativistic. The substitution of individual reason or private opinion for Platonic reason has far-reaching implications: as Hazlitt aptly remarks, "there was danger that the unseasoned novice might substitute some pragmatical conceit of his own for the rule of right reason, and mistake a heartless indifference for a superiority to more natural and generous feelings. . . . It was to be feared that the proud Temple of Reason, which at a distance and in stately supposition shone like the palaces of the New Jerusalem, might (when placed on actual ground) be
broken up into the sordid styres of sensuality, and the petty huckster's shops of self-interest!" The susceptibility of Political Justice to divergent explications is of considerable importance to Godwin's reputation, as the current controversy over the basis of his system indicates, and as the misunderstandings of his theories discussed in the following chapter more strikingly illustrate.

Summing up the paradoxical facets of the reception and reputation of Political Justice, Godwin's biographer Ford K. Brown calls the book "one of the strangest and most influential books of the century. Enthusiasm joined to Reason produced a work of political philosophy as logical as Calvinism, as extreme as the tenets of Robert Sandeman, enthralling, startling, extravagant and absurd, that became the delight, amazement and perplexity of thinking people." With the fundamental principles of Political Justice and the major problems in accurate interpretation of those principles in mind, we must now see what principles and problems Godwin's contemporaries discovered in his work. We must always remember, too, that for them Political Justice was not an abstract treatise to be considered objectively, but a work to be considered in its context--a period of crisis in European history.
NOTES


3. The effect of Political Justice on Shelley and the other Romantic poets has been the subject of so much scholarly attention that only cursory notice need be given to it here: see Priestley, PJ, III, 102-112 for an example. For the roll call of the Godwinists, see Priestley, PJ, III, 101; B. Sprague Allen, "Minor Disciples of Radicalism in the Revolutionary Era," MP, XXI (1924), 227-301; Paul, I, 351-352; and Amy Cruse, The Englishman and His Books in the Early Nineteenth Century (London, 1930), p. 133. The historian Max Beer states: "What Burke's Reflections were for the upper classes, Paine's Rights of Man for the masses, that was Godwin's Enquiry concerning Political Justice (1793) for the intellectuals. Godwin suddenly woke up one morning as the most famous social philosopher of his time" (A History of British Socialism [London, 1919], 114).

4. The title was changed in the 1796 and 1798 editions to Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness (PJ, III, 233).


7. Wordsworth is quoted by Hazlitt in Works, XI, 17. Coleridge's "To William Godwin" is quoted by Elton Edward Smith and Esther Greenwell Smith, William Godwin (New York, 1965), pp. 54-55. The sonnet was first published in the Morning Chronicle on 10 January 1795; the last six lines were sent in a letter to Southey on 17 December 1794. For Southey, see Ford K. Brown, p. 62.

8. See The Life of Thomas Holcroft: Written by Himself, Continued to the Time of His Death from His Diary, Notes, & Other Papers by William Hazlitt, and Now Newly Edited with Introduction and Notes, by Elbridge Colby, 2nd ed. (New York, 1968), II, 84. For Pantisocracy, see Priestley, PJ, III, 103-104,


10 Pitt is quoted in Paul, I, 80. Gentleman's Magazine, N. S. V (June 1836), 667; see also PJ, III, 101; and Cruse, p. 158. The Critical Review, like Pitt, thought Political Justice "a work which from its nature and bulk can never circulate among the inferior classes of society" (2nd Ser., VII April 1793, 361), but the conservatives underestimated "the inferior classes." Pollin erroneously gives VIII for this reference in Godwin Criticism.

11 Public Characters of 1799-1800, p. 74.


13 See Pollin, Godwin Criticism, 1031GQ-1034GQ, and 1016GQ-1019GQ, for precise references to Eaton and Spence, respectively. The full title of Symonds' publication is: The Manual of Liberty: or, Testimonies in behalf of the Rights of Mankind, Selected from the Best Authorities, In Prose and Verse, and Methodically Arranged (London, 1795). For information about the repeated harassment of these publishers, see Lucyle Werkmeister, A Newspaper History of England, 1792-1793 (Lincoln, Neb., 1967), pp. 447-448, 454, et passim.

14 Quoted in Allen, "Minor Disciples," p. 281. Crane Brinton calls Place "a man who is nowadays accepted as one of the most important collaborators in the practical work of preparing for the Reform Bill of 1832," in The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1966), p. 43.


16 For the libraries, see Cruse, p. 158; for Godwin, see Paul, I, 118.
Thoughts on Man (1831), p. iv.

The best general source of information about eighteenth-century periodicals remains Walter Graham, English Literary Periodicals (New York, 1930). My references below are to the complete review; since critical commentary is interspersed with blocks of quotation and is thus easily located, I have not thought it necessary to give the page number of every remark cited.

Monthly Review, N. S. X (March 1793), 311-320.
N. S. X (April 1793), 435-445.
N. S. XI (May 1793), 187-196.

Thomas Holcroft is identified as the author of this review in Benjamin Christie Nangle, Monthly Review Second Series 1790-1815: Index of Contributors and Articles (Oxford, 1955).

Analytical Review, XVI (June 1793), 121-130.
XVI (August 1793), 388-404.

Literary and Biographical Magazine, and British Review, X (March 1793), 224-226.
X (April, 1793), 306-310. (Pollin erroneously lists this review twice, under the above title and under the original title of the Literary Magazine and British Review with which the periodical began publication in 1788; he apparently did not observe that both titles refer to the same journal.)

2nd Ser., VIII (July 1793), 290-296.
2nd. Ser., IX (October 1793), 149-154.

British Critic, I (July 1793), 307-318.

I have allowed the reviewers of 1793 to speak for themselves so extensively because I wish to emphasize the difference in tone between the majority of these initial critics—even when disagreeing with Godwin—and the interpreters of a few years later. For instance, it is instructive to compare the general tone of the critics cited with that of the journalist for the English Review in 1796. This magazine, though not a reactionary mouthpiece like the British Critic, vies with that journal in the outraged scorn it heaps upon Godwin's book. The intervening years of war abroad and repression at home placed Political Justice against quite a different background for the tardy English Review. The British Critic's suggestion that Godwin is drawing on Gulliver's Travels has been taken very seriously by at least one modern critic. See James A. Preu, The Dean and the Anarchist (Tallahassee, 1959).

For Godwin, see Cameron, I, 117-120; and Priestley, PJ, III, 101. Constant is quoted from Crabb Robinson's Diary, in B. Sprague Allen, "William Godwin and the Stage," PMLA, XXV (1920), 372. Constant did not publish his translation because, he told Crabb Robinson in 1804, "the current was so strongly running against liberal sentiments." See Crabb Robinson in Germany, 1800-1805, ed. Edith J. Morley (London, 1929), p. 135. Pollin has discovered the manuscript of Constant's translation and plans eventually to publish it. See Introduction, Godwin Criticism, p. xxxvii; see also entries 1554P and 1555A.


Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon (London, 1801), p. 2. See also Priestley, PJ, I, x.

James Mackintosh], Review of The Lives of Edward and John Philips, Edinburgh Review, XXV (October 1815), 488. This review was originally published anonymously, but appears in Mackintosh's collected works. The spelling of the surname in the title is Godwin's.

See Chronology.

See Chronology, p. 4. In the Memoirs ('1798), Godwin remarks: "I have been stimulated, as long as I can remember, by an ambition for intellectual distinction" (ed. Durant, p. 124).

For the cousin, see Paul, I, 23; for Godwin, see Paul, I, 29.

Paul, I, 356.

Thoughts on Man (1831), p. 337.

Paul, I, 61.

Fox's statement was made on 30 July 1789; quoted from Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox, in R. R. Fennessy, Burke, Paine, and the Rights of Man: A Difference of Political Opinion (The Hague, 1963), p. 94.
See Fennessy, p. 3; William Thomas Laprade, England and the French Revolution, 1789-1797 (Baltimore, 1909), p. 9; and Philip Anthony Brown, The French Revolution in English History (London, 1918), Ch. II. One minor but indisputable evidence of England’s universal favor is an annual broadside with which newsman enticed customers for the coming year, for any deviation from general public opinion would be bad business:

Mark the Aera EIGHTY-NINE
Must in future Annals shine.
France from SLAVERY set free,
By asserting Liberty,
While, with Patriotic zeal,
They destroyed the curs’d Bastile.

The Newsman’s Present to his Worthy Masters and Mistresses on the Entrance of the New Year, 1790 (Brit. Mus. 1875, d. 8) is quoted in Robert Birley, The English Jacobins from 1789 to 1802 (London, 1924), p. 3.

Quoted in Fennessy, pp. 3-4. The Morning Post (21 July 1789), the Diary (26 May 1789), and the World (20 July 1789) express similar opinions. See also “Accurate Statement of the late Revolution in France,” Gentleman’s Magazine, LIX, Pt. 2 (July 1789), 656, and Lucyle Werkmeister, The London Daily Press, 1772-1792 (Lincoln, Neb., 1963), pp. 17-18 et passim.


Laprade, p. 10, prints numerous references to contemporary newspapers. On 28 July 1789, Sir Samuel Romilly, the proponent of criminal law reform, wrote to a French friend that "the Revolution had produced a very sincere and very general joy here. It is the subject of all conversations; and even all the newspapers, without one exception... join in sounding forth the praises of the Parisians, and in rejoicing at an event so important for mankind," quoted in Cobban, p. 40.

Quoted in Cobban, p. 41.

Quoted from The Life of Thomas Holcroft, ed. Colby, II, 92.

The official name of the group was The Society for Commemorating the Revolution in Great Britain. See George Stead Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform*, 2nd ed. (Hamden, Conn., 1965), p. 122.

Quoted in Cobban, pp. 63-64. For more information about this famous event, see Veitch, pp. 121-125; Fennessy, pp. 99-100; Laprade, pp. 11-13; and Walter Phelps Hall, *British Radicalism, 1791-1797* (New York, 1912), pp. 58-59. Besides Price, Godwin's old friend Joseph Priestley, Andrew Kippis, and Abraham Rees, all well-known Dissenting ministers, were members. Burke of course exaggerates in calling the Society "a club of dissenters" (*Reflections*, p. 6), for it included a number of Anglicans, peers, and Members of Parliament.

Quoted from *The Diary of the Rt. Hon. William Windham*, in James T. Boulton, *The Language of Politics in the Age of Wilkes and Burke* (London, 1963), pp. 79-80. Boulton also lists other examples of the laudation Burke received from the upper classes.

The whole of Burke's famous passage reads: "Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, whilst thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field; that, of course, they are many in number, or that, after all, they are other than the little, shrivelled, meager, hopping, though loud and troublesome, insects of the hour" (*Reflections*, p. 97). Burke's traditional use of the insect image is discussed by Paul Fussell in *The Rhetorical World of Augustan Humanism: Ethics and Imagery from Swift to Burke* (Oxford, 1965), pp. 247-248.

Quoted in Fennessy, p. 107.

See Fennessy, p. 1; and Boulton, pp. 80-81, 271. About 19,000 copies were sold the first year; Burke got £1000.

The *Reflections* controversy has recently been extensively canvassed from complementary points of view in Fennessy's *Burke, Paine, and the Rights of Man*, and Boulton's *The Language of Politics*. Fennessy stresses the arguments of Burke and his opponents and provides facts on the social ferment they aroused in England; though Boulton is chiefly concerned with a literary-critical examination of language.
and image in persuasive discourse, he does include a chapter on the progress of the controversy. See especially Fennessy, p. 220; by the end of 1792, both parts together had sold 200,000 copies.

46 See Philip A. Brown, Chs. ii and iv; Fennessy, Chs. vi and vii; and Cruse, Ch. ix, for further discussion.


48 See Paul, I, 26. For the Rational Dissenters, see Lincoln, pp. 29-31, 62-63. For Joseph Priestley in particular, see Lincoln, Ch. v; and Willey, Ch. x.

49 See Godwin's various notes and accounts for the early years of the Revolution in Paul, esp. I, 59-78. Ford K. Brown remarks that "probably no other man of his time had acquaintances so extensive and diverse" (p. 77).


51 See Paul, I, 62-63. For the controversy concerning the political societies, see Veitch, Ch. vi.

52 See Paul, I, 69-70; and Fennessy, pp. 224-226.

53 See PJ, II, 481: "Republicanism is not a remedy that strikes at the root of the evil." Priestley, PJ, III, 44, discusses Godwin's views on the inadequacy of republicanism.

54 Paul, I, 64-65.

55 See Paul, I, 67; and Priestley, PJ, I, vii. Robinson was such an unusually generous publisher that he was known as "The King of Booksellers" (Pollin, Introduction, Italian Letters, p. xi). Godwin received a thousand guineas for the first edition of PJ (Paul, I, 81). See Cameron, I, 203, for information about Robinson's publication of Godwin's later works. Robinson's firm was known for its radical sympathies and was fined in November for publishing Part II of Paine's Rights of Man (Werkmester, A Newspaper History of England, 1792-1793, p. 443).
See, e.g., Woodcock, Anarchism, p. 68; Boulton, pp. 207-208; and Raymond A. Preston, ed., An Enquiry concerning Political Justice (New York, 1926), I, vi (In an editorial foreword by Lindsay Rogers); this edition is an abridgement of the first edition of 1793.


See "Preface to the Present Edition," in Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling (London, 1832), p. vi; and Paul, I, 67, for these quotations. For the 1832 Bentley "Standard Novels" edition of Fleetwood, Godwin wrote a lengthy new preface in which he gives for the first time his full account of the origin and composition of Caleb Williams (1794), his first major novel. This important account will subsequently be referred to as the 1832 Preface of Fleetwood. The preface has recently been reprinted--though with some deletions--as "Godwin's Own Account of Caleb Williams," in Caleb Williams, ed. George Sherburn (New York, 1960), pp. xxv-xxx.

British Critic, I (July 1793), 310; Analytical Review, XVI (June 1793), 121. Pollin covers periodicals and books from 1793 through 1966.

All the quotations in this paragraph are from the original preface of 1793. See Priestley, PJ, I, v-xii.

See Priestley, PJ, III, 4-5, for more discussion of Montesquieu in relation to Godwin and of Godwin's basic purpose.

Priestley, PJ, III, 5.

The Enquirer (1797), pp. v-vi.

PJ, I, 86.

PJ, I, ix.

Godwin apologizes for the contradictory views on government in the first edition by explaining that the printing began "long before the composition was finished" (PJ, I, viii). See Priestley, PJ, III, 82-83, for a fuller discussion.
69 PJ, III, 237. See also PJ, III, 239-247.

70 PJ, III, 276.

71 See the chapters omitted after 1793 printed in Priestley, PJ, III.

72 For the mind as plastic, see Priestley, PJ, I, 26, and I, 84, for two of many examples. Godwin does not deny that man can act irrationally, but argues that actions are essentially determined by reason; see PJ, I, 26.

73 See PJ, I, 69, and I, 71.

74 PJ, I, 57.

75 PJ, I, 57.

76 PJ, I, 56.

77 PJ, I, 56. The changes in this passage from the 1793 and 1796 editions are among the first indications of Godwin's rehabilitation of feeling; see Priestley, PJ, III, 90, for citation of the original version and a fuller discussion.

78 PJ, I, 57.

79 For an account of Godwin's varying attitudes toward reason, see Priestley, PJ, III, 12-13, 90-93, and Monro, pp. 26, 32-33. The "Summary of Principles" added to the third edition contradicts the text itself and makes voluntary actions under the direction of feelings rather than opinions: reason becomes "merely a comparison and balancing of different feelings" (Priestley, PJ, I, xxvi). But though reason here no longer excites to action, it still "is calculated to regulate our conduct, according to the comparative worth it ascribes to different excitements" (Priestley, PJ, I, xxvi). Godwin intended to restrict the role of reason still further; his 1798 notebook projects "A book to be entitled 'First Principles of Morals.'" He continues:

the principal purpose of this work is to correct certain errors in the earlier part of my 'Political Justice.' The part to which I allude is essentially defective, in the circumstance of not yielding a proper attention to the empire of feeling. The voluntary actions
of men are under the direction of their feelings: nothing can have a tendency to produce this species of action, except so far as it is connected with ideas of future pleasure or pain to ourselves or others. Reason, accurately speaking, has not the smallest degree of power to put any one limb or articulation of our bodies into motion. Its province, in a practical view, is wholly confined to adjusting the comparison between different objects of desire, and investigating the most successful mode of attaining those objects. It proceeds upon the assumption of their desirableness or the contrary, and neither accelerates nor retards the vehemence of their pursuit, but merely regulates its direction, and points the road by which we shall proceed to our goal. (Paul, I, 294)

Priestley maintains that Godwin is "concerned to assert . . . the appetitive aspect of reason" throughout his career, but other interpreters disagree. See later discussion.

80PJ, I, 85. Godwin also maintains here that "whatever will make a reasonable nature happy will make us happy." See also Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, Ch. 1, "Reason--Man's Basic Quality," esp. pp. 2-3.

81PJ, I, 68.

82PJ, I, 69.

83PJ, I, 69.

84PJ, I, 85.

85PJ, I, 86. Godwin also finds objectivity or disinterestedness, another essential point of his philosophy, deducible from the same corollaries: "an unanswerable argument for the system of disinterestedness is contained in a proposition . . . that the motive of every voluntary action, consists in the view present to the mind of the agent at the time of his determination" (Priestley, PJ, I, 423).

86See Priestley, PJ, I, 79-80, 316, and 424 for examples.

87"In every voluntary action there is preference or choice,
which indeed are synonymous terms" (Priestley, PJ, I, 58). As Pollin says, "what Godwin is eager to stress, though unable to prove, is that the mental act of judging relative merit leads automatically into choice" (Education and Enlightenment, p. 27). Monro also discusses this point (pp. 36-38).

88PJ, I, 54-55.

89PJ, I, 69-70. See also Priestley, PJ, II, 256, and Paul, II, 204. As Monro puts it, "once we have grasped the premisses, we cannot but assent to the conclusion" (p. 29).

90PJ, I, 81.

91PJ, I, 276.

92PJ, I. 276.

93PJ, I, 92. Godwin believes that "error contains in it the principle of its own mortality" (Priestley, PJ, I, 89). See also Priestley, PJ, III, 247.

94In Political Justice, Godwin consistently equates vice and error, but his increasing awareness of the importance of emotion leads him to waver on the nature of virtue: feeling appears as a constituent of virtue in several passages of the 1798 edition. See PJ, I, 316, and II, 146, for instance. For Godwin's usual position on virtue, see Book IV, Ch. v. "Of the Connection between Understanding and Virtue," and also PJ, I, 433. For vice as error, see PJ, II, 197, and III, 247. See also Priestley, PJ, III, 20-21, and Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, p. 50.

95Godwin argues that vice is to be cured "only by the introduction of knowledge" (PJ, II, 407). Again, "nothing further is requisite but the improvement of [man's] reasoning faculty, to make him virtuous and happy" (PJ, I, 382).

96PJ. I, 369.

97The idea had of course been a commonplace since Locke. See Willey, Eighteenth Century Background, pp. 137, 178, and 228-229, for examples.

98PJ, I, 272, 363. It is of interest that Godwin could also write: "it is the madness of philosophy only, that would undertake to account for every thing, and to trace
out the process by which every event in the world is generated" (The Enquirer (1797), p. 24).

For typical misleading summations, see Smith and Smith, p. 29, and Sherburn, Introduction, Caleb Williams, p. vii.


Godwin, the philosophical concept of free will introduces an element of "mere caprice" into human behavior and entails a denial of the conjunction between motive and action (see PJ, I, 376, 379-380, and 382). He understands free will to mean independence of motive—the ability to act irresponsibly without motive or to prevent the strongest motive from operating upon the will. Free will implies a division of the will and the understanding and means that knowledge of the goodness of an end or action can be disregarded by the independent will; but Godwin, quoting Clarke, defines will as merely "the last act of the understanding" (PJ, I, 381). Since the doctrine of perfectibility is based on the assumption that vice is simply the result of an erroneous opinion and that a true perception of the good must be followed by virtuous conduct, Godwin must disprove complete liberty of action or undermine his theory of rational progress. As Godwin says,

did [man] possess a faculty independent of the understanding and capable of resisting from mere caprice the most powerful arguments, the best education and the most sedulous instruction might be of no use to him. This freedom we shall easily perceive to be his bane and his curse... Freedom of the will is absurdly represented as necessary to render the mind susceptible of moral principles; but in reality, so far as we act with liberty, so far as we are independent of motives, our conduct is as independent of morality as it is of reason, nor is it possible that we should deserve either praise or blame for a proceeding thus capricious and indisciplinable. (PJ, I, 382-383)

See also Fleisher, pp. 74-76.
The problem is largely one of terminology; see Priestley, PJ, III, 17-19. Determination by rational motive is very different from the determination by material cause often attributed to Godwin. The quotation is found in PJ, I, 370; see also The Enquirer (1797), p. 340.

John Middleton Murry remarks, "the acceptance of this psychological determinism Godwin, like Spinoza, held to be the highest spiritual achievement of man" (Heroes of Thought [New York, 1938], p. 259). Crocker's observations about Spinoza seem applicable to Godwin as well (pp. 113-114).

PJ, I, 384.
PJ, I, 454.
PJ, II, 324. Priestley believes Godwin adopts the idea from d'Holbach's Systeme de la Nature; here is another example of the fusion of contradictory philosophical traditions in Godwin's thought. See Priestley, PJ, III, 62.
PJ, I, 391.


PJ, I, 395. See also PJ, I, 396; and Willey, pp. 228-229.
111 PJ, I, 93.
112 PJ, I, 68.
113 PJ, I, 422. In the essays he left unfinished at the
time of his death, Godwin is still reviling "the grov-
elling principle, born in France [with La Rochefoucauld],
and which is the curse of modern times, that all human
motives are ultimately resolvable into self-love." See
Essays Never Before Published (London, 1873), pp. 226-
227.
114 "Man is not a vegetable to be governed by sensations of
heat and cold, dryness and moisture. He is a reasonable
creature, capable of perceiving what is eligible and
right, of fixing indelibly certain principles upon his
mind, and adhering inflexibly to the resolutions he has
made" (Priestley, PJ, I, 79).
116 Godwin continually stresses the social nature of virtue:
for him the true solitary cannot be considered a moral
being. See Priestley, PJ, I, xxiv; II, 325, 386-387;
III, 53. For justice as the one rule of conduct, see
Priestley, PJ, I, 158-159, 170, 323. In Political
Justice, Godwin always maintains that there is one right
action in any given case: "there is no situation in
which I can be placed, where it is not incumbent upon
me to adopt a certain conduct in preference to all
others, and, of consequence, where I shall not prove an
ill member of society, if I act in any other than a
particular manner" (Priestley, PJ, II, 296).
117 See PJ, I, 125-129.
120 Hazlitt, Works, XI, 20. For Godwin and private affec-
tions, see also Priestley, PJ, III, 25. As we will see,
Godwin later revises his opinion on private or domestic
affections.
121 Priestley, PJ, II, 463.
122 PJ, I, 427-428. The chapter on self-love and benevolence
from which this quotation is taken is one of the most important in the work. See also PJ, I, xxv, 133, 155; II, 493; and III, 319-320. Oliver Elton uncharitably remarks that Godwin's "theory was impersonality run mad," in A Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830 (New York, n.d.), I, 272. Monro observes that impartiality is "an axiom of reason," necessarily inherent in it (see pp. 18, 28).

"No man ever performed an act of exalted benevolence, without having sufficient reason to know ... that all the gratifications of appetite were contemptible in the comparison" (Priestley, PJ, I, 76). See also PJ, I, 430, 447.

PJ, I, 158.

See PJ, II, 366. Godwin is commonly referred to as the first philosopher of anarchism. George Woodcock writes: "in the positive sense in which anarchism is now understood, Godwin stands at the head of the tradition, for the arguments he put forward in 1793 with the publication of his Enquiry Concerning Political Justice embraced all the essential features of an anarchistic doctrine" (Anarchism, p. 61). James Joll gives Godwin similar credit as the writer who, starting from the commonplaces of eighteenth century philosophical belief, elaborated the most complete and worked-out statement of rational anarchist belief ever attempted, a philosophy of anarchism carried through to its logical conclusions, however surprising and absurd these might be" (The Anarchists [Boston, 1964], p. 31).

PJ, I, xxvi.

Democracy is of course better than monarchy or aristocracy because it allows the individual more freedom for developing his understanding; see Priestley, PJ, II, 114-123, 176-182; III, 38-47. Monro remarks, "he was not really a political reformer in the ordinary sense. He is not very interested in blueprints for a brave new world; he does not believe in political organizations, and he has no programme. He is primarily a moralist. He is chiefly concerned to analyse the causes of prejudice; once we understand these the cure may very well be left to look after itself" (p. 169).

Individuality is for Godwin a basic value. See, e.g., Priestley, PJ, I, 236; II, 229-330, 333-334, 450.

130 PJ, I, 6-7. Cf. the original epigraph to Caleb Williams (1794):

Amidst the woods the leopard knows his kind;
The tyger preys not on the tyger brood;
Man only is the common foe of man.

and Thoughts on Man (1831): "man is to man ever the most fearful and dangerous foe" (p. 117).

131 PJ, I, 5.

132 Godwin consistently advocates a nonviolent gradualism. He maintains that

the legitimate instrument of effecting political reformation is knowledge. Let truth be incessantly studied, illustrated and propagated, and the effect is inevitable. Let us not vainly endeavour, by laws and regulations, to anticipate the future dictates of the general mind, but calmly wait till the harvest of opinion is ripe. Let no new practice in politics be introduced, and no old one anxiously superseded, till the alteration is called for by the public voice. (PJ, II, 227)

Of many other references that could be cited, perhaps the best account is Bk. IV, Ch. 11, "Of Revolutions" (PJ, I, 263-284); see also PJ, II, 491-492. By the 1798 edition, Godwin typically presents perfectibility as the work of a long period of time; see, e.g., PJ, I, 241-244; II, 451-452, 475. Godwin's views have often been misrepresented. According to Leslie Stephen, "Godwin believes as firmly as any early Christian in the speedy revelation of a new Jerusalem, four-square and perfect in its plan." Stephen also writes: "The world, according to [Godwin], is inhabited by a set of beings quite ready for the millennium, if only they could shake off this monstrous incubus" of institutions (History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century, 1902 ed. [New York, 1962], II, 224, 232). J. Steven Watson, in his respected modern history of the period, similarly misinterprets: "A few simple constitutional reforms would therefore put the world to rights--provided everyone will read Godwin and be as sensible as he is" (p. 534, n. 1).
It is true, as Priestley says, that "everything which suggests precipitancy, more especially everything which suggests violent introduction of changes, is anathema to Godwin" (PJ, III, 50); but Godwin's ideas on the speed with which perfectibility is to progress do seem to vary over the years. Passages occur in the first edition of PJ which indicate a much more optimistic view than Godwin is later willing to sustain: in 1793 he suggests that the end of war, crimes, administration of justice, and government is "at no great distance; and it is not impossible that some of the present race of men may live to see them in part accomplished" (PJ, III, 227). In another passage omitted after 1793, he says, "If every man to-day would tell all the truth he knows, three years hence there would be scarcely a falsehood of any magnitude remaining in the civilized world" (PJ, III, 293). In later editions, he sometimes appears skeptical about the power of reason ever to triumph: "after all, it may not be utterly impossible that the nature of man will always remain, for the most part, unaltered, and that he will be found incapable of that degree of knowledge and constancy, which seems essential to a liberal democracy or a pure equality" (PJ, II, 533, added in 1796 ed.). For further discussion, see Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, Ch. ii, "Unlimited Progress--The Doctrine of Perfectibility," pp. 60-114; and Priestley, PJ, III, 49-50.

133 The quotation, as noted earlier, is from The Enquirer (1797), p. v. The eight-book, two-volume plan remains constant through all three different editions, but the editions vary in number, content, and title of individual chapters. Some titles of books are also altered.

134 PJ, II, 420. The italics are Godwin's.

135 PJ, II, 423.

136 PJ, II, 451-452. It will be seen that Godwin was being perfectly consistent in his monetary dealings with Shelley. For Godwin on rights, see PJ, I, 158-169.

137 PJ, II, 433-434.


139 PJ, II, 429.

140 PJ, II, 435.
141\textit{PJ}, II, 444, 441.
142\textit{PJ}, II, 452-453.
144\textit{PJ}, II, 484, 493.
145\textit{PJ}, II, 499.
146\textit{PJ}, II, 495-497.
152\textit{PJ}, III, 220 (1793); \textit{PJ}, II, 499 (1796); \textit{PJ}, II, 508 (1798).
154\textit{PJ}, III, 220.
157\textit{PJ}, II, 519.
158\textit{PJ}, III, 224.
159\textit{PJ}, III, 226 (1793); \textit{PJ}, II, 519 (1796, slightly different in wording).
160\textit{PJ}, II, 520 (1796).
162\textit{PJ}, II, 520 (1796); \textit{PJ}, 527 (1798).
See The Enquirer (1797), p. v; and PJ, I, 86. As Monro says: "It is, then, not unfair to say that the whole of Godwin's moral philosophy is a mere tissue of assumptions. His basic hypotheses are not merely unverified, but intrinsically unverifiable" (p. 187).

The anonymous author writes in Public Characters of 1799-1800, p. 373, as quoted in Ford K. Brown, p. 61. Green is quoted in Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, p. 54; see p. 13 for the remark cited from Pollin.


The quoted phrase is from The Enquirer (1797), p. v. Godwin himself is aware of the dangers that beset him in the mode of investigation attempted in PJ:

an enquiry thus pursued is undoubtedly in the highest style of man. But it is liable to many disadvantages; and . . . it is perhaps a method of investigation incommensurate to our powers. A mistake in the commencement is fatal. An error in almost any part of the process is attended with extensive injury; where every thing is connected, as it were, in an indissoluble chain, and an oversight in one step vitiates all that are to follow. The intellectual eye of man, perhaps, is formed rather for the inspection of minute and near, than of immense and distant objects. . . . there is danger, if we are too exclusively anxious about consistency of system, that we may forget the perpetual attention we owe to experience, the pole-star of truth. (The Enquirer, p. vi)
Grylls, p. 38.


Fleisher, pp. 65-66. Fleisher would accept at face value such statements as these (quoted from Priestley's ed.):

The true object of moral and political disquisition, is pleasure of happiness. (PJ, I, xxiii)

Justice is a principle which proposes to itself the production of the greatest sum of pleasure or happiness. (PJ, I, xxv)

Duty is that mode of action, which constitutes the best application of the capacity of the individual, to the general advantage. (PJ, I, xxv)

Justice . . . is coincident with utility. I am myself a part of the great whole, and my happiness is a part of that complex view of things by which justice is regulated. (PJ, I, 171)
Morality is that system of conduct which is determined by a consideration of the greatest general good: he is entitled to the highest moral approbation, whose conduct is, in the greatest number of instances, governed by views of benevolence, and made subservient to public utility. (PJ, I, 121)

Morality, as has already been frequently observed, consists entirely in an estimate of consequences; he is the truly virtuous man, who produces the greatest portion of benefit his situation will admit. (PJ, I, 228)

Morality is nothing else but a calculation of consequences, and an adoption of that mode of conduct which, upon the most comprehensive view, appears to be attended with a balance of general pleasure and happiness. (PJ, I, 342)

Moral reasons and inducements, as we have repeatedly shown, consist singly in this, an estimate of consequences. . . . a consideration of consequences is the only thing, with which morality and practical wisdom are directly concerned. (PJ, II, 141)

See also PJ, I, 50; II, 114, 404. Godwin's most striking statement on utility as a principle of conduct is perhaps the Fénélon episode discussed earlier. Godwin's reasoning is that Fénélon is more likely to contribute to the general happiness (PJ, I, 126-128). Priestley points out that in some respects the "Summary of Principles" (from which the first three quotations are taken) presents a more utilitarian basis for the treatise than is present in the text itself (PJ, III, 117). Priestley's arguments that Godwin's apparently utilitarian statements must be taken with reservations are persuasive. Godwin maintains that the intention of an act and its relation to universal truth must be taken into account: utility is not the only criterion. Priestley finds, moreover, that Godwin has a number of ultimate values, such as virtue, knowledge, truth or sincerity, and individuality, besides pleasure, and even pleasure Godwin defines in a nonutilitarian manner. (See Priestley, PJ, III, 14-16, 22-23). Since there are several important grounds on which it can be doubted whether Godwin is a consistent utilitarian, it seems wiser to consider his philosophy
on its own terms rather than to force it into a preconceived category. Godwin's advocacy of utility as a criterion is part of a system in which the central tenets are inimical to utilitarianism as it is customarily defined.


183 Ford K. Brown, p. 45. The propositions are found in PJ, I, 86.

184 PJ, III, 309.

185 PJ, I, 174.


187 Priestley, PJ, III, 12-13. See also PJ, III, 91-93, for a discussion of modifications in Godwin's view of reason.

188 See Monro, pp. 7, 12, 32; Murry, pp. 249-250. Murry calls Godwinian reason "inherently compulsive" and says there is no difference between Blake's proverb and the Godwinian axiom that "sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error." Blake's statement is one of the "Proverbs of Hell" in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Murry (p. 250) also remarks that "Godwin's reason was near to Blake's Imagination," an idea seconded by Priestley ("A Critical Edition," p. 71). Murry and Priestley are thinking of Godwin's reason as seizing immediately upon immutable truth, "the final stage," according to Priestley, "in a Platonic process in which the flash of illumination follows patient examination" (PJ, III, 93).

189 Priestley, PJ, III, 93.


191 Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, pp. 11-12.

192 Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, pp. 13, 11. Pollin also says that "In general, Godwin inclines toward the more instrumental view of the reason as a power of organizing and inferring from the materials accumulated by the senses" (p. 4).

193 Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, p. 3.
Pollin, Education and Enlightenment, p. 13. See also p. 1, and, for Godwin's difficulties in reconciling pure sensationalism and pure rationalism, pp. 27-29.

PJ, I, 313-314, xvii; and II, 3, for a few of the many examples. Godwin defines the "omnipotence of truth" as "the connection between the judgment and the outward behaviour" (PJ, II, 121), and calls truth "a sound and just estimate of things" (PJ, I, 82-83).

Paul, I, 68.

PJ, III, 273, 246 (1793).

PJ, III, 163-164 (1793).


PJ, I, 388 (1796).

PJ, II, 321 (1796).

PJ, I, 221 (1796).

PJ, I, 166.

PJ, II, 3.

Priestley, PJ, III, 8.


Monro, pp. 197-198. Monro, incidentally, sees not only Political Justice, but also all of Godwin's writings as of a piece.


Ford K. Brown, p. 45.
II. GODWIN EMBATTLED: THE WORKS AND THE REPUTATION IN A
    CHANGING CONTEXT

A. PROSPECT: FROM RENOWN TO NOTORIETY

Everything rung and was connected
with the Revolution in France;
which for above twenty years, was,
or was made, all in all. Everything,
not this thing or that thing, but
literally everything was soaked in
this one event.

Lord Cockburn

You will see
That which was Godwin--greater none
than he
Though fallen--and fallen on evil
times--
Shelley, Letter to Maria Gisborne

The widespread initial adulation of Godwin lasted
only a very few years after the publication of Political
Justice in February 1793. Even as he relished his brief and
heady acclaim, the last rosy flush of enthusiasm from 1789
which had made that acclaim possible was fast being
obliterated by the gathering forces of reaction. In a backlash of passionate fear and intolerance came the revul-
sion from idolatry of the New Philosophy: Godwin's exalted position before long seemed a bad eminence and the philo-
sophical morning star, a Lucifer of more infernal glow. By the closing years of the 1790's, Godwin had become the
cynosure of public odium, the moral monster of the era; he was attacked with shocking scurrility, both personally and philosophically, and his erstwhile disciples were not infrequently the leaders of the pack.

But in 1793 and 1794, any decline in Godwin's repute seemed remote: the latter year marks the high point of his career. Political Justice had made his reputation as a philosopher and abstract theorist, and now his pamphlet Cursory Strictures of October 1794 strongly impressed the activist radicals who had disliked his aloof attitude toward practical politics. In addition, Godwin's first important novel, Things as They Are: or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams, which appeared in May 1794, increased his fame, even among those who cared little for philosophical or political issues. Remembering "the singularity and surprise" occasioned by the philosopher turned novelist, Hazlitt declares that

few books have made a greater impression than Caleb Williams on its first appearance. It was read,
admired, parodied, dramatised. All parties joined in its praise. Those (not a few) who at the time favoured Mr. Godwin's political principles, hailed it as a new triumph of his powers. . . . his enemies, or those who looked with a mixture of dislike and fear at the system of ethics advanced in the Enquiry concerning Political Justice, were disposed to forgive the author's paradoxes for the truth of imitation with which he had depicted prevailing passions, and were glad to have something in which they could sympathize with a man of no mean capacity or attainments. At any rate, it was a new and startling event for a metaphysician to write a popular romance. The thing took, as all displays of unforeseen talent do with the public. Mr. Godwin was thought a man of very powerful and versatile genius.²

Godwin was thus enjoying a happy and triumphant heyday in 1794: he had made a name for himself, and he was now sufficiently prosperous to escape hack writing. Admiration for his accomplishments had brought him many friends: there were few important figures in the world of arts and letters or of liberal politics with whom he had not some sort of relationship at this time.³ All the omens seemed to foretell years of continuing fame and success.

Yet, though Godwin the novelist escaped relatively unscathed, Godwin's reputation as a philosopher and as a man underwent a startling change during the latter half of the 1790's: surely few careers demonstrate such a dramatic and speedy reversal from fame to notoriety. The basis for this unusual phenomenon, characterized by B. Sprague Allen in an early article as "the reaction against William Godwin,"
is indicated by the juxtaposition of the two epigraphs to this section.\textsuperscript{4} As we have seen, contemporary events converted Godwin's philosophical treatise into a work of great and immediate social relevance. Godwin himself was well aware of the connection between the initial success of \textit{Political Justice} and the political climate: "that book was published in a propitious season," he recalls in 1831.\textsuperscript{5} Godwin's comment at the time, already quoted in part from his diary for 1794, accurately summarizes the foundation of his renown: "the doctrines of that work (though if any book ever contained the dictates of an independent mind, mine might pretend to do so) coincided in a great degree with the sentiments then prevailing in English society."\textsuperscript{6} Godwin's parenthetical remark may be taken as an indication of what might be expected to happen when "the dictates of an independent mind" ceased to coincide with public opinion: Godwin maintained his convictions after they became unpopular with the same tenacity he had demonstrated in supporting Sandemanianism against his schoolmates at Hoxton College. Despite the charges sometimes made against him, Godwin did not emasculate his doctrines in deference to the sentiments of others. De Quincey's famous statement of 1845 epitomizes the myth that the philosopher beat a cowardly retreat from his original radicalism:

\textit{in the quarto} (that is, the original) edition of his \textit{Political Justice}, Mr. Godwin advanced against
thrones and dominations, powers and principalities, with the air of some Titan slinger or monomachist from Thebes and Troy, saying--"Come hither, ye wretches, that I may give your flesh to the fowls of the air." But in the second or octavo edition ... he recoiled absolutely from the sound himself had made: everybody else was appalled by the fury of the challenge, and, through the strangest of accidents, Mr. Godwin also was appalled. The second edition, as regards principles, is not a re-cast, but absolutely a travesty of the first; nay, it is all but a palinode. In this collapse of a tense excitement I myself find the true reason for the utter extinction of the Political Justice, and of its author considered as a philosopher. 7

Though picturesque, De Quincey's explanation of Godwin's deflated reputation is easily refuted by a close examination of the texts themselves. 8 There is much more truth in the proud assertions of Godwin's Preface to his fourth major novel, Mandeville (1817): he says of his contemporaries that

if ever they have received my productions with welcome, it has been because the same public impression, or the same tone of moral feeling, had been previously generated in the minds of a considerable portion of my species, and in my own. ... I have never truckled to the world. I have never published anything with the slightest purpose to take advantage of the caprice of the day, to approach the public on its weak side, or to pamper its frailties. What I have produced, was written merely in obedience to that spirit, unshackled and independent, whatever were its other qualities, that commanded me to take up my pen.

Godwin was always willing to revise his opinions when his own maturer deliberation had convinced him of error, but he was never prone to recant merely because of public.
displeasure at his tenets.

The "true reason for the utter extinction of the Political Justice, and of its author considered as a philosopher" lies not, as De Quincey suggests, in Godwin himself, but rather in the volatile political climate of the times. Godwin's unorthodox theories seen against a changed context provoked a very different response from that accorded Political Justice on its original appearance in 1793. Reminiscing rather wistfully in 1831 on his situation in the early years of his fame, Godwin says, "I was treated generally with a certain degree of deference, or, where not with deference and submission, yet as a person whose opinions and view of things were to be taken into the account. The individuals who most strenuously opposed me, acted with a consciousness that, if they affected to despise me, they must not expect that all the bystanders would participate in that feeling." But this initial reaction, he continues, "was to a considerable degree the effect of novelty. . . . there was nothing in it to deter him who differed from me from entering the field in turn, and telling the tale of his views and judgments in contradiction to mine. I descended into the arena, and stood on a level with the rest." But the amicable disagreement of former years seemed no longer possible, and Godwin found himself embattled: "if I had not the stentorian lungs, and the petty
artifices of rhetoric and conciliation, that should carry a cause independently of its merits, my antagonists were not deficient in these respects." The attacks on Godwin in the later nineties came from every side and in every possible medium. Philosophic rebuttal, gentle satire, blatant distortion, and savage invective jostled one another for the contemporary reader's attention, with the assaults becoming more frequent and more bitter as the political situation of England worsened.

Godwin's productions during the last half of the decade did little to relieve his beleaguered position. On the contrary, his pamphlet Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills (1795) alienated some of his liberal followers, and the volume of essays he published in 1797, The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature, provided a few additional barbs for the anti-Jacobins. But much more damaging was the 1798 Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman: the criticism with which Godwin's tribute to his dead wife was assailed by the conservative press exceeded in fury, if not in amount, that heaped by the establishment writers on Political Justice. The merit that many of Godwin's contemporaries found in his novel of 1799, St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century, was not sufficient to rescue him from his detractors. In his 1819 Lectures on the English Comic Writers, Hazlitt
draws an analogy between the supernaturally-gifted hero of this romance, who becomes alienated from society, and Godwin himself:

in delineating the character and feelings of the hermetic philosopher St. Leon, perhaps the author had not far to go from those of a speculative philosophical Recluse. He who deals in the secrets of magic, or in the secrets of the human mind, is too often looked upon with jealous eyes by the world . . . he who pours out his intellectual wealth into the lap of the public, is hated by those who cannot understand how he came by it; he who thinks beyond his age, cannot expect the feelings of his contemporaries to go along with him; he whose mind is of no age or country, is seldom properly recognised during his life-time, and must wait, in order to have justice done him, for the late but lasting award of posterity.11

We must now consider more specifically in the following section why, despite so auspicious a beginning, proper recognition of Godwin's achievement became impossible in the England of the later 1790's, a period which one modern historian calls "among the most momentous in the history of modern Europe."12
B. GODWIN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE CHANGING
POLITICAL CLIMATE

1. THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: SHIFTING OPINIONS

The Revolution before the 10th of August, was as different from
the Revolution after that day as
light from darkness; as clearly
distinct in principle and prac-
tice as liberty and slavery.
Arthur Young

The publication of Political Justice in February 1793
was, as we have seen, a remarkable success, all the more re-
markable considering the forces at work in the interval of
its composition. When Godwin planned his book in mid-1791,
the Revolution was but two years old, and France a constitu-
tional monarchy. But in June 1791, Louis XVI's unsuccessful
flight to Varennes exposed the dissatisfaction of both king
and people, and presaged the republic. In England the shift-
ing of public opinion went slowly on, but the Birmingham
populace revealed the shape of things to come. Reaching
Burke's catastrophic conclusions on their own, a church and
king mob demonstrated its hatred of the French Revolution
and its followers while Burke was still isolated from both
opposition and ministry and Pitt was predicting years of peace. Birmingham's celebration of the Bastille's second anniversary left a city dotted with smoking ruins, the property of Dissenters and French sympathizers. Godwin's friend Joseph Priestley was a chief target: his magnificent library and laboratory were a total loss, and he shortly emigrated to America. Yet at the time, the upheaval at Birmingham appeared less an omen than an isolated incident: English attitudes toward the French experiment remained generally favorable for the first two years of the Revolution.

The year 1792, although its political crises were to make it one of the turning points in history, began auspiciously. Both ministry and opposition insularly hymned the prosperity of the country, and the government seemed at first to be firmly maintaining a policy of neutrality toward revolutionary France. Pitt on 17 February made his famous prediction that "unquestionably there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace, than we may at the present moment." At this time, even the majority of those most unsympathetic to the aims of the Revolution felt, unlike Burke, no pressing need for English intervention in the domestic affairs of France.

But the opening months of 1792 also brought a fresh
spurt of political activity in England: the founding of the working-class Corresponding Society by the shoemaker Thomas Hardy in January and the setting up of the gentlemanly Friends of the People by some of the more radical Whigs in April, along with the publication of the second part of Rights of Man in February. The two political groups advocated nothing but constitutional reform; not so Paine's pamphlet, which circulated rapidly through the country: more vehemently republican than his initial argument, it alarmed even the long-time reformer Christopher Wyvill.\textsuperscript{17} Across the channel, meanwhile, France declared war on Austria in April.

These events apparently determined the ministry to inaugurate a policy of repression: on 21 May 1792 the government issued a proclamation against "wicked and seditious" publications and meetings. Subjects were warned against writings aimed at raising groundless discontents respecting the English constitution, and magistrates were charged with ferreting out authors and printers of such works and with suppressing tumultuous meetings. Though the governmental order was not rigorously enforced until the following autumn, this proclamation established a pattern which was to continue throughout the 1790's. Despite much study and conjecture, the underlying motives of these policies of the Pitt administration on reform and repression remain uncertain.
Whether an apprehensive ministry was genuinely alarmed by expressions of discontent against the existing government or whether a cynical Pitt was playing a masterful game of party politics to discredit his Whig enemies and to consolidate his own power by manipulating the public into a state of terror, the official course of action was a major factor in creating a climate of opinion hostile to all adherents of change. If Pitt and his followers were acting from political expediency, they must have congratulated themselves on their success, for a continual stream of loyal addresses from almost every city, town, and county in the land poured in upon the king during the ensuing months.

The fear and patriotism of the conservatives were further heightened by events in France in the latter half of 1792. The mob assault on the Tuileries and the imprisonment of Louis XVI belied the peaceful revolution from arbitrary government to constitutional monarchy that the English had wanted to see in France. The Parisian excesses of 10 and 13 August produced a general revulsion across the channel, a change of feeling rendered permanent for most of the nation by the prison massacres, the abolition of the monarchy, and the establishment of the republic in September. The dismay with which Samuel Romilly, the reformer of criminal law, viewed the violence of September epitomizes the changing attitude of even stalwart English liberals. The
Revolution that was for him in May "the most glorious event, and the happiest for mankind, that has ever taken place since human affairs have been recorded" became on 10 September "the affairs of that wretched country." "How could we ever be so deceived in the character of the French nation as to think them capable of liberty!" he exclaims, "wretches, who, after all their professions and boasts about liberty . . . at the very moment when their country is invaded and the enemy is marching through it unresisted, employ whole days in murdering women, and priests, and prisoners!" Those who had been skeptical of the Revolution from the beginning naturally reacted even more strongly.

The actions of the French Executive Council in mid-November further inflamed the political situation. The fraternité et secours decree, which offered French aid to all peoples struggling for liberty, and the proclamation of the opening of the Scheldt to navigation in defiance of the treaty rights of Holland, England's ally, converted English horror to fear and anger, since France's goal now seemed to be the abolition of all monarchies and the conquest of her neighbors.
2. THE BEGINNING OF WAR AND FULL-SCALE SUPPRESSION

Good God! that a man should be sent to Botany Bay for advising another to read Paine's book!  
Charles James Fox

Whether Pitt decided on war to take advantage of England's old enemy in a time of apparent weakness or whether the French war was merely a pretext to get rid of his enemies the moderate reformers, the Prime Minister evidently made up his mind to fight sometime between May and November 1792; but it was the Scheldt decree which provoked the definite decision to prepare for hostilities. By late 1792 a strong stand on law and order was being taken by the government as one means of uniting the country behind a French war: the system of terror and espionage that was to characterize the rest of the decade was set in motion on a large scale. Government spies had already infiltrated the reform societies and begun to dog the steps of suspect characters like Paine, and in late autumn government prosecutions began in earnest. Paine himself had fled England in September, but was tried in absentia 18 December for publishing a seditious libel and
was declared an outlaw. Another friend of Godwin, the American poet and liberal Joel Barlow, also left England abruptly for France to avoid arrest when his *Advice to the Privileged Orders* was suppressed in November. During the months following Paine's trial, printers, booksellers, and loose-tongued liberals by the dozen were brought to trial and often severely punished. Besides these punitive measures, the government also worked upon the public mind through loyal associations, sermons, and pamphlets. The newspapers of the day are full of the activities of such groups as the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, which was set up in November by the lawyer John Reeves, a fervent supporter and judicial appointee of Pitt. Besides distributing tracts, these anti-republican groups agitated for war and secretly collected information for the Solicitor General.

In December the militia was called out, and Parliament unexpectedly summoned with a speech from the throne avowing the existence of a design to attempt the destruction of the constitution and the subversion of all order and government, a scheme supposedly concerted with France. Though Fox and others maintained that there was neither threat of domestic insurrection nor of foreign invasion and that the action of the ministry was a trick to perpetuate itself in power, the arguments of the opposition availed little. The chief
technique used by the government to convert the recalcitrant was to equate the excesses of the French Revolution with any plan of reform whatsoever; if this method did not terrify Fox into submission, it was eventually remarkably successful with the nation at large. Foreign events co-operated with ministerial aims: December also brought Louis XVI's trial, and January saw his execution, alienating still more French sympathizers in England. On 1 February 1793, the French republic declared war on England and Holland, with England's own declaration following ten days later. The war had strong backing in Parliament from the beginning, but it was at first unpopular in the country as a whole.31

In this same month that the outbreak of war occurred, Political Justice appeared; under such circumstances it was indeed "the most sanguine and fearless understandings of the time," which were its converts.32 In early 1793, Godwin's book was most timely: a few years or even months later it would probably have fallen "dead-born from the press," as he complains of his earlier efforts.33 As it was, Political Justice was able to cash in on the unparalleled interest in political theory aroused by the Revolution. Yet though his book "was the child of the French Revolution," Godwin in his desire to abstract basic principles out of the specific experiments of America and France early separated his faith in the perfectibility of man from that tumult by which the
faith had been aroused and took his stand against revolu-
tions. 34 "Even in the commencement of the revolution," he
disliked its "mob government and violence" and "desired
such political changes only as should flow purely from the
clear light of the understanding, and the erect and generous
feelings of the heart"; several years after this diary note
for 1789, he was still maintaining to his calumniators that
he "never went so far in ; partiality for the practical
principles of the French Revolution, as many of those with
whom I was accustomed to converse." 35 Thus, though his own
liberal creed was proof against the disillusionment that
overtook so many of the believers in "practical principles,"
Godwin was well aware of the shifting currents of opinion
into which he was launching the work.

Having foreseen a coming era of proscription as early
as 1791, he knew Political Justice was making its debut "be-
fore a public that is panic struck, and impressed with the
most dreadful apprehensions respecting such doctrines as are
here delivered. All the prejudices of the human mind are
in arms against it." 36 Godwin devotes several pages of his
preface to an appraisal of the incipient heresy hunt, con-
clusing with a quiet determination not to be cowed into
silence:

the people of England have assiduously been ex-
cited to declare their loyalty, and to mark every
man as obnoxious who is not ready to sign the
Shibboleth of the constitution. Money is raised by voluntary subscription to defray the expence of prosecuting men who shall dare to promulgate heretical opinions. . . . This was an accident unforeseen when the work was undertaken; and it will scarcely be supposed that such an accident could produce any alteration in the writer's designs. . . . It is now to be tried whether . . . a book is to fall under the arm of the civil power, which, beside the advantage of having for one of its express objects the dissuading from tumult and violence, is by its very nature an appeal to men of study and reflection. . . . Respecting the event in a personal view the author has formed his resolution. . . . The duty he conceives himself most bound to discharge, is the assisting the progress of truth; and, if he suffer in any respect for such a proceeding, there is certainly no vicissitude that can befall him, that can ever bring along with it a more satisfactory consolation.37

As this calm challenge to the authorities indicates, Godwin would have been not at all surprised to be prosecuted; why he was not has been a matter for some conjecture.38 Certainly his book provoked a bitter and extensive concerted attack from adherents of the established order a few years later. Political Justice is said to have "created a sensation that was a fear in every state of Europe," but public expressions of conservative alarm were, as we have seen, surprisingly few in the months immediately following its publication.39 In the reviews of 1793 and 1794 little severe criticism of Political Justice appeared, certainly no denunciation commensurate with Godwin's own attack on existing society--an oversight on the part of the traditionalists amply recompensed in the coming years. But for a brief time
the popularity of Political Justice seemed a realization of Godwin's vision of omnipotent truth "victorious over every adversary."\[^{40}\]

Triumphant in one area, Godwin seemed no longer content to remain merely a theoretical exponent of political justice: he spoke out against concrete abuses of liberty as well. In the same year his book was published came the trials of the Scottish parliamentary reformers Thomas Muir and Thomas Palmer. Egged on by alarmist letters detailing rampant reformism and Paine's pamphlets sown broadcast, the government had begun a series of prosecutions for sedition in Scotland. Muir, an advocate and a speaker in the General Assembly, was sentenced to transportation for fourteen years; Palmer, a Unitarian minister, for twelve. En route to Botany Bay, the two were imprisoned in the hulks like common felons. Members of the opposition tried to obtain a revision of their sentences, and Godwin publicized the issue from the pages of the liberal Morning Chronicle—to no avail.\[^{41}\]

In the last months of 1793, the Scottish reformers again roused governmental ire by sponsoring "The British Convention of the Delegates of the People associated to obtain Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments," to which several English reform societies sent delegates. Among them was Godwin's friend Joseph Gerrald, representing both the
London Corresponding Society and the Society for Constitutional Information. Pitt, a one-time reformer himself, maintained that reform was now in the hands of "wicked persons," that it aimed at "subversion," and that the Scottish judges were of similar mind. A second series of sedition trials quickly followed the convention, meting out lengthy sentences of transportation to Gerrald and several others, despite Gerrald's reliance on Godwin's advice to place his faith in the inherent power of truth to convince its hearers. But though Godwin's counsel to Gerrald on his defense proved a failure, the philosopher was more successful in his next attempt to aid the victims of a misconstrued law.

3. THE STATE TRIALS AND CURSORY STRICTURES

Thank God, these London trials have given us a little more breath, & I imagine that the time is not far distant when a man may freely blame Billy Pitt, without being called an enemy to his Country. Robert Burns

Concurrently with the climax of the Reign of Terror in France, England experienced its own less bloody terror in
1794—the year of the famous State Trials. Thomas Hardy, founder and secretary of the London Corresponding Society, was arrested 12 May and his house and shop ransacked for incriminating documents; the secretary of the Society for Constitutional Information, along with all the group's papers, was seized a few hours later. The very same day, in response to a message from the throne declaring that the parliamentary reform societies were planning a convention to subvert the constitution and introduce French anarchy, the House of Commons ordered the appointment of a Committee of Secrecy to scrutinize the evidence. On 16 May Pitt reported for the committee that a dangerous insurrection was afoot, with the "monstrous doctrines of the rights of man" at the root of it all: "pretences of Reform in Parliament" were a mere cloak for "that great moving principle of all Jacobinism, the love of plunder, devastation and robbery." Pitt concluded by asking for special legislation to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act and was given it by an overwhelming majority.

Twelve members of the two reform societies were eventually indicted for high treason early in October—more than half of the defendants were Godwin's personal acquaintances and several, including Thomas Holcroft, John Horne Tooke, and John Thelwall, were his particular friends. Godwin and his fellow liberals were much alarmed: they had good reason
to regard the trials as "one of the most memorable epochs in English history."47 For "if Tooke had been convicted," wrote the poet Samuel Rogers later, "he would certainly have been hanged. We lived then in a reign of terror."48 The ministry was reported to have hundreds of signed warrants prepared should these initial prosecutions for treason succeed. Godwin could be certain that any such warrants would include one for him. The twelve apostles, as the defendants were called, were in grave danger.49 Public opinion was inflamed against them: they were "sung in ballads as Jacobins and Cannibals" and handkerchiefs depicting them as traitors were hawked about the streets; Hardy's wife was attacked by a mob and died in childbirth soon after.50 Th
evague accusations in Lord Chief Justice Eyre's charge made it possible for a life to hang on a misinterpreted word or action.

With only a few days before the trials, Godwin locked himself up for forty-eight hours to compose his Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794, which appeared anonymously in the Morning Chronicle 21 October and was quickly picked up by other papers and also reprinted as a pamphlet. Godwin had seen at once from Eyre's accusation that treason was being inferred from other activities: "it was an attempt to take away the lives of men by a
constructive treason, and out of many facts, no one of which was capital, to compose a capital crime." Carefully analyzing the English law defining treason, Godwin reveals Eyre's extrapolations and concludes indignantly:

an association for Parliamentary Reform may desert its object, to be guilty of High Treason. -- True: so may a card club, a bench of justices, or even a cabinet council. . . . the authors of the present prosecution probably hope that the mere names of Jacobin and Republican will answer their purposes, and that a Jury of Englishmen can be found who will send every man to the gallows without examination, to whom these appellations shall once have been attributed! . . . This is the most important crisis in the history of English liberty that the world ever saw. If men can be convicted of High Treason upon such constructions and implications as are contained in this Charge, we may look with conscious superiority on the Republican speculations of France; but we shall certainly have reason to envy the milder tyrannies of Turkey and Ispahan.52

Godwin's Strictures are generally considered by historians to have played a very important part in securing a verdict of acquittal for the prisoners. His cogent criticism turned public sentiment toward the accused and revealed the danger to individual liberty inherent in the governmental proceedings: there was no proof that the accused had unlawfully extended their traditional right to disagree with the English government.53

The trial captured the attention of England. Hardy was pronounced not guilty only after nine grueling days; he was then triumphantly drawn away in a coach by a crowd of
sympathizers.54 With characteristic hyperbole, Holcroft
exclaims that "never surely was the public mind more pro-
foundly agitated. . . . in [Hardy's] fate seemed involved
the fate of the nation, and the verdict of Not Guilty ap-
peared to burst its bonds and to have released it from in-
conceivable miseries and ages of impending slavery. The
acclamations of the Old Bailey reverberated from the fur-
thest shores of Scotland and a whole people felt the en-
thusiastic transports of recovered freedom."55 Tooke and
Thelwall were successively prosecuted and also acquitted,
and the rest of the prisoners discharged without trial.56
Rejoicing was widespread at the dismissal, but it was for
the preservation of English liberty rather than for the
triumph of Jacobin principles.57

The government's failure seemed an auspicious victory
for the liberals at the time, but it proved a hollow one:
ministerial measures grew ever more repressive in the suc-
ceeding years, and the reformers had to endure their forty
years in the wilderness. But in 1794 the unknown author of
Cursory Strictures was lauded everywhere. The praise Godwin
most regarded came from Horne Tooke a year later: the phil-
ologist had often questioned Godwin as to the truth of the
widely-circulated rumor that he was the author of the Stric-
tures, "of which pamphlet he always declared the highest ad-
miration, and to which he repeatedly professed that he held
himself indebted for his life." This time Godwin affirmed the report: "he then requested that I would give him my hand. . . . I had no sooner done this, than he suddenly conveyed my hand to his lips, vowing that he could do no less by the hand that had given existence to that production."  

4. THE CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION OF CALEB WILLIAMS

In "Caleb Williams" the name of Godwin will principally live; every one reads it, some extol, many admire, all wonder, and most agree that it is the work of a clever but strangely perturbed imagination.  

(Gentleman's Magazine)

Caleb Williams, Godwin's other production of 1794, was greeted by many of its first readers with admiration as extravagant as that of Tooke for the Strictures. The fame of the novel in its own day matched that of Political Justice, though without drawing on its author's head the weight of censure that the philosophical treatise was soon to provoke. Godwin's first major piece of fiction was generally acclaimed a masterpiece, as the well-known statement by Hazlitt which
was quoted earlier in this chapter indicates. The book appeared in May 1794 with the title *Things as They Are: or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*; though the original order of the title was retained through the first three editions, the book seems to have been popularly called *Caleb Williams* from the beginning. Some indication of the striking impression the book made has already been given: it was, as Hazlitt says, "read, admired, parodied, dramatised."\(^{60}\) *Caleb Williams* was a great—and continuing—popular success: so frequently was it read that it was one of the books requiring continual replacement in both English and continental circulating libraries for many years.\(^{61}\) The first French translation appeared the same year as the original English edition, and five thousand copies were quickly sold.\(^{62}\) Before the revised second edition of the novel came out in 1796, several more French versions, a German translation, and Irish and American editions had also been published; and still more foreign renditions continued to follow each new English edition.\(^{63}\)

*Caleb Williams* was not only popular as a novel; it was also several times adapted for the stage. George Colman the Younger dramatized the story as *The Iron Chest*, taking his title from the mysterious trunk of Falkland which arouses Caleb's curiosity. The play was first performed at Drury Lane 12 March 1796 with John Philip Kemble as the lead;
Edmund Kean later found one of his most powerful characterizations in Sir Edward Mortimer, the Falkland figure. Coleman's play was extremely popular and remained a stock piece through the first half of the nineteenth century. The American William Dunlap also used Caleb Williams as the basis for a drama: The Man of Fortitude was first acted in New York 7 June 1797 and was later published. In 1798 Jean Louis Laya's version, Falkland, ou la Conscience, appeared, providing the famous French tragedian Talma with one of his most striking roles.

In examining more specifically the impression Caleb Williams made on its first readers, we find Hazlitt scarcely exaggerating in saying that "all parties joined in its praise." The friends and admirers of the author naturally lauded the book. Godwin's mentor Joseph Fawcett read "with admiration tinctured with wonder." The poet Samuel Rogers ranks Godwin's work with Don Quixote, Tom Jones, and Gil Blas. Elizabeth Inchbald, herself a popular novelist, was allowed to read the novel in proof and quickly rewarded Godwin for the favor with warm commendation:

God bless you!

That was the sentence I exclaimed when I had read about half a page.

Nobody is so pleased when they find anything new as I am. . . .

Your first volume is far inferior to the two
last. Your second is sublimely horrible—captivatingly frightful.

Your third is all a great genius can do to delight a great genius, and I never felt myself so conscious of, or so proud of giving proofs of a good understanding, as in pronouncing this to be a capital work.

It is my opinion that fine ladies, milliners, mantua-makers, and boarding-school girls will love to tremble over it, and that men of taste and judgment will admire the superior talents, the incessant energy of mind you have evinced.70

Even after Godwin's one-time disciple James Mackintosh repudiates the principles of Political Justice, he continues to see Caleb Williams as "probably the finest novel produced by a man—at least since the Vicar of Wakefield" and thinks "there is scarcely a fiction in any language which it is so difficult to lay by."71 Godwin writes in the 1832 Preface to Fleetwood that "the unfortunate Joseph Gerald" had told him of receiving Caleb Williams late one evening and of being so fascinated that he read straight through all three volumes "before he closed his eyes." Crabb Robinson records that he "idolized the book" on its first appearance.72

Hazlitt praises the novel highly in several of his writings, at one point calling Caleb Williams "one of the best novels in the language, and the very best of the modern school."73

The list of friends who acclaimed Godwin's novel could go on and on, but the respect the book won from those who opposed or knew nothing of the author's philosophical
theories is perhaps a better testimonial to its popularity and merit as a novel. Walter Scott, who finds the subject "unpleasing" and the moral "mischievous," still has to "acknowledge we have met with few novels which excited a more powerful interest." And, he continues: "while the author pauses to reason upon the feelings and motives of the actors, our sense of the fallacy of his arguments . . . is lost in the solemnity and suspense with which we expect the evolution of the tale of mystery." Scott particularly admires the skill with which Godwin maintains interest by keeping the contents of the iron chest a mystery.74 Anna Seward, the "Swan of Lichfield," thinks the work has a bad "tendency" and "pernicious principles" and includes "an indirect libel upon the laws and constitution of Great Britain," but her political disapproval does not deter her from pronouncing the novel "singular" and "extraordinary," recommending it to her friends, or annotating her own copy with analytic marginalia.75 William Maginn, who deems Political Justice "cold-blooded" and "absurd," finds Caleb Williams a "wonderful" book, "once read, not only ever remembered, but ever graven on the mind of those who know how to read." He predicts, with some accuracy, that the novel will be remembered long after Godwin's philosophical writings are forgotten.76 Many readers of course, like the young Henry Siddons, simply read and admired the book as a novel without
much interest in its possible political implications. Upon meeting Godwin, Siddons, then a boy of thirteen or fourteen, "reverently kissed the chair which the philosopher had just quitted, rapturously thanking heaven that he might now say he had been in company with the author of the best novel in the English, or in any language."77

A number of the contemporary reviewers, though somewhat more restrained than the youthful Siddons, also award high praise to Godwin's effort. Although one modern critic asserts that Caleb Williams did "raise howls of righteous outrage from eighteenth-century conservatives," he seems to be basing his statement largely on the review of the British Critic, an ultraconservative journal.78 Other contemporary critics typically focus their attention on the aesthetic merits and deficiencies of the work: even most of those who disagree with Godwin's political position apparently do not see the doctrinal aspect of the work as its most important feature in the reviews of 1794.

The Analytical Review finds the story "a singular narrative," written with "the power of genius." The critic admires the "strong feeling" and "depth of reflection" of the author. Oddly enough in view of the detailed account Godwin later gives of his careful plotting and attention to unity, and of Poe's celebration of the method of planning Caleb Williams as exemplary in "The Philosophy of Composition,"
the Analytical reviewer pronounces the author "not sufficiently aware of drawing a general outline of the plot of any work of imagination, before the narrative is entered upon." To the anonymous critic, however, the real interest of the novel lies not in the imperfect plot or in "the author's occasional deductions, on the state of society," but in the psychology, "the manner in which the minds of the parties are delineated." He discerns "much skill . . . shown by the author in the movements of intellect and the passions." "By the exertion of genius, which is indeed astonishing," says the critic, "he rivets our attention to a minute dissection of the characters, feelings, and emotions of three insulated men. . . . every where related with the imagination of a poet, and the discriminating spirit of a philosopher." The reviewer thinks Godwin's performance "equals the Eloise of Rousseau in depth and accuracy of dissertation; approaches the sorrows of Werther in the gigantic energy of mental picture; but falls far beneath them both in felicity of subject." Far from being struck by an obvious purpose in the novel, this writer cannot discover "that any entire moral pervades this narrative." The work for him is too singular and original "to afford any general moral." This reviewer's insistence on Godwin's striking originality and mastery of psychological analysis indicates the major emphases of early Godwin criticism: for his first
critics, despite their immersion in the contemporary political turmoil, Godwin is pre-eminently a psychological novelist instead of the blatant novelist of purpose he appears to almost all his modern interpreters.

Without the aid of the politically-oriented preface first published in the second edition, the writer for the Critical Review seems indeed to have missed the "purpose" of Caleb Williams completely. He thinks the "moral is excellent" and yet finds the doctrinal aspect of the work completely adventitious. Far from seeing a political purpose as constitutive of the novel, the reviewer finds the doctrinal comments few and inessential: "the political reflections, which however are not very numerous, might in general have been spared; and in a future edition, which we doubt not so very interesting and entertaining a book must soon come to, we would recommend to the author to expunge a considerable part of them at least." He feels "this work ranks greatly above the whole mass of publications which bear the name of novels, if perhaps we except the productions of Fielding, Smollet, and Burney," and is even superior to them in "construction and conduct." The peculiar power of Godwin's fiction to engross the reader completely, which is so often mentioned in discussions of his work, is also stressed by this early critic: "so fascinating is the narrative, that few readers will have sufficient coolness to lay down the
book before they have concluded it." Godwin's ability to sustain interest through a long narrative without resorting to love much impresses the Critical journalist, as it has many later readers.

William Enfield, writing for the Monthly Review, also remarks Godwin's refusal to indulge in "framing a whining love tale" and thinks the philosopher means "to give an easy passport, and general circulation, to some of his favourite opinions." But despite his recognition of Godwin's utilizing "the captivating dress of fable" for philosophical purposes, Enfield still does not discern the same political lesson many modern commentators have seen in Caleb Williams. To Enfield, the "narrative seems to have been written chiefly for the purpose of representing, in strong colours, the fatal consequence of suffering the love of fame to become predominant." "A farther object in this story," he thinks, "appears to have been to exhibit an example of the danger of indulging an idle curiosity, merely for its own gratification; and the fatal consequences of this folly were perhaps never so impressively exemplified as in the story of Caleb Williams, the confidential servant of Falkland." Though Enfield dislikes the "systematical eccentricity" of Godwin's philosophical opinions and finds the author "making an indirect attack on what he deems vulgar prejudices respecting religion, morals, and policy," he nevertheless finds the most striking feature of the novel to be Godwin's powers of
psychological analysis as manifested in Caleb's obsessive curiosity and manipulation of Falkland: "nothing can exceed the skilful management with which that part of the story is conducted, in which the reader remains unacquainted with the real occasion of Tyrrel's death, till the suspicion against Falkland is gradually excited, and at length confirmed by the persevering ingenuity of Williams." All this section he finds "related with an interesting particularity that evidently shews the hand of a master. The general result is a forcible conviction of the hazard of suffering any foolish desire, or curiosity, (that restless propensity,) to creep into the mind."

Caleb Williams assuredly is not praised by all of its first reviewers. The British Critic, for example, attacks the novel savagely as "a striking example of the evil use which may be made of considerable talents." This journal is the more vehement in censuring Godwin's every writing precisely because of the author's superior talents: the commentator remarks of Caleb Williams that "when a work is so directly pointed at every band which connects society, and at every principle which renders it amiable, its very merits become noxious as they tend to cause its being known in a wider circle." So obnoxious are Godwin's principles for this critic that he sees in Caleb Williams, which he calls an "extraordinary performance," only an intent to
"attack religion, virtue, government, laws, and above all, the desire . . . of leaving a good name to posterity." He thinks Godwin is writing the novel "in order to render the laws of his country odious."  

This last charge aroused a heated correspondence in subsequent issues of the British Critic. A few months after the initial review of Caleb Williams, a supporter of the journal's position gives a minute exposure of "the unfair efforts of the author of Caleb Williams, to throw an odium upon the laws of his country." Godwin himself enters the fray shortly thereafter: he denies the intention attributed to him as "a mistake into which no attentive and clearsighted reader could possibly fall." In view of the usual twentieth-century classification of Caleb Williams as a novel of purpose, the point to be made here is that even the politically hypersensitive reviewer, alert to every manifestation of Godwin's hatred doctrines, manages to deduce the wrong purpose from the narrative.

With the exception of the British Critic, then, Caleb Williams, like Political Justice the preceding year, was on the whole greeted favorably and judged objectively by most of its first readers and critics, even by those who disagree with or are indifferent to Godwin's philosophical theories. Apparently the fact that Godwin was considered pre-eminently a psychological novelist rather than primarily a doctrinal
one preserved his high reputation for fiction; for Godwin the novelist continued to be generally respected, even after the political climate turned very stormy for Godwin the philosopher during the next few years. The year 1794 was perhaps the last in the nineties in which a measure of objectivity and tolerance for radical theories per se could be widely found.

5. THE TRIUMPH OF THE CONSERVATIVES AND THE CONSIDERATIONS

The French Revolution and its Consequences must occupy and alarm the thoughts of every man who reflects and stands in awe of the misery and desolation which have been brought upon the earth, and of the judgments which may be yet impending over Europe. . . . My mind is either borne down or hurried away with the terrors of impending desolation, and the overthrow of fixed, regulated, established government.

Thomas James Mathias

The political events of the later nineties provided a darkening context for any ideas of reform or change; the striking reversal from the glorious earlier years of the
decade to the disillusionment occasioned by contemporary happenings is well put by Hazlitt: "the French Revolution was the only match that ever took place between philosophy and experience: and waking from the trance of theory to the sense of reality, we hear the words, truth, reason, virtue, liberty, with the same indifference or contempt, that the cynic who has married a jilt or a termagant, listens to the rhapsodies of lovers."\(^{86}\) England was in the nineties almost uniformly unsuccessful against the French. Pitt initially expected the conflict to be very brief: France was at war with Austria, Prussia, and Spain, as well as with England, and the Prime Minister undertook to weld all of France's enemies into a great coalition. But the task of subduing the French proved much more difficult than Pitt had anticipated. Mismanaged and unlucky, the English campaign dragged on and on. By 1795 several of Pitt's former allies had made peace with France and were now fighting England. The following years were marked for England by a succession of abortive peace efforts, blundering military policies, and threatened French invasions. After Napoleon came into prominence, his successes contrasted especially gravely with the bad fortunes of the English. Already laboring under repeated reverses, England by 1797 found the situation very gloomy indeed: Austria capitulated to the French, the Bank of England suspended payments, Ireland
was in near rebellion, and the British seamen at Spithead and the Nore mutinied. Though not as uniformly disastrous as 1797, the rest of the nineties continued to bring disappointments for England, including the French invasion of Switzerland in 1798; and her war prospects at the time of Pitt's resignation in February 1801 were very dismal. 87

During these years, the Pitt ministry was much more successful in consolidating public opinion behind it at home than it was in evolving a satisfactory war policy: the governmental military strategy failed because of fragmented aims, but that on the domestic front was single-mindedly repressive. The patriotism born of war and fear had brought most of the Portland Whigs into Pitt's government by mid-1794: only Fox and a few followers were left in opposition. The anti-government elements in the general population were in a proportional minority: national crisis roused the majority to a fierce conservatism and loyalty, and repressive measures were not only generally accepted, but also often actively demanded. 88 While England was engaged in the long struggle against France, the government became increasingly totalitarian. The campaign against Jacobinism was pursued with what a modern historian has called "Machiavellian realism": no technique of counter-propaganda or suppression was forgotten—neither the cultivation of loyal clergymen and country gentleman, the
subsidizing of the press, the packing of juries, nor the employment of spies and agents provocateurs. A series of acts from 1795 to 1799 perfected the machinery of repression: the Habeas Corpus Act remained suspended; all meetings and lectures were rigidly supervised; all secret associations and federations were forbidden; trade unions or any combinations of workmen for better wages and working conditions were punishable by summary jurisdiction; printing presses were placed under censorship by a system of registration; and anyone who attacked the constitution was liable to seven years' transportation. Armed expressions of discontent were even more firmly repressed: incipient rebellion in Ireland was crushed and some of the leaders of the 1797 naval mutinies promptly hanged.

Class panic, hatred of France, and terror of what Gibbon calls "the French disease, the wild theories of equal and boundless freedom," possessed upholders of the establishment, who spewed forth a stream of propaganda against radicalism, beginning in the mid-nineties and lasting well into the nineteenth century. It was a massive--and effective--attack on the New Philosophy, directed especially against Godwin, its chief English adherent, though for a time against advocates of any change whatever. During the war years, anyone expressing dissatisfaction with English institutions was forthwith labeled Jacobin; conservatives
who saw "systematic treason and rebellion" lurking in every speculation could not discriminate among liberals of varied hues and tarred all indiscriminately with the same brush. Reform was dead, hopelessly confused with Jacobin extremism, and subversion was the champion bogey of the day. 92 By 1800 most of the English liberals had fallen silent or turned conservative, and the originally conservative had hardened into rigid Toryism. "Jacobinism was destroyed," writes Godwin of this time, "its party, as a party, was extinguished: its tenets were involved in almost universal unpopularity and odium; they were deserted by almost every man, high or low, in the island of Great Britain"; indeed, "even the starving labourer in the alehouse is become the champion of aristocracy." 93

So far as Godwin was concerned, the reversal of his fortunes had begun as early as 1795, when the practical reformers repudiated him. In the autumn of 1795, the Pitt government, having been briefly frustrated by the acquittals of Hardy, Tooke, and Thelwall, determined on more severe repressive legislation. Already political suspects could be held without trial. Following a protest meeting a hundred and fifty thousand strong against the war with France, the king's coach was attacked by a mob, and Parliament was promptly debating the Seditious Meetings and the Treasonable Practices Bills, both soon to become law. 94
Godwin's pamphlet Considerations on Lord Grenville's and Mr. Pitt's Bills was occasioned by these two measures. His pseudonym, "A Lover of Order," indicates his return to an attitude toward practical politics more typical of him than the partisan immediacy of Cursory Strictures: he seeks to stay clear of faction and present the point of view of the objective, rationally enlightened man. Godwin firmly condemns both governmental repression and liberal agitation: he argues that though the government should protect itself from violence, and though the radical groups may give cause for alarm, the measures being contemplated are ruthlessly vindictive and unreasonable and pose a grave threat to liberty.\footnote{By}

But in the attempt to rise above party, Godwin much offended the radical wing of the reform groups. Believing in the spread of rational enlightenment by reading and friendly discussion, and disapproving of inflammatory emotional appeals and mass political organization, he censures the impassioned lectures of his friend and follower John Thelwall and the activities of the London Corresponding Society. Though Grenville and Pitt bear the onus of guilt, Godwin's remarks on ill-vised political agitation loomed large to the attacked parties, and bitter quarrels followed.\footnote{A movement against Godwin that was to leave him with few adherents among the practical reformers soon began; the}
incident was but the portent of that reaction against him which in the course of a few years made him the most hated man of the day.

C. THE ATTACK OF THE ANTI-JACOBINS

1. GODWIN'S WORKS IN THE ANTI-JACOBIN PERIODICALS AND POETRY

LOUD howls the storm along the neighbouring shore--BRITAIN indignant hears the frantic roar: Her generous Sons pour forth on every side, Firm in their Country's cause--their Country's pride! . . .

Yes! happy BRITAIN, on thy tranquil Coast No Trophies mad Philosophy shall boast: . . .

While Cities, Cottages, and Camps contend, Their King, their Laws, their Country to defend.

"Lines Written at the Close of the Year 1797" Anti-Jacobian; or, Weekly Examiner

The "Enquiry concerning Political Justice" . . . has occasioned more literary warfare, than any production during the last fifty years; nor do we remember controversy to have been carried on with greater acrimony since Lauder's audacious attack on Milton.

Monthly Mirror (1801)
Never did book rise or sink more rapidly. Now it flared a meteor
... and now it sunk a cold
and heavy dreg upon the ground.
George Gilfillan97

Starting about 1797 when, as we have seen, England's fortunes were at low ebb, anti-Jacobin literature begins to pour from the presses to bolster her faith in herself and to protect her heritage against the French principles that seemed to threaten her very life. The country as a whole had now come round to Burke's way of thinking. The anti-Jacobin press is the literary analogue of the ministry's repressive legislation, and is similarly determined to stamp out any advocacy of change. Just as the constitutional reform societies were seen by the government as hotbeds of sedition, the liberal literature is viewed by the conservative writers as tantamount to treason.

The country at large seemed beset by a conspiracy mania: all liberals and radicals are continually depicted during this period as engaged in a plot to overthrow the country, and their acts and writings are constantly misconstrued and misrepresented.98 An enormous amount of this anti-Jacobin propaganda is aimed at Godwin; for, as he points out, "it was my fortune to be, among English writers,
the most conspicuous and generally known of those . . . nicknamed advocates of the New Philosophy." The onslaught is not directed against the philosopher alone of course; finding a non-existent unity among their opponents, the conservatives blame literature as the tool of a concerted design, the literary arm of a political conspiracy: these Jacobins are "ignorant, and designing, and false, and wicked, and turbulent, and anarchical--various in their language, but united in their plans, and steadily pursuing through hatred and contempt, the destruction of their country." The term "Jacobin" is comprehensively defined to include "whoever is the enemy of Christianity and natural religion, of monarchy, of order, subordination, property and justice" --that is, anyone averse in any way to the established system.

Much of the extensive literature of liberal propaganda which so alarmed Godwin's contemporaries has proved ephemeral and is now very difficult to trace; that the press labored under the burden of radical writings of every shade is the constant lament of the conservatives: "the torrent of licentiousness incessantly rushing forth from their numerous presses, exceeds, in violence and duration, all former examples," deplores the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine in the Prospectus of its first issue in 1798. The anti-Jacobins deprecate the subtlety of the liberals
almost as much as their productivity, the popular contemporary novelist Mrs. Jane West complaining that

the title of a work no longer announces its intention: books of travels are converted into vehicles of politics and systems of legislation. Female letter writers teach us the arcana of government. . . . Traits on education subvert every principle of filial reverence: Writers on morality lay the axe to the root of domestic harmony. . . . The Muse chants the yell of discord, and, under the pretense of universal citizenship, sounds the dirge of that amor patriae which her classic predecessor sought to inspire. . . . the novel . . . is converted into an offensive weapon, directed against our religion, our morals, or our government. . . . The egotism of infidelity . . . may be the undesigned cause of some of these effects; but repeated deviations from an ostensible subject can only proceed from a settled design of covertly attacking whatever science once taught us to revere.103

The conservatives quickly proved adept in organizing their own design and appropriating all these techniques of propaganda for their own purposes. "LITERATURE, well or ill conducted, IS THE GREAT ENGINE by which . . . all civilized states must ultimately be supported or overthrown," asserts the satirist Thomas James Mathias, and pamphlets, sermons, poems, reviews, lectures, magazine and newspaper articles, caricatures, and novels by authors who subscribed to his opinion proliferated in the last years of the nineties and the first of the nineteenth century.104

An enormous amount of this material is devoted to Godwin as the foremost among the literary Jacobins. The "immoral and impious absurdities" of Political Justice are
concisely listed in a British Critic of 1801: "that to love our parents, our children, or our country, is contemptible superstition; that to make or to observe promises or oaths, is immoral; that gratitude is a vice, marriage an odious monopoly, remorse a prejudice, and crimes mere mistakes; that the murderer is no more an object of indignation or punishment than the dagger with which he kills; finally, that all property is usurpation, all government tyranny, all laws oppression, and all religion imposture."105 Except for the omission of Godwin's utopian speculations in the eighth book of Political Justice, this catalogue provides a useful summary of those parts of Godwin's philosophical system which were attacked with unwearied zeal by the anti-Godwinists for more than a decade. These principles, along with Godwin's candid account of his and Mary Wollstonecraft's unorthodox sexual behavior in the Memoirs of 1797, constitute the chief—but not the only—targets of the anti-Jacobin school, though of course such attacks typically bear but little relation to Godwin's actual assumptions and acts. These propagandists almost invariably rely on rhetorical, not logical, proof: they appeal to the emotions and prejudices of their readers and make no effort to analyze the arguments or to present objectively the position of their opponent. The anti-Jacobins thus have a common bias and a common store of material,
but they demonstrate a good deal of inventiveness in the variations they perform upon their stock themes.

Godwin professes complete disdain for such a "rabble of scurrilities" as "the vulgar contumelies of the author of the Pursuits of Literature, novels of buffoonery and scandal to the amount of half a score, and British Critics, Anti-Jacobin Newspapers, and Anti-Jacobin Magazines with number." Had he examined them, he would have been amazed at the Godwin they present: the composite portrait culled from their pages images a corrupter of youth, a reviler of familial affection and true virtue, a godless infidel, a libertine, a leveler, an arch-republican, a bloodthirsty revolutionist, a heartless monster of inhuman rationality, a malign demon bearing "the cloven foot of . . . pure genuine Jacobinism," and a visionary and farcically inept fool. Just as the respectable and the reactionary saw Godwin as both formidable adversary and impotent enthusiast, so also the techniques they use against him frequently commingle the tragic and the satiric in exposing the results of his philosophy.

Satire, parody, and ridicule are the deadliest weapons of the Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner, although this miscellany also undertakes a serious "confutation of the falsehoods and misrepresentations" in the liberal press. Inspired by the ministry in late 1797 as "an
instrument of defence" for the government, the weekly ran only until the following July, but its clever principal contributors--George Canning, John Hookham Frere, George Ellis, and William Gifford--won for the journal a wide following: 50,000 readers at their own estimate. 108 Glorying in the "Prospectus" of the magazine in their "partiality and prejudice" and their failure to arrive "at that wild and unshackled freedom of thought, which rejects all habit, all wisdom of former times, all restraints of ancient usage, and of local attachment; and which judges upon each subject, whether of politicks or morals, as it arises, by lights entirely its own, without reference to recognized principle, or established practice," the Anti-Jacobin writers conceive it their duty to "lash the vile impostures" of "the specious bastard brood . . . Sprung from a Parent, nurse of thousand crimes, The New Philosophy of modern times." 109 Among that brood, the favorite victims are Fox and the opposition Whigs; the Rational Dissenters Priestley, David Williams, and Gilbert Wakefield; Coleridge, Southey, Paine, Holcroft, and, of course, Godwin.

As the mouthpiece for Godwinian theories, the Jacobin poet Mr. Higgins is created by Canning and Frere, who satirize the New Philosophy by publishing their comic poetry as Higgins' serious work. In addition, Higgins is given a number of introductory letters in which Jacobin principles
are inadvertently damned out of the mouth of their own spokesman. Explaining the "New Principles," Higgins declares that

our first principle is. . . "Whatever is, is WRONG"--that Institutions civil and religious, that Social Order, as it is called in your cant, and regular Government, and Law, and I know not what other fantastic inventions, are but so many cramps and fetters on the free agency of man's natural intellect and moral sensibility. . . .

Our second principle is the "eternal and absolute PERFECTIBILITY of MAN." We contend, that if . . . we have risen from a level with the Cabbages of the field . . . by the mere exertion of our own energies, we should, if these energies were not repressed and subdued by the operation of prejudice, and folly, by KING-CRAFT and PRIEST-CRAFT, and the other evils incident to what is called Civilized Society, continue to exert and expand ourselves . . . which would in time raise Man from his present biped state, to a rank more worthy of his endowments and aspirations; to a rank in which he would be . . . all MIND, would enjoy unclouded perspicacity and perpetual vitality . . . and never Die, but by his own consent.110

Since the "NEW SYSTEM of PHILOSOPHY" comprehends "not Politics only, and Religion, but Morals and Manners, and generally whatever goes to the composition or holding together of Human Society; in all of which a total change and Revolution is absolutely necessary," Higgins naturally produces a poem on marriage, in which he "describes the vicious refinement of what is called Civilized Society, in respect to Marriage" and "contends with infinite spirit and philosophy against the factitious sacredness and indissolubility of that Institution."111 What the Jacobins basically want,
according to Higgins, is to unhinge the present notions of men with regard to the obligations of Civil Society, and to substitute in lieu of a sober contentment, and regular discharge of the duties incident to each man's particular situation, a wild desire of undefinable latitude and extravagance; an aspiration after shapeless somethings, that can neither be described nor understood, a contemptuous disgust at all that is, and a persuasion that nothing is as it ought to be--to operate, in short, a general discharge of every man . . . from every thing that laws divine or human; that local customs, immemorial habits, and multiplied examples impose upon him; and to set them about doing what they like, where they like, when they like, and how they like--without reference to any Law but their own Will, or to any consideration of how others may be affected by their conduct. . . . I hold every Government . . . as a malum in se--an evil to be eradicated . . . by force, if force be practicable, if not, by the artillery of Reason. . . . Destroy the frame of Society . . . and there is then some hope of a totally new order of things--of a Radical Reform in the present corrupt System of the World.\textsuperscript{112}

Canning and Frere's treatment of the Godwinian Higgins epitomizes a favorite method of the anti-Jacobin school: taking Godwin's principles and purporting to show how they would work out in real life. The characteristic result is, as here, catastrophic relativism: Godwin's theories of reason, truth, and virtue are as misconstrued in the satire of the Anti-Jacobin as the philosopher's views on force. Yet however full of misrepresentations and exaggerations Higgins' letters and verses may be, they do avoid mere invective and personal abuse and stick to satirizing Jacobin philosophy.

The attacks of the Anti-Jacobin's successor are less
satiric than libelous. The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor (1798-1821), edited by John Richards Green, continues, far less brilliantly, the opposition to liberalism of its namesake. More interested in morals than in politics, the review was closely connected with the Tories and the Anglicans, as its later incorporation of the True Churchman's Magazine indicates. The subtitle makes explicit the magazine's chosen role as arbiter of the press, and it was in fact extremely influential in shaping public opinion. Unlike the Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner, which specializes in political analysis and original poetry, the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine is largely devoted to reviewing the literature of the day: it castigates everything unorthodox and recommends what it considers proper with such unwearied zeal that it has been called a "veritable bibliography of fugitive controversial writings." Not content with a mere endorsement of anti-Jacobin propaganda, such writers for the magazine as Robert Bisset and Richard Polwhele themselves contributed to swell the volume of this material.

That Godwin's works would be handled roughly by the reviewers of such a periodical is obvious; what is more remarkable is the quantity of incidental comments disparaging the philosopher and his work which appear in the issues of the nineties: indeed, the whole course of Godwin's
reputation can be traced in the plethora of references over the years. Such a dangerous enemy of society does Godwin seem to the writers of the Anti-Jacobin Review in 1798 that they consider it their "official business" to unmask "the absurd and pernicious consequences of the Godwinian philosophy." Not only does Godwin advance "false and pernicious tenets": he is ignorant as well as erroneous and "really a very bungling anatomist of the human mind." His philosophy is an "anomaly from every rule of sound thinking, virtuous sentiment, and beneficent conduct," and his theories are "the creatures of his own fancy, without any proof to support them, and with the experience of all mankind to demonstrate their absurdity." Godwin is really not a philosopher or metaphysician deducing from reason at all, but a kind of poet projecting from imagination: "he has created a state of society for himself, and arranged the regulations of that society as seemed good to himself. . . . It is a picture, but entirely a fancy picture. . . . plagiarisms of bad poetry, or original fictions, still more extravagant, chimerical and pernicious." Godwin's vision of the perfect society, with its exaltation of universal benevolence and justice over particular affection, arouses the utmost horror: such "cold blooded calculating principles" are "formed only to generate selfishness in the shape of philanthropy, and insensibility to private suffering,"
in the likeness of regard for public good."\textsuperscript{120} Such stupid, such degrading dogmas," such "empty and iniquitous doctrine," "very truly characterized as absurd, fantastical, and contrary to common sense and experience," reveal Godwin's true position as "the avowed high priest of a most pestiferous religion."\textsuperscript{121} The only "proper punishment" for the "promulgators of such senseless and blasphemous doctrines would be the discipline of the mad-house."\textsuperscript{122} But, despite its usual deadly seriousness, even the \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review} has a few humorous moments: the July 1798 issue features an enormous foldout caricature of a heterogeneous assortment of radicals, with Godwin among them as an ass reared on hind legs and clutching \textit{Political Justice} in hoof.\textsuperscript{123}

The last of the periodicals that Godwin himself mentions as systematically attacking him is the \textit{British Critic}. This magazine, like the \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review}, is a Tory and Anglican organ which later united with a theological journal.\textsuperscript{124} Since the \textit{British Critic} is more interested in religion and politics than in literature, there is less attention paid to Godwin in its pages than in those of the \textit{Anti-Jacobin Review}; but what it lacks in frequency, it makes up for in viciousness. Since something of the bias and tone of this magazine has already been indicated, a few examples will suffice to demonstrate the vituperation
conservative Christians of the 1790's felt justified in heaping upon Godwin. Unfavorable as the British Critic's reviews of Political Justice and Caleb Williams are, the magazine is even harsher to Godwin's later works. Its writers never tire of using Godwin's own doctrines as a rod with which to chastise his new productions. For example, in reviewing Antonio, Godwin's ill-fated tragedy of 1800, the journalist despairs of perfectibility, since in this drama "Mr. G. has taken such terribly long strides backward, that we are absolutely at a loss to know in what age to look for him." Nor does the critic allow the self-tilling plough of Political Justice a rest: "on this judicious speculation he seems to have acted; he turned his pen into a ream of paper, and left it to perform its office without any superintendence." Having condescendingly analyzed the "crude and undigested mass" of Antonio, the reviewer exclaims that he would "not have wasted a single page on the most worthless production . . . that ever came before us . . . had it not been for the circumstances of the times, which have given a degree of consequence to whatever drops from these pseudo-philosophers." From the "nauseous" duty of examining Godwin's work the British Critic has never shrunk: "we recollect, with honest pride, that we were among the foremost to point out the folly, arrogance, atrocity, and absolute insanity, of his Political Justice:
and, while his besotted worshippers were distantly sounding
the sackbut and dulcimer before a fancied image of gold,
we ventured to approach the idol, and inform them what it
really was—a dwarfish and insignificant mass of miry clay
mixed up with blood!" The conclusion of the critique de-
serves quotation as an epitome of Godwin's reputation in
the reactionary period at the end of the century:

we have long been sick of Mr. Godwin's multi-
farious productions; sick of his politics and of
his novels; his criticisms and his plays: since
whatever may be their ostensible purport, their
uniform object is to afford this most ignorant
and conceited sophist additional opportunities
of degrading virtue and exalting vice; of ridi-
culing the long-established opinions which come
in aid of the laws; of depriving the maxims of
morality of their ancient sanction; of tearing
from the wretched their dearest consolation;
and of removing from the great mass of mankind
every social bond, and every salutary restric-
tion: and all this under the equally mad and
wicked pretext of forwarding the PERFECTIBILITY
OF THE HUMAN SPECIES!!!

Godwin is not only foolish and wicked to the writers
of the British Critic, but also unoriginal: he is a mere
compiler and translator who "resolved to collect . . . all
the immoral and impious absurdities, which he found dis-
persed through the French writers of the last half-century"
and "to rake together the scattered offal of all the pesti-
lential sophists of the age into one noisome heap, which
he called a Treatise on Political Justice. His positions
were indeed borrowed . . . but no man before him had obliged
the English public with a complete digest, and a convenient manual, of the whole theory of vice."\textsuperscript{126} The explanation that Godwin stole all his theories from France represents another aspect of the conspiracy mania of the period: English Jacobins, the literary as well as the political, are exactly the same as the French ones. And, in spite of Godwin's hatred of the French principle of self-love as man's guiding quality and his substitution for it of rational benevolence, the idea that his theories are derivative from French philosophy persisted, as we have seen, until quite recently.\textsuperscript{127}

The accusations hurled at Godwin by the \textit{British Critic} are presented in another genre by Thomas James Mathias. In the "vulgar contumelies" of \textit{The Pursuits of Literature}, Godwin is again depicted as at once devilishly wicked, incredibly stupid, and unoriginal.\textsuperscript{128} The tenaciously anonymous creator of this massive and popular "satirical poem in four dialogues" calls his work "a Conversation on the various subjects of Literature, in a very extended sense, as it affects publick order, regulated government, and polished society."\textsuperscript{129} Jacobins, Catholics, Shakespearean commentators, classical scholars, poets, and preachers jostle one another in the pages of \textit{The Pursuits}: for Mathias is a man of many grievances, and Godwin is only one of them. Mathias sees himself as a latter-day Augustan
humanist satirizing the view of life that a modern critic calls "simple-minded Puritan utopianism." Though Mathias is less the Pope he thinks than a Settle, his poem went through sixteen editions from 1798 to 1812 and inspired numerous imitations and rebuttals. Physically The Pursuits is an imposing production, comprising in the seventh edition of 1798 over 600 pages of prefaces, poetry, footnotes, defenses, and translations of learned quotations from several languages. The poem itself, appearing at the rate of about four lines per page, is buried in commentary.

It is in the amazingly voluminous footnotes that Mathias' animadversions on the "contemptible nonsense of William Godwin" chiefly appear. Of Political Justice Mathias says frankly, "I looked indeed for a superstructure raised on the revolutionary ground of equality, watered with blood from the guillotine; and such I found it." Godwin's treatise is composed of "pantomime fancies," "the most curious and incongruous ideas ever exhibited," and "whirlpools of desolating nonsense"; it is written with "cold-blooded indifference to all . . . honourable feelings," and its doctrines will necessarily lead to "plunder, confiscation, revolutionary diurnal murders, and the insurrection of the enterprising talents of gifted, bold, and bad men UPON ALL PROPERTY, publick and private." Mathias has much to say about Godwin's attacks on property, God,
marriage, and gratitude and about his utopian speculations on sleep, death, and the automatic plough. Like most of the anti-Jacobins, Mathias lumps all liberals together and envisions them plotting an immediate violent overthrow of the government.

The Enquirer (1797) also receives Mathias' attention in a ten-page footnote: the essays achieve "the acmé or height of absurdity and wildness." Though "the sentiments are either so trite, or so absurd, or so wicked, that it is difficult to choose," Mathias is particularly upset by Godwin's "desolating, unfounded, and silly opinions on all trades, professions, and occupations; wholly subversive of the order of society." Mathias at last announces in exasperation: "I must copy two thirds (at the least) if I wished to express, and to expose, all that is reprehensible in this volume, or wicked, or ridiculous, or trite beyond belief." Readers must decide for themselves whether Godwin's "impiety be not even less than his folly; and the weakness of his understanding more visible than the plunging violence of his exertions." Like the reviewers for the British Critic, Mathias is both horrified and bored by the unoriginal Godwin, who "is at best but a mongrel and an exotick. He is grafted upon the stock of Condorcet and the French rabble. . . . I really am fatigued with this man. Nothing but the importance of the consequences and effects of his wild, weak, wicked,
and absurd notions . . . could have prevailed upon me to have wasted irretrievably so much of my time upon them."\textsuperscript{134} Though the supposedly dire results of Godwin's doctrines constrain most of the anti-Jacobins to attack the philosopher as a menace to society, a few of the sketches and poems in which Godwin figures do present him intelligently as the "meek and mild" abstract theorist he really is.\textsuperscript{135} But most of the conservatives are as unfair as Mathias and picture Godwin as "a spirit evil and foul" intent on "hatching an obstinate sedition from pamper'd lust and infidel despair."\textsuperscript{136}

Few aspects of Godwin's character and private life escape mauling at the hands of the anti-Jacobins, but far more interesting than his "ridiculous vanity" or "pompous solemnity" or "affected gravity" is the supposed "licentiousness" for which he was notorious.\textsuperscript{137} Not only are Godwin's philosophical strictures on marriage said to present "the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, as one of the highest improvements to result from political justice!" but he also flouted public morality by actually putting into practice "the immorality and licentiousness of ideas, with respect to women" and then detailing his conduct to the world.\textsuperscript{138} The combination of Godwin's marital views in \textbf{Political Justice} and the frank account of sexual unorthodoxy in the \textbf{Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of}
the Rights of Woman (1798) aroused a veritable storm of controversy. Godwin the reviler of connubial monopoly startled his friends and acquaintances by legalizing his liaison with Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797; but the following year the grieving widower shocked a far wider audience by his candid and touching tribute to the memory of his wife, who was already entrenched in the public mind as the archetypal female radical for A Vindication of the Rights of Men (1790) and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). Godwin lives up to his ideal of perfect sincerity and does not gloss over Mary's relationship with Imlay, her illegitimate child, her attempts at suicide, her pre-marital affair with him, or her lack of deathbed religion. Along with the Memoirs, Godwin also presented to the public Mary's Posthumous Works in four volumes, including her unfinished novel Maria: or, The Wrongs of Woman, with its heroine the victim of matrimonial despotism.139

Godwin's tender memorial effort was scathingly received: his biography and Mary's novel are widely described in contemporary comments as blatant manuals of vice.140 The Memoirs seems to have found a wide audience, for it went into a second (slightly revised) edition later in 1798, but most of its reviewers pillory it—and Maria—venomously. Southey's distaste for Godwin's "want of all feeling in stripping his dead wife naked" is mild indeed in comparison
with some of the other comments the Memoirs inspired. Godwin is branded as the "infamous and blasphemous biographer" of a "philosophical wanton": though he makes "a biographical attempt to canonize prostitution," his account forms only "an aera in the annals of human impudence." The book is the "most hurtful" of the entire year as it is, but the amours Godwin leaves untold, "if faithfully related, would make a book, in comparison with which . . . Moll Flanders would be a model of purity." After a slashing critique of the Memoirs, the Anti-Jacobin Review levels a Parthian shot from its Index with "Prostitution, see Mary Wollstonecraft." What now seems one of Godwin's finest works was to many of his contemporaries only another infamous confirmation of his moral depravity, and it materially hastened the decline of his already badly-damaged reputation. Ironically, his well-intentioned tribute intensified animosity against him and provided hitherto unknown ammunition for his enemies by appearing to confirm the widespread opinion that the New Philosophy sophisticatedly sanctioned moral license. The conservatives were not slow to take advantage of such an opportunity: 1798, the year in which the Memoirs and Maria appeared, brings an increased barrage of anti-Godwin literature, and the next few years show no decline.

All sense of proportion and decency deserts Godwin's
opponents: no charge is too outrageous to find believers
and no abuse too coarse to be printed. The Reverend Richard
Polwhele, in The Unsex'd Females: A Poem, Addressed to the
Author of The Pursuits of Literature (1798), derides at
length "Wollstonecraft, whom no decorum checks" and views
with horror "the fatal example of the Arch-priestess of
female Libertinism."¹⁴⁶ Like his mentor Mathias, Polwhele
appends voluminous footnotes to his satire for further cas-
tigation of his victims. He attributes all Mary's errors
to her neglect of "religious restraints," for such a woman
"will commonly be found ripe for every species of licen-
tiousness." Appalled at "the triumphant report of Godwin"
that Mary "was neither a Christian, nor a Mahometan, nor
even a Deist," Polwhele concludes piously:

I cannot but think, that the Hand of Providence is
visible, in her life, her death, and in the Memoirs
themselves. As she was given up to her "heart's
lusts"... that the fallacy of her doctrines and
the effects of an irreligious conduct, might be
manifested to the world; and as she died a death
that strongly marked the distinction of the sexes,
by pointing out the destiny of woman, and the dis-
tresses to which they are liable; so her husband
was permitted, in writing her Memoirs, to labour
under a temporary infatuation, that every inci-
dent might be seen without a gloss--every fact
exposed with an apology.¹⁴⁷

The Memoirs also drove Mathias himself to hasten into
print once more with The Shade of Alexander Pope, on the
Banks of the Thames: A Satirical Poem (1799), which belabors
Mary and Godwin with heavy sarcasm and obscene innuendo.¹⁴⁸
But the nadir of taste must surely be reached in "The Vision of Liberty," a poem in Spenserian stanzas which appears in the Anti-Jacobin Review in 1801. The author heartily abuses Voltaire, Fox, Paine, and Helen Maria Williams, but saves his coarsest remarks for

William and Mary, sooth, a couple jolly;  
Who married, note ye how it came to pass,  
Although each held that marriage was but folly—

Her husband, sans-culottes, was melancholy,  
For Mary verily would wear the breeches—  
God help poor silly men from such usurping b____s.

Whilon this dame the Rights of Women writ,  
That is the title to her book she places,  
Exhorting bashful womankind to quit  
All foolish modesty, and coy grimaces;  
And name their backsides as it were their faces;  
Such license loose-tongued liberty adores,  
Which adds to female speech exceeding graces;  
Lucky the maid that on her volume pores,  
A scripture, archly fram'd, for propagating w____s.

William hath penn'd a waggon-load of stuff,  
And Mary's life at last he needs must write,  
Thinking her whoredoms were not known enough,  
Till fairly printed off in black and white—  
With wondrous glee and pride, this simple wight  
Her brothel feats of wantonness sets down,  
Being her spouse, he tells, with huge delight,  
How oft she cuckolded the silly clown,  
And lent, O lovely piece! herself to half the town. 149

No wonder that Lamb was pleased to find Godwin "quite another guess sort of gentleman from what your Anti-Jacobin Christians imagine him" with "neither horns nor claws" despite his "noisy fame"; or that De Quincey calls him "the great mormo set up to terrify all England" and records that "most people felt of Mr. Godwin with the same alienation and horror as of a
ghoul, or a bloodless vampyre. or the monster created by Frankenstein"; or that Godwin himself remarks: "I was at length attacked from every side, and in a style which defied all moderation and decency. No vehicle was too mean, no language too coarse and insulting, by which to convey the venom of my adversaries. . . . The cry spread like a general infection."¹⁵⁰

2. GODWIN'S WORKS IN THE ANTI-JACOBIN NOVELS

The rage for novels does not decrease; and . . . while the enemies of our church and state continue to pour their poison into unwary ears through this channel, it behoves the friends of our establishments to convey an antidote by the same course; especially as those who are most likely to be infected by false principles, will not search for a refutation of them in profound and scientific compositions.

Jane West, The Infidel Father (1802)¹⁵¹

Since conservative writers like the novelist Mrs. West feel so strongly about the dangers of fiction tainted with the New Philosophy, it is not surprising to find the liberal novelists, who so often attack established religion, morality,
and government, being themselves assailed by the anti-Jacobins: among those soundly censured are Robert Bage, Charlotte Smith, Mary Hays, Mary "Perdita" Robinson, Elizabeth Inchbald, Thomas Holcroft, and of course Mary Wollstonecraft. Such works as the "trash of Mrs. Robinson," that "superannuated prostitute"; Nature and Art (1796), "that most impudent, malignant, and audacious heap of absurdity by Mrs. Inchbald," "the scavenger of democracy"; and the "reprehensible" Emma Courtney (1796) of Mary Hays brand their authors as the "false malignant and sophisticated ... disciples of the Godwinian philosophy," all the "spawn of the same monster." What is surprising is how lightly Godwin's own fiction gets off, considering the abuse heaped on his other works. The fusillade directed against Caleb Williams in the pages of the British Critic has already been noticed, and others also oppugn this novel. The Reverend George Hutton in a printed sermon warns Godwin to "be cautious of again obtruding on the world such gross misrepresentations, such unfounded calumnies, as appear in his 'Adventures of Caleb Williams'; and Mathias moralizes:

Godwin's dry page no statesman e'er believed,
Though fiction aids, what sophistry conceiv'd;
Genius may droop o'er Falkland's funeral cry:
No patriot weeps, when gifted villains die.

But if Godwin's fiction is occasionally derided as merely "the servile trappings of his miscreant opinions," most of the anti-Jacobin fulminations are reserved for Political Justice and the Memoirs.
Much unlike his other works of the late nineties, The Enquirer and the Memoirs, Godwin's novel St. Leon (1799) greatly added to his literary fame without further damaging his moral reputation. Even that conservative watchdog the Anti-Jacobin Review is unable to unearth the expected "poison" and is forced to admit that "the evil it contains is little." Godwin's preface, modifying his previous doctrine on "the affections and charities of private life" which he now finds conducive to "the culture of the heart," somewhat appeased his conservative critics, some of whom are so rash as to prophesy his total recantation and conversion to Christianity. St. Leon brought Godwin £400 and much praise from such contemporaries as Hazlitt, Coleridge, Holcroft, Crabb Robinson, and Sophia Lee; Keats, Shelley, and Byron were later warm admirers of the book. Hazlitt records that "St. Leon did not lessen the wonder, nor the public admiration of him [as a novelist], or rather 'seemed like another morn risen on mid-noon.'" On a visit to Ireland in the summer of 1800, Godwin found that it was his authorship of St. Leon, "a much greater favourite" there than Caleb Williams, which made him particularly sought after. St. Leon had first appeared 2 December 1799 and became popular enough to go into a second edition only two months later. Like Caleb Williams, St. Leon was quickly translated into French and German and was frequently reprinted in England during the nineteenth century.
Edward Dubois' parody of 1800 offers an additional testimonial to widespread knowledge of St. Leon. The full title of Godwin's novel is St. Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century; Dubois calls his parody St. Godwin: A Tale of the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Century by Count Reginald de St. Leon. Dubois' work consists almost wholly of actual passages from St. Leon rendered ridiculous by quotation out of context, omissions, or the addition of italics and capitals to give a false emphasis, all embellished with the author's sarcastic asides. Dubois is largely concerned with satirizing, sometimes tellingly, what he considers the artistic flaws of the novel, though he delivers occasional attacks on the principles of Political Justice and Godwin's supposed advocacy of free love. In concluding the book, Dubois leaves quotation aside and makes the narrator damn himself with his own pen: "thinking from my political writings, that I was a good hand at fiction, I turned my thoughts to novel writing. These I wrote in the same pompous inflated style as I had used in my other publications, hoping that my fine, high-sounding periods would assist to make the unsuspecting reader swallow all the insidious reasoning, absurdity, and nonsense, I could invent. The plan succeeded for some time, but at last, they burlesqued my works, and made me look like a fool!"^162

Unlike Dubois, the other novelists who attack Godwin
focus almost exclusively on what they think are his philosophical tenets. Only rarely do Godwin's novels provide grist for the reactionary mills, and then the fiction is typically alluded to as a device for assailing the doctrines of Political Justice. In Robert Bisset's Modern Literature (1804), for example, Godwin is caricatured as St. Leon, the "English champion" of French perfectibility and "a writer of very considerable ingenuity." Though Bisset devotes most of his attention to ridiculing St. Leon's conduct and philosophy, he does refer to Caleb Williams as "a very interesting tale he has told to disparage fair fame, and high consideration in the community; to vindicate thieves and robbers; and to inculcate that the inmates of jails for crimes, are more virtuous than the most eminent characters in civil and political society; and that penal laws are an intolerable grievance to freemen: in short, to confound all distinctions between reputation and infamy, virtue and vice, innocence and guilt." This technique of turning Godwin's own fiction back upon him as a tool for censuring his philosophy is used as late as 1818 after the appearance of his fourth major novel Mandeville (1817). In the anonymous Prodigious!!! or, Childe Paddie in London (1818), Godwin is presented as Mr. Mandeville, whose behavior ludicrously contradicts his dogma.

Godwin himself appears as a character in a number of
anti-Jacobin novels, for prose fiction occupies a conspicuous place in the campaign of the conservatives. Since the opponents of the New Philosophy feel that its infection has been spread through novels, they provide an antidote in the same medium. As George Walker explains of his satiric novel *The Vagabond* (1799): "it is . . . an attempt to parry the Enemy with their own weapons; for no channel is deemed improper by them, which can introduce their sentiments." Walker and his companion novelists consider fiction a most effective tool of propaganda, for "a Novel may gain attention when arguments of the soundest sense and most perfect eloquence, shall fail to arrest the feet of the Trifler, from the specious paths of the new Philosophy."166

Few of these anti-revolutionary writers leave any doubt as to the identity of their victims: not only are the characters' names often suggestive of their originals, but their conversation also bristles with direct quotations or close paraphrases from the authors under attack, each remark scrupulously footnoted. The writers most frequently cited are Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, Holcroft, Mary Hays, Paine, Thelwall, Helvétius, Hume, and Rousseau, with as many references to Godwin as to all the rest combined.

As early as 1795, novels burlesquing philosophical quixotes begin to appear, but the real vogue of anti-reformist fiction gets under way a few years later and continues
well into the nineteenth century. Since 1801 seems to be the peak year for anti-Jacobin novels, Godwin is scarcely exaggerating when he remarks in *Thoughts Occasioned* that "not even a petty novel for boarding-school misses now ventures to aspire to favour, unless it contain some expressions of dislike and abhorrence to the new philosophy, and its chief (or shall I say its most voluminous?) English adherent."¹⁶⁷ There are at least thirty novels directed either primarily or in part against the New Philosophy, and the large amount of specifically anti-Godwin material in their pages indicates how grave a threat the philosopher's doctrines were felt to pose.

Much of this anti-Jacobin fiction is based on the same formula: the presentation of a philosopher, his followers, and the consequences of putting his theories into practice; Godwin's doctrines are used both as plot motivation and as matter for philosophical discussion among the characters. Sometimes speculation reduced to action proves farcical, sometimes tragic; often the novelist creates a plot combining both effects. Godwin is assailed with all the diversity prose fiction offers—including the parody in *St. Godwin*, the "Menippean satire" in Isaac D'Israeli's *Flim-Flams!* (1805), the oriental tale in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Letters of a Hindoo Rajah* (1796) and in Benjamin Silliman's *Letters of Shahcoolen* (1802), and the domestic
tragedy in Jane West's *A Tale of the Times* (1799).\(^{168}\)

But whether satiric or serious, the anti-Godwin novelists always stress the ironic disparity between man as he is and man as projected in *Political Justice*. The radical imperfections of human nature loom large to Godwin's opponents: most of them are Burkeans who assault the doctrine of rational perfectibility with Christian piety and traditional values. Though some of the anti-Godwin novels, like D'Israeli's *Vaurien* (1797) and Charles Lucas' *The Infernal Quixote* (1801), emphasize the political consequences of the New Philosophy, most of them deal with political systems only in passing and focus on the domestic effects of Godwin's theories.\(^{169}\) Since the private familiar affections that Godwin downgrades in favor of a more universal affection are for the conservatives the bulwark of all virtue, they devote much attention to Godwin's speculations on marriage and find a chief animus among the dangerous heresies of the New Philosophy in its supposed undermining of established morality, especially of the codes governing relations between the sexes. The anti-philosophic novelists typically picture man as a creature of custom and emotion whose nature is not meant to be governed by stern Godwinian rationalism; and they ward off the incursions of reason by glorifying the ancient sanctities of the family—filial and parental love, submission to parent and husband, the
inviolability of the marriage vow—and the organic Burkean community founded on hierarchy, property, and "just prejudices" clothed in "all the decent drapery of life."\textsuperscript{170}

No other tenet of Godwin's philosophy seems to horrify his opponents so much as that of rationally motivated universal benevolence. Godwin's rule of justice demands objectivity and the subordination of the private affections to the good of the whole system, but to his adversaries such a rule is only a clock for a lawless, selfish individualism using the general good as an excuse for trampling on every nearer duty. Yet far from being the relativistic, hedonistic utilitarian he was often taken for, Godwin really seems to be postulating in \textit{Political Justice} an ordered moral universe based on immutable truths. In the reason he exalts as the means of humanity's perpetual improvement the anti-Godwinians can see only the tool of man's ruin; fundamentally diverging from Godwin on the capacity of man to be governed by right motives, these novelists present characters who profess the Godwinian criteria of truth, justice, and universal benevolence as either the foolish victims of good intentions imposed on by specious doctrines or as calculating villains cynically disguising their rampant egoism under the mask of philosophic virtue. For example, Stupeo, a supposedly Godwinian philosopher in \textit{The Vagabond}, instructs his pupil that "'the great mass of mankind are fools. . . . It is the
part of the great men and philosophers to mould them as they please; and when we have shaken off the influence of every thing called principle, are satisfied we have no portion in eternity, and that the fable of an avenging Deity is an old woman's tale, what power, I ask, can control us? We become almost too great for the world; mind seems to rise superior to matter; crime becomes nothing; all that men call murder, incest, lust, and cruelty, is trifling.' . . . 'I feel,' cried Frederick, 'I feel I am now free. I shall render my name immortal, for no human tie, no moral check shall stay the purpose of my power.'"171

The deluded philosophers typically end disenchanted and repentant; such Machiavellians as Stupeo are more edifyingly beheaded by the guillotine or burned alive by savage Indians or reduced to suicidal madness.172

The best of these novels were avidly read. In his preface to the third edition of The Vagabond, Walker remarks that the book had sold two editions in six months despite his refusal to sanction a cheap reprint.173 As it was, there were five editions in two years.174 Walker's is perhaps the most comprehensive attack on the New Philosophy in one novel: it provides almost a compendium of conservative opinion on each point of Godwin's theory, for Walker writes to place "in a practical light" the "prominent absurdities" of "political romances, which never were, and never will
be practical." The epigraph of The Vagabond is "whatever is just, is equal, but whatever is equal is not always just," and Walker exposes the inconsistencies of universal benevolists from the first pages when his Godwinian Dr. Alogos refuses to aid a starving soldier. Though Walker includes many tragic incidents, he conducts his warfare chiefly through satire. The first volume concerns the adventures of Frederick Fenton, the vagabond, who in reducing to practice the theories of political justice imbibed from his tutor Stupeo has become a seducer, an adulterer, an incendiary, a robber, a murderer, and a parricide. Fenton is an unprincipled sensualist who is always able, by means of philosophic cant, to metamorphose his selfish inclinations into the dictates of reason.

Godwin's speculations are put to the test of action with satiric literalness. As "counsel for Archbishop Fenelon versus my own Mother in the famous fire cause," Godwin argues that in accordance with justice and impartial truth one should not save even his own relative from a burning building in preference to someone, like Fénelon, of more benefit to society. Frederick in similar case is calmly reasoning to determine whether his mistress or her father is of more value "when a tremendous crash, and a large column of flame ended my discussion, and I had the horror to see the farmer and his daughter both overwhelmed
in the burning ruins. I was shocked at so dreadful an accident . . . but in this present rascally system of government and society, virtue will not always succeed; and no man can be condemned, if evil should result from a good intention."\textsuperscript{179}

The book concludes with satiric fantasy: Alogos, Stupeo, and Fenton discover in the wilds of America a land of philosophers in which the principles of \textbf{Political Justice} are disastrously embodied. The people are starving while trying to decide by reason where the daily half-hour of work which Godwin speculates would be sufficient in an enlightened state should be applied to the general good. A countryman tells them, "I don't know how it is, since we are all equal, and all labourers, and all studying the public good, our country is going rapidly to decay."\textsuperscript{180} Thieves and criminals run rife, for there is no politically just method of punishment, and the poverty, hunger, and disease brought by equality have sapped the country. The conversion of Alogos and Fenton speedily ensues.

The other most widely-read anti-Godwin novel is Elizabeth Hamilton's \textit{Memoirs of Modern Philosophers} (1800); the book went through four editions in as many years and won her considerable acclaim.\textsuperscript{181} Like the other anti-reformist novelists, she supports the "cause of religion and virtue" against "the opinions generally known by the name of the
New Philosophy." She thinks *Political Justice* "ingenious, and in many parts admirable," but feels compelled "to expose the dangerous tendency of those parts . . . which might, by a bad man, be converted into an engine of mischief, and be made the means of ensnaring innocence and virtue."\(^{182}\)

The sophistries of her philosophic villain Vallaton duly ensnare the heroine, who, seduced and abandoned, repentantly goes into a decline.\(^{183}\) Juxtaposing monitory calamity with satire, Miss Hamilton caricatures Godwin as Mr. Myope, Holcroft as Mr. Glib, and Mary Hays as Biddy Botherim. These inhuman New Philosophers, who oppose gratitude, promises, filial duty, family affection, marriage, God, and the Bible, are glaringly contrasted with the exemplary local gentry. As usual in these novels, situations reducing abstract Godwinian theories to ridiculous particularity provide the satire, as when Myope and his crew find the Utopia of *Political Justice* realized among the Hottentots. Cries Glib: "all our theory realized! Here is a whole nation of philosophers, all as wise as ourselves! All on the high road to perfectibility! All enjoying the proper dignity of man! . . . No man working for another! All alike!—All equal! No laws! No government! No coercion! Every one exerting his energies as he pleases! Take a wife today: leave her again to-morrow! It is the very essence of virtue!"\(^{184}\)
This whole novel, like many others, is replete with quotations from Godwin, but the conversation of Biddy (or Bridgetina as she prefers to be called) is a mere pastiche of *Political Justice*, *The Enquirer*, and Mary Hays' novel *Emma Courtney*. This female quixote discovered "metaphysics" when her mother's snuff came "wrapped in two proof-sheets . . . of the Political Justice. . . . I read and sneezed, and sneezed and read, till the germ of philosophy began to fructify my soul." Godwin's ideas are rendered ridiculous by continually being in the mouth of the ludicrous squint-eyed Biddy, who delights in astounding her hearers by declaring whole pages of *Political Justice*. If Biddy's quotations make the New Philosophy seem merely foolish, Walker uses a similar technique more seriously with the evil Stupeo. By having his villain constantly quote or paraphrase Godwin while acting repulsively, Walker contaminates Godwin through guilt by association.

Nor do the anti-Godwin novelists avoid specific personal allusions to their victims: the Godwin-Wollstonecraft liaison and the *Memoirs* figure largely in this respect. For instance, Marauder, Lucas' philosophic fiend, corrupts the heroine with the *Rights of Woman* and extracts from "that first of writers, that most rational, philosophical, learned, modest, and ingenious of all human naturals, William Godwin . . . taken from his scientific work--'The History of the
Intrigues of his own Wife." Bisset's Sidney in Douglas: or, The Highlander (1800) similarly draws on Godwin's opinions as "illustrated in his history of the life, literary and amorous adventures, of his spouse" for purposes of seduction. Walker's Fenton speedily wins the favors of a married woman named Mary whose principles come verbatim from Wollstonecraft's Rights and Godwin's Memoirs, and these works are cited disparagingly in a number of other novels as well.

Just as personality-oriented, though rather more charitable, is D'Israeli's Vaurien; or, Sketches of the Times (1797). This fantastic farrago, according to the subtitle, is intended to exhibit "views of the philosophies, religions, politics, literature, and manners of the age." D'Israeli's work, which manifests some serious concern for the political consequences of the New Philosophy, as well as humorous delight at the extravagances of its theories, purports to be an anatomy of eighteenth-century intellectual and social fatuities.

Like the hero of the story, Godwin, Holcroft, and Thelwall are given label names: Mr. Subtile, Mr. Reverberator, and Mr. Rant, respectively. As the use of this tag for Godwin indicates, D'Israeli shows some insight into Godwin's character, though of course this insight is turned to satiric purposes. Instead of depicting Godwin as an
incendiary or a voluptuary, D'Israeli, drawing upon details of Godwin's life, portrays him as an abstracted, over-in-
genious philosopher, who "like another Socrates... is surrounded by the spirited youth of his age." Subtile "has reduced every thing to a system. A system, is the cap of Fortunatus to philosophy; an engine of iron working on the ductile wax of nature; an elastic patent silk stocking, smooth and glossy, and fitted for any leg. Subtile gives a reason for the most unreasonable thing."\(^{190}\)

D'Israeli mixes his sneers with some home truths:

*vive la metaphysique! Vive la bagatelle! He calculates on every action, every virtue, every vice, and pronounces on all merits and demerits, on truth and falsehood, with his pen in his hand, by a metaphysical algebra. O! great arranger of possibilities! nice discerner of probabilities! who never loses himself in the combinations of certitude and doubt. He knows the connection of the mind with its exterior organization; we are all mind... Infinite perfectibility of the mind! We flatter ourselves soon to combine new senses with the five old ones, and so live on for a few hundred years.\(^{191}\)

In giving a history of "the philosophic and atrabilious Subtile," D'Israeli draws on such facts of Godwin's life as his ministerial career and the passion for the Latin historians mentioned in *Political Justice*: "Subtile was no idler; he had exalted his imagination with certain romances, vulgarly termed the Roman histories; and with an intense delight for speculative notions, plunged far and wide into the interminable discussions of metaphysics."\(^{192}\)
Describing the lean years in London before Political Justice, D'Israeli mingles discernment with distortion:

Subtile devoted his days and his nights to the study of metaphysics; and his literary industry was at length rewarded with that perfection of talent which is designated by the term, of metaphysical genius; subtilty, acuteness, and profundity, without imagination, sensibility, and amenity. . . . He practiced, in great perfection . . . the stern virtues of a haughty poverty. . . .

Ten years he consumed in a solitary garret, in a state partaking more of intellect than of sense. He learnt to reason; but he forgot to feel. An habitual melancholy pervaded his gloomy habits. His acrid blood, and rigid nerves, were agitated by no sweet emotions; he knew not the softening confidence of love, nor the cheerful consolations of friendship; but he calculated the passions, and judged them when they hardened into immobility; that is, he viewed them when they ceased.193

Similarly, there is an element of truth in the description of Subtile's mania for system-building:

To arrange the vast diversities of nature into the contraction of a system, to methodize what is spontaneous, and to attempt to enumerate all its endless varieties, formed his sublime occupation, and his solitary amusement. Man was adapted to his system, which is much easier than to adapt a system to man. He peopled the world with Subtiles, and traced its government according to the legislation observed in the Utopia of his garret.

Subtile in his dismal retreat, was in a similar situation with the religious visionary, whose prolific and atrabilious fancy, pro-creates a monster brood, which feed and gorge on the entrails of their mother; that species of insanity which takes possession of the melancholy being, who severed from all human interests, yields itself with phrenetic fervour to one solitary and bewitching contemplation.
With a fearless hand he drew a circle round nature, and became that unreasonable being who reduced every thing to the line and compass of human reason; and with whom to vary in opinion was to wander in error. An emphatic monotony, gigantic ideas, and hyperbolic truths formed his genius, his rigid mind could not change its attitude; but, firm and massy, made every thing yield to its superior pressure.194

D'Israeli's satire, though of course it does perpetuate the myth of Godwin the emotionless monster, is worth quoting at length because it is unusual in both its foundation of fact and its acuteness: seldom do the anti-Jacobins so objectively analyze the strengths and weaknesses of their victim.
3. GODWIN'S DEFENSE AND THE VERDICT OF TIME

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

Hazlitt 195

Under all the varieties of misrepresentation and abuse which poured from the press in the anti-Jacobin periodicals, poetry, and fiction of the late nineties, Godwin remained silent; but an attack from the pulpit at last forced him to reply in 1801. Ministerial criticism was not new to Godwin: the Baptist Robert Hall, one of the most distinguished Dissenting preachers of the day, in 1799 twice delivered and then published a strongly-worded sermon against him which was widely influential. Hall's "Modern Infidelity Considered"—in which, says Godwin, "every notion of toleration or decorum was treated with infuriated contempt"—condemns the philosopher's speculations on marriage and universal
benevolence and labels the Memoirs "a narrative of his licentious amours." 196 Godwin was denounced by a host of other ministers as well; but only when a censorious Easter sermon, attacking him for the theory of universal benevolence which he had already publicly qualified, was preached before the Lord Mayor in 1800 by his former friend Dr. Samuel Parr (the "Whig Johnson") did Godwin begin preparing a defense against his accusers. 197

Godwin was already deeply wounded by the recantation of another long-time intimate, James Mackintosh. Mackintosh, now converted to a Burkean view of the French Revolution he so earnestly defends in Vindiciae Gallicae (1791), delivered a series of lectures from January to June 1799, entitled "On the Law of Nature and Nations," in which he learnedly attacked the New Philosophy. 198 Though Godwin was not openly named, the allusions were so obvious that the crowd clearly applied them to the philosopher, who had innocently attended to hear his supposed disciple. Hazlitt, who was also present, records that "poor Godwin, who had come, in the bonhommie and candour of his nature . . . was obliged to quit the field, and slunk away after an exulting taunt thrown out at 'such fanciful chimeras as a golden mountain or a perfect man.'" 199 With bitter humor, Godwin remarks of the series that Mackintosh was representing him
"three time a-week . . . as a wretch unworthy to live," one "who only wanted the power, in order to prove himself as infernal as Robespierre." 200

To apostate liberals and anti-Jacobins alike, Godwin makes but a single reply: Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon (1801). 201 Despite the opprobrium under which he labors, Godwin remains admirably restrained and objective; although his inveterate foe the British Critic retitles his "sorry" pamphlet "The History of the Rise, Decline, and Fall of a second-hand Sophister, who, after having written himself into some notoriety, by stolen paradoxes, has written himself down by original non-sense," Godwin's tone and arguments won him much praise from others, among them Coleridge. 202 "I remember few passages in ancient or modern authors," Coleridge notes in his copy, "that contain more just philosophy, in appropriate, chaste, or beautiful diction. . . . They reflect equal honour on Godwin's head and heart." 203

Godwin begins his apologia by rehearsing the "singular and perverse destiny" of his reputation: he recounts his gratification at the unexpectedly favorable reception of Political Justice and his subsequent surprise at being "dragged to public odium, and made an example to deter all future enquirers from the practice of unshackled speculation." 204 Godwin is correct in stating that "the work which
has principally afforded a topic for the exercise of this malignity" is **Political Justice**, and in assessing the reaction against him as part of the general revulsion of feeling against the French Revolution and "French principles." 205 "For more than four years," Godwin says of his treatise, "it remained before the public, without any man's having made the slightest attempt for its refutation; it was repeatedly said that it was invulnerable and unanswerable in its fundamental topics; high encomiums were passed on the supposed talents of the writer." 206 Godwin traces the course of events in France and England in the 1790's and finds that "down to about the middle of the year 1797" he remained unattacked. 207 He writes of his reputation for **Political Justice** that

if the temper and tone in which this publication has been treated have undergone a change, it has been only that I was destined to suffer a part, in the great revolution which has operated in nations, parties, political creeds, and the views and interests of ambitious men. I have fallen (if I have fallen) in one common grave with the cause and the love of liberty; and in this sense have been more honoured and illustrated in my decline from general favour, than I ever was in the highest tide of my success. 208

It is true that **Political Justice** is "the child of the French Revolution," but Godwin feels it unfair that a theoretician should be abused because of affairs in France: "I sought no overt effects; I abhorred all tumult; I entered my protest against revolutions. . . . I was no man of the world;
I was a mere student, connected with no party, elected into no club, exempt from every imputation of political conspiracy and cabal."\textsuperscript{209} Godwin certainly did not expect "to be treated like a highwayman or an assassin" merely for "having meditated upon philosophical subjects" and given his conclusions to the public; yet "after having for four years heard little else than the voice of commendation," he finds himself "at length attacked from every side, and in a style which defied all moderation and decency."\textsuperscript{210}

Godwin does not deign to consider the general "flood of ribaldry, invective and intolerance" in detail, but concentrates instead on the serious charges against his doctrines.\textsuperscript{211} So far as Godwin's philosophical principles are concerned, the arguments he directs specifically against Parr are the most important part of the pamphlet; in fact, he considers these "certain essential explanations and elucidations" of his original position so necessary a comment on \textit{Political Justice} that he wanted \textit{Thoughts Occasioned} printed with future editions of his treatise under the title "Defence of the Enquiry concerning Political Justice."\textsuperscript{212}

Parr in his sermon, much like Mackintosh in his lectures, asserts that the "beatific visions of universal benevolence" produce "a long and portentous train of evils"; as Godwin rightly observes, "persons not versed in the mysteries of this controversy, may perhaps be at a loss to understand,
why . . . 'universal philanthropy' should awaken in lawyers and divines, in reviewers and scribblers for the circulating libraries, such fierceness of invective, and such vehemence of reprobation. 213 Parr's explanation of the mystery lies in the denigration of domestic affection which is the necessary correlative of Godwin's theory of universal rational benevolence. To Godwin, man is capable of rising beyond purely personal allegiances to an objective view of a larger good; but to Parr and the other anti-Godwinists, the weakening of private affections and practical duties leads not to replacing a lesser good with a greater one, but only with a selfish relativism. Reduced to the level of the contemporary popular mind, as in Hannah More's famous tale Village Politics, universal benevolence "means contempt of religion, aversion to justice, overturning of law, doting on all mankind in general, and hating every body in particular." 214

Setting himself to answer these staple charges of the anti-Jacobins, Godwin reconsiders in detail his doctrine of universal benevolence. Well before 1801 Godwin had already revised his opinion of private affections in the third edition of Political Justice (1798), the Memoirs (1798), and the preface to his novel St. Leon (1799). Now in his reply to Parr, Godwin explicitly abandons the whole utilitarian justification for the indulgence of private affections: he replaces utility as a source or motive of actions with
utility as a criterion or regulator of them. Going beyond his previous acceptance of domestic duties as on the whole conducive to the general good, Godwin now no longer insists that a desire for this general good be the motivating force behind their performance: instead he allows that "it would be well" if the performance of domestic duties "should arise from the operation of those private and domestic affections, by which through all ages of the world the conduct of mankind has been excited and directed."215 Still, he cautions, "parental and filial affection, and the sentiments of love, attachment and friendship... are all liable to excess. ... I must take care not so to love, or so to obey my love to my parent or child, as to intrench upon an important and paramount public good."216 He admits that he at first over-stressed the criterion of virtue to the neglect of ordinary motives of virtue, but denies that the error of his original doctrine of benevolence is productive of evil. Since "the human mind is so constituted, as to render our actions in almost every case much more the creatures of sentiment and affection, than of the understanding," and private affections are "twisted with our very natures," there is no danger that man will neglect these feelings, even if philosophy should do so.217 Godwin's reassessment of the domestic affections is part of the general revaluation of feeling in his later thought; but he always refuses to grant that such
changes invalidate his doctrines and continues to uphold the main tenets of Political Justice against all his opponents. The question at issue, Godwin says, is whether any great improvement can ever take place in society, and he sees a "deep-laid project of despotism and intolerance" to thwart this improvement at work.\textsuperscript{218} In a kind of ontological argument, Godwin attempts to confute the conservative view of human nature by asserting that "the human imagination is capable of representing to itself a virtuous community, a little heaven on earth," and "what the heart of man is able to conceive, the hand of man is strong enough to perform."\textsuperscript{219} Godwin closes his pamphlet with a humanistic plea for men "to be proud of ourselves that we belong to a species capable of so high achievements. . . . For myself I firmly believe that days of greater virtue and more ample justice will descend upon the earth."\textsuperscript{220}

Thoughts Occasioned is a kind of nunc dimittis for Godwin, marking his departure from active political engagement. He had to wait many years for "more ample justice"; even his defense was perversely distorted, and the enthusiast for perfectibility found himself seriously described as an "advocate of infanticide" through a misrepresentation of his remarks on Malthus.\textsuperscript{221} As a defense of Godwin's philosophical doctrines, Thoughts Occasioned was not likely to convert the hostile, since the fundamental quarrel
between Godwin and his opponents lies in their radically different—and logically unprovable—assumptions about the nature of man: all the bloodshed and turmoil of contemporary events which demonstrate to the conservatives the radical imperfection of man cannot prevent Godwin from entertaining a hope of what it may be possible for man to become.

As an account of the rise and fall of his reputation, Godwin's pamphlet is more accessible to objective analysis. B. Sprague Allen, in his discussion of the reaction against Godwin, states that Godwin's chronology is unsatisfactory. As evidence that the attack on the philosopher began earlier than 1797, Allen cites Coleridge's criticisms in his Bristol lectures of 1795 and his Watchman of 1796, and Wordsworth's supposed exposure of Godwinism in The Borderers about 1796. But though Coleridge certainly objects to the treatment of private affections and the utopian speculations of Political Justice, his attitude toward Godwin and the philosopher's principles is much more complex than Allen allows; moreover, Coleridge's periodical collapsed for want of support after only ten numbers. Wordsworth's relationship to Godwinism is also a vexed question; in any case, the tragedy, as Allen admits, was not published until 1842. It is true that the practical reformers, such as Thelwall, whom Godwin does not mention, became alienated from the philosopher as early as 1795, with the publication of the Considerations; but
their chiefly private displeasure constitutes no large-scale public attack. Godwin's chronology of the reaction against him is, on the whole, more accurate than Allen allows: during the last three years of the century, as we have seen, England's apparently desperate plight produced a climate of opinion intensely patriotic and intolerant of supposed "French principles." Allen is more to the point in criticizing Godwin's omission of the Memoirs from his discussion of the causes for his decline. As the anti-Jacobin literature abundantly indicates, Godwin's unapologetic account of his wife provoked virulent assaults on both Mary and himself. Such frankness about religion, suicide, and unwed love would have incensed the conservatives of itself; but the Memoirs was especially disastrous for Godwin's reputation in that it re-enforced an already existing line of attack: the Monthly Magazine remarks of Political Justice in 1802 that the "portion of his work which has excited most outcry, is the theory of agamy, or of exempting matrimony from the notice of the magistrate." The periodical's phrase is somewhat ambiguous; but if "most outcry" refers to scurrility rather than sheer quantity of criticism, the observation is certainly correct. One other factor suggested by Allen as "probably" contributory to Godwin's decline in public favor is the excessive zeal of some of the philosopher's
disciples, such as Thelwall and Mary Hays; however, Allen offers little real evidence on this point. A much more important reason for Godwin's notoriety than the imprudence of a few followers would seem to derive from the susceptibility of his doctrines to divergent interpretations: as we have seen, Godwin's ambiguity on central points in Political Justice leaves his treatise open to either Platonic or relativistic conclusions, and the charge of encouraging a selfish, lawless relativism is continually brought against him by his critics. This cause for Godwin's discredit Allen does not mention; nor does Godwin himself confront the issue in exactly these terms, for he is apparently not fully aware of the contradictions implicit in his treatise. Despite noticeable omissions, however, Thoughts Occasioned does treat in detail the overriding cause of both Godwin's renown and his notoriety: the changing political climate of the revolutionary years.

In its broad outlines, then, Godwin's account of his reputation during the 1790's is fundamentally accurate, if not wholly inclusive, in spite of the fact that he is writing at the height of the reaction against him. The Anti-Jacobin Review is hardly exaggerating when it crows in 1801, the year of Godwin's defense, that "Political Justice . . . is now universally considered as a text-book of absurdity, a record of impotent malignity--which, whoever inspects,
ridicules and hates—ridet et odit." Godwin was considered so suspect a character that in this same year the government refused him a passport; and for several years following, a significant amount of anti-Jacobin material continued to be published against him.

But eventually Godwin was sufficiently discredited philosophically and morally to satisfy even his most virulent conservative foes. By 1805 the Anti-Jacobin Review feels it can afford to be lenient at least to his fiction: it informs its readers that it has always regarded Godwin as "a man of genius, subtle, fanciful and refining" and that it has never doubted Caleb Williams "displayed abilities of very high consideration." So neglected was Godwin as a philosopher by 1812 that even so enthusiastic a reader of Political Justice as Shelley is filled with "inconceivable emotions" to find Godwin's name is not "enrolled . . . on the list of the honorable dead" as he had thought. Satire against Godwin continues to appear during this period, though with a much milder tone than that published at the height of the reaction against him. For instance, in James and Horace Smith's Horace in London (1813), the authors emphasize the waning of his reputation:

Our Temple youth, a lawless train,
Blockading Johnson's window pane,
No longer laud thy solemn strain,
My Godwin!
Chaucer's a mighty tedious elf,
Fleetwood lives only for himself,
And Caleb Williams loves the shelf,
My Godwin!

No longer cry the sprites unblesst,
"Awake, arise! stand forth confess'd!"
For fallen, fallen is thy crest,
My Godwin!
Thy muse for meretricious feats,
Does quarto penance now in sheets,
Or cloathing parcels roams the streets,
My Godwin! 234

The decline which Hazlitt deplores in 1825 had set in much before that date:

he has sunk below the horizon, and enjoys the serene twilight of a doubtful immortality. . . .
Mr. Godwin's person is not known, he is not pointed out in the street, his conversation is not courted, his opinions are not asked, he is at the head of no cabal, he belongs to no party in the State, he has no train of admirers, no one thinks it worth his while even to traduce and vilify him, he has scarcely friend or foe, the world make a point . . . of taking no more notice of him than if such an individual had never existed; he is to all ordinary intents and purposes dead and buried; but the author of Political Justice and of Caleb Williams can never die, his name is an abstraction in letters, his works are standard in the history of intellect. 235

Neither of these two summaries of Godwin's later reputation is strictly accurate, though for differing reasons; but it is quite true that his later years show a striking decline from the fame of the early 1790's.

Godwin's works continued to find an audience, however; and some of his readers agreed with Hazlitt's high estimation of his dual achievement. But by the mid-nineteenth century
Godwin seems to have been more frequently esteemed for his fiction than for his once famous treatise. Caleb Williams in particular did not love the shelf: more than two dozen editions and reprints appeared during the nineteenth century. Since its first appearance in 1794, the novel has gone into more than fifty separate editions, reprints, and translations. The book seems to have reached all classes and many countries: it has appeared in newspapers and inexpensive paperback form and has been included in several series of popular novels; besides the various French, German, Irish, Scottish, and American versions, the work has also been several times rendered into Russian and has even appeared in Polish. Godwin's first major novel seems to have established itself as the most popular of all his works. Hazlitt's assertion that the author of Caleb Williams "can never die" has some foundation in fact.

During the nineteenth century Godwin's later novels were also quite widely read; the popularity of St. Leon (1799) has already been noted. Though Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling was initially less popular, the publication of Mandeville: A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England (1817) marks a resurgence of interest in Godwin's fiction. Several essays on Godwin as a man of letters, prominently featuring his novels, appeared in the next few years. Godwin's last two works of fiction—Cloudesley (1830)
and Deloraine (1833)--added little to his stature as a novelist in themselves, though they did refresh appreciation of his earlier work in fiction: during the early 1830's the inclusion of Caleb Williams, St. Leon, and Fleetwood in the popular Bentley "Standard Novels" series had a similar effect. Nineteenth-century reviews and evaluations of Godwin's work indicate that he was ultimately esteemed by his contemporaries not for the varied literary efforts of his later years or even for the once celebrated Political Justice, but principally for his novels--with particular emphasis on Caleb Williams.237 In Godwin's obituaries, his novels appear prominently: the Annual Register for the year of his death (1836) indexes him as "William Godwin, novelist"; the Gentleman's Magazine, previously a hostile foe to Caleb Williams, now pronounces it "perhaps the most powerful novel in our language"; and the New Monthly Magazine praises his excellence of novelistic form.238

In the nineteenth-century reviews and evaluations of Godwin's fiction, the chief emphases are on his originality and pre-eminence as a novelist and his skill in psychological analysis. As we have seen, these are also the points most often stressed in the 1794 reviews of Caleb Williams. Though the nineteenth-century interest in psychological dissection is more marked, there is thus a continuity in estimates of Godwin's central achievement as a novelist.
which is strikingly lacking for his work as a philosopher. George Gilfillan's comments of 1845 on the relative merits of Caleb Williams and Political Justice offer a useful summation of Godwin's reputation after the political furor of the French Revolution had subsided:

while "Caleb Williams" is in every circulating library ... the "Inquiry into Political Justice" is read only by a few hardy explorers. ... And yet, while of "Caleb Williams" it was predicted by some sapient friend, that, if published, it would be the grave of his literary reputation, the other lifted him, as on dragon wings, into instant and dangerous popularity; the "Inquiry" was the balloon which bore him giddily up--the novel the parachute which broke his fall.

As a novelist, indeed, Godwin, apart from the accidents of opinion and popular caprice, occupies a higher place than as a philosopher. As a philosopher, he is neither altogether new nor altogether true. ... As a novelist, on the contrary, he passes for no more than he is,--a real and robust original. He ... has hit on a vein entirely new. ... Written with the care and consciousness of one who felt himself writing for immortality, [Caleb Williams] still keeps its place amid the immense fry of ordinary tales, embalmed and insulated in the rough salt of its own essential and original power.239

Though Godwin's fiction largely escaped the tempest that centered around Political Justice in the late nineties and continued to be widely read, the philosophical treatise was long in recovering any measure of its former fame: its early reputation, whether for renown or notoriety, was closely linked to its political context. It would be difficult to find a more accurate account of the relationship of
Political Justice to its contemporary setting than that of James Mackintosh in 1815:

books, as well as men, are subject to what is called fortune. The same circumstances which favoured its sudden popularity, have since unduly depressed its reputation. Had it appeared in a metaphysical age, and in a period of tranquillity, it would have been discussed by philosophers, and might have excited acrimonious disputes; but they would have ended . . . in assigning to the author that station to which his eminent talents entitled him. It would soon have been acknowledged, that the author of one of the most deeply interesting fictions of his age, and of a treatise on metaphysical morals which excited general alarm, whatever else he might be, must be a person of vigorous and versatile powers. But the circumstances of the times, in spite of the author's intention, transmuted a philosophical treatise into a political pamphlet. It seemed to be thrown up by the vortex of the French Revolution, and it sunk accordingly as that whirlpool subsided; while by a perverse fortune, the honesty of the author's intentions contributed to the prejudice against his work. With the simplicity and good-faith of a retired speculator, conscious of no object but the pursuit of truth, he followed his reasonings wherever they seemed to him to lead, without looking up to examine the array of sentiment and institution, as well as of interest and prejudice, which he was about to encounter. Intending no mischief, he considered no consequences; and, in the eye of the multitude, was transformed into an incendiary, only because he was an undesigning speculator. 240

Godwin's treatise was certainly not totally forgotten, and, as we have seen, Caleb Williams still found an audience; but it is true that the latter part of Godwin's life was spent largely in those shadows of Grub Street from which he had briefly and brilliantly emerged; the scanty income
from his futile labors to support a numerous family by writ-
ing bad plays, painstaking biographies, lengthy histories,
several volumes of essays, and some noteworthy children's
books was only eked out by the long career of borrowing
which looms so large in Shelley scholarship. In spite of
his once well-recognized versatility and achievement and
the strong impact his views had on England in the tumultuous
years of the French Revolution, Godwin was until quite re-
cently something of a forgotten figure. As early as 1845,
Gilfillan found it necessary to preface his literary por-
trait with some biographical information, for even his edu-
cated readers were beginning to enquire "who's Godwin?"241
In the same year, De Quincey, who strongly dissents from
Gilfillan's high estimate of Godwin's novels, asserts that
"Godwin's name seems sinking out of remembrance; and he is
remembered less by the novels that succeeded, or by the
philosophy that he abjured, than as the man that had Mary
Wollstonecraft for his wife, Mrs. Shelley for his daughter,
and the immortal Shelley as his son-in-law."242

Though Caleb Williams was appreciated, Godwin's
philosophy was frequently distorted into a parody of itself.
The warped picture of Godwin resulting from the widespread
neglect of his doctrines is concisely presented by D. H.
Monro, who discusses "The Godwin Legend" in his 1953 study
of the philosopher. Not until well into the twentieth
century did revisionist scholarship really begin to rescue Godwin's image as a philosopher from the enveloping myth. About 1902, Leslie Stephen wrote much on Godwin's philosophy and, more discerningly, of his novels; but he characterizes Political Justice as "the very lunacy of revolutionary speculation" and Godwin himself as a "venerable horseleech," a frigid dogmatist, and a "superlative bore," "with a singular incapacity for even suspecting the humorous or fanciful aspects of life."²⁴³ Even the most sympathetic of Godwin's early twentieth-century explicators, such as A. K. Rogers in 1911, write pitifully of his unfortunate personality in which "the intellectual qualities were developed at the expense of the emotional" and conclude that he was "a good deal of a prig."²⁴⁴ In 1917 it was still being written of Godwin that "with all his writings he has not left ... one thought worth thinking. ... he was a cold, hard, self-centered man who did good to none and harm to many. ... It is his fate to be remembered chiefly as the husband of the first suffragette."²⁴⁵ And he has scarce fared better with some more recent historians: as late as 1950, D. C. Somervell characterizes him as a "philosophical gas-bag," and J. H. Plumb calls him "raffish, extravagant, and unpatriotic."²⁴⁶ The aspersions of the anti-Jacobins proved long-lived.

But the trickle of more sympathetic reassessments of the man and his thought which began to appear early in this
century has in recent years swollen into a modest flood. More than a half-dozen German and French studies appeared before 1918, followed by the books of H. N. Brailsford (1913), Ford K. Brown (1926), George Woodcock (1946), F. E. L. Priestley (1946), David Fleisher (1951), A. E. Rodway (1952), Rosalie Glynn Grylls (1953), D. H. Monro (1953), James A. Preu (1959), Burton R. Pollin (1962), and Elton and Esther Smith (1965), besides numerous articles, dissertations, and chapters in broader studies. Priestley's edition of Political Justice, with its revisionist introduction and extensive annotation, was a major event in Godwin scholarship. Now Godwin's early works are being unearthed and reprinted, his diary is in the process of being edited by Lewis Patton; his Enquirer essays are once more in print after a century and a half; and a massive bibliography of references to his works has appeared (1967). If the early Godwin scholar B. Sprague Allen thought in 1920 that "the overshadowing interest in Godwin must always remain his influence upon the great young poets of his time," the years have proved him wrong. Godwin's thought has now been extensively studied on its own merits, his character has largely been rehabilitated, and his novels have begun to receive attention: days of "more ample justice" would appear to have at last arrived.
NOTES

1 Lord Cockburn is quoted in Philip A. Brown, p. 168; lines 196-198 of Shelley's poem are quoted from The Complete Poetical Works of Shelley, ed. George E. Woodberry (Boston, 1901), p. 393.

2 [William Hazlitt], Review of Clodesley, Edinburgh Review, CI (April 1830), 144-145.

3 The fame of the book long preceded its publication, and even before it officially appeared, Godwin was meeting and discussing its principles with the notables of the day. See Paul, I, 71.


5 Thoughts on Man, p. v.

6 Paul, I, 118.

7 Thomas De Quincey, "Notes on Gilfillan's Literary Portraits," in The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey, ed. David Masson (London, 1897), XI, 328.

8 See Priestley's account of Godwin's revisions in PJ, III, 81-100.


10 Thoughts on Man, p. 328.


13 Cobban, p. 365; Young originally approved of the Revolution.

14 See Laprade, pp. 43-52; Philip A. Brown, pp. 77-82; and Veitch, pp. 180-189.
Barnes, p. 204. For the summation of French events in this chapter I have found helpful J. M. Thompson, The French Revolution, Oxford Galaxy ed. (New York, 1966).


The success of Part II was even greater than that of its predecessor--nearly a million and a half copies were published in England during Paine's life; see Boulton, p. 88. See also Fennessy, pp. 240-241; and Butterfield, pp. 302-305. Wyvill is quoted in Fennessy, p. 246. Horace Walpole called Paine's work "the most seditious pamphlet ever seen but in open rebellion"; see The Letters of Horace Walpole, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford, 1905), XIV, 428.

The proclamation is printed in part in Cobban, pp. 273-274; see Butterfield, p. 311; Veitch, p. 208; Fennessy, pp. 242-243; Barnes, pp. 221, 322-323.

Veitch, pp. 230-231.


Cobban, pp. 354, 359.

Veitch, pp. 234-235; Barnes, p. 256.

Cobban, p. 305.

Barnes, pp. 254, 256.

Philip A. Brown, pp. 85-87; Veitch, pp. 236-239; and Fennessy, pp. 243-244.

See M. Ray Adams, "Joel Barlow, Political Romanticist," in Studies in the Literary Backgrounds of English Radicalism, esp. pp. 36-52. Several of Godwin's friends--Barlow, Paine, Priestley, Tooke, and Mackintosh--were granted French citizenship in 1792 in recognition of their services to the liberal cause (see Veitch, p. 219; Adams, p. 49).

28 Philip A. Brown, p. 83; Laprade, pp. 76-79; Cobban, pp. 276-277, and Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England, 1792-1793*, pp. 134, 201, et passim. Reeves's association was also known as the Crown and Anchor Association because of the tavern where it met.

29 Edward Smith, p. 57; Butterfield, pp. 327-329.

30 Barnes, p. 251.


33 1832 Preface to *Fleetwood*, p. vi.

34 *Thoughts Occasioned* (1801), p. 2; *PJ*, I, v.

35 See Paul, I, 61, and *Thoughts Occasioned*, p. 5.

36 *PJ*, I, xii. Although England's era of proscription did not officially begin until May 1792, Godwin had foreseen it a full year before, while the consensus which made it possible was yet being shaped. Writing to Sheridan in April 1791, Godwin urged him to apply his admiration for the French Revolution to English reforms. But, he warned, "if you speak out you must be contented to undergo a temporary proscription," though he thought that "the period of the obloquy which the true friend to mankind must endure will be very short" (Paul, I, 75).

37 *PJ*, I, x-xii.

38 Godwin wrote to Joseph Gerrald: "For myself I will never adopt any conduct for the express purpose of being put upon my trial, but if I be ever so put, I will consider that day as a day of triumph" (Paul, I, 126).

Late in May 1793 the Privy Council debated the prosecution of *Political Justice*; Pitt's remark quoted earlier indicates that the book was spared because it seemed too expensive to achieve a wide circulation. Veitch (pp. 264-269) finds the real secret of Godwin's immunity in that abstract nature of *Political Justice* which, rightly considered, made it far more dangerous than Tom Paine's republican remedies. Boulton thinks the treatise escaped suppression because "language such as Godwin used, remote from life lived by the mass of people who might have been
potentially dangerous radicals, was unlikely to be a subversive factor" (p. 257). One contemporary of Godwin, puzzled at the government's failure to take legal action against so unremitting an attack on established institutions, concludes that a cunning ministry had deliberately commissioned Godwin to write a book so extravagant as to make a reductio ad absurdum of the doctrines it advocates; he thinks the work a gigantic irony, a sort of "Modest Proposal" in two volumes (18 July 1795, in Benjamin Flower's Cambridge Intelligencer; see Allen, "Minor Disciples," p. 297).


40 For a few of many references to omnipotent truth, see PJ, I, 86, 91; the quotation is from PJ, I, xii.

41 Godwin's letter to the Morning Chronicle appears in Paul, I, 121-123. For more information about these events, see Hall, Sect. II, Ch. ii, "The British Convention"; Veitch, Ch. x, "Repression in Scotland"; and Philip A. Brown, pp. 67-68, 95-98. Muir's trial was presided over by the notorious "hanging judge" Lord Braxfield, who inspired Stevenson's Weir of Hermiston. Braxfield's address to the jury at this trial was the occasion of a famous speech: "the British Constitution is the best that ever was since the creation of the world, and it is not possible to make it better. . . . Mr. Muir might have known that no attention could be paid to such a rabble. What right had they to Representation. . . . A government in every country should be just like a corporation, and in this country it is made up of the landed interest, which alone has a right to be represented" (quoted in Edward Smith, p. 82).

42 Pitt's speech of 1793 is quoted in Philip A. Brown, p. 102.

43 For the convention and trials, see Edward Smith, pp. 88 ff.; Veitch, pp. 283-298; and Philip A. Brown, pp. 103-107. The complete records of these trials are printed in Howell's State Trials, ed. Thomas James Howell, XXIII (London, 1817). When Gerald exclaimed to Braxfield that Christ himself had been a reformer, the judge retorted, "Muckle he made o' that, he was hanget" (quoted in Philip A. Brown, p. 107). This Gerald is "the unfortunate Joseph Gerald" Godwin mentions as an enthralled reader of Caleb Williams (1832 Preface to Fleetwood, p. xiii). Because the supposedly
inherent power of truth to convince its hearers is so important a question in Political Justice, Godwin's advice to Gerrald on his defense is of considerable interest:

Your trial, if you so please, may be a day such as England, and I believe the world, never saw. It may be the means of converting thousands, and, progressively, millions, to the cause of reason and public justice. . . .

Never forget that juries are men, and that men are made of penetrable stuff: probe all the recesses of their souls. Do not spend your strength in vain defiance and empty vaunting. Let every syllable you utter be fraught with persuasion. . . . It is in man, I am sure it is, to effect that event. . . . "I know," I would say to this jury, "that you are packed . . . but I do not fear the event; I do not believe you will be slaves. I do not believe that you will be inaccessible to considerations irresistible in argument, and which speak to all the genuine feelings of the human heart. I have been told that there are men upon whom truth, truth fully and adequately stated, will make no impression. It is a vile and groundless calumny upon the character of the human mind. This is my theory, and I now come before you for the practice."

If you should fail of a verdict—-but why should I suppose it?—-this manner of stating your defence is best calculated to persuade the whole audience, and the whole world, for the same reason that it is best calculated to persuade a jury. (Paul, I, 126-127)

The record of Gerrald's trial shows that he followed Godwin's advice and asserted the power of irresistible, immutable truth; his plea is still moving to read, but it failed to convince its original audience (see Gerrald's trial in Howell's State Trials, XXIII, esp. columns 974, 991, 995, and 996). For more about Godwin and Gerrald, see Paul, I, 123-128, and Ford K. Brown, pp. 89-90.

Burns is quoted in Cobban, p. 322. Philip A. Brown, Veitch, Hall, and Edward Smith (who prints several documents) treat the State Trials very extensively. See also
Laprade, pp. 144-146, 149-150; Kent, pp. 146-157; Grylls, pp. 9-32; Paul, I, 117-119, 128-137; and Life of Thomas Holcroft, ed. Colby, II, 26-81. The 1794 State Trials are printed in Howell's State Trials, XXIV (London, 1818).

45 See the speech quoted in Veitch, p. 306, and Edward Smith, p. 118.

46 Pitt's speech is quoted in Edward Smith, pp. 119-121.

47 Paul, I, 117.

48 Quoted in Ford K. Brown, p. 91.


50 The quotations are in Life of Thomas Holcroft, ed. Colby, II, 78; for Mrs. Hardy, see Veitch, p. 314, and Philip A. Brown, p. 123.

51 Paul, I, 117.

52 Quoted from microfilm of the Morning Chronicle, 21 October 1794. Because Godwin published Cursory Strictures anonymously, it has sometimes been attributed to others; it is published entire in Howell's State Trials as the work of Felix Vaughan, Counsel for one of the defendants.

53 See Veitch, p. 313; Philip A. Brown, pp. 126-217; Ford K. Brown, pp. 94-95; and Fleisher, p. 29. Mary Shelley (Paul, I, 133-135), Hazlitt (Works, XI, 26), and Thelwall (Godwin Criticism, 272P) are of the same opinion.

54 Philip A. Brown, pp. 127-128.

55 Life of Thomas Holcroft, ed. Colby, II, 59.

56 Some errors that have been perpetuated about the State Trials should be corrected. D. Gilbert Dumas writes: "The plot Godwin alludes to was of course the Crown's proceedings against Hardy, Tooke, Thelwall, Holcroft, and other members of the London Corresponding Society on charges of High Treason" ("Things as They Were: The Original Ending of Caleb Williams," SEL, VI [1966], 575). The defendants were not all members of the London Corresponding Society, nor was that society the only political association the Crown moved against. The Society for Promoting Constitutional Information and the Friends of the People were also considered dangerous;
and several of the defendants were members of one or both of these, but not of the LCS. Though there was some overlapping of membership, the LCS was dominantly working-class in make-up. Others besides Dumas give Holcroft as a member of the LCS; Cruse (p. 157) even lists him as one of the nine founding members, but a close examination of the Life and of the State Trials themselves reveals that Holcroft belonged only to the SPCI: dozens of entries give him as a member of the SPCI. Colby also prints Holcroft’s own emphatic denial of membership in the LCS (II, 68).

57 As late as 1842, the acquittal of Hardy, Tooke, and Thelwall was still being celebrated (Edward Smith, p. 153).

58 Paul, I, 147. See also Parr’s praise, in Paul, I, 137.


60 See n. 2 above.


63 Caleb Williams has been the most popular of all Godwin’s works, being repeatedly translated and reprinted down to the present. See Pollin’s bibliography in Education and Enlightenment. The book was especially popular in France, where its success could only be compared with that of Scott’s fiction; see Allen, “William Godwin and the Stage,” p. 371, and Burton R. Pollin, “Poe and Godwin,” Nineteenth-Century Fiction, XX (1965), 239, n. 7.


67 See n. 2 above.
Ford K. Brown, p. 84.


Quoted from letters in *Paul*, I, 138-139.


Henry Crabb Robinson on *Books and Their Writers*, I, 345.


[William Maginn], "Gallery of Literary Characters, No. LIII: William Godwin, Esq.," *Fraser's Magazine*, X (October 1834), 463.

Frederick Reynolds, *The Life and Times of Frederick Reynolds* (London, 1826), II, 216. Reynolds was a well-known playwright and actor.

Dumas, p. 584.

Analytical Review, XXI (February 1795), 166-175; this reference and those following to reviews of Caleb Williams are to the whole review.

Critical Review, 2nd Ser., XI (July 1794), 290-296.

[William Enfield], *Monthly Review*, XV (October 1794), 145-149. Nangle attributes this review to Enfield.

British Critic, IV (July 1794), 70-71.

"Correspondence," *British Critic*, V (April 1795), 444-447.

William Godwin, "Correspondence," *British Critic*, VI (July 1795), 94-95.

86 Life of Thomas Holcroft, ed. Colby, II, 93.

87 My summary of events during these years is indebted to Barnes, pp. 266-326.

88 Francis Place notes that "infamous as these laws were, they were popular measures" (Philip A. Brown, p. 160).

89 The quotation is from Brinton, A Decade of Revolution, 1789-1799, p. 172.

90 Watson, pp. 360, 362, 372-373, 392-399; Veitch, p. 330; Philip A. Brown, p. 158.


92 The quotation is from the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, II (April 1799), 415, in a review of the Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons (1799).

93 Thoughts Occasioned (1801), pp. 21, 7.

94 For details of the mob and these bills, see Watson, p. 360; Veitch, p. 325.

95 See Fleisher, pp. 29-31, for a good brief account of this rare pamphlet.

96 See B. Sprague Allen, "William Godwin's Influence upon John Thelwall," PMLA, XXVII (1922), 662-682.

97 No. 10 (15 January 1798), p. 77; review of Thoughts Occasioned, Monthly Mirror, XII (September 1801), 182; Gilfillan, p. 12.

98 The whole article (pp. 413-419) cited in n. 92 above is a good example of this paranoia. The reviewer accepts completely the biased and scanty evidence of the ministry and exclaims in horror that "such consummate hypocrisy, combined with such determined villainy, proves, incontestibly, the decided superiority of modern French principles over all other modes of vice, in debauching, corrupting, and vilifying the human mind, and in eradicating every principle of true religion, morality, and honour.
... so complete and extensive a system of rebellion never before existed in any country; not even in France" (pp. 417-418).

99 Thoughts Occasioned (1801), p. 18.

100 Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner, No. 36 (9 July 1798), p. 282.

101 "The Rise, Progress, and Effects of Jacobinism," Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, I (August 1798), 223. The contemporary historian Belsham observes that "the nation was on a sudden struck with terror at the idea of any political innovation of any kind; and the very name of REFORM became the subject of violent and indiscriminate reprobation. Under the impression of this prevailing prepossession ... an innumerable multitude of pamphlets ... were circulated throughout the kingdom, inculcating an unreserved submission to Government, on the old exploded principles of Toryism and High Churchism," quoted in Lois Whitney, Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century (Baltimore, 1934). Note also the discussion of the meaning of "Jacobin" in the Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner, No. 27 (14 May 1798), pp. 210-211: "but shall a person, who has contented himself with this sort of condemnation of what he may please to allow to be the Excesses of the FRENCH REVOLUTION--applauding and admiring at the same time, the Principles which produced these outrages ... shall such a man claim to be exempted from the description of a JACOBIN, and to be considered as a calm and temperate lover of Rational Liberty; as an admirer of 'pure ends,' and an abhorrer of 'impure means?'--It is really too childish. ... we have neither the time, nor the taste, to note these fine shades of feeling, or to arrange these precise classifications. The admirer of French Principles must be satisfied with the appellation of JACOBIN."

102 Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, I (July 1798), 1.

103 [Jane West], A Tale of the Times, 3rd ed. (London, 1803), III, 387-388. The periodicals of the time are full of comments on the Jacobin political and literary conspiracy; see, e.g.: Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner, No. 30 (4 June 1798), p. 236; "Prefatory Address," Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, I (1798), iii-v; Review of An Oblique View of the Grand Conspiracy against Social Order ...

104 The Pursuits of Literature, pp. 161-162.

105 Review of Thoughts Occasioned, British Critic, XVIII (August 1801), 184-185.

106 Thoughts Occasioned (1801), p. 10.


109"Prospectus," p. 1; No. 36 (9 July 1798), p. 283. The latter quotation is from the famous poem by Canning usually called "New Morality." According to Hopkins, p. 136, the "Prospectus" is also by Canning.

110 No. 23 (16 April 1798), pp. 179-180.

111 No. 30 (4 June 1798), p. 236; No. 21 (2 April 1798), p. 165.

112 No. 30 (4 June 1798), p. 236.

113 Graham, pp. 223-224; Ford K. Brown, p. 156.


116 By 1804 the magazine is occasionally charitable to Godwin: see the Review of Life of Chaucer, XVIII (July 1804), 220-241.

117 Review of An Examination of the Leading Principle of
the New System of Morals . . ., I (September 1798), 331, 335, 333.

118 Review of Vaurien, I (December 1798), 685-686; Review of Memoirs, I (July 1798), 96.


120 Review of St. Leon, V (February 1800), 153.

121 Letter to the Editor, III (May 1798), 65; Letter from George Hutton, II (April 1799), 435; Review of St. Leon, V (February 1800), 151.

122 "Preface," IV (1799), vi-xvi.

123 The caricature is by Gillray.

124 The magazine was quite popular; see Graham, pp. 189, 221-222.

125 All quotations in this paragraph are from Review of Antonio, XVII (April 1801), 364-371.

126 Review of Thoughts Occasioned, XVIII (August 1801), 184-185.

127 For Godwin on the French principle, see Essays Never Before Published, pp. 226-227.

128 Thoughts Occasioned, p. 10.

129 Mathias, pp. 12-13. Though Mathias frequently declares that "neither my name, nor my situation in life will ever be revealed" (p. 270), others made his identity known. For more about Mathias and his poem, see Hopkins, pp. 194-216.

130 Fussell, p. 25.

131 See the British Museum Catalogue. The dialogues were first published together in 1798, but had earlier appeared separately.

132 Mathias, p. 22.

133 Mathias, pp. 210-216; see also pp. 167-168.

134 Mathias, pp. 370-375.

Quoted from Charles Lloyd's Lines suggested by the Past as reviewed in the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, II (April 1799), 428-433.


Maria is discussed in Tompkins, pp. 314-317.

Durant reprints some of the contemporary reviews in his edition of the Memoirs; see also the list in Pollin, Godwin Criticism. Wardle gives an account of the book's reception (Mary Wollstonecraft, pp. 312-322).

Quoted in Ford K. Brown, p. 134.


Pollin, Godwin Criticism, p. 83; Letter on Public Characters, AJRM, V (January 1800), 93.

I (1798).


Pp. 28-30; Mary died following childbirth.

See the review in the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, II (March 1799), 280-285; Wardle, Mary Wollstonecraft, pp. 320-321.


London, 1802, I, ii.


Quoted from Review of A Sermon . . ., Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, III (June 1799), 310; Mathias, pp. 210-212.


Review of St. Leon, V (January 1800), 23.

E.g., Anna Seward (Letters, V, 289).

For the praise, see Woodcock, William Godwin, p. 160; for the praise, Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, I (Oxford, 1956), 569-571; Paul, II, 25-26; Robinson, Books and Their Writers, I, 7; Lee letter of 7 December 1799 in the Abinger collection; The Complete Poetical Works of Keats, ed. Horace E. Scudder (Boston, 1899), 346-347 (letter of 2 January 1819); Shelley, Letters, I, 195. In Godwin's old age, Byron asked him why he did not write a new novel; Godwin giving the answer that it would kill him, Byron exclaimed, "and what matter, we should have another St. Leon," recounted by Maginn in Fraser's Magazine, X (October 1834), 463.


Paul, I, 371.

Information from microfilm of Godwin's diary, 2 December 1799; 3 February 1800.
161 See Pollin's bibliography in *Education and Enlightenment*.

162 Dublin, 1800, p. 218.


164 III, 195.

165 London, 1818, III, 66-76.

166 2nd ed. (London, 1799), I, vi.

167 *Thoughts Occasioned*, pp. 21-22.


169 *Vaurien; or, Sketches of the Times: Exhibiting Views of the Philosophes, Religions, Politics, Literature, and Manners of the Age* (London, 1797); *The Infernal Quixote: A Tale of the Day* (London, 1801).

170 *Reflections*, p. 87.

171 II, 88-89; for another of many excellent examples, see Lucas, II, 295-298. Walker complains bitterly in his preface of "the prominent absurdities of many self-im- portant reformers of mankind, who . . . by breaking every moral tie (while they declaim about morals) turn loose their disciples upon the world, to root up and overthrow every thing which has received the sanction of ages, and been held sacred by men of real genius and erudition" (I, ix-x).


Similarly, the anonymous author of The History of Sir George Warrington: or, The Political Quixote (1797) focuses on "the absurdity and hurtfulness of the doctrines of equality"; one of the episodes involving his Godwin figure Mr. Godney demonstrates in little a chief method of the conservative novelists: "Mr. Godney, a most strenuous orator in favour of benevolence and equalization of rank and property. . . . being humbly supplicated for charity by a woman whose children were sick and starving, proposes to send for the constable to apprehend her as a vagrant," quoted from the review in the Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine, II (February 1799), 133-136.

E.g., II, 12-13; 20-22, where the "infamous and brothel doctrines" of Political Justice are quoted to justify sexual license.

The phrase is Charles Lamb's (Letters, I, 237).


"The popularity of The Modern Philosophers was a passport to fame and distinction; and Miss Hamilton consequently found herself admired by the celebrated and the fashionable, and the object of curiosity and interest to the public. On the plan and execution of this work it would now be superfluous to offer any remarks: its favourite phrases have acquired popular authority; the name of the heroine is proverbial," quoted from Memoirs of the Late Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton (1818) in Whitney, pp. 309-310.

Vallaton harangues Julia into running off with him by demanding: "has it not been to demonstration proved, that the prejudices of filial duty, and family affection, gratitude to benefactors, and regard to promises, are the great barriers to the state of perfect virtue? These obstacles to perfection it is the glory of philosophy to demolish, and the duty of every person, impressed with a sense of perfectibility, to remove" (II, 279).

II, 316-317.
I85II, 87.

I86E.g., III, 31.

I87I, 170-171.

I88London, 1800, III, 94.

I89I, Ch. viii, II, 21-29. With vicious irony, a reviewer remarks that Fenton "gave a specimen of his practical application of the rules of the Political Justice concerning gratitude and marriage, by debauching the wife of his preserver. The lady made great progress in the Godwinian doctrines, and embraced many of the positions of that illustrious promoter, and shining pattern, of female morality, Mrs. Wollstonecraft Godwin, to whose virtues the narrative of the philosopher, her husband, bears so ample testimony," Review of The Vagabond, Anti-Jacobian Review and Magazine, II (February 1799), 138.

I90I, 35-37.

I91I, 38-40.

I92I, 53, 55.

I93I, 60-62.

I94I, 62-64.

I95Works, XI, 16.

I96Thoughts Occasioned, p. 10; "Modern Infidelity Considered, with Respect to Its Influence on Society," The Entire Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, ed. Olinthus Gregory, I (London, 1831), 49. Gregory is erroneous in giving 1800 as the date of delivery, for the separate publication of the sermon in 1800 gives 1799 (see Pollin, Godwin Criticism, 1599P). Pollin says Godwin is not mentioned by name in the sermon, but he is in the Gregory edition. In another sermon (not listed by Pollin), "The Sentiments Proper to the Present Crisis," preached in 1803, Hall again harshly criticizes Godwin's principles (I, 125-192). When incidents "of unnatural depravity or abandoned profligacy" were mentioned, it was said that Hall always remarked, "I could not have supposed any man capable of such an action, except Godwin" (Fleisher, p. 40).
For further information about Parr, see Adams, pp. 267-311; Paul, I, 375-387. The sermon was preached 15 April 1800 (Paul, I, 377).

For more about Mackintosh, see Adams, pp. 155-190; Paul, I, 328-330 (apologetic letter to Godwin). Many of the passages quoted by Godwin in Thoughts Occasioned occur in the preliminary discourse to the lectures (the only part published) in The Miscellaneous Works of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh, ed. Robert James Mackintosh (London, 1846), I, 339-387. In later years Mackintosh and Godwin resumed their friendship, Mackintosh confessing that "if I committed any fault which approaches to immorality I think it was towards Mr. Godwin. I condemn myself for contributing to any clamour against philosophical speculations; and I allow that, both from his talents and character, he was entitled to be treated with respect," in Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh, ed. Robert James Mackintosh (London, 1836), I, 134.

Works, XI, 98; see also Thoughts Occasioned, p. 18.

Paul, I, 378; Thoughts Occasioned, p. 19.

See Chronology of 1801 for full title, of 1797 for Malthus; as early as October 1795 Godwin notes in the preface to the second edition of Political Justice that his treatise "had been treated by some persons as of a seditious and inflammatory nature," but then contents himself with observing mildly that this is "probably an aspersion" (I, xvii).

Review of Thoughts Occasioned, British Critic, XVIII (August 1801), 134. The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine is also averse, X (December 1801), 394-399; but the Edinburgh Review (among others) gives high praise, I (October 1802), 24-26.

Coleridge's copy is now in the British Museum, quoted in Fleisher, p. 42. See Paul, II, 12-13, 81-82; Letters, IV (1959), 830-831, for further praise.

Thoughts Occasioned, pp. 10, 12.

Thoughts Occasioned, p. 1.

Thoughts Occasioned, p. 1.
The Works of Hannah More (London, 1853), II, 233-234; this piece was published as a pamphlet and "most extensively circulated, in 1793, to counteract the pernicious doctrines" of the Revolution (II, 221). Mr. Fantom, More's "New-Fashioned Philosopher," similarly owns that "the wrongs of the Poles and South Americans so fill my mind, as to leave me no time to attend to the petty sorrows of workhouses and parish apprentices. It is provinces, empires, continents, that the benevolence of the philosopher embraces; every one can do a little paltry good to his next neighbour" (I, 11).
when they have done this they will have sufficiently overthrown my arguments. . . . My literary labours for ten years have been solely directed to the melioration of human society, and prompted by an anxiety for human happiness. Let, then, these men go on in their despicable task of misrepresentation and calumny. Let them endeavor to represent me as the advocate of everything cruel, assassinating, and inhuman. You and I, my friend, I firmly persuade myself, shall yet live to see whether their malignant artifice, or the simple and unalterable truth, shall prove triumphant.

(29 August 1801, Paul, II, 73-74)


223Allen greatly oversimplifies in calling Wordsworth's play "a record of his emancipation from the seducing formulas of Godwinian optimism" (p. 62). For more accurate evaluations of the relationship, see PJ, III, 102-103; Alan Grob, "Wordsworth and Godwin: A Reassessment," SIR, VI (1967), 98-119.

224Pollin (Godwin Criticism, 1725P) lists one published comment by Thelwall, apparently respectful in tone.

225It should be noticed that in some of his comments about the dates of changes in public opinion, Godwin is speaking not of the general public but of partisans of the Revolution like Mackintosh (e.g., Thoughts Occasioned, pp. 5-7).

226For an analogous failure to take notice of an attack on the Memoirs, see Paul, I, 383. Perhaps Godwin thought comment on the attacked biography inappropriate in Thoughts Occasioned, for he was certainly aware of the adverse criticism of his book.

227Review of Thoughts Occasioned, XII (January 1802), 578.


Review of _A Spital Sermon_, X (December 1801), 393.

Paul, II, 88.

Quoted in Ford K. Brown, p. 174; Review of Fleetwood, XXI (August 1805), 337.

Letters, I, 220 (3 January 1812). For high praise of _Pj_, see I, 227; 229-230; 243; 303.

Quoted in Ford K. Brown, p. 173.

Works, XI, 16-17.

See Pollin's bibliography in _Education and Enlightenment._

See, e.g., "Memoir of William Godwin," Gold's London Magazine, and Theatrical Inquisitor, III (May 1821), 444; Caleb Williams "has established the claims of its author to the first novelist of his country." This article is not included in _Godwin Criticism._

Obituary of Godwin, Gentleman's Magazine, N. S. V (June 1836), 667; Pollin, "William Godwin's 'Fragment of a Romance,'" p. 50.

Gilfillan, pp. 12-13, 16.


Gilfillan, p. 10.

"Notes on Gilfillan's Literary Portraits," _Collected Writings_, XI, 335.


Quoted in Monro, p. 4; Plumb, p. 161.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CITED


Allen, B. Sprague. "*Analogues of Wordsworth's The Borderers,*" *PMLA,* XXXVIII (1923), 267-277.

--- "Minor Disciples of Radicalism," *MP,* XXI (1924), 277-301.

--- "The Reaction Against William Godwin," *MP,* XVI (1918), 57-75.


--- "William Godwin's Influence upon John Thelwall," *PMLA,* XXXVII (1922), 662-682.

Analytical Review. Review of *Political Justice,* XVI (June 1793), 121-130; XVI (August 1793), 388-404.

--- Review of *Caleb Williams,* XXI (February 1795), 166-175.

Annual Register for 1836.


__________ "Prospectus," I (July 1798), 1-6.

__________ Review of *Posthumous Works,* I (July 1798), 91-93.

__________ Review of *Memoirs,* I (July 1798), 94-102.


__________ Review of *An Examination of the Leading Principle of the New System of Morals,* . . . , I (September 1798), 331-335.

Review of Vaurien, I (December 1798), 685-690.

Review of An Oblique View of the Grand Conspiracy against Social Order . . . , I (December 1798), 691-692.

Review of The History of Sir George Warrington . . . , II (February 1799), 133-136.

Review of The Vagabond, II (February 1799), 137-140.


Review of Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons, II (April 1799), 413-419.

Letter from George Hutton, II (April 1799), 433-443.

Review of Lines Suggested by the Fast . . . , II (April 1799), 428-433.

Review of Memoirs of Emma Courtney, III (May 1799), 54-58.

Letter to the Editor, III (May 1799), 63-72.

Review of A Sermon . . . , III (June 1799), 309-311.

"Preface," IV (1799), vi-xvi.

Letter on Public Characters, V (January 1800), 91-94.


... Review of The Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis ... VI (May 1800), 59-64.

"The Vision of Liberty: Written in the Manner of Spencer," IX (Appendix, 1801), 515-520.

Review of A Spital Sermon, X (December 1801), 389-394.

Review of Thoughts Occasioned, X (December 1801), 394-399.

Review of Life of Chaucer, XVIII (July 1804), 220-241.

Review of Fleetwood, XXI (August 1805), 337-358.

Anti-Jacobian; or, Weekly Examiner. Nos. 1-36 (1797-1798).


*British Critic.* Review of *Political Justice,* I (July 1793), 307-318.

________. Review of *Caleb Williams,* IV (July 1794), 70-71.

"Correspondence" [on *Caleb Williams,*] V (April 1795), 444-447.


________. Review of *Thoughts Occasioned,* XVIII (August 1801), 184-192.


Review of Caleb Williams. 2nd Ser., XI (July 1794), 290-296.


[D'Israeli, Isaac]. Flim-Flams! or, The Life and Errors of My Uncle and His Friends! with Illustrations and Obscurities, By Messieurs Tag, Rag, and Bobtail: A Literary Romance. 2nd ed. 3 vols. London, 1806.

[ ]. Vaurien; or, Sketches of the Times: Exhibiting Views of the Philosophies, Religions, Politics, Literature, and Manners of the Age. 2 vols. London, 1797.


English Review. Review of Damon and Delia, III (February 1784), 133-135.

Review of Political Justice, XXVII (January 1796), 138-143; XXVIII (February 1796), 437-443; XXVIII (September 1796), 314-319.


Obituary of Godwin, N. S. V (June 1836), 666-670.


Gilfillan, George. First and Second Galleries of Literary Portraits. Edinburgh, 1854.


Caleb Williams. See Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams.


"Correspondence" [on Caleb Williams], British Critic, VI (July 1795), 94-95.

Cursory Strictures on the Charge Delivered by Lord Chief Justice Eyre to the Grand Jury, October 2, 1794 in The Morning Chronicle, October 21, 1794.


Essay on Sepulchres; or, a Proposal for erecting some memorial of the Illustrious Dead in all ages on the spot where their remains have been interred. London, 1809.

Essays Never Before Published. London, 1873.


Letter of Advice to a Young American on the Course of Studies it might be most advantageous for him to pursue. London, 1818.


Lives of the Necromancers: or, an Account of the most eminent persons in successive ages, who have claimed for themselves, or to whom has been imputed by others, the Exercise of Magical Powers. London, 1834.


Of Population: an Enquiry concerning the Power of increase in the Number of Mankind, Being an Answer to Mr. Malthus's Essay on that Subject. London, 1820.


Things as They Are: or, the Adventures of Caleb Williams. 3 vols. London, 1794.


Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr. Parr's Spital Sermon, Preached at Christ Church,
April 15, 1800. Being A Reply to the Attacks of Dr. Parr, Mr. Mackintosh, the Author of An Essay on Population and Others. London, 1801.


[__________]. Review of Clodesley, Edinburgh Review, LI (April 1830), 144-159.

Hearnshaw, F. J. C., ed. The Social & Political Ideas


_________________________. The Life of Thomas Holcroft: Written by Himself, Continued to the Time of His Death from His Diary, Notes, & Other Papers by William Hazlitt, and Now Newly Edited with Introduction and Notes, by Elbridge Colby. 2nd ed. 2 vols. New York, 1968.


Howell, Thomas James, ed. Howell's State Trials, XXIII (London 1817); XXIV (London 1818).


Literary and Biographical Magazine, and British Review. Review of Political Justice, X (March 1793), 224-226; X (April 1793), 306-310.


Monthly Magazine. Review of Thoughts Occasioned, XII (January 1802), 578-579.

Monthly Mirror. Review of Thoughts Occasioned, XII (September 1801), 182-183.

Monthly Review. Review of Thoughts Occasioned, XII (September 1801), 182-183.


---. "William Godwin's 'Fragment of a Romance','" *Comparative Literature,* XVI (1964), 40-54.


Enquiry concerning Political Justice." Unpubl. diss. 
U. of Toronto, 1940.

"Platonism in William Godwin's Political 

Prodigious!!! or, Childe Paddie in London. 3 vols. London, 
1818.


Reynolds, Frederick. The Life and Times of Frederick Reyn-

Rieger, James. The Mutiny Within: The Heresies of Percy 

Robinson, Henry Crabb. Crabb Robinson in Germany, 1800-1805, 

Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their 

Rogers, A. K. "Godwin and Political Justice," International 
Journal of Ethics, XXII (1912), 50-68.

Rogers, Samuel. The Table Talk of Samuel Rogers, ed. Alexan-


Sadleir, Michael. "Bentley's Standard Novel Series: its 
History and Achievement," The Colophon, pt. 10, no. 7 
(New York, 1932).


Review of Fleetwood, Edinburgh Review, VI 
(April 1805), 182-193.

1811.

Shelley, Percy Bysshe. The Complete Poetical Works of Shelley, 

The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, ed. 


