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DEPARTMENT  
OF HISTORY  
AND  
CIVILIZATION

# To Teach Every Principle of the Infidels and Republicans?

William Godwin Through His Children's Books

John-Erik Hansson

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to  
obtaining the degree of Doctor of History and Civilization  
of the European University Institute

Florence, 23 November 2018



European University Institute  
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## ABSTRACT

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Focusing on the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century radical William Godwin, this thesis examines the relationship between children's books and society by investigating the different ways in which authors try to bring about social change. The main claim of this work is that, in writing books for children, Godwin was attempting something radical and complex: to create a new kind of youth culture that was enquiring, knowledgeable and critical. A youth culture, therefore, that was likely to pave the way for the kind of social and political progress Godwin advocated in his better-known works such as the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793).

Often treated either as a way for a financially precarious, out-of-fashion radical writer to make ends meet or as illustrations of Godwin's broader philosophical and political claims from the 1790s, Godwin's books for children have not received sustained scholarly attention. This thesis, taking the form of an 'intellectual history through children's books', seeks to show their significance in Godwin's *oeuvre* and as cultural and literary artefacts of the turn of the nineteenth century. Godwin's works for children are therefore contextualised at three different levels: (1) within Godwin's own thinking, expressed in print and in unpublished manuscripts; (2) within the range of similar writing for children of the time; and (3) within broader late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century intellectual debates, particularly those concerning education, morality, religion and history.

By contextualising Godwin's children's books in this way, this thesis (1) highlights the relationship between the cultural and intellectual worlds of children and adults; (2) clarifies Godwin's broader lines of thought during the less well studied 'middle period' of his life; (3) examines in detail Godwin's attempt to reform (or re-form) a whole generation of children as he sought to unseat common assumptions about morality, religion, history and society while more generally "awakening" their minds.



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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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## ABBREVIATIONS (1): WORKS BY GODWIN

### For Adults

- CNM* William Godwin, *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, gen. ed. by Mark Philp, 8 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992).
- PPW* William Godwin, *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, gen. ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1993).

### For Children

- BS* William Scolfield [William Godwin], *Bible Stories. Memorable Acts of the Ancient Patriarchs, Judges and Kings: Extracted from Their Original Historians for the Use of Children*, 2 vols (London: R. Phillips, 1803).
- F* Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Suzanne L. Barnett and Katherine Benett Gustafson (Romantic Circles, 2014) <[http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin\\_fables/index.html](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin_fables/index.html)> [accessed 11 August 2014].
- GHoE* Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, First (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806).
- GHoG* Edward Baldwin [Godwin], *History of Greece: From the Earliest Records of That Country to the Time in Which It Was Reduced Into a Roman Province. Illustrated with Maps and Portraits. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, Second Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1822).
- GHoR* Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, First (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1809).
- GP* Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, Second Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1809).
- JG* Theophilus Marcliffe [William Godwin], *Life of Lady Jane Grey, and of Lord Guildford Dudley Her Husband*. (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806).
- TLG* Theophilus Marcliffe [William Godwin], *The Looking-Glass: A True History of the Early Years of an Artist* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805).

## ABBREVIATIONS (2): WORKS BY OTHER AUTHORS

- DHoE* George Davys, *A Plain and Short History of England, for Children: In Letters from a Father to His Son, with a Set of Questions at the End of Each Letter*, Ninth Edition (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1850).

- GsRH* Oliver Goldsmith, *Dr. Goldsmith's Roman History, Abridged by Himself, for the Use of Schools* (London: G. Leigh and S. Sotheby; W. J. and J. Richardson; J. Sotheby; F. and C. Rivington; Scatcherd and Letterman; Wilkie and Robinson; C. Law; Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and T. Kay, 1807).
- JP* Anonymous, *The Juvenile Plutarch*, Second Edition, 2 vols (London: Tabart and Co., 1806).
- MFS* Mary Pilkington, *A Mirror for the Female Sex. Historical Beauties for Young Ladies.*, Second Edition (London: Vernor and Hood, 1799).
- NRH* Anonymous, *A New Roman History, from the Foundation of Rome to the End of the Commonwealth* (London: E. Newbery, 1800).
- THoE* Sarah Trimmer, *A Concise History of England, Comprised in a Set of Easy Lessons Illustrated by Engravings: Being a Continuation of the Series of Historical Books for Children.*, 2 vols (London: J. Harris, 1808).
- TP* Andrew Tooke, *The Pantheon, Representing the Fabulous Histories of the Heathen Gods, and Most Illustrious Heroes, in a Plain and Familiar Method, by Way of Dialogue.*, Thirty First Edition, Revised and Corrected (London: J. Johnson, H. L Gardner, R. Baldwin, F. and C. Rivington, J Scatcherd, W Bent, G. and J. Robinson, G. Wilkies, C. Law, Longman and Rees, and Pote and Williams, 1803).

### ABBREVIATIONS (3): OTHER

#### Archival Material and Correspondence

- GD* William Godwin, *The Diary of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, Victoria Myers, and David O'Shaughnessy (Oxford: Oxford Digital Library, 2010) <<http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>>.
- LWG* William Godwin, *The Letters of William Godwin*, 5 vols., ed. by Pamela Clemit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011-). References follow Pamela Clemit's numbering system.
- MS. Abinger* Abinger Collection. References follow the coding used at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, where the collection is kept.
- NLS MSS* Constable Collection. References follow the coding used by the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.
- BL Add MSS* Place Papers. References follow the coding used by the British Library, London.

#### General Reference

- ODNB* *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: In Association with the British Academy: From the Earliest Times to the Year 2000*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Howard Harrison (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

# CHAPTER 1.

## INTRODUCTION:

### WRITING CHILDREN'S BOOKS IN SOCIETY

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In 2017 a controversy erupted in the United States when the MIT Press published the translation of a German book entitled *Communism for Kids*, as different media personalities condemned the book for what they considered its overly sympathetic treatment of communism both as a political theory and as a historical phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Such scandals remind us that books for children, whether they are for leisure or education, stand in a complex relationship to politics and society.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, this is not a new phenomenon. The late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century radical and political reformer William Godwin was subjected to similar – if not so public – criticism. Like the author of *Communism for Kids*, Godwin was accused of writing and circulating dangerous and seditious materials for children in his Juvenile Library. An anonymous and worried government informant who discovered William Godwin's children's bookshop, the Juvenile Library, reported to the Home Office in 1813:

it is evident there is an intention to have every work published for the Juvenile Library that can be required in the early instruction of children, and thus by degrees to give an opportunity for every principle professed by the infidels and republicans of these days to be introduced to their notice.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the lack of widespread outrage at either the publication of *Communism for Kids* or the continued existence of Godwin's business, both raise questions about the link between children's books and society: what is the relationship between social change and children's books, which serve as educational tools? What are authors doing when they write for children?

In this thesis, I propose analysing Godwin's output for children whilst bearing these questions in mind. I will show that, at a fundamental level, Godwin was trying to reform the cultural norms of the generation growing up in the wake of the conservative reaction to the

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1 Jacob Blumenfeld, 'The Little Red Book for Children', *The New York Times*, 20 January 2018 <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/28/opinion/communism-for-kids-scandal.html>> [accessed 5 June 2018]; Bini Adamczak, *Communism for Kids* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2017).

2 Among others, Raymond Williams tirelessly tried to show, both practically and theoretically, the extent of these complex relations. The title of this introduction is also a humble homage to his *Writing in Society*, Verso Modern Classics (London: Verso, 1991).

3 Quoted in Pamela Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', *Bibliion: The Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 9.1/2 (2001), 44–70 (pp. 45–46).

French Revolution. His attempt was wide-ranging and straddled fictional stories and more factual histories while also dealing with the classical and Christian religions. In doing so, Godwin covered central aspects of the culture of the British middle classes in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. He participated, through his output for children, to broader debates concerning history, morality and religion. By exploring these works by Godwin, I show the importance of his children's books for understanding his political and social activity in the opening years of the nineteenth century, which have often either been overlooked or characterised as a period of reduced activity. More broadly, I show how intellectual debates permeate both 'adult' and 'children's' culture and therefore suggest that intellectual historians should pay more attention to children's books in particular and to popular culture generally.

### GODWIN'S WORKS FOR CHILDREN

Although William Godwin is mostly known for the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), in which he presents a doctrine which has since been called 'philosophical anarchism',<sup>4</sup> and for his novels, especially *Caleb Williams* (1794), the children's publishing business occupied him for about two decades in the early nineteenth century. He first forayed into writing for children before running his own bookselling venture – the Juvenile Library – with the help of his second wife, Mary Jane. While I deal with Godwin's business and more the importance of education and educational thought for him in Chapter 2, the main objects of study of this thesis are the books for children Godwin penned; especially, the *Bible Stories* (1802), the *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, the *Looking Glass* (both in 1805), the *History of England*, the *Pantheon* and the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* (all in 1806), the *History of Rome* (1809) and finally the *History of Greece* in 1821. They were written under three pseudonyms, William Scolfield (for the *Bible Stories*), Theophilus Marcliffe (for the *Looking Glass* and the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*) and Edward Baldwin, Esq. (for the others),<sup>5</sup> as was a way for Godwin to shelter his books from accusations of political radicalism, and therefore to continue selling them without trouble.

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4 John P. Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1977); Peter H Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010).

5 In the rest of this thesis, I refer to Edward Baldwin Esq. as Edward Baldwin, for the sake of brevity.

Of the works written by Godwin for the Juvenile Library, Godwin's two works of linguistics, the 'New Guide to the English Tongue' (1809), and the *Outlines of English Grammar Partly Abridged from Mr. Hazlitt's New and Improved Grammar of the English Language*, published in 1810 have been omitted. I have excluded them primarily because they are a fundamentally different kind of book than the other works Godwin published for the Juvenile Library, which can be roughly divided in two categories: 'stories' and 'histories' (though they often tread the liminal space between them). In that sense they are therefore outliers. Moreover, as works of what we would now call linguistics, they were designed to change the way English grammar was taught in schools and their primary audience seems to have been schoolmasters, who would be better placed to understand the context of Godwin's linguistic arguments based, for example, on their knowledge of Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley*, than the pupils who would have made use of the lessons. What is more, both the 'New Guide to the English Tongue' and the *Outlines of English Grammar* are pieces that were either derived from or included in works not written by Godwin – Mylius's *School Dictionary* and Hazlitt's *New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue*. Lastly, any study of these works would require specific expertise in linguistics and the history of that discipline in order to evaluate the boastful claim recorded in Godwin's diary on 29 July 1809: "I think I have made an entirely new discovery as to the way of teaching y<sup>e</sup> English lang<sup>e</sup>". While it would be an interesting endeavour, studying the 'New Guide to the English Tongue' and the *Outlines of English Grammar* would therefore require a significant shift in focus away from Godwin's own work as well as a considerably broader contextualization in terms of linguistic theories than would be achievable in a single thesis.<sup>6</sup>

There are other works that have sometimes (or often) been attributed to Godwin that have been excluded from this study. *Dramas for Children* published in 1809 in the Juvenile Library were analysed as authored by Godwin in Jean de Palacio's *William Godwin et son Monde Intérieur*. It has however since been recognized that the author was most likely Mary Jane Godwin rather than William.<sup>7</sup> The Abinger Collection in Oxford, where the majority of

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6 For broader context on language and politics in the period, see: Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984); Susan Manly, *Language, Custom and Nation in the 1790s: Locke, Tooke, Wordsworth, Edgeworth* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007).

7 Jean de Palacio, *William Godwin et Son Monde Intérieur* (Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1980), pp. 84, 89-91; On Mary Jane's *Dramas* see: William St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989), pp. 293-94; and Suzanne L. Barnett and Katherine Bennett Gustafson, 'A Complete Bibliography of Titles Released by Godwin's Juvenile Library and City Juvenile Library', in *Fables Ancient and Modern*, by Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], ed. by Suzanne L. Barnett and Katherine

Godwin's manuscripts are collected, contains an unfinished draft of a work of natural history that has been identified as that of Godwin's *Rural Walks*.<sup>8</sup> This was not included in this study as I have not been able to locate a published version, or indeed find traces of one. I also do not tackle the French translation of Godwin's *Fables* for two reasons. First, it was most undertaken by Mary Jane and not William Godwin. Second, the analysis I conduct of the *Fables* in Chapter 3 would not have been altered had I included the translated work.

Finally, I have excluded *The Outlines of English History*, published in 1809, as I am now convinced that it was not, in fact, written by Godwin even though it is usually attributed to him. The *Outlines* has been attributed to Godwin because in its full title the book boasts to have had its text "chiefly extracted from *The History of England* by Edward Baldwin," connecting the *Outlines* with Godwin's own work. Moreover, the layout of the title page makes it seem that 'Edward Baldwin' is in fact the author. However, in the advertisement pages that precede the fourth edition of *The Life of Lady Jane Grey* (1815), the works "written by Edward Baldwin, Esq." are clearly marked out, and do not include the *Outlines of English History*.<sup>9</sup> The *Outlines* do appear in a different section, without any indication of an author, between an advertisement for Godwin's *Looking-Glass* (written under the pseudonym of Theophilus Marcliffe in 1805) and a book entitled *Colonel Jack: The History of a Boy who never went to School. By the Author of Robinson Crusoe*. In an 1809 edition of the *History of Rome*, there is a similar organisation of the advertisements, where again the *Outlines of English History* are presented without any indication of authorship – and indeed, in those advertisements there is no mention of Edward Baldwin even as source material.<sup>10</sup> More broadly, advertisement pages in books published by the Juvenile Library consistently mark out the books written by Edward Baldwin and never include the *Outlines of English History*. The opening statement of the preface of the *Outlines* makes it even clearer that the work should not be attributed to Edward Baldwin, for it refers to Baldwin as a third party who wrote "the work from which these pages are drawn".<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the style of the

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Bennett Gustafson (Romantic Circles, 2014) <[http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin\\_fables/index.html](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin_fables/index.html)> [accessed 11 August 2014].

8 It has however been studied in: Janet Bottoms, 'William Godwin's Rural Walk', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, 2012, 47–57. The draft can be found in: MS. Abinger c. 24 fols. 20–31.

9 Theophilus Marcliffe [Godwin], *Life of Lady Jane Grey, and of Lord Guildford Dudley Her Husband.*, Fourth Edition (London: M. J. Godwin & Co., 1815), pp. 3–6.

10 Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, First (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1809).

11 *Outlines of English History, Chiefly Extracted from the History of England by Edward Baldwin, Esq. For the*

text, particularly the numerous religious references and more generally the Christian orientation of the *Outlines* are uncharacteristic of Godwin's style in the opening decade of the nineteenth century. Lastly, the *Outlines of English History* do not appear in the manuscript note where Godwin specifies which books he would have liked to see included in posthumous collections of his works.<sup>12</sup> Given the available evidence, I find it very doubtful that Godwin actually authored the work and have therefore excluded it from the thesis.

### THE STUDY OF GODWIN'S WORKS

Despite the importance of education in Godwin's life, Godwin's children's books have received relatively little critical attention. Political theorists and historians of political thought have continued to focus on on *The Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* in order to locate Godwin's politics in a tradition, and thus keep asking whether Godwin was a utilitarian, an anarchist, or simply a radical rational Dissenter.<sup>13</sup> In that sense, Colin Ward's efforts to frame the discussion of Godwin's politics in educational terms have not yet borne fruit.<sup>14</sup> In the broader historiography on Britain, Godwin is mostly known for his participation in the 'French Revolution debate' in London of the 1790s.<sup>15</sup> In this context, he is often seen as proposing an alternative form of political engagement in the cause of reform to that advocated by other writers and orators such as Thomas Paine or John Thelwall.<sup>16</sup> Yet,

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*Use of Children from Four to Eight Years of Age.* (London: M. J. Godwin, 1814), p. iii.

12 MS. Abinger c. 33 fol. 65

13 On Godwin as a utilitarian, see: Elie Halévy, *La Formation du radicalisme philosophique*. (Paris: PUF, 1995) originally published in 1901-1904. Robert Lamb, 'Was William Godwin a Utilitarian?', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 70.1 (2009), 119–41; On Godwin as an anarchist, see: D. H. Monro, *Godwin's Moral Philosophy; an Interpretation of William Godwin*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1953); Clark, *The Philosophical Anarchism of William Godwin*; Alain Thévenet, *William Godwin: Des Lumières à l'anarchisme*, *Commune Mémoire* (Lyon [France]: Atelier de création libertaire, 2002); Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*; For Godwin as a radical Dissenter, see: Mark Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986); William Stafford, 'Dissenting Religion Translated into Politics: Godwin's *Political Justice*', *History of Political Thought*, 1 (1980), 279–99.

14 Colin Ward, *Anarchism: A Very Short Introduction*, *Very Short Introductions*, 116 (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 51–54, 61.

15 A. Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1979); Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?: England, 1783-1846* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 57–74; Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); chapter 2 in Kenneth R. Johnston, *Unusual Suspects: Pitt's Reign of Alarm and the Lost Generation of the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Mark Philp, *Reforming Ideas in Britain: Politics and Language in the Shadow of the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

16 See for example, Mark Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform', in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. by Mark Philp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 18–37; E. P. Thompson, 'Benevolent Mr. Godwin', in *The Romantics: England in a Revolutionary Age* (Suffolk: Merlin

his reaction to the increasingly repressive context of the late 1790s has been of interest to historians and provided much evidence for Godwin's alleged turn to more conservative politics.<sup>17</sup> This view has since been challenged through the analysis of his theory of communication, or the relationship between the means and ends of Godwin's radicalism, both in the contexts of changing forms of sociability and the dynamic features of what has been understood as competing public spheres.<sup>18</sup>

This revaluation of Godwin's activity in the late 1790s (and to a lesser extent in the early years of the nineteenth century) was made possible thanks to historicist literary scholars rather than historians and political theorists. It was they who have most regularly tackled Godwin's broader ideas through readings of his later novels, plays, and more recently histories, essays and biographies.<sup>19</sup> For the most part, however, these works did not usually discuss Godwin's thoughts on education at any length, and frequently do not mention the

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Press, 1997), pp. 96–106; Mark Philp, 'Godwin, Thelwall, and the Means of Progress', in *Godwinian Moments: from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto, ON.: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 59–82.

- 17 Isaac Kramnick, 'On Anarchism and the Real World: William Godwin and Radical England', *The American Political Science Review*, 66.1 (1972), 114–128; John P. Clark, 'On Anarchism in An Unreal World: Kramnick's View of Godwin and the Anarchists', *The American Political Science Review*, 69.1 (1975), 162–67; Thompson.
- 18 See for example: Andrew McCann, *Cultural Politics in the 1790's: Literature, Radicalism, and the Public Sphere*, Romanticism in Perspective (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999) especially chapter 3; Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jon Mee, *Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762 to 1830* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Jon Mee, "'The Press and Danger of the Crowd": Godwin, Thelwall, and the Counter-Public Sphere', in *Godwinian Moments: from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto, ON.: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 83–102; Philp, 'Godwin, Thelwall, and the Means of Progress'; Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture*, 2013, pp. 82–121; John-Erik Hansson, 'The Genre of Radical Thought and the Practices of Equality: The Trajectories of William Godwin and John Thelwall in the Mid-1790s', *History of European Ideas*, 43.7 (2017), 776–90.
- 19 On the novels, see for example: Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Jon Klancher, 'Godwin and the Genre Reformers: On Necessity and Contingency in Romantic Narrative Theory', in *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-Forming Literature, 1789-1837*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan and Julia M. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 21–38; Gary Handwerk, 'History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin's Historical Fiction', in *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-Forming Literature, 1789-1837*, ed. by Tilottama Rajan and Julia M. Wright (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 64–85; Tilottama Rajan, 'The Dis-Figuration of Enlightenment: War, Trauma, and the Historical Novel in Godwin's *Mandeville*', in *Godwinian Moments: from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto, ON.: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 172–93; on the theatre: David O'Shaughnessy, *William Godwin and the Theatre* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2010); On the histories and biographies, see: John Morrow, 'Republicanism and Public Virtue: William Godwin's History of the Commonwealth of England', *The Historical Journal*, 34.3 (1991), 645–64; Rowland Weston, 'History, Memory, and Moral Knowledge: William Godwin's Essay on Sepulchres (1809)', *The European Legacy*, 14.6 (2009), 651–65; P. Fermanis, 'William Godwin's History of the Commonwealth and the Psychology of Individual History', *The Review of English Studies*, 61.252 (2010), 773–800; April London, *Literary History Writing, 1770-1820* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 37–46.

Juvenile Library – though some, like Rowland Weston and Jonathan Sachs do include some analysis of a few works for children written by Godwin, but they are not usually at the centre of the analysis.<sup>20</sup> Closer to the concerns of Godwin's works for children, then, are Godwin's works on education, which have received far less attention than the works mentioned above. For the most part, they have been studied in their more philosophical dimensions rather than as complement to children's books.<sup>21</sup> A notable exception to this is Janet Bottoms' recent article where she works out the connection between *The Enquirer* and Godwin's view of the imagination, as developed philosophically and in his books for children.<sup>22</sup> My work is deeply indebted to her approach although I work with broader intellectual and cultural contexts than Bottoms.

Scholars working on the Juvenile Library have often asked whether the Juvenile Library was a continuation or a retreat from Godwin's political project as defined during the French Revolution debates. Before the publication of St Clair's biography of Godwin in 1989 and the definite attribution to Godwin of the *Bible Stories* and its loaded preface, there were thus two competing views. On the one hand, scholars such as Marilyn Gaull and Geoffrey Summerfield have tended to disconnect the Juvenile Library from Godwin's political and social concerns, and argued that he had become a tradesman mirroring public taste, fallen prey to "deep and ridiculous contradictions".<sup>23</sup> Scholars specialising in Godwin's work specifically, however, noted the philosophical, ethical but somewhat a-political aspects of Godwin's children's literature. They thus dealt with Godwin's conception of childhood as it emerged alongside the Rousseauian and Wordsworthian ideals, which have since sometimes been described as the archetypal 'romantic child', rather than engaging with Godwin's

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20 Rowland Weston, 'William Godwin's Religious Sense', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32.3 (2009), 407–23 (p. 414); Jonathan Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination, 1789-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 17.

21 Brian Simon, *Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960) especially pp. 49-50; Burton Ralph Pollin, *Education and Enlightenment in the Works of William Godwin*. (New York: Las Americas Pub. Co., 1962); Pamela Clemit, 'Godwin's Educational Theory: The Enquirer', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 12 (1993), 3–11; Graham Allen, 'Godwin, Fénelon, and the Disappearing Teacher', *History of European Ideas*, 33.1 (2007), 9–24; Gary Handwerk, "'Awakening the Mind": William Godwin's *Enquirer*', in *Godwinian Moments: from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto, ON.: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 103–24.

22 Janet Bottoms, "'Awakening the Mind": The Educational Philosophy of William Godwin', *History of Education*, 33.3 (2004), 267–82.

23 Geoffrey Summerfield, *Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the 18th Century* (London: Methuen young books, 1984), p. 252 For Summerfield's severely anti-Godwinian assessment of the Juvenile Library, see pp. 245-257. Marilyn Gaull, *English Romanticism: The Human Context* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988), pp. 64–65.

activity as an intellectual writing children's books. Moreover, and with the exception of Jean de Palacio's psychoanalytically informed work on Godwin as a person,<sup>24</sup> this scholarship tends to study the publications of the Juvenile Library as a whole, often analysing Godwin's and Lamb's texts together, rather than engaging with Godwin's works in a consistent fashion.<sup>25</sup>

Since St Clair's discovery, and despite the resilience of the idea that Godwin was simply a mirror of public taste, there has been a stronger push toward an understanding of Godwin's books as specific, intentional interventions to change the way children's books were written. Here, and in contrast to the broader thrust of the present work, an analysis centred on relatively narrowly political issues has nevertheless remained dominant. Matthew Grenby, for example, has restated the view that Godwin "refused to politicize" his children's literature.<sup>26</sup> However, he adopts an intentionally narrow understanding of the incursion of politics in children's literature: for him, only works that refer directly to the political events of the period count as political. With this definition, he shows that it was only non-canonical Jacobin and (particularly) anti-Jacobin authors of children's books who were political.<sup>27</sup> Contemporary politics might not have entered the books in an explicit and direct way – though, as we shall see in chapter 3, they were alluded to quite freely – but it is far from certain that they did not do so at a different level. If we broaden our understanding of the relationship between politics and children's literature, we might discover a different picture that complements Grenby's valuable analysis. There are also good reasons to do this, since, as Robert Anderson notes, Grenby's definition is "sure to exclude many books that most readers would consider political".<sup>28</sup>

There is also a fair share of disagreement among authors who do see Godwin's children's books as political, in particular with regard to the way and extent to which the books are

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24 Palacio On the Juvenile Library, see especially pp. 83-113.

25 Margaret Fearn, 'William Godwin and the "Wilds of Literature"', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 29.3 (1981), 247–57; Margaret Kinnell, 'Childhood and Children's Literature: The Case of M. J. Godwin and Co., 1805-25', *Publishing History*, 24 (1988); Don Locke, *A Fantasy of Reason: The Life and Thought of William Godwin* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 212–16; Peter H Marshall, *William Godwin* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 267–92.

26 Matthew O. Grenby, 'Politicizing the Nursery: British Children's Literature and the French Revolution', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 27.1 (2003), 1–26 (p. 19).

27 Grenby, 'Politicizing the Nursery'.

28 Robert Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised: Politics in the Juvenile Library', in *Godwinian Moments: from the Enlightenment to Romanticism*, ed. by Robert Maniquis and Victoria Myers (Toronto, ON.: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp. 125–46 (p. 130).

actually political. Pamela Clemit, for example, claims that Godwin's business was "an outlet for progressive children's books".<sup>29</sup> However, it was not simply in the content of the text that the progressive politics were to be found, but "rather, it was their [the books'] formal strategies, designed to foster the moral autonomy of the child reader, that made his [Godwin's] books uniquely progressive or dangerous, depending on one's point of view".<sup>30</sup> Tracking Godwin's epistemology through his philosophical works and a small selection of his works for children, Richard Gough Thomas has identified Godwin as "Britain's first anarchist educator".<sup>31</sup> Susan Manly has argued against Matthew Grenby, claiming that contemporary politics directly influence Godwin's way of writing children's books. According to Manly, these works should be seen as a continuation of a political project that mobilized both the spheres of childhood and adulthood.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, Robert Anderson points to the ultimate political ambivalence of Godwin's work in the Juvenile Library, to suggest that trying to characterise it fully would be "chimerical". In a limited sense, I agree. In my view, part of the problem with the literature on Godwin's Juvenile Library is that it is too centred on politics and too intent on placing Godwin somewhere on the 'radical-to-conservative' scale. One cannot avoid politics when studying Godwin's books for children, but one should expand the analytical horizon to recognize precisely that, as Anderson puts it, Godwin's "work for children and [...] for adults share similar preoccupations and pursue similar projects."<sup>33</sup>

To my knowledge, there has not yet been a book-length attempt to understand the Juvenile Library at this level of complexity. Such is the main objective of the present work, which follows in the wake of arguments put forward first by Pamela Clemit and later revisited by different scholars.<sup>34</sup> Julie Ann Carlson, for example, characterises Godwin's works for children as a consistent attempt to "revis[e] childhood, children, and the texts that compose a Juvenile Library" in an attempt to create the possibility of a better society. Her account, however, relies on a particularly expansive notion of history, which, as we shall see, erases

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29 Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25'; Pamela Clemit, 'William Godwin's Juvenile Library', *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, NS.147 (2009), 90–99.

30 Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', pp. 47–48; See also: Clemit, 'William Godwin's Juvenile Library'.

31 Richard Gough Thomas, 'Scepticism and Experience in the Educational Writing of William Godwin' (unpublished PhD Dissertation, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2016), p. 181.

32 Susan Manly, 'William Godwin's "School of Morality"', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 43.3 (2012), 135–42.

33 Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', p. 143.

34 Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25'.

important dimensions of Godwin's children's books.<sup>35</sup> Embracing an equally holistic approach, but from a different angle, Katherine Bennett Gustafson and Suzanne L. Barnett, editors of the recent online edition of Godwin's *Fables*, have also argued for a more coherent approach to Godwin as a children's author.<sup>36</sup> Lastly, Janet Bottoms has emphasised the importance of Godwin's understanding of the faculty of imagination in his educational philosophy, and interprets the works that Godwin wrote as Edward Baldwin as illustrating his commitment to the development of that faculty in children.<sup>37</sup> Exploring these connections further, and characterising Godwin's work in the Juvenile Library in greater detail, is one of the fundamental objectives of the present work. Moreover, this thesis shows the wide variety of Godwin's ethical, political, literary, cultural and historiographical attempts at reforming youth and education. It also illustrates that the children's book-market presented a unique cultural and intellectual space for this endeavour, not to mention one which, Godwin hoped, would also sustain both he and his family.

### RE-THINKING CHILDREN'S BOOKS

The connections between Godwin's works for children and his work for adults should be understood in an even broader context: that of the more general relationship between the cultures of adulthood and childhood. In her seminal work, Mary Jackson argued that "at every point in its early history, children's literature was rooted in the conditions and imperatives of the adult world and was regarded first and foremost as a tool to shape the young to the needs of that world".<sup>38</sup> Thus, children's books contribute to what Andrew O'Malley has called "the making of the modern child", as the pedagogical, moral and thematic dimensions of children's literature are linked to the desire to see children live and behave in socially appropriate ways.<sup>39</sup> While I agree with these points, I want to go beyond

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35 Julie Ann Carlson, *England's First Family of Writers: Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Mary Shelley* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 244. On Godwin's children's books, see pp. 231-245. There are also empirical problems in her analysis. She relies on an erroneous chronology of publication to bolster her argument. See p. 236.

36 Suzanne L. Barnett and Katherine Bennett Gustafson, 'Introduction: The Radical Aesop: William Godwin and the Juvenile Library, 1805-1825', in *Fables Ancient and Modern*, by Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], ed. by Suzanne L. Barnett and Katherine Bennett Gustafson (Romantic Circles, 2014) <[http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin\\_fables/index.html](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin_fables/index.html)> [accessed 11 August 2014].

37 Bottoms, "Awakening the Mind".

38 Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from Its Beginnings to 1839* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. xi.

39 Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Routledge, 2004).

Jackson's argument and suggest, through my contextualisation of Godwin's writings for children, that one should consider that the intellectual world of the child and that of the adult are more than connected: they are different sides of the same coin. Children's books are a place where intellectual debates also play out; in other words, the children's book market is a place where interventions in intellectual life were made. Beyond understanding what Godwin was doing with his children's books, then, I want to identify how this medium reflects broader cultural, literary and intellectual debates and should therefore be understood as contributing to them.

This theoretical point must be put alongside the empirical fact that the genres of Godwin's children's books are not the most commonly studied in the field of children's literature. This thesis therefore addresses some of the broader issues facing the history of children's literature as well as the history of educational theories and practices. In the very first page of his seminal study of the history of early children's books, F. J. Harvey Darton defines children's books as:

Printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet. I shall therefore exclude from this history, as a general rule, all schoolbooks, all purely moral or didactic treatises, all reflective or adult-minded descriptions of child-life, and almost all alphabets, primers, and spelling-books.<sup>40</sup>

It has some merit as a broad-strokes definition: (1) it is fairly straightforward and allows the historian to discriminate between sources; (2) it remains open to some exceptions by enunciating a "general rule" which remains nevertheless open to some exceptions. It is therefore justifiable heuristically given that Darton's investigation covers half a millennium of writing and publishing for children. However, because such a simple definition has frequently been replicated uncritically, it has led to assumptions in the study of children's books more generally. This is partly true, for example, even in such a self-reflective work as Mary Jackson's, where a distinctive split between instructional and pleasurable books is maintained, leading to the commonplace conclusion that imaginative literature progresses and becomes acceptable in the mid-eighteenth century and flourishes during the late-

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40 F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, ed. by Brian Alderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 1.

Victorian and Edwardian eras.<sup>41</sup> As the critic Seth Lerer argues, “just as we seek to find anew the innocence of the child, so we have sought a golden age of children’s literature”.<sup>42</sup> Fortunately, this no longer holds for many contemporary scholars, who have started to question the whiggish views of their predecessors. The conventional story of ‘progressive development’ is now being replaced with a more complex historical narrative which emphasises ruptures and continuities, and links what critics identify as traditions.<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, many critics still exclude works for children that they do not consider to be primarily read for leisure. Let me illustrate this point by taking two fairly typical examples. In a 1998 article, Ruth Bottigheimer attempted to redefine children’s literature according to the central characteristic of what she calls its specific “normative nature”. For her, the recognition of this normative nature enables us to “come to grips with children’s literature in and of itself, that is, as an independent system”. However, in this process of redefinition, she largely ignores works that are not imaginative fiction, and does not at all pay attention to works for the use of schools.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in his introduction to his recent book, *Children’s Literature*, Matthew Grenby writes that his study “concentrate[s] only on those texts [...] which have been intended to entertain children *at least as much as* to instruct them”, an immediate consequence being that “school-books and ABCs are omitted”.<sup>45</sup>

By studying Godwin’s works with as few preconceptions as possible regarding the traditional classifications of children’s books, this thesis thus continues the important work of criticism and displacement of the (anachronistic and ideal-typical) definitions that have become common starting points for the study of children’s literature.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, I hope to contribute to the study of texts that are, as I have shown, frequently out of the

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41 Jackson, p. xiv.

42 Seth Lerer, *Children’s Literature: A Reader’s History, from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), p. 7.

43 See for example Kimberley Reynolds, *Children’s Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 3; Matthew O. Grenby, *Children’s Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

44 Ruth B. Bottigheimer, ‘An Important System of Its Own: Defining Children’s Literature’, *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 59.2 (1998), 191–210.

45 Grenby, *Children’s Literature*, p. 2, emphasis added; this echoes Grenby and Immel’s choices in *The Cambridge Companion to Children’s Literature*, ed. by Matthew O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

46 Other recent pieces of scholarship doing this from different angles include: Matthew O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Lissa Paul, *The Children’s Book Business: Lessons from the Long Eighteenth Century*, 72 (New York: Routledge, 2011).

literary critic's focus, namely school-books and books of instruction, for, as I demonstrate throughout the thesis, they are sites of the circulation and confrontation of ideas.

## METHODOLOGICAL MADNESS

### I. THE ANATOMY OF A CHILDREN'S BOOK

Imagine picking up one of Godwin's children's books. In fact, imagine, picking up the two-volume edition of his *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1805).<sup>47</sup> The first impression of the book is physical: the book has a size, a specific print-format and a weight. As a duodecimo (about 14×8.5 cm), it fits effortlessly in small hands. Moreover, it is quite light and thus comfortable to hold. Should you open the volumes and leaf through some of the pages, other constitutive elements of the book become evident. It is impossible to ignore the text density of its pages, how the text is organised and printed on the page, the varying size of the typeface, or whether there are tables or other obvious textual breaks. You cannot miss the illustrations, how frequently they appear and how big or small they are. Then you would start actually reading the text, beginning with the preface, printed in small, tightly spaced letters. After deciphering (or simply ignoring) it, you would finally get to the main body of the text, the actual fables, many of which are illustrated in different ways and whose texts are generously spaced, making the book easy and entertaining to read as well as visually attractive. Now, if you next leafed through the single-volume edition of the same work, you would immediately be struck by how much fewer illustrations there are.<sup>48</sup> Finally, comparing Godwin's *History of England* (first edition, 1806) and Sarah Trimmer's *Concise History of England* (1808),<sup>49</sup> you would be struck with how many tables and illustrations there are in the latter, and how few in the former.

Interpreting such differences is at the core of the problem posed by children's books. More broadly, the experience of picking up a children's book, flipping through it and finally reading it brings to light three basic aspects of the object that must be tackled to form an

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47 Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, First Edition, 2 vols (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805).

48 Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805).

49 Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, A New Edition (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1807); Sarah Trimmer, *A Concise History of England, Comprised in a Set of Easy Lessons Illustrated by Engravings: Being a Continuation of the Series of Historical Books for Children.*, 2 vols (London: J. Harris, 1808).

adequate interpretive framework. Firstly, that this is an object, destined to be bought, sold, and used by a variety of people old and young; secondly, we are confronted with an object containing text; and finally, there are images that accompany this text. Making sense of these elements in relation to one another is a first key to understanding an individual children's book as a whole unit carrying different meanings. Still, while the three dimensions of interpretation (object, text, image) can be separated analytically, it should nonetheless be emphasised that they are all aspects of the same item and therefore all participate in different processes through which meaning emerges for different readers. They also illustrate some of the specific constraints that were imposed on the author and bookseller, William Godwin. In the following paragraphs, I discuss some of these issues in further detail, in order to construct the analytical framework that I eventually deploy in my reading of Godwin's children's books. After all, the goal of these observations is not simply to notice how Godwin differed from other children's authors, but rather to interpret his works, and his contributions to the children's book market of the early nineteenth century, in a way that highlights the differences and sets them in the perspective of some of the pedagogical, political and philosophical debates of the time.

## II. MATERIALISM: A BOOK IS TO BE READ BUT ALSO BOUGHT AND SOLD

The first impression that one has of a children's book is its materiality: its size, its weight, and the appearance of the pages, including the organisation of text on the pages.<sup>50</sup> Tackling children's books by simply and only dealing with the text in relation to ideologies or philosophical systems, as has sometimes been done,<sup>51</sup> thus begs the question of the importance of materiality in the elaboration of meaning through reading. Historians of reading have therefore emphasised the importance of understanding the diversity of conventions and ways of approaching the activity of reading, from oral rendition of texts with a smaller, familial audience, to reading aloud in front of a large audience, and to the silent practice that is most common today.<sup>52</sup> These authors have shown that understanding

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50 For a broad introduction to many aspects of the materiality of a book, see *The Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship*, ed. by Neil Fraistat and Julia Flanders (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

51 See for example: Mitzi Myers, 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books', *Children's Literature*, 14.1 (1986), 31–59; Isaac Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 99–100.

52 Robert Darnton, 'History of Reading', in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. by Peter Burke, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), pp. 157–86; Roger Chartier, 'Languages, Books, and Reading from the Printed Word to the Digital Text', *Critical Inquiry*, 31.1 (2004), 133–52; Martyn Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing in*

these conventions is key to identifying the ways in which meanings were extracted and appropriated by different readers, and that there is good reason to believe that authors were not ignorant of these practices; not least as they were often readers themselves. One would therefore expect authors to tailor their writings according to these conventions, especially when choosing between writing for classroom use and for private reading.

What is more, these issues are particularly important in the case of William Godwin since he partially reflects on the link between the emergence of meaning and the conditions in which a text is read in *The Enquirer*.<sup>53</sup> Some children's books also provide other indications regarding their uses. For example, George Davys's *Plain and Short History of England* includes specific questions at the end of each chapter. Not only do these indicate some of his views on pedagogy, they are also indicative of the environment in which a book should be read (under the supervision of an adult, who is supposed to ask the questions), and how the texts should be read (in such a way that specific details are retained).<sup>54</sup> Taking a slightly different approach to the study of books, Matthew Grenby has persuasively emphasised the usefulness of marginalia, written by both adults and children, as traces of the identities of readers, and as clues regarding their use. He records, for instance, an annotation of an 1814 edition of Godwin's *Pantheon*, where the tutor instructed the child to read the chapter "until all the proper names have been memorized".<sup>55</sup>

The second dimension of materiality that must be taken into account, is the commercial nature of Godwin's enterprise. Godwin's children's books, like most other children's books at the time, were produced to be bought and sold: they were commodities that existed in a market with a supply, a demand, and intervening individuals mediating the availability and desirability of particular books.<sup>56</sup> The commodity status of such works, as well as William

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*the Western World* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

53 See the more detailed discussion in chapter 3 below.

54 George Davys, *A Plain and Short History of England, for Children: In Letters from a Father to His Son, with a Set of Questions at the End of Each Letter*, Ninth Edition (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1850).

55 Matthew O. Grenby, 'Early British Children's Books: Towards an Understanding of Their Users and Usage', *Corvey CW3 Journal*, 2007 <<https://www2.shu.ac.uk/corvey/cw3journal/>> [accessed 8 November 2014] paragraph 22. Emphasis in the original.

56 For an early text dealing with children's books specifically as commodities, see: J. H Plumb, 'The New World of Children', in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and J. H Plumb (London: Europa Publications, 1982), pp. 286–315. More recently, and taking a systemic approach, see: Jeroen Salman, 'Children's Books as a Commodity: The Rise of a New Literary Subsystem in the Eighteenth-Century Dutch Republic', *Poetics*, 28.5–6 (2001), 399–421. Some works follow the traces of individual businesses in late eighteenth century England, see for example: Jill

and Mary Jane Godwin's need to make a living from the profits of the Juvenile Library, are vital to understanding some of the constraints that Godwin faced. In addition to this very material incentive, Godwin had another motivation to widen the circulation of his works. Given the working hypothesis of the dissertation, that Godwin's books for children should be understood as communicative interventions in various intellectual debates with different layers of meaning, it follows that his desire for the success of this process of communication consequently encouraged him to increase his output and sales, as is illustrated by the publication of the cheaper and more accessible volume of the *Fables*.

### III. ILLUSTRATIONS

The two-volume edition of Godwin's *Fables* is richly illustrated. This is not unique; children's books at the turn of the nineteenth century were often illustrated in different ways, depending on the artist, the available technology, or indeed the costs of production. Furthermore, these illustrations vastly differed in size, complexity, position within or around the text, in number, and in graphic style. All of these elements are important in understanding the function of illustrations in children's literature and especially with regards to how the relationships between text and image can provide additional clues into the possible meanings that can emerge through the process of reading.

Illustrating children's literature is an art almost as old as children's literature itself.<sup>57</sup> As a consequence, many different methods have been developed with which to approach illustrations, some of which are based on aesthetics and are therefore essentially art-historical. However, as Rosemary Ross Johnston notes, "because of the intimate relationships and responsibilities of both words and pictures in the carriage of a story, in the sphere of picture-books, art terms and the methodologies of art historians and critics are not

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Shefrin, "'Adapted for and Used in Infants' Schools, Nurseries, &c.': Booksellers and the Infant School Market', in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 163–80; Paul; For a more general introduction to 'the literary marketplace' of the period, see: Gauld chapter II; see also: William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

57 For a recent historical overview, and many reproductions of early illustrations, see: Brian Alderson and Felix de Marez Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise: Origins of Children's Book Publishing in England, 1650-1850* (New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2006); See also: Judith Graham, 'Five Centuries of Illustrating Aesop's Fables', in *Acts of Reading: Teachers, Texts and Childhood*, ed. by Morag Styles and Evelyn Arizpe (Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham, 2009), pp. 59–72; Rosemary Ross Johnston, 'Analysing Visual Texts - Tools and Terminologies', in *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook*, ed. by Kimberley Reynolds and Matthew O. Grenby (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 82–91.

sufficient".<sup>58</sup> Instead, the focus of the analysis of illustrations in children's books needs to be on the relationship between text and image, and one must therefore ask questions such as, "what is the intention of the images: to expand the verbal text? To contradict it? To problematize it?"<sup>59</sup> For instance, Godwin's *Pantheon* contains textual descriptions of gods and goddesses which are then complemented by full-page illustrations though there are no immediate references to the illustrations in the text, leaving readers to glance at the illustrations at their leisure. This practice can be contrasted with Andrew Tooke's. In his version *Pantheon*, which Godwin sought to replace, the reader is explicitly told when to look at the illustration. Tooke's *Pantheon* takes the form of a dialogue between a master and his pupil, and as the master describes the divinity and he exhorts his pupil, and thus the juvenile reader, to, for example, "look upon" Pluto, "and discover if you [the pupil/reader] can, his habit, and the ensign of his majesty."<sup>60</sup> As this example shows, illustrations cannot be omitted as conveyors of meaning as well as pedagogical tools.

#### IV. THE TEXT(S)

We may now come to the actual text of the children's books. The majority of Godwin's works for children are constructed as narratives. In short, they are literary texts in the common conception of the word. Because of this, I mobilize some of the tools of formal literary analysis, especially following those critics with historicist inclinations.<sup>61</sup> Yet, the idea of the text itself needs to be investigated, for a children's book often contains different kinds of texts, with different target audiences. The prefaces of Godwin's children's books, for example, are very clearly directed to adult, not child readers. With their small print, they are typographically daunting for the unexperienced reader. Linguistically, they make use of a syntax and vocabulary which is as unfriendly to the unexperienced reader as the aspect of the page itself. Furthermore, and beyond these formal issues, Godwin tackles concerns and questions that would most likely not be those of the child, but rather of the parent, guardian,

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58 Rosemary Ross Johnston, p. 86.

59 Rosemary Ross Johnston, p. 87.

60 Andrew Tooke, *The Pantheon, Representing the Fabulous Histories of the Heathen Gods, and Most Illustrious Heroes, in a Plain and Familiar Method, by Way of Dialogue.*, Thirty First Edition, Revised and Corrected (London: J. Johnson, H. L Gardner, R. Baldwin, F. and C. Rivington, J Scatcherd, W Bent, G. and J. Robinson, G. Wilkies, C. Law, Longman and Rees, and Pote and Williams, 1803), pp. 223-224 (the illustration is plate 22, opposite p. 221).

61 Sometimes called 'New Historicists', see: *The New Historicism Reader*, ed. by H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1994); Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

or teacher in his prefaces. This is perhaps clearest in the preface of Godwin's *Bible Stories* (1802), which takes the form of a sort of educational manifesto, but it remains true for the prefaces he wrote for the Juvenile Library. For instance, in the preface to the *History of Rome*, Godwin talks about “our children”, indicating beyond any doubt that the readers he is targeting in the preface are adults.<sup>62</sup> With the change of tone, typography, and subject, it then becomes clear that the main body of the book is directed to children readers. Nevertheless, the adults, be they parents, school-teachers, or private tutors, can never completely be forgotten: it is they who purchase the book and who sometimes supervises the child's reading practice.<sup>63</sup>

While tackling Godwin's children's books, then, one must be aware of several possible levels of interpretation. To use literary critic Gérard Genette's vocabulary, there are different ways in which the narrative of the children's book is framed by other “paratextual elements”. These, as Genette defines them, exist in relation to text, and are located either “around the text [...] within the same volume”, as is the case of prefaces, epigraphs, chapter titles, illustrations, or even simply the name of the author.<sup>64</sup> Genette calls these the “peritext.” The short discussion of prefaces above shows one way in which to tackle peritexts. Another is to consider, for example, the pseudonyms William Scolfield, Edward Baldwin and Theophilus Marcliffe as paratextual elements. They allowed Godwin to put some distance between the author and an audience that was largely hostile towards him, thus preventing prejudiced responses to his children's books. The knowledge of the author's name, however, invites a different kind of enquiry, which I am attempting in this thesis.

By contrast, the “epitext” exists around the text, but at a greater distance, and consists of discourses that relate to the text, “freely, in a virtually limitless physical and social space”, but which are nevertheless either uttered by the author, or by an “authorized third party”. This may include interviews, reviews, correspondences, even manuscripts and private

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62 See the preface to William Scolfield [William Godwin], *Bible Stories. Memorable Acts of the Ancient Patriarchs, Judges and Kings: Extracted from Their Original Historians for the Use of Children*, 2 vols (London: R. Phillips, 1803) reprinted in *PPW5*: 313-317; Baldwin [William Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, p. v.

63 On this, see: Grenby, ‘Early British Children's Books: Towards an Understanding of Their Users and Usage’; especially paragraphs 22-26.

64 Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997).

papers.<sup>65</sup> It is nevertheless helpful to enlarge the notion of epitext, following David O'Shaughnessy, so that it also encompasses *non*-authorized elements, such as “public opinions, prevailing political ideologies, and other general cultural influences.” As O'Shaughnessy remarks, given Godwin's awareness of them and their influence on reading (*PPW* 5:139), they were also likely to influence or direct his writing.<sup>66</sup> Analysing Godwin's texts through the critical lens of their paratexts offers some helpful insights into how Godwin was working, highlights some of the constraints around this work and provides some direction for reading of his books for children with an eye to his intellectual sources.

However, I do not think this is sufficient to adequately determine what he was doing in writing and publishing these works, especially with regards to my consideration of how Godwin's children's books were interventions into contemporary debates. To do this, Skinner's conception of the “illocutionary force” as implied in the question ‘what is an actor doing in making an utterance?’,<sup>67</sup> has great value as a critical tool to approach children's literature. The point then is “to give an account not merely of the meaning of what was said, but also of what the writer in question may have meant by saying what was said”.<sup>68</sup> This allows for a more specific, and perhaps even more historical angle of approach to the reading of children's literature than what is commonly found in the historicist scholarship.<sup>69</sup> Part of the illocutionary force of a book can be recovered by an understanding of the modalities of its use and of its circulation. Another way of recovering the illocutionary force of one of Godwin's children's books is by locating it in the context of works for adults addressing similar subjects. Lastly, and most importantly, confronting Godwin's works for children with popular texts of a similar genre and style, and especially those Godwin knew or with which he would have been in direct competition helps recover the illocutionary force of his works.

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65 Genette, pp. 4–5; 344–45.

66 O'Shaughnessy, pp. 25–27.

67 On this, see: Quentin Skinner, ‘Interpretation and the Understanding of Speech Acts’, in *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1, 103–27; I should also note here that Genette also discusses the question of the performative aspects (and the illocutionary force) of paratextual elements, pp. 10–11.

68 Quentin Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas’, in *Visions of Politics*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1, 57–89 (p. 79). I am using Skinner's revised essay here, which I take to be Skinner's most recently clarified position on theoretical and methodological issues.

69 See for example the discussions in: Matthew O. Grenby, ‘Text and Context’, in *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook*, ed. by Kimberley Reynolds and Matthew O. Grenby (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 102–7; David Rudd, ‘Histories, Politics, and Children's Literature’, in *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook*, ed. by Kimberley Reynolds and Matthew O. Grenby (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 107–19.

### THE THESIS OUTLINE

To understand how Godwin attempted to bring about cultural and therefore social and political reform through his children's books, I roughly divide his works by genre. Before delving into the details of these works, I will examine different aspects of Godwin's involvement with children's books, educational theories and educational practices in the following chapter. This provides a broader contextual introduction to the Juvenile Library and to the personal, material and pedagogical concerns upon which it rested. In chapter 3, I turn to Godwin's *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, the first book he wrote after having set up the Juvenile Library, to show how he re-conceptualized (or re-formed) the genre of the fable, going against the grain of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century literary and didactic traditions. Instead of reproducing a standard model of the moral tale, Godwin consciously sought to present a morally and pedagogically open-ended fable that raised questions about the political and social order of the early nineteenth-century world. Moving from the moral tale to religious morality and religious education more generally, I analyse Godwin's *Bible Stories*, his first children's book, and his compendium of Greco-Roman myth, *The Pantheon*. In my reading, Godwin uses both works to encourage some critical distance in the religious education of children.

Moving from stories to histories, I offer two complementary but distinct readings of Godwin's three history textbooks, the *History of England*, the *History of Rome*, and the *History of Greece*. In chapter 5 I examine these histories from the point of view of debates on historiography and historical education in the late eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries. I show how Godwin's books for children are infused with his considerations on history. Indeed, I argue they are an attempt at combining two historical traditions that Godwin identifies and critically assesses in his unpublished essay 'Of History and Romance': what he calls the history 'of mankind in a mass' and the history 'of the individual'. Chapter 6 is then dedicated to the politics of Godwin's histories for children and to the way contemporary political developments influenced his writing. I thus examine key moments in his *History of England*, locating them in the broader political debates on the subject, while more broadly resituating the histories of ancient Greece and Rome in the context of their political uses in the Romantic period. Taken together, these historical works show that Godwin politicised his histories, bringing out a form of radical Whiggism that was

in some tension with his own political beliefs, but which may have corresponded with those of several of his patrons. In chapter 7 I turn to Godwin's two biographies for children, analysing their narrative form and showing that through the use of biography Godwin could pursue a political and educational reformist agenda through a complex use of exemplarity.

I conclude that Godwin sought to create a new kind of youth culture that was enquiring, knowledgeable and critical, and that sat well with the kind of pedagogical commitments he expressed in *The Enquirer*. Taking Godwin's work as a whole, I demonstrate how authors of books for children could reinforce or challenge a wide variety of cultural and intellectual norms, contributing to the circulation and confrontation of ideas. I thus suggest that intellectual and cultural historians could profit from reading children's books. To close the thesis, I present some further avenues for the study of Godwin's works for children.



## CHAPTER 2.

### GODWIN AND CHILDREN'S BOOKS: FROM READER TO WRITER AND BOOKSELLER

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#### BEFORE THE JUVENILE LIBRARY

In the *Morning Chronicle* obituary of William Godwin in 1836, the journalist centred his narrative on the French Revolution, the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* and *Caleb Williams*. Godwin's achievements in the world of education, though acknowledged by the author of the obituary, remain an afterthought. The journalist thus soberly states that the works "published under the name of Baldwin [...] obtained very extensive circulation".<sup>70</sup> Yet, when Godwin records his life in the draft of an autobiography, the world of education is central, and so is the world of the child as reader. Godwin reveals how much of his childhood revolved around his "love of reading" (CNM 1:25), and a variety of (children's) books, to which Godwin ascribes the formation of his early character – an indication of his fundamental interest in children's reading during his mature years.<sup>71</sup>

By the time he was around five years old, Godwin recalls, he had read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* "five or six times within a very short period", James Janeway's rather sordid but quite popular *Token for Children: being an Account of the Conversions, Holy and Exemplary Lives, and Joyful Deaths of Several Young Persons and Children* (CNM 1:12), and "the whole Old and New Testament", which "had undoubtedly a great share in forming [his] infant character" (CNM 1:16). Godwin also recollects receiving and having "read several times" a history of England, published by John Newbery (CNM 1:15, 25), and in fact read "several [more] of the children's books published by Newberry" as well as many books dealing with various aspects of religion, including parts of the apocryphal book of Maccabees, and the persecution of French Huguenots (CNM 1:18).

Perhaps the most memorable moment of Godwin's autobiography, both with regard to both reading and education, comes at the end of the unfinished manuscript, when he recalls the circumstances of his reading of the English translation of Charles Rollin's *Ancient History*.

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70 Obituary from the *Morning Chronicle* reprinted in the *Spectator*, 7-9 April 1836.

71 As noted by Pamela Clemit, Godwin writes parts of his autobiography at different points between the mid-1790s and 1820. The portion quoted above was probably written in the late 1790s. For more on Godwin's autobiographical writings, see: Pamela Clemit, 'Self-Analysis as Social Critique: The Autobiographical Writings of Godwin and Rousseau', *Romanticism*, 11.2 (2005), 161–80; see note 23 in that article for the bibliographical presentation of these manuscripts, including dating. Godwin's interest in children's reading is nevertheless evident as early as 1797, when he published, in *The Enquirer*, essays entitled 'Of an Early Taste in Reading' and 'Of Choice in Reading', both of which I discuss below.

Being certain that his strict and dislikeable teacher, Samuel Newton, would not allow him to read such a work, he proceeded to read it clandestinely, being “resolved he [Newton] should not be a despot to me, where I [Godwin] could avoid it” (*CNM* 1: 37). This book, Godwin claims in the preface to the *History of Greece* he published with the Juvenile Library, was the source of his “love of liberty and of public virtue” and therefore its “perusal” is warmly recommended “to elder pupils”.<sup>72</sup> He is even more emphatic in his autobiography, where he writes:

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.

The effect of Rollin’s *Ancient History* on Godwin is even more remarkable given that it is a book to which Godwin returns several times as an adult. In his diary, he records reading parts of it in his diary in 1791. He then read most of the work in late 1792 and perused it again as he first started composing the *History of Greece* in 1809.

The question of children’s education and their reading returns in 1797, when Godwin publishes the collection of essays entitled *The Enquirer*. In that work, in addition to presenting a variety of views on pedagogy,<sup>73</sup> Godwin presents a radical view on children’s reading: children should be allowed to read whatever they want. This is primarily because children are to be considered as morally autonomous individuals and therefore treated with respect and in a spirit of relative equality (*PPW* 5: 130-131).<sup>74</sup> Additionally, children should be free to read what they wish as the act of reading is itself fundamental to the educational process. Godwin indeed believed that any form of reading contributes to the success of early education, which rested not on the acquisition of detailed knowledge but rather the development of “habits of intellectual activity”.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, it encourages the development of “an early taste for reading,” which Godwin perceives as a precondition for the acquisition

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72 Edward Baldwin [Godwin], *History of Greece: From the Earliest Records of That Country to the Time in Which It Was Reduced Into a Roman Province. Illustrated with Maps and Portraits. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, Second Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1822), p. vii.

73 On *the Enquirer* and educational theory, see: Clemit, ‘Godwin’s Educational Theory: The Enquirer’; Gary Handwerk, “‘Awakening the Mind’: William Godwin’s *Enquirer*”, and more recently:

74 Clemit, ‘Godwin’s Educational Theory: The Enquirer’ especially pp. 6-7.

75 I discuss this in more detail below.

“of wisdom to judge, and power to perform” (*PPW* 5:95). Finally, letting children choose their own books discourages deception and reinforces the confidence, candour and relative equality that must exist between tutor and child. Imposing a restriction on reading is therefore described as making children “prisoners” to a “despotism which [...] is peculiarly grating to a mind of generosity and spirit” (*PPW* 5: 136), and may lead them eventually to read clandestinely, and therefore learn different arts through which the transgression may be hidden (*PPW* 5:136-137).

Education and children's reading, moreover, became a very real aspect of Godwin's life from the late 1790s and throughout the early years of the nineteenth century. Several young children were in his care when he made his first foray into writing and publishing for children. The period of the composition and publication of *The Enquirer* was also one of changes in Godwin's domestic life, as well as the start of a long and complex process of rethinking the value of the private affections, domesticity and family.<sup>76</sup> From the time of his marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft in 1797 and until William Junior left the home, Godwin was surrounded by an increasing number of children whom he educated and instructed, and, it seems, for whom Godwin's children's books were partly written. Two of them were his own biological children: Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, and William Godwin Junior. The other three were the children of his wives from their previous relationships: Mary Wollstonecraft came to London with her daughter Fanny Imlay, while Mary Jane Clairmont had two children in her care, Charles and Clara, when she married Godwin in December 1801.

However, William Godwin's first adult experience in the domain of children's literature was not a pleasant one, overshadowed as it was by his loss. In 1798, he posthumously published Mary Wollstonecraft's 'Lessons' for children, which depict a “domestic idyll, [...] especially poignant because it portrays a life” she and Godwin “might have lived together.”<sup>77</sup> In 1802, Godwin finally picked up a pen to write a children's book himself. This was perhaps at the suggestion of his second wife, Mary Jane, who had some experience in the field and trade of juvenile literature, and most certainly for the education of members of their own household.

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76 Mark Philp tracks some aspects of Godwin's revisions in *Godwin's Political Justice*, pp. 210–13, 222–24; More generally, on domesticity, family and the private affections in the Godwin-Shelley family, see Carlson, pt. 1.

77 Matthew O. Grenby, 'Captivating Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Children's Books and the Private Life of the Child', in *Representing Private Lives of the Enlightenment*, ed. by Andrew Kahn (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2010), pp. 269–84 (p. 275).

The result was the *Bible Stories*, written by Godwin under the pseudonym of William Scolfield, for Godwin's then bookseller Richard Phillips, and to be distributed by Benjamin Tabart's famous Juvenile Library in New Bond Street. Mary Jane may well have facilitated this, as she was already in contact with Tabart, for whom she had worked as a translator and editor.<sup>78</sup>

Although the *Bible Stories* was reviewed with much hostility in the *Guardian of Education* by one of Godwin's main opponents in the field of juvenile literature: the conservative Anglican Sarah Trimmer (for reasons which I explore in more detail in chapter 4) the book seems to have been fairly successful. It had an initial print-run of 2500 copies in 1802, and was already being re-issued in a new edition the following year. In 1804, it was re-printed again, this time anonymously rather than pseudonymously, and with the new and frankly less fitting title, *Sacred Histories; or, Entertaining Narratives and Moral Stories, Selected from the Old and New Testament*, which provoked Trimmer's ire once again.<sup>79</sup> Following this, and finding in children's books a way to produce useful texts as well as to generate enough income for their family, William Godwin and Mary Jane decided to set up the Juvenile Library in 1805, an endeavour which was to occupy and preoccupy them both for twenty years.

## THE GODWINS IN BUSINESS: A VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION

### I. SETTING UP SHOP

The market for children's books, as well as other consumer goods specifically designed for children, such as toys, prints or maps, was an emerging feature of the late eighteenth century.<sup>80</sup> At the same time, literacy levels increased across British society, through the impact, for example, of Christian societies and denominations that emphasised reading and instruction, such as Wesleyan Methodism, the Society for the Propagation of Christian

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78 Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 265; St. Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys*, p. 259; Brian Alderson, "Mister Gobwin" and His 'Interesting Little Books, Adorned with Beautiful Copper-Plates'", *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 59.2 (1998), 159–90 (p. 163).

79 The unfortunately abridged text of both of Trimmer's reviews of the *Bible Stories* can be found in in Kenneth W. Graham, *William Godwin Reviewed: A Reception History, 1783-1834* (New York: AMS Press, 2001), pp. 210–12. The full text can be found in the *Guardian of Education* I, pp. 244-264, and III, pp. 372-375; On the print runs of the *Bible Stories* see: St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 603.

80 Plumb.

Knowledge and, later in the century, the Sunday School Society (founded in 1785).<sup>81</sup> This did not mean, of course, that children (or adults) would have the possibility of reading a large number of books. Lower-class children in rural communities, such as Godwin's friend Thomas Holcroft, might have learned to read in the 1760s with as little as "the Bible and two chapbooks".<sup>82</sup> By the late eighteenth century, and throughout the Romantic period, however, the picture changes and books became ever more available to an ever wider audience, as "more books were sold in smaller formats in the lower price ranges".<sup>83</sup>

The Godwins, like the other children's booksellers from the time of the famed John Newbery on, were riding these waves of increased literacy and the consequent greater demand for books at lower prices. As historians of children's literature have shown, the variety of children's books therefore increased dramatically, from the mid-eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth, all the way to the supposed (and now discredited) "golden age" of children's literature.<sup>84</sup> In the later part of the eighteenth century, and in the early years of the nineteenth, certain features of the children's book trade changed, as there were aggressive campaigns to replace the early children's books and fairy tales published by those, like John Newbery, with books considered to be more appropriate, often for political, religious, or moral reasons. Although the impact of the French Revolution and its British afterlife on the children's book trade should not be overstated, the political and social debates of the 1790s did partly contribute to the restructuring of the children's book market in the 1800s.<sup>85</sup> It was in this fragmented, complex, but still potentially lucrative market that the Godwins tried to insert themselves, with Mary Jane Godwin contributing her expertise throughout the venture.<sup>86</sup>

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81 Richard D Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, Midway Reprint (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 30–77.

82 Altick, p. 38.

83 St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 20.

84 Darton; Jackson.

85 Jackson see especially chapters 6-9; Janet Bottoms, 'The Battle of the (Children's) Books', *Romanticism*, 12.3 (2006), 212–22; Grenby, 'Politicizing the Nursery'.

86 This was shown clearly by Jenny McAuley, in 'Mary Jane Godwin and the Juvenile Library' (presented at the Annual Conference of the British Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, Oxford, 2016); see also Pamela Clemit's summary of the paper at 'Featured Event: "Revisiting the Juvenile Library"', BSECS 2016, 2016 <<https://pamelaclemit.wordpress.com/2016/01/08/featured-event-revisiting-the-juvenile-library-bsecs-2016/>> [accessed 2 May 2016].

The couple began by opening a shop in Hanway Street, Oxford Street (just a short walk west of the British Museum) from 1805 to 1807.<sup>87</sup> Godwin looked for financial backing and was eager to analyse the book market, which he perceived as growing, and sought to replace the works which he found distasteful. In one of many letters where he describes his business (and where he sometimes asks for financial support), Godwin thus noted:

the children to be instructed are innumerable, & the demand of one year for their supply scarcely diminishes the demand of the next. The copy of Tooke's Pantheon (a very poorly written book) which lies before me, is of the 31<sup>st</sup> edition and more than £40,000 have been made by Dilworth's Spelling Book.<sup>88</sup>

Despite this apparently promising assessment – though Godwin may well have exaggerated his possibilities of success in order to secure patronage – William and Mary Jane soon realised that renting lodgings in Somers Town as well as a shop in Hanway Street was financially untenable. Initially, their financial situation was also compromised by their shopkeeper, Thomas Hodgkins, under whose name the company was registered, and who was stealing money from the register.

After dismissing Hodgkins, the family therefore relocated to Skinner Street, Snow Hill, north of Blackfriars' Bridge, where they stayed from 1807 to 1822. They also changed the company's name to the City Juvenile Library. It was during that period that Godwin's business was, at once, both relatively successful, and financially unsound, even though he was helped organisationally and financially by several of his friends and acquaintances. To take just three brief examples: already in 1808, the famous veteran bookseller and loyal friend of Mary Wollstonecraft Joseph Johnson, tried his best to help Godwin find his footing in the business.<sup>89</sup> A few years later, Godwin sought the financial help of the radical Francis Place who felt himself something of a disciple of Godwinism. Their dealings, personal disagreements, and Godwin's insistence on always receiving more help without reimbursing

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87 For more on the Juvenile Library, see "M. J. Godwin and Company; The Juvenile Library; T. Hodgkins" in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 154, pp. 143-150, see also: William St. Clair, 'William Godwin as Children's Bookseller', in *Children and Their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*, ed. by Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 165-79; and Kinnell.

88 MS. Abinger c. 21 fols. 32-33.

89 For more detail on this, see: John Bugg, 'Guest Post: John Bugg, "The Generosity of Joseph Johnson"', 2016 <<https://pamelaclemit.wordpress.com/2016/04/19/guest-post-john-bugg-the-generosity-of-joseph-johnson/>> [accessed 2 May 2016].

Place eventually led to their falling out.<sup>90</sup> The most important person to help Godwin in that time of need was his son-in-law, Percy Bysshe Shelley who did his best, even when their relations were tense.<sup>91</sup> In spite of this Godwin was never able to stabilise the endeavour.

## II. A GLIMPSE OF GODWIN'S WORK

This period was also the most productive in terms of Godwin's composition of children's books. He busied himself and wrote many books that he published under two separate pseudonyms: Edward Baldwin (esquire) and Theophilus Marcliffe. Under the former pen-name, he released a set of prose *Fables* derived from Aesop and others in 1805. This brought Baldwin some fame as an author with a distinctively vivid style, which set the *Fables* apart from many other similar works of the time.<sup>92</sup> The demand was sufficiently high that he was able, within a year, to prepare a second standard edition, and a cheaper one for wider circulation.<sup>93</sup> The *Fables* were soon translated into French by Mary Jane Godwin, and also published and sold by the Juvenile Library (1806). The following year, still under the pseudonym of Edward Baldwin, Godwin wrote two rather successful works that were intended primarily as school-books but also advertised as useable for private study: *The History of England*, and *The Pantheon*. The first, unsurprisingly, consists of a historical narrative beginning with ancient, druidic Britain and ending roughly in Godwin's present, war-ridden day. *The Pantheon* was a compendium of Greco-Roman mythology, visibly written with the Charterhouse public school in mind, which seems to have adopted it for some time.<sup>94</sup>

In 1805 and 1806, Godwin also published two biographies or 'lives' of and for children, this time under the pseudonym of Theophilus Marcliffe. The first, published in 1805, was perhaps Godwin's most original work for children; entitled *The Looking Glass*, it followed the childhood and youth of William Mulready, the illustrator of Godwin's children's books, and a friend of the author.<sup>95</sup> The second work was a *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, first published in 1806, which recounted the life, education, and eventual tragic death of this member of the

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90 See Place's version of events in BL Add MS. 35145 (Place Papers, vol. LXXVI), fols. 30-36. Their correspondence was also kept by Francis Place. On Francis Place, see 'Place, Francis (1771-1854) in the *ODNB*.

91 See chapter XVIII in Marshall, *William Godwin*.

92 See the reviews reprinted in Kenneth W. Graham, pp. 270-81.

93 See for example the letter from Godwin to Josiah Wedgwood dated 27 October 1806, in MS. Abinger c. 18 fols. 75-77. See also his letter to Joseph Johnson dated March 21 1807, in MS. Abinger c. 18 fols 91-93.

94 Marshall, *William Godwin*, p. 268.

95 See 'Mulready, William (1786-1863)' in the *ODNB*

royal family at the time of the Reformation in England. Godwin returned to the pseudonym of Edward Baldwin after publishing the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* and stopped using that of Theophilus Marcliffe. In 1824, he even reprinted the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* with Edward Baldwin as the author. In any case, reviewers suspected that Baldwin and Marcliffe were one and the same, though they never identified the real author.<sup>96</sup>

Godwin proceeded to write another book of history for children, the result being Baldwin's *History of Rome* (1809), which spanned from the foundation of the city to the collapse of the Republic and the consolidation of the Empire. That same year, Godwin wrote an addendum to *Mylius's School Dictionary of the English Language*, the 'New Guide to the English Tongue', which he also included as a preface to Hazlitt's *New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue*. The following year, Godwin decided to take Hazlitt's grammar book as a basis for a volume of his own, and released the *Outlines of English Grammar*. The initial period of Godwin's rather intense original publishing for the Juvenile Library ends in 1810. Eventually, he added one final work for children to the list of releases by Edward Baldwin: a companion to his earlier works on ancient history and myth, the *History of Greece*, published in 1822. This book was Edward Baldwin's swansong, and Godwin described it as such in the preface.

In addition to the works for children that Godwin published for his Juvenile Library, the Godwin-Shelley papers, kept in the Abinger Collection at the Weston Library in Oxford contain fragments and drafts of other children's books, possibly or probably written by Godwin. He may have prepared these for publication, but I have found no trace of them having been printed. This includes the preface of a science book for children, dated January 1819,<sup>97</sup> as well as the undated preface and beginning of a work entitled *Juvenile Accomplishments, or the Amusements of Salt Hill. For the Use of Schools*.<sup>98</sup> In the undated fragment where Godwin indicates that the works of Edward Baldwin should be printed in his miscellaneous works, he makes a reference to another (presumably published) book, the *Rural Walks*, a copy of which has yet to be found. However, scholar Janet Bottoms has recently made a compelling argument that an early draft of this work, dated September 23

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96 See the review of the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* in the *Literary Journal* in Kenneth W. Graham, p. 288.

97 MS Abinger c. 29 fols. 82-85.

98 MS Abinger c. 25 fols. 1-12; the catalogue indicates a likely date of 1806.

1806, is to be found in the Abinger Collection, and has also offered the sketch of an analysis.<sup>99</sup> Due to some uncertainty regarding their provenance, as well as their unfinished and unpublished state, I have decided not to include close readings of these drafts in this dissertation, focussing instead on Godwin's published works.

Though Godwin seems to have not written any new material for children between 1810 and 1822, he did not neglect the Juvenile Library. He published and sold new texts by different collaborators and acquaintances of his, both in English and in French. This includes Mary Jane Godwin's 1814 translation of German author Johann Wyss's *The Family Robinson Crusoe*, better known as the *Swiss Family Robinson*. Being still found in print today, this book, like Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales From Shakespear* (1807) and their other works, enjoyed a far greater longevity than Godwin's Juvenile Library or than Godwin's own children's books.<sup>100</sup> On the more original end of the spectrum of the publications of the Juvenile Library, we find a version of *Beauty and the Beast*, published in 1811 with the extended title, *A Rough Outside with a Gentle Heart: A Poetical Version of an Ancient Tale*. Godwin unsuccessfully sought the pen of William Wordsworth for this 'beauty-book,' and though it has usually been attributed to Charles Lamb, it was written by the actor, writer, and early animal-welfare advocate Samuel Jackson Pratt.<sup>101</sup> This said, it is the combination, in a fairly luxurious book, of high quality, delicately coloured illustrations; sheet music for the piano; and text, rather than the text itself, which solidifies the book's claim to originality, and illustrates Godwin's creative thinking regarding the Juvenile Library's activities.<sup>102</sup>

Returning to Godwin's children's books, and to briefly contextualise their production, it should be noted that the author covers a relatively wide range of topics even though the books in themselves do not seem particularly original. In other words, Godwin was working within the pre-established specific largely educational markets. Countless books of fables were published, indeed not only during the Romantic period, but also since the very beginning of the production of children's books.<sup>103</sup> An early eighteenth century set of

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99 Bottoms, 'William Godwin's Rural Walk'. For the manuscript, see MS Abinger c. 24 fols. 20-31.

100 For a full(er) list of titles, see: Barnett and Gustafson, 'A Complete Bibliography of Titles Released by Godwin's Juvenile Library and City Juvenile Library'.

101 Matthew O. Grenby, 'William Godwin and the Beauty-Book' (presented at the Annual Conference of the British Society for Eighteenth Century Studies, Oxford, 2016) see also Pratt's page in the *DNB*.

102 See also the summary of Grenby's conference paper in Clemit, 'Featured Event: "Revisiting the Juvenile Library"', BSECS 2016'.

103 For some discussion of this issue, see: Jackson, pp. 43–51; For a broader take on the history of fables, see chapter 1 in Grenby, *Children's Literature*.

Aesop's fables even boasts John Locke as its author, and Godwin mentions in his autobiography having "learned by rote [...] nearly all of Gay's Fables" (*CNM* 1:22).<sup>104</sup> Similarly, various books covering the histories of Rome, England, or Greece from diverse perspectives already existed. The most famous may well have been the children's versions of Oliver Goldsmith's different histories, generally abridged by the author himself, and to which Godwin refers in the preface to his own histories of Greece and Rome. But other, less canonical authors, such as Elizabeth Helme or Sarah Lawrence also wrote histories with various kinds of children's audiences in mind. The most striking example of Godwin's attempt to enter an already established market might well be his *Pantheon*. The book was specifically designed to compete with a popular work also entitled *The Pantheon*, but signed by a former Charterhouse schoolmaster, Andrew Tooke, who translated it from the Latin original written by the French Jesuit François Pomey in the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, and despite the final demise of his company, the Godwins and their Juvenile Library were relatively successful.

### III. THE JUVENILE LIBRARY: CLIENTELE AND SALES

The clients of the Juvenile Library included private customers, among whom some of Godwin's friends, but presumably many others as well, since the books published by the Juvenile Library were sold by booksellers across London, and indeed across Britain. Schools also purchased Godwin's works, this includes both well-known boarding schools such as Christ's Hospital or the Charterhouse school,<sup>105</sup> and smaller or less famous institutions, such as "Miss Pierce[']s school] of Bayswater", or Dr. Charles Burney's school at Greenwich, where William Godwin Junior would complete his formal education, as well as Clarke's Academy, where John Keats perused *The Pantheon*.<sup>106</sup> In the Charterhouse, where both Charles Clairmont (Mary Jane's son from her first marriage) and William Godwin Junior were students, one could find Godwin's *Pantheon* and his *Outlines of English Grammar*, and probably some of his histories.<sup>107</sup> It thus appears that the business was relatively successful.

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104 Jackson, p. 43.

105 St. Clair, 'William Godwin as Children's Bookseller', p. 173.

106 For Miss Pierce's school, see: MS. Abinger c. 42 fol. 90. For Charles Burney's school, see the exchange between Godwin and Charles Burney on 19 December 1809 and 24 January 1810, as well as Kenneth Neil Cameron's commentary in *Shelley and his Circle*, ed. by Kenneth Neil Cameron, Donald H. Reiman, and Doucet Devin Fischer, 10 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961-2002), II, pp. 563-564, 599. On Keats's use of *The Pantheon* as a schoolboy, see: Nicholas Roe, *John Keats: A New Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 37.

107 See the 1812 letter from Godwin to Charles Clairmont in NLS MSS 327 fols. 179-180. St. Clair, 'William

This assessment can be confirmed by a cursory look at some of Godwin's print and sales numbers. In the appendices to *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, William St Clair notes that the children's *History of England* and *History of Rome*, written pseudonymously by Godwin in 1806 and 1809 respectively, had a modest but respectable first print-run of 1000 copies.<sup>108</sup> Both books went through several editions, with Godwin's *History of England*, for example, being reprinted already in 1807. While this does suggest a fair circulation, more impressive successes of the Juvenile Library include *Mylius's School Dictionary*, initially compiled and published in 1809, with Godwin's 'New Guide to the English Tongue' added to the second edition. In a letter to his stepson Charles, who was in Edinburgh training with the bookseller Archibald Constable, Godwin boasts having sold 10,000 copies of the dictionary "in little more than two years".<sup>109</sup> If we are to believe the title page of the 1819 edition, where the publishers boast having sold more than 25,000 copies of the book, then sales must have remained high. St Clair reports further that an 1825 advertisement for the dictionary suggested that the number of copies sold might have been as high as 60,000.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, while this indicates that the Godwins' business was relatively successful, it was not generating enough income to pull them out of debt and the constant threat of debilitating poverty, which severely weighed on Godwin in the later years of the business.<sup>111</sup>

#### IV. COLLAPSE

Overwhelmed by insurmountable financial difficulties, aggravated by the credit crisis of 1824-1825, which culminated in legal action by their landlord of Skinner Street (who had already forced the Juvenile Library to move to the Strand), Godwin gave up.<sup>112</sup> Finding a buyer in the booksellers Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, Godwin sold the copyrights to his most successful books. This included all volumes published under the Baldwin pseudonym, the *Swiss Family Robinson*, the *Outlines of English History* and the works by Charles and Mary

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Godwin as Children's Bookseller', p. 173.

108 St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 603.

109 NLS MSS 327 fols. 179-180.

110 St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 603.

111 See a note entitled "Thoughts on Waterloo Bridge, September 1822" in MS. Abinger c. 32 fols. 4-5.

112 On the legal action concerning rent in Skinner Street, see William Godwin's notes from 1824-1825 in MS. Abinger c. 38 fols. 20-21. See also the letter from William Junior to Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley dated 24 June 1822, where he gives more details regarding the trial, and the subsequent relocation of the shop to the Strand. MS. Abinger c. 45 fols. 129-130.

Lamb.<sup>113</sup> The Juvenile Library was officially declared bankrupt in 1825.

Godwin appears to have been ambivalent about the quality of his books. In a letter he wrote to Mary Shelley, dated 30 March 1820, he discusses the pros and cons of his business at the Juvenile Library and his activity as a writer in the first years of the nineteenth century. He wrote: “I manufactured the works of Baldwin [...]. But these were not me; I did not put forth the full force of my faculties”.<sup>114</sup> It is difficult to say what he meant exactly here. Perhaps he thought that they were written too fast and with too much of a commercial incentive. It is true that, with the exception of the *History of Greece*, the composition of each of his works for children was rather swift.<sup>115</sup> Perhaps he considered that they were a form of minor literature that did not demand as much energy and skill than longer compositions such as the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, *The Enquirer*, or his answer to Malthus, *Of Population*, in which was deeply engaged at the time (and which occupied his mind for nearly three years). Nevertheless, at the end of his life, he did seem to consider his works for children important enough to request that they should be “printed among my miscellaneous works, from editions before 1825”.<sup>116</sup> The apparent importance of education and children’s books, the writing of which Godwin seems to have “felt a talent for”,<sup>117</sup> as well as his rather gloomy assessment of his publications, raise questions about their place in Godwin’s *oeuvre* and about what he hoped to achieve with such works. Before turning to these questions through a close reading of these works in the rest of this thesis, it is worth contextualising their production by exploring the dynamics of Godwin’s business in further detail.

### “THE CRITICAL THOUGHT OF A TRADESMAN”<sup>118</sup>

Godwin has often been derided as a poor businessman, and the account he gives of himself in some of his correspondence supports such a characterisation. In a letter written in 1808, Godwin writes that being “a tradesman, a bookseller, [...] is a situation very little congenial

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113 MS. Abinger c. 38 fol. 19.

114 MS. Abinger c. 45 fols. 40-41.

115 For example, according to the information available in *GD*, it takes Godwin just over four months to write the *Fables* in 1805.

116 MS. Abinger c. 33 fol. 65.

117 MS. Abinger c. 19 fol. 4.

118 The quote is taken from a famous letter to Charles Lamb, dated March 10 1808, on the topic of Lamb’s *Adventure of Ulysses*, which Godwin considered too gruesome for the ‘squeamish days’ of the early 1800s, it is reproduced in Charles Kegan Paul, *William Godwin: His Friends and Contemporaries*, 2 vols (London: Henry S. King & Co, 1876), pp. 2:163-164. I discuss it more below.

to my propensities".<sup>119</sup> However, as we have seen, he was far from wholly unsuccessful in his endeavour and, as we shall see, he tried earnestly to stabilise his business by engaging in a number of different, more or less innovative, commercial practices. Because of my emphasis on Godwin's own works, I do not deal with some of the more interesting features of the works Godwin commissioned for what he called the "Copper-plate Books" series, which which included such titles as Charles Lamb's *King and Queen of Hearts* (1805) and the Juvenile Library's version of *The Beauty and the Beast* mentioned above.<sup>120</sup> Despite this limitation, I show that Godwin was perhaps not as lacking in business acumen as one of his early biographers, Don Locke claimed, even given the eventual demise of the Godwins' business venture.<sup>121</sup> Rather, his enterprise was marred by personal credit problems that predated the business. Indeed, Godwin's financial difficulties at the beginning of the nineteenth century and the growing size of his family were what led him to found the Juvenile Library in the first place.

## I. AUDIENCE AND AVAILABILITY

Godwin's Juvenile Library catered to a wide clientele that he attempted to reach in different ways. One was to produce works in different editions, sometimes with different sets of illustrations, and therefore different prices. Thus, in the advertisement pages at the end of the *New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue* by Godwin's friend William Hazlitt, published in 1810 by the Juvenile Library, we find that Baldwin's *Fables, Ancient and Modern* exist in three different editions: the first and most expensive, "in two volumes, 12mo, with 73 engravings, price 8s."; the second, "in one volume, neatly bound, 3s. 6d." (down from the price of 4s., advertised in the 1807 edition of Godwin's *History of England for the Use of Schools*); and the final, "cheap edition [...], price 2s., for universal accommodation".<sup>122</sup> Images 2.1 and 2.2 below show one of the important differences between a cheaper and a more expensive edition of the *Fables*: the size, quality and number of illustrations. In the cheaper, one-volume edition, several fables are illustrated together

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119 MS. Abinger c. 19 fol. 8

120 On this issue, see: Alderson. Matthew Grenby explored in further detail the *Beauty and the Beast*, showing how Godwin the publisher was being original, innovative, and not devoid of business acumen, in his BSECS 2016 presentation 'William Godwin and the Beauty-Book'.

121 Don Locke, p. 222.

122 William Hazlitt, *A New and Improved Grammar of the English Tongue: For the Use of Schools*. (London: M.J. Godwin, 1810); Baldwin [William Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*.

(Image 2.2) whereas in the more expensive edition (Image 2.1), individual fables have a larger illustration placed on the same page as the beginning of the text.



It is worth examining Godwin’s claim about “universal accommodation” from the perspectives of book prices and cost of living. The 2 shilling version of Godwin’s *Fables* cost the same as the octavo edition of Gay’s *Fables* sold at Benjamin Tabart’s bookshop, and 1 shilling less than a 1789 edition of Dodsley’s *Select Fables of Esop and Other Fabulists*.<sup>125</sup> By contrast, the two volume, 8s. ‘luxury’ edition cost more than an unbound copy of Thomas Love Peacock’s novel, *Headlong Hall* (1816). To put this in perspective, William St Clair notes that “bookseller’s apprentices”, such as William Godwin’s stepson Charles Clairmont,

<sup>123</sup> Image courtesy of the New York Public Library.

<sup>124</sup> My own photograph from the British Library from: Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805).

<sup>125</sup> Gay’s *Fables*, and its price, are listed as item 76 in Benjamin Tabart, *A Catalogue of Books, for the Amusement and Instruction of Youth and for the Use of Schools, Systematically Arranged* (London: B. Tabart, Juvenile & School Library, 1801). For the price of Dodsley’s book, see the title page in R. Dodsley, *Select Fables of Esop and Other Fabulists, A New Edition* (London: J. Dodsley, 1789).

could, for 1s. 6d. per week, “have a shared bedroom, a landlady to do the cooking, and the right to sit by the fire” in Edinburgh. “Only a few” members of the lower middle classes and working classes, St Clair continues, “earned as much as 10 shillings a week”.<sup>126</sup> This suggests that “universal accommodation”, in the case of the *Fables*, would have most likely meant the higher end of the lower middle classes, but probably not anyone poorer – unless they accessed the books through schools or circulating libraries. This holds for all of Godwin’s own children’s books, though he sometimes acted differently with the books he commissioned.

More than half of Godwin’s writings for the Juvenile Library were designed for schools, or at least primarily for educational purposes. Schools were the institutions through which Godwin could have expected not only most of his income, but also the highest levels of circulation. Of Godwin’s full-length products, *The Pantheon* and Godwin’s three histories were therefore targeted more specifically at schools, as is evident from the phrase that is common to the title pages of all four books: “for the use of schools and young persons.” The *New Guide to the English Tongue*, originally printed as part of *Mylius’s School Dictionary*, and the *Outlines of English Grammar* were also primarily marketed for school use, though they might also have been used at home, being priced at only 1 shilling. Still, Godwin was happy to report that his son William was “working on his Baldwin’s Grammar” in 1812,<sup>127</sup> perhaps he hoped that his grammar would prove as successful as “Dilworth’s Spelling Book, price one shilling” which Godwin reports to have earned its booksellers “more than £40.000”.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, we know from the advertisements for Godwin’s books that there low and high end (or “best”) editions of the *History of England* and the *History of Rome*, for example. This suggests that Godwin was not only trying to reach schools – which would have most likely used the cheap editions – but also the children of richer middle class families who employed private tutors, and who might therefore have been more interested in the “best” editions.

In contrast to the grammars, the histories and *The Pantheon*, the *Fables’* use in school seems to have been more incidental, almost an afterthought, even as it was a successful commercial

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126 St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, pp. 195–96 note that prices should also be adjusted for inflation. Nevertheless, the general analysis stands.

127 Letter to Charles Clairmont, 29 February 1812, NLS MSS 327 fols. 179-180.

128 MS. Abinger c. 18 fols. 75-77.

move. In a letter to one of his patrons, the potter Josiah Wedgwood II, brother of Godwin's late friend, Thomas Wedgwood and son of the master potter and industrialist Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795), dated 27 October 1806, Godwin writes that, initially, the *Fables*

Came out [...] with one disadvantage, which I trust will not ultimately prove a disadvantage. Their size & price disqualified them for the ordinary use of schools in general. If however they had been published in the customary size & type of the common Fable Books at first, they would never have excited so much attention, or been so favourably received. I have now been encouraged by the sale of the expensive edition, to print a new edition in one volume fitted for universal use.<sup>129</sup>

Such situations gave Godwin business experience, and so, in describing his plans in an 1807 letter to his close friend the Irish politician and lawyer John Philpot Curran we find Godwin “pressé to bring out separately in twenty parts” Charles and Mary Lamb’s *Tales From Shakespear*,<sup>130</sup> clearly expecting these cheaper chapbooks to sell extremely well after the resounding success of the costly 8s. two-volume edition, “with 20 engravings”.<sup>131</sup> These chapbooks would have certainly been for “universal accommodation”. At the price of half a shilling, of they were cheap enough for anyone to buy and thus made Shakespeare available to an extremely wide audience, not necessarily of just children, but possibly of adults as well. In fact, William St Clair reports that the eight tales that were “sold separately for 0.5 shillings, with illustrations [...] can be regarded as the first chapbook versions of Shakespeare since the Ballad version of *Titus Andronicus*, 1594”.<sup>132</sup> Godwin’s two biographies, written under the pseudonym of Theophilus Marcliffe, seem to have been designed for an equally wide circulation and private use. Unlike Godwin’s *Pantheon* or histories, they were not presented as books primarily for instruction. They were also shorter and cheaper than Godwin’s other children’s books.

Such claims to “universal accommodation” also raise the question of the gender of the intended readers of Godwin’s children’s books – the actual breakdown of the readership being outside of the scope of the present work. In 1802, William Cole, a merchant from

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129 MS. Abinger c. 18 fols. 75-77.

130 MS. Abinger c. 18 fols. 88-89.

131 See the last advertisement page at the end of: Baldwin [William Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*; St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 615.

132 St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 615 see also pp. 149-150.

Exeter and the son-in-law of Godwin's friend Thomas Holcroft, asked Godwin for advice on a course of reading "for the education of female children from the age of two to twelve". In his response on 2 March, Godwin simply writes that, in the early years of childhood, one "should make no difference between children male & female".<sup>133</sup> Accordingly – though also following common practice and financial interest – Godwin does not usually exclude one category of readers. Many of the publications of the Juvenile Library, particularly the cheap booklets, were advertised as "presents for youth of both sexes, under ten years of age".<sup>134</sup> For the texts he wrote, Godwin tended to use gender neutral terms. The histories of Greece, England and Rome, for instance, are simply presented as being "for the use of schools and young persons", and the *Fables* are "adapted for the use of children".

There are exceptions to these formulations. Godwin stresses the appropriateness for "young persons of both sexes" of the *Pantheon* and *The Looking-Glass*, and more explicitly advertises the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* for young women.<sup>135</sup> As I discuss the gendered dimension of the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* in detail in chapter 7, I will focus here on the *Pantheon* and *The Looking Glass*. Concerning the latter, though it is the story of a young boy, the emphasis on its suitability for both sexes suggests that Godwin considered that it had a more universal dimension, and that the "cultivation of the fine arts" was desirable for boys and girls alike. In the case of the *Pantheon* there seems to be a clearer pedagogical dimension to this formulation. As girls were rarely taught Ancient Greek or Latin, their early exposition to Greco-Roman mythology and poetry would have been limited. By stressing that the *Pantheon* is designed for the use of both boys and girls, he is therefore also stressing the desirability of knowledge of Greco-Roman mythology for all children. He returns to this, as Barnett and Gustafson note in the introduction to their edition of the *Fables*, in his epistolary exchange with Charles Lamb in 1808, on the subject of the draft of the *Adventures of Ulysses*, where he remonstrates with Lamb for writing in a style that might "exclude one half of the human species" from reading the work.<sup>136</sup>

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133 LWG 324

134 Barnett and Gustafson, 'A Complete Bibliography of Titles Released by Godwin's Juvenile Library and City Juvenile Library' paragraph 2.

135 Theophilus Marcliffe [William Godwin], *Life of Lady Jane Grey, and of Lord Guildford Dudley Her Husband*. (Lodon: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806), p. iii.

136 Barnett and Gustafson, 'Introduction: The Radical Aesop: William Godwin and the Juvenile Library, 1805-1825' paragraph 28.

## II. GODWIN BETWEEN PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS

As a bookseller, Godwin was in a position where he had to negotiate with both the authors who produced the works he sold and his potential clients. The exchange with Charles Lamb on the subject of the production of the *Adventures of Ulysses* shows that Godwin was willing to adapt a text to his perception of public taste. On 10 March 1808, he writes:

It is children that read children's books, when they are read, but it is parents that choose them. The critical thought of the tradesman put itself therefore into the place of the parent, and what the parent will condemn.

We live in squeamish days. Amid the beauties of your manuscript, of which no man can think more highly than I do, what will the squeamish say to such expressions as these, – 'devoured their limbs, yet warm and trembling, lapping the blood,' p. 10. Or to the giants vomit, p. 14; or to the minute and shocking description of the extinguishing the giant's eye in the page following. You, I daresay, have no formed plan of excluding the female sex from among your readers, and I, as a bookseller, must consider that if you have you exclude one half of the human species.

Nothing is more easy than to modify these things if you please, and nothing, I think, is more indispensable.<sup>137</sup>

This shows that Godwin was a careful editor and publisher when it came to commissioning children's books. More importantly, it confirms that Godwin was ready to make specific demands concerning details of the text, to make sure that it would not offend that part of the public that he hoped would purchase the work. In other words, he was willing to compromise the integrity of the text or book, to a certain extent. This was not only something he did with Charles Lamb, he most likely did it with his own work, too.

We cannot exactly know if and how Godwin censored himself in the writing process, but we do know that he responded to some of the criticism and demands from his customers. In a manuscript note he wrote toward the end of his life, committing the works of Edward Baldwin to posterity, he commented on the footnotes he was required to add:

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137 Reproduced in: Kegan Paul II pp. 163-164.

The references at the bottom of the page in this book [*The Pantheon*] were admitted afterwards on the recommendation of Dr. Raine, & form no part of the work. They are slight, & do not accomplish their own purpose. The notes, longer than a bare reference, are mine.<sup>138</sup>

The publication of *The Pantheon* was also the occasion of a second compromise made on Godwin's part to secure sales: covering the nudity of the illustrations of the book, so as to make the work palatable to the schoolmaster Charles Burney (Image 2.3 below).<sup>139</sup>

We may suppose that Godwin changed this only begrudgingly. This was certainly the case for the footnotes, which he asked to be removed from subsequent editions of his collected works. The case of the illustrations is trickier, since the 1814 edition of *The Pantheon* mixes both slightly modified 1806 illustrations (for the male deities) and fully censored 1810 plates (for the female deities). Perhaps Godwin found, in the end, that the uncovered female body was too provocative for his time. In his recent biography of John Keats – for whom Godwin's *Pantheon* was an important source of inspiration – Nicholas Roe reports that *The Pantheon* was considered by some to be “dangerously explicit” for thirteen-year-old boys such as John Keats and Leigh Hunt, who “pored over” the original illustration of Venus.<sup>140</sup> The obviously gendered concern with illustrations echoes Godwin's claim in his letter to Lamb concerning the potential exclusion of “the female sex” from the readership of the *Adventures of Ulysses*. A variation on this theme emerges again in the preface to the work, where Godwin notes that the book is “expressly written for the use of young persons of both sexes,” emphasising “that nothing will be found in it, to administer libertinism to the fancy of the stripling, or to sully the whiteness of mind of the purest virgin”.<sup>141</sup> Clearly, Godwin was aware of the issues concerning the gender appropriateness of a text, and was sensitive to both its financial and educational aspects. He thus developed his own understanding of the gendered book-reading dynamics of the early nineteenth century, while at the same time considering that one “should make no difference between children male & female”.<sup>142</sup>

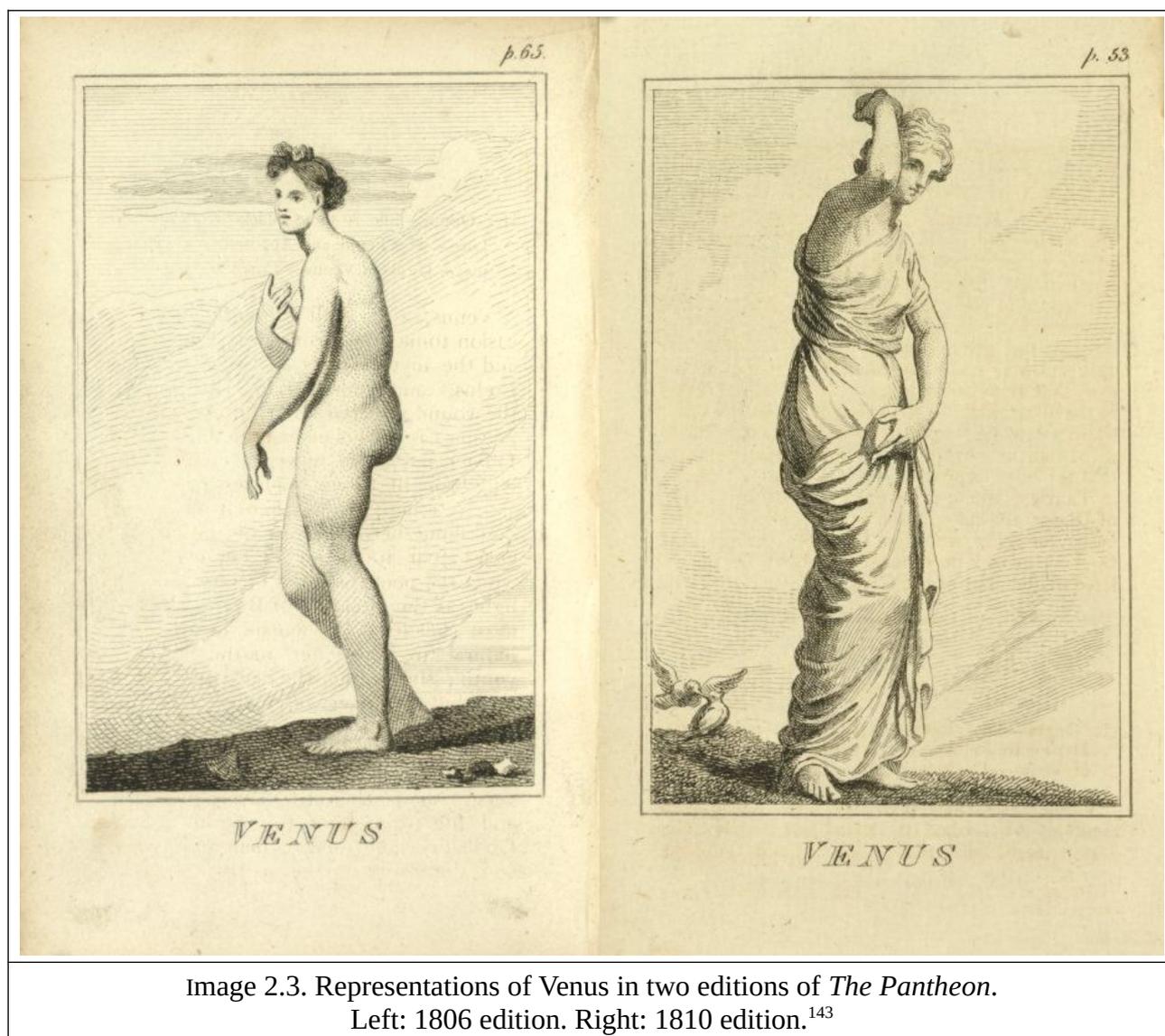
138 MS. Abinger c. 33 fol. 65.

139 See the letters written Godwin to Burney on 19 December 1809 and 24 January 1810, as well as Kenneth Neil Cameron's commentary in *Shelley and his Circle*, ed. by Kenneth Neil Cameron, Donald H. Reiman, and Doucet Devin Fischer, 10 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961-2002), II, pp. 563-564, 599.

140 Roe, p. 37.

141 Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, Second Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1809), p. vii.

142 LWG 324.



### III. RESPECTABILITY AND COMPETITION

The most obvious move Godwin makes in order to earn respectability for his books is by distancing his name from their titles. Dissimulating his identity was an essential part of the commercial endeavour given that the political and ideological reaction of the early 1800s forced Godwin and other radicals to retreat. As Godwin stated in the draft of a letter to an undisclosed recipient, probably written in 1806:

It was necessary that I should bring out my books under a feigned name. Reviewers & old women of both sexes have raised so furious a cry against me as a seditious man and an atheist that the tabbies who superintend schools either for

<sup>143</sup> Images from the collections of the New York Public Library.

boys or girls would have been terrified to receive a book under the name of Godwin. My concealment has answered my purpose. All the reviews have cried up my books in the highest terms.<sup>144</sup>

Godwin's rhetoric here articulates his frustration and he conveys his lack of respect for schoolmasters and his bitterness through misogynistic language and misogynistic ("tabbies" and "old women of both sexes"). It is also clear that he exaggerates the positive response to his children's books. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that concealing his name was a successful move, resulting in reasonably good reviews even in such reactionary publications as the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*.<sup>145</sup>

However, it remained for Godwin to carve a space for his own books in a market which, as I have shown, was already fairly crowded. Usually, he did this by placing his works in relation with those of other writers, in order to emphasise what he considers to be the comparative qualities of the former. In the first sentence of the preface to the *Fables*, we therefore see Godwin directly addressing the reader – most likely a parent – claiming that "there are two or three features that I have aimed to bestow upon these fables, by which they might be distinguished from the generality of fables I have seen".<sup>146</sup> In the prefaces to *The Pantheon*, the *History of Rome* and the *History of Greece*, Godwin goes further and actually names his opponents. In the former case, it is Andrew Tooke, a former schoolmaster at the Charterhouse school, and also the author (or rather, translator) of a book called *The Pantheon*; in the latter two cases, it is Oliver Goldsmith, the famed Irish author of a wide variety of books, including, most famously, the best-selling novel *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766), and a number of historical abridgements.<sup>147</sup> Proceeding to lay out the specificities of his works, Godwin uses the preface as a space to elaborate on his ideas of education, and to demonstrate to the schoolteacher or parent that he was aware of the competition.

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144 MS. Abinger c. 21 fol. 32.

145 See for example the *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* discussion of the *Fables* in Kenneth W. Graham, p. 270.

146 Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Suzanne L. Barnett and Katherine Benett Gustafson (Romantic Circles, 2014) <[http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin\\_fables/index.html](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin_fables/index.html)> [accessed 11 August 2014] vol. 1, para. 1.

147 See for example Godwin's comments on Goldsmith in the preface to: Baldwin [William Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, p. iv.

In addition to placing himself in open opposition to Andrew Tooke's *Pantheon*, and with an open wish to replace that book, Godwin tried to make his book even more attractive to potential customers by dedicating it to Matthew Raine, schoolmaster at the Charterhouse public school. Dedications were a fairly common strategy authors used to enhance the status of their works, and were often made to persons of a certain stature in English society. Hannah More, for example, dedicated her *Sacred Dramas* (1782) to the Duchess of Beaufort (Elizabeth Somerset), whose "excellence in the maternal character gives a peculiar propriety to her protection of this little work".<sup>148</sup> In 1808, Elizabeth Helme chose a slight variation of the same strategy, dedicating her version of the *History of Rome* to the child of the judge and politician Thomas Plumer, therein showing a particular appreciation for children, and tapping the symbolic capital of Sir Thomas Plumer.

What is particularly striking about the case of Godwin's dedication in *The Pantheon* is that it is Godwin's only dedication. None of the histories make use of this commercial strategy, and neither do the *Fables*. This suggests that Godwin was particularly anxious to succeed with *The Pantheon*, and had a very specific target in mind: the Charterhouse school. This includes both the financial benefits that would come from an endorsement in that school, as well as the educational benefits he could impart to this part of the new generation of the British educated elite. Ultimately, it was a successful ploy: Godwin's *Pantheon* did replace Tooke's at Charterhouse, and the dedication might well have helped. Moreover the reviewer from the *British Critic* who perused the book in 1807 closed the review by commenting on the "great propriety" of the dedication to Matthew Raine.<sup>149</sup>

Godwin tried his pen as a reviewer – apparently without success – to influence the children's book market, and prop up his own books. In 1808, he attempted to remove his competition, which appeared in the form of a new edition of Sarah Trimmer's *Concise History of England*. Given her scathing reviews of Godwin's *Fables* and *Bible Stories*, we can only imagine Godwin's pleasure in writing his anonymous, scathing review, which he then probably sent to George Edward Griffiths, then editor of the *Monthly Review*.<sup>150</sup> In it, he tears

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148 Hannah More, *Sacred Dramas Chiefly Intended for Young Persons: The Subjects Taken From the Bible. To Which Is Added, Sensibility, a Poem*, Second Edition (London: T. Cadell, 1782), p. iii.

149 The review was in the *British Critic* 29. It is reproduced in Kenneth W. Graham, pp. 282–83.

150 See MS Abinger c. 19 fols. 10-11 for the letter and a short paragraph of the review, and MS Abinger c. 29 fols. 114-115 for the rest of the review. It seems likely that the two items should be put together, as the single paragraph does not make much sense as a full review, while it complements the manuscript of the longer review. I analyse the importance of the elements raised in the review in chapters 5 and 6;

the work apart for its “crudities, absurdities, incoherencies & contradictions” and its factual mistakes, eventually claiming that “Mrs Trimmer is the most resolute advocate for despotism & arbitrary power”. Furthermore, he condemns the work for containing “no such idea as that of literature” and simply ends the review, exclaiming: “Alas for the children who shall be made to believe that such is the History of England!” It seems that the review was never published,<sup>151</sup> but the fact Godwin wrote it shows his desire to exploit this important corner of the book market for his own profit.

## **GODWINIAN PEDAGOGY: THEORY AND MATERIALITY**

### **I. THE BASICS OF GODWIN'S PEDAGOGICAL THEORY**

Though the focus of this study is on Godwin's children's books as contributions to intellectual debates of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is worth presenting some of his pedagogical theory in the early 1800s. The discussion that follows is intended to provide a broader framework within which to understand Godwin's writings for children, and is by therefore limited to those aspects of the theory which seem most relevant for that purpose.<sup>152</sup> There are six interconnected aspects of Godwin's educational thought that I therefore introduce here: (1) his ideas concerning the formation of the child's mind; (2) his commitment to a more egalitarian, open relationship between the teacher and the pupil; (3) the freedom of the pupil and the development of a course of study; (4) Godwin's commitment to a disposition to learning rather than the acquisition of specific kinds of knowledge; (5) the place of the imagination; and (6) the importance of reading, which is perhaps the fundamental basis of Godwin's whole educational theory. All of Godwin's considerations on education come together in Godwin's desire to propose a model of education which would result in the moral improvement of humanity through the improvement of the individual.

Like many educational thinkers in the eighteenth century, Godwin's considerations on the formation of the child's mind largely belong to a broadly Lockean tradition, although, as

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<sup>151</sup> Neither Matthew Grenby nor I have been able to locate any printed version of this piece of writing.

<sup>152</sup> For a broader view of Godwin's educational theory see: Clemit, 'Godwin's Educational Theory: The Enquirer'; Bottoms, "Awakening the Mind"; Allen; Gary Handwerk, "Awakening the Mind": William Godwin's *Enquirer*'; the most recent book-length study is Richard Gough Thomas's illuminating though yet unpublished thesis, 'Scepticism and Experience in the Educational Writing of William Godwin' (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2016).

Pamela Clemit has shown, Godwin was more radically egalitarian.<sup>153</sup> Though he does not subscribe to a radical version of the *tabula rasa*, arguing that there may be “a certain predisposition for wisdom” he insists it is a “mistake to suppose that he [man] brings an immutable character”. This is because, for Godwin, “in infancy, the mind is peculiarly ductile”; it is “like a sheet of white paper, which takes any impression that it is proposed to make upon it” (*PPW* 5: 88, 92, 111-112). Unlike Locke, whose educational model in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) was reserved to the sons of gentlemen,<sup>154</sup> Godwin considered children of all classes to be worthy of a comprehensive education. He ascribes the differences in character and wisdom between children of peasants and children of gentlemen to material circumstances and the lack of educational opportunities (*PPW* 5:89). He argues therefore that such opportunities should not be denied to any child, even if he or she “should be destined to the humblest occupations” (*PPW* 5: 105). This concern for the education of the lower classes may also have been of importance for Godwin’s decision to publish works for children that he considered were priced “for universal accommodation”.<sup>155</sup>

Godwin’s egalitarianism concerns gender as well as class. Throughout *The Enquirer* (as elsewhere) the author follows eighteenth-century conventions and uses “man” and the associated male pronouns as default signifiers for a person. While this could indicate that he considered that his thoughts on education applied exclusively to boys, it seems clear that this was not the case. As I have shown above, Godwin believed boys and girls should read the same books, a view that underlay some of his concerns with the female readership of the works he wrote and commissioned for the Juvenile Library. Moreover, as Gary Handwerk has shown, his critical engagement with the misogyny of Rousseau’s *Emile ou de l’éducation* (1762) in the novel *Fleetwood* (1805), for example, betrays a strong commitment to the desirability of an equal education for children of both genders.<sup>156</sup> As I will show in chapter 7, this commitment was realized in the publication of the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, a deeply contextual (and therefore original) historical biography.

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153 Clemit, ‘Godwin’s Educational Theory: The Enquirer’, pp. 5–6.

154 The authoritative edition is: John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. by John W. Yolton and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

155 Though, as we saw above limits should be placed on the universality of “universal accommodation”.

156 Gary Handwerk, ‘Mapping Misogyny: Godwin’s “Fleetwood” and the Staging of Rousseauvian Education’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 41.3 (2002), 375–98.

The rejection of misogyny was not Godwin's only point of contention with Rousseau.<sup>157</sup> He more generally rejected the kind of relationship between teacher and pupil that the *Philosophe* presents as a model in *Emile*. Here again, equality is central to the thought of the author of *Political Justice*. Rousseau believed children should be granted a certain degree of autonomy, since "quand la volonté des enfants n'est point gâtée par notre faute, ils ne veulent rien inutilement".<sup>158</sup> At the same time, however, his system of education famously implies a more insidious form of authoritarian control. Rousseau argues that "il n'y a point d'assujettissement si parfait que celui qui garde l'apparence de la liberté", the preceptor is therefore always "le maître" even as the child believes himself to be free. Emile's lessons are therefore carefully planned so that the control of the preceptor remains hidden under the guise of the child's liberty.<sup>159</sup> For Godwin, the child must not be subjected to this kind of "fictitious equality", which has as its basis the "appearance of freedom" and is a "system of incessant hypocrisy and lying" (*PPW* 5: 126, 131). On the contrary, the exchanges between adults and children must "inspire them [children] with frankness" (*PPW* 5: 127), which can only be done through the establishment of a relationship based on sincerity, confidence and relative equality (*PPW* 5: 121-127). As should be clear throughout the thesis, this informs Godwin's use of language and the narrative form of his children's books.

The quality of the tutor-child relationship is connected to Godwin's understanding of the child as an individual in the process of becoming a full person, who thus "has a claim upon his little sphere of empire and discretion" and "is entitled to his appropriate portion of independence" (*PPW* 5: 119). This, in turn, is related to Godwin's considerations on the relative freedom of children to choose their own course of study and of reading (to which I return in more detail in chapter 7). For Godwin, learning ought to be preceded by desire (*PPW* 5: 115). From this follows that either the teacher must reveal the reasons for learning in order to stimulate the desire to learn in the student, or the student is already convinced that he or she should learn, in which it is "probable that the pupil should go first, and the master follow" (*PPW* 5: 115). Preceptors should therefore to adapt the content of their lessons to the desires of their students.

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157 On Godwin's debts to and criticism of Rousseau, see Clemit, 'Godwin's Educational Theory: The Enquirer', p. 8; Gary Handwerk, 'Mapping Misogyny'; the most detailed and most recent assessment on the issue is: Thomas, especially chapters II, IV and V. See also Thomas's discussion of Godwin's *Fables* in chapter 6, and my own analysis of the same book in chapter 3 below.

158 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile ou De l'éducation*, ed. by André Charraak (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), p. 116.

159 Rousseau, *Émile ou De l'éducation*, p. 168.

Such flexibility is a consequence of Godwin's commitment to the formation of a disposition to learning, rather than the requirement that children acquire specific kinds of information. At the end of the first essay of *The Enquirer*, entitled 'Of Awakening the Mind', the author affirms that

It is of less importance, generally speaking, that a child should acquire this or that species of knowledge, than that, through the medium of instruction, he should acquire habits of intellectual activity. It is not so much for the direct consideration of what he learns, that his mind must not be suffered to lie idle (*PPW* 5: 85).

He makes a similar comment in the essay 'Of the Communication of Knowledge':

The true object of juvenile education, is to provide, against the age of five and twenty, a mind well regulated, active, and prepared to learn. Whatever will inspire habits of industry and observation, will sufficiently answer this purpose (*PPW* 5: 115).

This informs the wide variety of subjects tackled in Godwin's children's books and perhaps especially his *Fables* (see chapter 3). Godwin's flexible approach to the curriculum also grounds his suspicions about the use of memory, as is expressed in the prefaces to the *Bible Stories* and to the *History of England*. In the preface to the *Bible Stories*, for instance Godwin laments that children are made to learn details about history, geography and manufacturing, "all those things, which if a man or a woman were to live and die without knowing, neither man nor woman would be an atom the worse", by rote (*PPW* 5: 313).

Against such unproductive uses of memory, Godwin calls on parents and teachers to rely on works that help students develop their imagination. This concept becomes increasingly important in Godwin's thought in the early years of the nineteenth century, thanks to his friendship with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and the intense contact they had between the years 1799-1801.<sup>160</sup> As Pamela Clemit notes, Godwin's adoption of the language of imagination

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<sup>160</sup> Bottoms, "Awakening the Mind", p. 271; Pamela Clemit, 'Coleridge and Godwin: A Literary Friendship', *Wordsworth Trust*, 2015 <<https://wordsworth.org.uk/blog/2015/05/19/coleridge-and-godwin-a-literary-friendship/>> [accessed 20 August 2018]; for a longer discussion of the changes in Godwin's use of the concept, see: Thomas, pp. 139-44; for a recent discussion on Coleridge's views of the imagination, see: David Ward, *Coleridge and the Nature of Imagination* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); on the imagination more generally in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see: John C Whale, *Imagination under Pressure*,

follows in the wake of *The Enquirer* as a part of his reassessment of the ethical role of feeling and particularly of sympathy.<sup>161</sup> In the preface to the *Bible Stories*, the author claims that the “imagination is the ground-plot upon which the edifice of a sound morality must be erected”, precisely because it is the faculty which enables individuals to truly understand one another and communicate. The imagination allows an individual “to put himself [...] into the place of his neighbour, to feel his feelings, and to wish his wishes” (*PPW* 5: 313). Godwin seems to have held onto this view throughout his later years. He restates it in the preface to the *Pantheon* where the imagination is described as “the great engine of morality”, as well as in the *Letter of Advice to a Young American* (1818), this time with a direct reference to the Sermon on the Mount (*PPW* 5: 320-321).<sup>162</sup> As I will show below in my discussion of the materiality of *The Pantheon* and in my analysis of the pedagogical style of the *History of England* (in chapter 5), the rejection of the use of memory in favour of the development of the imagination had immediate consequences for Godwin’s practice as a children’s author and publisher.

Godwin’s final point of contention with Rousseau concerns the desirability of reading. Rousseau famously claimed in *Emile* “je hais les livres”.<sup>163</sup> He therefore argued that the first, and for a long period of time, the only, book that a child should read is *Robinson Crusoe*.<sup>164</sup> Godwin, by contrast, argued in *The Enquirer* that:

There is perhaps nothing that has a greater tendency to decide favourably or unfavourable respecting a man’s future intellect, than the question whether or not he be impressed with an early taste for reading (*PPW* 5: 95).

For Godwin, it is absolutely essential that a child should read. Not only is it through reading that a child acquires the “habits of intellectual activity”, which he found so important, it is also through reading that one exercises one’s reason as well as one’s sympathy and imagination (*PPW* 5: 95-96). This injunction to read and to foster a taste for reading intersects with Godwin’s considerations on the autonomy of the child. In one of the most

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1789-1832 *Aesthetics, Politics, and Utility* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

161 Clemit, ‘Godwin’s Educational Theory: The Enquirer’, p. 7; for the importance of this reassessment to the arguments of *Political Justice* see: Philp, *Godwin’s Political Justice*, pp. 142–53, 202–9.

162 Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, First Edition (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806), p. viii.

163 Rousseau, *Émile ou De l’éducation*, p. 264.

164 Rousseau, *Émile ou De l’éducation*, pp. 264, 266.

provocative essays of *The Enquirer*, ‘Of Choice in Reading’, Godwin argued that the child should, at least to some extent, be able to “select his own course for reading” (*PPW* 5: 142).<sup>165</sup> As will be clear throughout the thesis, fostering a desire to read through pleasurable reading is at the heart of Godwin’s project for the Juvenile Library, as he constantly includes a wide variety of references to other works of history, literature and science.

## II. PEDAGOGY AND MATERIALITY IN GODWIN’S WORKS

Godwin’s educational theories and his activity as a tradesman are brought together in his material choices for his own children’s books. I will close this chapter by showing how Godwin put some of his own pedagogical imperatives into practice. In doing this, I am trying to build on the insights into the connections between format, style and Godwin’s pedagogical views, that characterise Pamela Clemit’s article on the Juvenile Library, “Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom”. There, she notes that Godwin’s *History of England*, “published in a duodecimo format (about 8.5×14 cm)”, is therefore “small enough to fit into a child’s hands”. In addition, it has “clear, well-spaced print”, making it easier to read for a child. However, she goes on to suggest that this format was intended “to encourage independent reading”. Thus, Godwin’s choice of format, Clemit argues, aligns with his views on education and the individuality and autonomy of the child.<sup>166</sup> There are additional aspects of the format and style of Godwin’s children’s books that reflect his pedagogical commitments, for example, when it comes to the acquisition of knowledge by rote learning. While it has been attested by Matthew Grenby that tutors would use Godwin’s books and get their pupils to read sections of texts “until all the proper names have been memorized”, I will show, using the example of the *Pantheon*, that Godwin wrote his texts in a way that is easy and pleasant to read, but which which was not intended to facilitate memorization.<sup>167</sup>

Consider the reproductions found on the following page. They are excerpted from the chapters where Tooke (Image 2.4) and Godwin (Image 2.5) describe the labours and exploits of Hercules. Image 2.4 exemplifies quite well a particular feature of Tooke’s *Pantheon*: its use of numbered lists. By contrast, we can see from image 2.5 that Godwin’s text is uninterrupted narrative, although the paragraphs separating each labour begin with a

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165 On this point, see also: Clemit, ‘Godwin’s Educational Theory: The Enquirer’, pp. 9–10.

166 Clemit, ‘Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin’s Juvenile Library, 1805–25’, p. 63.

167 Grenby, ‘Early British Children’s Books: Towards an Understanding of Their Users and Usage’, para. 22.

variation on 'the n-th labour of Hercules was...'. The descriptions of each labour in Godwin's text are also visibly longer than in Tooke's *Pantheon*. This is fairly typical: there are many indented numbered lists in Tooke's text, but none in Godwin's. It seems to me that this difference is pedagogical in character: Godwin prefers lengthier descriptions to keep the mind interested, whereas the use of numbered lists with short descriptions implies and facilitates a more systematic and rote-based reading. This use of pedagogy is made even clearer in Tooke's text by the dialogical form. Mystagogus the tutor, after having answered a brief question regarding Hercules by Palæophilus, his pupil, returns to his numbered list of the hero's further deeds, thus disciplining the reader as well as Palæophilus.<sup>168</sup>

The frequent use of numbered lists is only one of the typographical choices of pedagogical importance. Another is the consistent italicisation of key words in the text. In Andrew Tooke's text, for example, as can be seen in image 2.4, all proper names are italicised and are therefore much more visible on the page than the rest of the text. This is not the case in Godwin's *Pantheon*, where only Latin words and phrases (but not names) are italicised.<sup>169</sup> Though this might be connected to more general changes in printing style, the chronological proximity of the two editions suggests a difference in purpose. Moreover, if we go back to the tutor's injunction quoted above, we can easily understand the pedagogical point of italicising proper names. If they are to be memorized, then italicisation facilitates that process by visually distinguishing the narrative from the proper names so that they can be listed and absorbed by the student. Godwin, however, prefers a visually continuous narrative, interrupted only by illustrations, which emphasises the story as a whole rather than the minute details. This is consistent with Godwin's disregard for the memorization of minutiae – and indeed the acquisition of specific knowledge – from a pedagogical point of view. In addition, by prioritizing the plot, Godwin makes the text more interesting to read, thus helping to foster a habit of pleasurable reading.<sup>170</sup>

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168 Tooke, p. 269. In the following pages, I refer to it in-text as *TP* followed by the page number.

169 See for example: Baldwin [William Godwin], *The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, p. 40 where the phrase "Dii majorum gentium" is the only italicised piece of text, in a sea of names of the major gods. It can be helpfully compared to TP 6, where Tooke also presents the major gods, but where almost half the page is italicised. In the following pages I refer to this edition in-text as *GP* followed by the page number.

170 See the Prefaces to: Edward Baldwin [William Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, First (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806); and Baldwin [William Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, as well as *PPW* 5:85.

called *Symphalides*, from the lake *Symphalium*, which used to feed upon man's flesh.

6. He defeated the army of the *Amazons*, and took from *Hippolyta*, their queen, the finest belt in the world.

7. He in one day cleaned the stable of *Argas*, by turning the course of a river into it. This stable had never been cleaned, although three thousand oxen tumbled in it thirty years. Whence, when we would express a work of immense labour and toil, in proverbial speech, we call it *cleaning the stable of Argas*.

8. He tamed a great bull, that did innumerable mischief in the island *Creta*, and brought him bound to *Eurytheus*.

9. He overcame *Diomedes*, the most cruel tyrant of *Thrace*, who fed his horses with the flesh of his guests. *Hercules* bound him, and threw him to be eaten by those horses, to which the tyrant had exposed others.

10. He overcame in war *Geryon*, king of *Spain*, who had three bodies: we saw him before in hell. He took likewise his bay oxen, that ate man's flesh, and brought them into *Italy*, when he had killed the dragon with seven heads, and the two-headed dog, which guarded him.

11. He killed the dragon that watched, and then carried away the golden apples in the gardens of the *Hesperides*; whence perhaps he is called *Melivus*, and apples were offered up in his sacrifices. In *Bœotia*, when no bull (or sheep) could be procured at the time of sacrifice, they took an apple, and stuck into it four straws, which represented four legs, and two more for horns, with another for a tail, and offered *Hercules* this apple instead of a victim.

12. Lastly, he was commanded by *Eurytheus* to go down into hell, and bring away thence the dog *Cerberus*. This he performed without delay: he bound the three-headed monster in a triple chain; and by force brought with him up to the earth the dog, which floure

\* *Melivus*, Græcè significat malum vel pomum.

Image 2.2 Excerpt from Tooke's description of the labours of Hercules (TP 268)

## 932

### HIPPOLITA, GERION.

almost at the end of his invention: he had heard that Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons in Asia, wore the most beautiful girdle in the world: he commanded Hercules to fetch this girdle, and make a present of it to Admetus, the hopeful daughter of Eurystheus: Hercules accomplished this task, and is said to have destroyed the whole nation before he could possess himself of the girdle.

The tenth labour of Hercules was one of the most terrible in which he ever engaged: it was to bring away the purple-coloured oxen of Geryon, a monster with three heads, the brother of Echidna, and the uncle of Orthus, Cerberus, Hydra and Chimæra: Geryon lived in the island of Gades in Spain, and he had Orthus, his nephew, who was a dog with two heads, beside a dragon with seven heads, to guard his cattle. Heracles killed Geryon and the dog and the dragon, and brought away the oxen: many attempts were made to rob Hercules of his prize, as he drove them along through Spain, Italy and Sicily; some robbers fell upon him in his sleep, and others endeavoured to overpower him with numbers; but he baffled and defeated them all.

The eleventh labour of Hercules was the gathering the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides, and the killing of the dragon who was appointed to guard them: Hesiod says that the garden of the Hesperides was to the north beyond the limits of the ocean; a long journey for Hercules to perform: he first applied to the nymphs of the Eridanus in Italy to know where these apples were to be found: they referred him to Nereus, God of the sea, whom the hero caught in his chains, and in spite of a variety of tortures

Image 2.3 Excerpt from Godwin's description of the labours of Hercules (GP 222)

Nevertheless, we should bear in mind that there are pieces of text present in both Godwin's and Tooke's books on classical religion that break the narrative: the footnotes. It seems to me, however, that their individual use of footnotes is quite different.<sup>171</sup> Consider the following images, which are reproductions of the footnote section of two pages of Tooke (Image 2.6) and Godwin's (Image 2.7) texts. More specifically, they are excerpted from the authors' respective presentations of twelve major gods of the Greco-Roman Pantheon.

<p>° Dii Majorum Gentium. p Selecti. q Consentes, quasi consentientes. Senec. l. 2. Quæst. Nat. Lucian. dial. de Deorum concil. Plaut. in Epidico.</p> <p>° Juno, Vesta, Minerva, Ceres, Diana, Venus, Mars, Mercurius, Neptunus, Jupiter, Vulcanus, Apollo.</p> <p>Dempster paralip. ad c. 3.</p> <p>In posteriore hoc versu alii legunt Jovis, non Jupiter; et melius meo judicio; olim enim Jovis in nominativo dicebatur; elisâ, metri gratiâ, ultimâ literâ. Rosin. Antiq. l. 2. ° Manilii Astron. l. 2. † De Nat. Deor. 2. ° Var. apud August.</p>	<p>b The account given of some of the Gods in this chapter is brief. The cause of this is, that the history of the amours of the Gods, and of their progeny by mortal mothers and fathers, is reserved for the latter part of the work, chap. XVII, to the end. The motive of this arrangement is assigned in that chapter.</p> <p>° Hesiod. The. 42.</p>
<p>Image 2.6 Footnotes to Tooke's <i>Pantheon</i>, TP 6.</p>	<p>Image 2.7 Footnotes to Godwin's <i>Pantheon</i>, GP 40.</p>

The first obvious remark here is that there are considerably more footnotes in Tooke's presentation than in Godwin's. This holds for the entirety of the two books. As a whole, the thirty-first edition of Tooke's *Pantheon* is richer and more diverse in footnotes and references than any edition of Godwin's book published by the Juvenile Library. The second aspect of the footnotes that catches the eye is the difference in language: Godwin's footnotes are in English while Tooke's are largely in Latin. Again, this is fairly typical for both Godwin and Tooke. Tooke's text is full of excerpts from different poems in Latin – often with an English translation – which may have served as a basis for a lesson in the Latin language or poetry, from original sources, or as passages for memorization.<sup>172</sup>

Godwin, by contrast, avoided Latin in his footnotes. He used them only to give short references (as he does here to Hesiod) and, when necessary, to briefly explain the logic of his text, so that readers could understand the direction of the book as a whole. This choice is also consistent with Godwin's interest in maintaining a narrative that is both clear and evocative, rather than antiquarian and too obviously didactic. This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that the footnotes were a later addition to Godwin's *Pantheon*, as

<sup>171</sup> The classic historical treatment of the subject of footnotes, especially the footnotes used by historians, is without a doubt Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997).

<sup>172</sup> See for instance pp. 16, 19, 20, 108, 112. This is only an extremely partial selection of examples.

they there are none in the first edition. What is more, as I have already mentioned, they were an addition about which Godwin remained hesitant.<sup>173</sup>

Beyond the typographical differences, one cannot overlook the fact that there are also significant differences in terms of the organisation of the book as a whole. Tooke's *Pantheon* follows a rather stable and predictable breakdown. In the first section, gods, goddesses, and heroes are described physically according to the illustrations adjoined to the text. Then, in a second section, there is a discussion of the descent and education of the divinity or hero. The third section is dedicated to their memorable actions or exploits. In the fourth section Mystagogus describes the diversity of names of a given god or goddess, both across different ancient religions and within the Greco-Roman culture, as well as the meaning of each name. Finally, there is sometimes (though not always) an exposition of what Tooke, through the voice of Mystagogus, thinks is the explanation behind the heathen fable.

Of the rest, nothing extraordinary is reported.

**SECT. 5. THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE FABLE:  
APOLLO MEANS THE SUN.**

EVERY one agrees, that by *ⁿ Apollo* the Sun is to be understood; for the four chief properties ascribed to

Image 2.8

Typographical Separation Between Sections in Tooke's *Pantheon* (TP 38).

Each of these sections is separated typographically by a subtitle, written in capital letters (see image 2.8). In contrast, Godwin's text does not have such clear thematic boundaries within chapters, although he usually covers much of the same material. From the pedagogical point of view, the typographical and organizational choices Godwin makes seem to follow from an overarching concern with keeping the pupil interested in the stories themselves. Everything in Godwin's *Pantheon* comes together to assist the development of the imagination, which Godwin cherished so much for what he perceived as its progressive political and ethical applications.

<sup>173</sup> MS. Abinger c. 33 fol. 65.

### **THE LIFE OF AN EDUCATOR, THE LIFE OF A BOOKSELLER**

We are left with an image of Godwin as an individual deeply concerned with children's, from both a pedagogical and a practical point of view. Godwin also displays a certain kind of commercial pragmatism, as he navigates between pedagogical issues and marketing strategies in order to ensure the widest possible circulation of his own children's books. His connections to the various worlds of education are multifarious and stretch back to his own early childhood and contacts with children's literature. Reaching a riper age and settling into his own family life, Godwin returned to children's literature and tried to build up a business in a hostile environment and in an already rather crowded, though still expanding, market. The results were the Juvenile Library and Godwin's books, which he tried to sell as best he could, considering his somewhat limited understanding of the nature and structure of the children's book market.

All of these experiences contributed to Godwin's lifelong process of pedagogical and philosophical revisions, which find their expression in the various chapters on education in his last collection of essays, *Thoughts on Man* (1831). Written in the soberness of his old age, having "had a numerous audience of all classes, of every age, and of either sex" (*PPW* 6:35). With this work he continues the educational mission that, it could be argued, underlay all of Godwin's life and works and which, as he expresses, in the preface to this last collection of essays, emerged from "an ardent interest in and love for, my brethren in mankind" (*PPW* 6:36).



# CHAPTER 3. STORY-TELLING. GODWIN AS A FABULIST

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## FOR AND AGAINST THE FABLE

### I. WHAT IS A FABLE?

From the 1792 edition of Samuel Johnson's dictionary to *Mylius's School Dictionary*, published by Godwin's Juvenile Library, there seems to be a common view of the fable as – in the first instance – “a feigned story intended to enforce some moral precept”.<sup>174</sup> Many late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century authors and publishers were very concerned with establishing and textually enforcing a specific moral. Croxall's immensely popular version of Aesop's fables (first published in 1722) have paragraph-long moral expositions that follow the narrative. Moreover, in the opening dedication “to the Right Honourable George, Lord Viscount Sunbury, Baron Halifax” Croxall stresses the fact that the stories “abound in variety of instruction, moral and political”.<sup>175</sup> Editions of this text were sold by a wide variety of well-known booksellers of the period including John Harris (the heir to Newbury's shop) and Joseph Johnson and G. and J. Robinson (who published Godwin's *Political Justice*).

Sarah Trimmer, one of Godwin's main contemporary competitors, also wrote fables which were collected together as *The Ladder to Learning* (first published around 1772). The text went through several important pedagogical revisions at the dawn of the nineteenth century – a testament to Trimmer's interest in certain forms of pedagogical innovation – and reached its thirteenth edition by 1832.<sup>176</sup> Yet, for all its pedagogical underpinnings and its innovative approach to increasing the complexity of a child's reading, *The Ladder to Learning* is also heavily didactic and each fable ends with a brief, straightforward, and supposedly common-sensical moral, separated typographically from the fable itself by a centred heading.

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174 This definition is from: Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language. Abstracted from the Folio Ed., by the Author. To Which Is Prefixed, A Grammar of the English Language*, Tenth Edition (London: J. F. & C. Rivington, L. Davis, T. Longman, B. Law, J. Dodsley, C. Dilly, G. G. & J. Robinson, T. Cadell, J. Robson, W. Goldsmith, J. Bew, J. Murray, R. Baldwin, S. Hayes, G. & T. Wilkie, and C. Stalker., 1792). In William Frederick Mylius, *Mylius's School Dictionary of the English Language*, Second edition (London: M. J. Godwin, 1809), the fable is defined as “a short story contrived to impress a moral.”

175 Samuel Croxall, *Fables of Aesop and Others: Translated into English, with Instructive Applications and a Cut Before Each Fable*, A New Edition, Improved (London, York: A. Millar, W. Law, R. Cater, and Wilson, Spence, and Mawman, 1792), p. vi; see also Samuel Croxall, *Fables of Aesop and Others: Translated into English, with Instructive Applications and a Cut Before Each Fable*, Seventeenth Edition (London: J. Johnson, R. Baldwin, F.C. and J. Rivington, G. and J. Robinson, J. Walker, Cuthell and Martin, Scatcherd and Letterman, Vernor and Hood, G. Wilkie, E. Jefferey, C. Law, Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, Cadell and Davies, B. Crosby, and co. W. Ginger, J. Mawman, J. Harris, and E. Mathews, 1805).

176 Matthew O. Grenby, 'Introductory Essay to: Trimmer. *The Ladder to Learning*', *The Hockliffe Project* <<http://www.sd-editions.com/hockliffeNew/items/0003.html>> [accessed 18 April 2016].

For Trimmer, there are three “*Laws of Fable*”:

First, that to every Fable there be some Interpretation annexed, to shew the Moral sense, or design of it. - Secondly, that the Narrative be clear, probable, short, and pleasant. - Thirdly, to preserve the probability, the Manners of the Characters introduced must be expressed and closely kept to, as in Poetry. - To which we may add, that no useless characters should be introduced into a Fable; nor any extraneous matter.<sup>177</sup>

Trimmer’s laws may have oversimplified the matter, nonetheless, by the mid-eighteenth century, there appears to have been a sense of stability concerning fable-writing and the interpretation of such stories.<sup>178</sup> It is also from these “laws” that Trimmer attacked Godwin’s *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, for “Mr. B. in some respects disapproves of these rules, and deviates from them systematically”.<sup>179</sup>

Against common definitions, Godwin provides his own: “a fable [...] is only a story very prettily invented” (*F* 2:305). Most fable books are problematic or rather ineffective, Godwin argues, because their “customary dryness” and their emphasis on moral *dicta* fail to entertain, and therefore to instruct. They shrink children’s minds and imaginations because they “end unhappily, or end in an abrupt and unsatisfactory manner” and therefore cannot produce the “happy and forgiving [...] tone of mind” which Godwin “would wish to cultivate” in children (*F* 1: 3-5). Despite the shortcomings of contemporary fabulists then, Godwin still believes that the fable is a remarkable genre, and one which he has “long thought” to be “the happiest vehicle which could be devised for the instruction of children in the first period of their education”.<sup>180</sup> Here, Godwin follows in the footsteps of one of his favourite authors, Locke, who was also fond of fables.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, as Matthew Grenby notes, in *Some Thoughts on Education*, Locke “practically paraphrased” the celebrated late

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177 Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education. a Periodical Work.*, ed. by Matthew O. Grenby, 5 vols (Bristol; Tokyo: Thoemmes ; Synapse, 2002), vol. 5, pp. 282–283.

178 Jayne Elizabeth Lewis, *The English Fable: Aesop and Literary Culture, 1651-1740* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

179 Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education*, vol. 5: 283.

180 For its ease of access, I refer to the Romantic Circles edition of the *Fables*, based on the text of the first edition. Baldwin [William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern*. For this quotation, see volume 1, paragraph 2. Hereafter, I will refer to the *Fables* in-text, with an *F* followed by the volume and paragraph number, following the convention of the Romantic Circles edition.

181 John Locke, pp. 211–12.

seventeenth-century fabulist, Sir Roger L'Estrange, in his view on the educational benefits of fables.<sup>182</sup>

Most strikingly, Godwin's work as a fabulist is, in and of itself, an argument against Rousseau's rejection of the fable as a genre for the instruction of children, and continues the critical reading of *Emile* that Godwin initiates in the *Enquirer*.<sup>183</sup> Rousseau rejected the use of fables for instruction, singling out La Fontaine's work in particular. He believed that the genre presupposed a knowledge of the world, as well as natural and human history, that children did not have and equated the use of unrealistic characters (talking animals, among other things) with lying to children. He added that, as tools of specifically *moral* instruction, fables were problematic because they were too complex for the mind of the child.<sup>184</sup> Although Godwin accepts some of that criticism, for example, he openly discusses the presence of talking animals and presents it to the child-reader as a useful tool for story-telling rather than a lie (*F* 1:14), he opposes Rousseau's full rejection of the genre. Instead, as Richard Gough Thomas has suggested, Godwin uses Rousseau's criticism to innovate and create fables that are even more morally complex and which create the conditions for the acquisition of new knowledge (of natural history, for instance).<sup>185</sup> Godwin is therefore at once attracted to the fable as a genre, and repulsed by its actual manifestation in the children's book-market. Accordingly, he takes his pen to redress the situation, and begins to change what he sees as unpalatable in many of the fables of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

## II. FUTILE FABLES? AMUSEMENT, INSTRUCTION AND NARRATIVE STYLE

In his preface, Godwin explains why he has chosen to deviate from the common definition of the fable and the common practices of the genre. It was because he found the contemporary standards of fable-writing distasteful and, more importantly, pointless from a pedagogical perspective. For him, contemporary fables stray too far from the abilities and psychology of the child. The fable as *dictum* "dismissed in five or six lines" does not effectively communicate knowledge, for "a tale which is compressed, dry, and told in as few words as a problem in Euclid, will never prove interesting to the mind of a child" (*F*: 1:3). Godwin thus

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<sup>182</sup> Grenby, *Children's Literature*, p. 13.

<sup>183</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>184</sup> Rousseau, *Émile ou De l'éducation*, pp. 157–62.

<sup>185</sup> Thomas, pp. 153–56; On this, see also: Palacio, pp. 98–99.

repeats and reframes one of the major points from *The Enquirer*: an effective pedagogy must rely on exciting the mind of the child and eliciting the desire to learn:

Study with desire is real activity: without desire it is but the semblance and mockery of activity. Let us [educators] not, in the eagerness of our haste to educate, forget all the ends of education. The most desirable mode of education, therefore, in all instances where it shall be found sufficiently practicable, is that which is careful that all the acquisitions of the pupil shall be preceded and accompanied by desire. (*PPW* 5: 115).

This version of what has since been called ‘child-centred education’, and which Godwin developed based on an eighteenth-century tradition of pedagogical thinking shaped by Locke and Rousseau and partly adopted by children’s book writers,<sup>186</sup> is expanded in the preface to the *Fables*. There, he presents a specific method for eliciting interest in the child: sympathetic identification. To write effectively for children, Godwin contends, “we [teachers and authors] must become in part a child ourselves”.

The teacher must therefore not only keep sight of the pedagogical stakes, but also welcome the alterity and individuality of the child’s mind. Godwin illustrates this point by presenting his own practice:

In the present volumes I have uniformly represented myself to my own thoughts as relating the several stories to a child. I have fancied myself taking the child upon my knee, and have expressed them in such language as I should have been likely to employ, when I wished to amuse the child, and make what I was talking of take hold upon his attention. (*F* 1:4)

By assuming both the position of the teacher and that of the child, Godwin therefore identifies several additional features of many fable books that he considers to need

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186 On the development of that tradition (in France) and the connection between Rousseau and Locke, see: Natasha Gill, *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment: From Nature to Second Nature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); On Locke’s influence on children’s books in the 18th century, see: Samuel F. Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books in 18th Century England*, 1st edition (Knoxville: Univ of Tennessee Pr, 1982); Gillian Brown, ‘The Metamorphic Book: Children’s Print Culture in the Eighteenth Century’, *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 39.3 (2006), 351–62; On child-centred education more broadly, see: Christine Doddington and Mary Hilton, *Child-Centred Education: Reviving the Creative Tradition* (SAGE, 2007).

reforming. Against a dry fable written in “too simple a form”, Godwin claims that a good fabulist should “prattle to” the child, “expatiate upon some points” and “introduce quick, unexpected turns, which, if they are not wit, have the effect of wit to children” (*F* 1:3).

Indeed, when we compare popular books of fables and Godwin’s own, we find a profound difference in the length and narrative style of each fable. Where Godwin’s prose is rich and the fables typically run on for about three pages, with the longer ones, such as ‘The Miser and his Treasure’ running over six pages, Dodsley’s fables generally take up less than a page and Trimmer’s longest fables in the *Ladder to Learning* barely go over two pages. In addition, Godwin’s narrative style makes his fables much more dialogical and therefore closer to the story-telling scene adorning the title-page, where Aesop tells a story to two children, while pointing in the direction of a lion, a fox and a cock (see image 3.1).

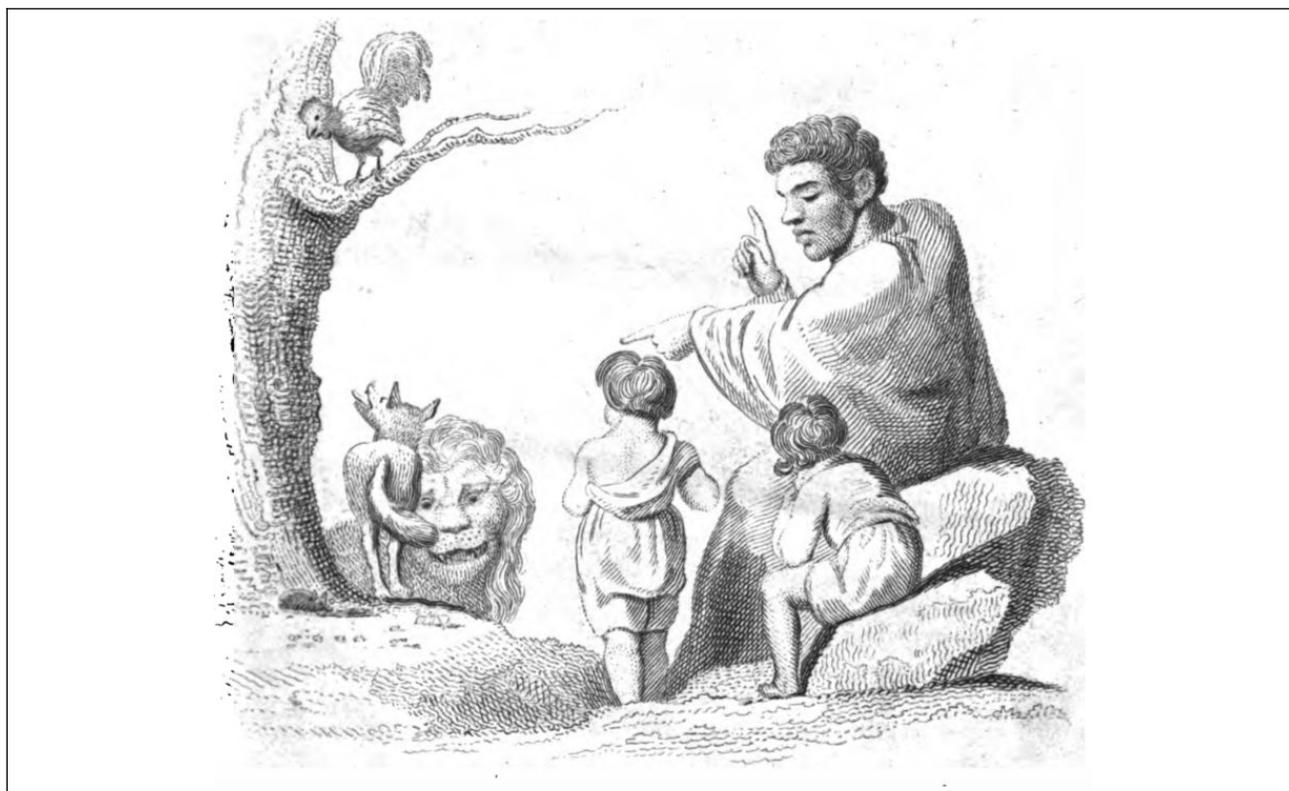


Image 3.1: Frontispiece of the *Fables*

The frontispiece foreshadows and represents Godwin’s approach to fables – perhaps even to teaching itself – and it should therefore not come as a surprise that this image also adorned the façade of the Juvenile Library’s shop in Skinner Street. Author/narrator interventions where Godwin speaks using the first person singular are common, as are the appearances of

Godwin's own children, which give a sense of a collective, conversational experience. For instance, in 'The Shepherd's Boy and the Wolf,' Godwin talks about "the times I am thinking of", "the boy I am going to tell you about" and the "children, boys of ten or twelve years old, like Charles [Clairmont]" who are sent "to take care of the flocks of sheep" (*F* 1:8-9).

It is also thanks to this set of narrative and pedagogical commitments that Godwin uses the genre of the fable to produce a multiplicity of meanings rather than enforce a single one, as was common practice in the early nineteenth century. These meanings emerge in the variety of spheres that Godwin considers educationally important, including ethics, politics, science and history. For Godwin, then, as we shall see, the fable is no longer simply a story "contrived to impress a moral" nor even "a story very prettily invented" but rather a story designed to "awaken the mind", to make children think about a wide variety of important subjects, to excite their curiosity. In this way, the author subverts the common form of the fable as a simple moral tale while enhancing its educational power.

## QUESTIONING CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

### I. THE FUTILITY OF THE MORAL?

Despite the very definition of the fable being tied to the communication of moral knowledge, Godwin does not stress that point in the preface to his *Fables*. This is perhaps even more noteworthy given that the issue of the moral purpose of a text is central to his analysis of both fable-writing and the practice of reading itself. In his famous essay 'Of Choice in Reading' in *The Enquirer*, Godwin writes:

Nothing is more futile, than the formal and regular moral frequently annexed to Esop's fables of animals. Examine the fable impartially, and you will find that the lesson set down at foot of it, is one of the last inferences that would have occurred to you (*PPW* 5:137).

It strikes as a radical statement. An explicit, simple, specific and unique moral has, throughout its long history since antiquity, often been taken to be a defining characteristic of the fable genre.<sup>187</sup> The point for Godwin is that one cannot really secure the production and

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<sup>187</sup> For a broader discussion of the genre, see chapter 1 in Matthew Grenby's useful *Children's Literature*; On the broader place of Aesop's fables in the history of children's literature in the eighteenth century, see: Jackson, pp.

reception of meaning in a book. For him, rather, “the impression we derive from a book, depends much less upon its real contents, than upon the temper of mind and preparation with which we read it” (*PPW* 5:138). The actual meaning produced by a book on a reader or on a community can only be understood by experience, because it is a matter of context.

This idea leads Godwin to identify and specify the difference between the “moral” and the “tendency” of a work, which, in the first part of the essay, were conflated. Godwin seeks to analytically disentangle these two related attributes of literature. “The moral of any work”, Godwin states, “may be defined to be, that ethical sentence to the illustration of which the work may most aptly be applied”. In contrast, “the tendency”:

Is the actual effect it is calculated to produce upon the reader, and cannot be completely ascertained but by experiment. The selection of the one, and the character of the other, will in a great degree depend upon the previous state of mind of the reader (*PPW* 5:139).

This distinction and its implications have been explored at varying lengths by Pamela Clemit, Tilottama Rajan and David O’Shaughnessy. Clemit and Rajan, who are primarily interested in this distinction in the context of Godwin’s historical novel-writing, connect the moral of a text with an established authorial intention, contrasting it with the tendency, which is the product of specific interactions between the text and individual readers.<sup>188</sup> By contrast, David O’Shaughnessy, whose interest lies primarily in Godwin’s work as a playwright, argues that the distinction is less obvious, and that the relationship between the moral and tendency of a text is more intricate than is often recognised.<sup>189</sup>

In O’Shaughnessy’s reading, the moral is not necessarily a product of authorial intention, rather, it is the “generally agreed ideological reading of a text” by different groups of readers, and is as a consequence negotiated between the readers’ own views and the text they read. From this follows that a text may be found to have several contradictory morals, depending on its readership, and it may well be that none of these correspond to “the moral

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43–50.

188 Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 76; Tilottama Rajan, ‘Wollstonecraft and Godwin: Reading the Secrets of the Political Novel’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 27.2 (1988), 221–51 (pp. 223–24).

189 O’Shaughnessy, p. 25.

contemplated by the author” (*PPW* 5:139).<sup>190</sup> Following Godwin’s distinction, O’Shaughnessy proceeds to describe the tendency of a text as being “that intangible benefit of literature” that improves readers either morally or intellectually (*PPW* 5:140). The tendency exists in relative autonomy from the moral of the text and from authorial intention, but is nevertheless also determined by “the spirit in which” a text is approached by its readers (*PPW* 5:141).<sup>191</sup> Thus, while Godwin emphasises the importance of the tendency of a text, its moral is nevertheless crucial as it reflects contemporary readings and therefore creates the context for the emergence of a text’s tendency. It is therefore in part because of the moral that the tendency of a text can have its positive effect over time, thus changing the environment in which a text is received for the better. Given enough time, texts, through their tendencies and morals, contribute to the general improvement of society.<sup>192</sup>

I agree with O’Shaughnessy that we should interpret Godwin’s distinction in terms of the dynamics of the relationship between the moral of a text, its tendency, and what he calls, expanding on Gérard Genette’s neologism, its “epitext”: the broad cultural, social, political environment in which a text is circulated, and in which information about it is circulated.<sup>193</sup> However, his reading of tendency as “that intangible benefit of literature that makes the reader, in crude terms, a ‘better’ person”, is flawed given Godwin’s own definition.<sup>194</sup> O’Shaughnessy’s formulation suggests that there can be no negative tendencies to texts. This is in part supported by Godwin’s view that “the power of books in generating virtue, is probably much greater than in generating vice” (*PPW* 5:141). Yet, Godwin clearly thinks that “books most pernicious in their effects” have been produced. He asserts that “the most that the most perfect wisdom can do, is to secure the benefit of the majority of readers”, though “intentions uncommonly elevated and pure” cannot guarantee a good tendency (*PPW* 5:140).

While, on the whole, book production and reception might be beneficial to society, this is not an inevitable, linear progressive process. It depends on the ability of authors to critically assess their own work in their own historical contexts, imagine what their reception will be, and use this self-reflection to ensure that their books have the desired effect. More to the point, seeing as, according to Godwin, there is a crucial level of indeterminacy in the

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190 O’Shaughnessy, p. 25.

191 O’Shaughnessy, p. 27.

192 O’Shaughnessy, pp. 28–29.

193 O’Shaughnessy, p. 27; Genette, pp. 4–5, 344–45.

194 O’Shaughnessy, p. 27.

individual and social effect of reading any book, fables included, overt moralising is perhaps to be avoided. However, through his creative radical re-writing of individual stories, his lighter editorial procedures on others, as well as his attempts to tie the stories together, providing different angles on the same subject or character, Godwin does more than withhold a specific moral message: he saturates his work with different positions that question many of the common moral points presented in fables.

## II. (UN)HAPPY ENDINGS

‘The Wolf and the Lamb,’ as it is recounted in the verse version of Jean de la Fontaine and Croxall’s prose translation of Aesop, is a bloody tale in which the wolf “seized the poor, innocent, helpless Thing [the lamb], tore it to Pieces, and made a Meal of it”.<sup>195</sup> Often, the tale serves to illustrate, condemn, or warn readers that usually, “the reasons given by the strong are best”,<sup>196</sup> or other variations on the idea that ‘might makes right’. At first glance, one could say that Godwin’s re-writing is no exception: even though the lamb is happily saved at the last minute by the shepherd, Godwin ends his version of the fable by conceding “that might sometimes overcomes right” (*F* 1: 223). Such a reading however overlooks the broader way in which this gentler re-writing is framed. It is obvious that, although Godwin claims that “might sometimes overcomes right”, we are shown precisely the opposite. Despite everything seeming to be in place for might to overcome right, it does not, thanks to the timely intervention of the shepherd. Moreover, Godwin carefully qualifies his concession “that might *sometimes* overcomes right”, as, according to him this is the case “in this world” but only “according to the proverb” (*F* 1:223). Yet, the proverb is proven wrong by the story itself, and as a consequence the child is made to question this piece of received wisdom.

Similar dynamics are at play in Godwin’s retelling of the famous ancient fable of ‘The Belly and the Members’. In Dodsley’s more traditional rendition, entitled ‘The Belly and the Limbs’, the narrator is none other than Menenius Agrippa, who, Dodsley tells us, was “deputed by the senate to appease a dangerous tumult and sedition of the people, who refused to pay taxes necessary for carrying on the business of the state”.<sup>197</sup> Agrippa thus tells

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195 Croxall, *Fables of Aesop and Others: Translated into English, with Instructive Applications and a Cut Before Each Fable*, p. 4.

196 ‘The Wolf and the Lamb’ in Jean de La Fontaine, *Selected Fables*, ed. & trans. by Christopher Betts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 14.

197 Dodsley, p. 7.

the story of the rebellion of the limbs against what they saw as the “fat and indolent Paunch”. The belly, “in his distress” tries to convince the seditious limbs “not [to] foment so senseless a rebellion”, since everything that he receives from the limbs is then dispatched “for the good of you all into every Limb”. His pleading goes tragically unheeded, and eventually, “the limbs, grown weak and languid, were sensible at last of their error [...]; but it was now too late, death had taken possession of the whole, and they all perished together”.<sup>198</sup>

Godwin’s version is quite different. He only mentions an “old Roman” described, and portrayed in Mulready’s plate, as a “grey-bearded savage”, thus avoiding the openly political slant of Dodsley’s tale. He proceeds to swiftly describe the rebellion of the limbs. Unlike Dodsley, Godwin’s belly does not plead with the limbs, it bides its time, for in her wisdom, “she foresaw very well how this conspiracy would end” (*F* 1: 247). As the members weaken, the belly then makes an eloquent speech, in which she says that as “scavengers and shoeblacks have their value in a great city”, the belly’s “office is ignoble” but fundamental. It is thanks to such an “office” that “the head [can] invent those sciences and arts which raise the human, so far above the brute creation” (*F* 1: 249). After remonstrating with the members, the belly then says, “come, my friends, let us return to the agreement and kindness in which we have been accustomed to live. It is not yet too late” (*F* 1: 249). Eventually, we are told, “the members listened to the prudent advice of the belly” and the whole body survives.

Godwin’s gentler rendition of the fable is infused with Godwinian characteristics that could only emerge in such a re-writing. First, there is a reversal of the hierarchy, which ends in an understanding of the equality and fraternity of all the parts of the body, despite their different uses. For Dodsley, the stomach is equated with the state, and in the first part of Godwin’s fable we are similarly told that the stomach has the limbs as “her servants” (*F* 1: 246). In the belly’s speech, however, she is equated rather with the “scavengers and shoeblacks” of a “great city”, whose labours are “ignoble” but necessary (*F* 1: 249). Unlike Dodsley’s fable, which vindicates a political order in which the stomach is sovereign, Godwin’s fable seems to emphasise the complementarity and society of different parts of the body. Additionally, and in my view perhaps even more importantly, we are shown in the fable how the combination of certain material conditions (hunger) and reasoned speech successfully leads

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198 Dodsley, p. 8.

to an adequate and peaceful process of conflict resolution. In this way, the fable embodies Godwin's revised view of the effectiveness of rational discourse, expressed in the third edition of *Political Justice*, where he claims that "truth is omnipotent", but only omnipotent when it is not simply "exhibited, but adequately communicated"; in other words, distinctly apprehended by the person to whom it is addressed (*PPW* 4: 41-42). It is thanks then to the dissemination of knowledge that order, peace, and equality between the members of the body are restored. Godwin's editorial work, correcting the "tone of mind" of certain fables, therefore serves to create additional layers of meaning that subvert or call into question the usual meanings associated with stories that had been circulating in British middle-class society for around a century.

### III. LINKING THE STORIES

In addition to such radical re-writings, Godwin leads the child to investigate the ethical messages of the stories from different perspectives. He does this by binding different stories and characters together in a way that forces them to recall the previous story and to question some of the apparent conclusions. Unlike Sarah Trimmer, whose stories in the *Ladder to Learning* are arranged in such a way that the reader follows one animal after the other as they display their dominant characteristic, Godwin creates moral complexity and ambiguity. It is such a practice that leads Robert Anderson to use Godwin's own words in a letter to the editor of the *British Critic* concerning the review of *Caleb Williams* and to describe the *Fables* and Godwin's other children's books as a platform to launch children "upon the sea of moral and political enquiry".<sup>199</sup> Anderson gives the example of how Godwin seems to sympathise with the wolf's desire for liberty, when he refers back to 'The Wolf and the Mastiff' at the beginning of 'The Wolf and the Lamb', only to reverse that thrust by exclaiming soon after "Thank God, there are no wolves in England!" (*F* 1: 213).<sup>200</sup> For Anderson, "in the space of five short pages, the book presents two radically different accounts of a wolf. The contradiction leaves young readers with no clear guidance about the nature of a wolf".<sup>201</sup>

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199 *LWG* 63. Also quoted in: Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', p. 142.

200 Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', pp. 126-27.

201 Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', p. 126.

This is neither singular nor accidental. The sequence constituted by ‘The Lion and Other Beasts Hunting’, which closes the first volume of the *Fables*, and ‘The Lion and the Man’, which opens the second volume, echoes the inversion we find in ‘The Wolf and the Mastiff’ and ‘The Wolf and the Lamb’. In ‘The Lion and Other Beasts Hunting’, we are shown how a lion illegitimately appropriated all the prey that was successfully hunted through the cooperation between himself, a bull-dog, a wolf, and a mountain-cat (*F* 1: 301-306). In this story, the lion is shown to be imperious and unjust, using his strength to claim what is not rightly his. In the beginning of the following story, ‘The Lion and the Man’, the narrator reverses this depiction, addressing the reader directly: “you have been told before that a lion is a generous creature. He is a fierce fellow; but as he is strong, so I have heard he is kind and merciful” (*F* 2: 15). Both of these reversals push the child into questioning different aspects of the representation of these animals and their typical characteristics. They force the child to reconsider the relationship between appearance, reputation and reality.

In other instances, the link between stories does not involve the main character of the story directly, but instead presents the same situation from a variety of angles, blurring the reader’s moral understanding of that situation. Richard Gough Thomas therefore brings together ‘The Lion and the Man’ and ‘The Horse and the Stag’ as they both deal with the relationship between horse and man, while offering conflicting points of view.<sup>202</sup> The domestication of the horse in ‘The Horse and the Stag’ is described as the story of the enslavement of the horse (due to the horse’s own pride and desire for vengeance) where, “the man, having once been his [the horse’s] master, was always his master” (*F* 1:285). Reversing this relationship, in ‘The Lion and the Man’ the former describes the reliance of the latter on the horse in the context of man’s inability to be truly independent. Unlike man, who depends on “a horse, and [...] a spear and shield” the lion only depends on his own physical abilities. The lion is therefore “a free creature” while man remains “a slave” (*F* 2:17).

Combining these two strategies, a sequence of three stories, ‘The Hart and the Vine’, ‘The Dying Eagle’ and ‘The Lynx and the Mole’, play with children’s minds and their ability to link stories by their theme – death – rather than their characters. In all three stories, characters are killed by hunters through faults of their own, whether that is explicitly said (in the case of ‘The Hart and the Vine’), implied (in the case of ‘The Lynx and the Mole’) or

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202 Thomas, p. 151.

presented as an erroneous interpretation (in the case of ‘The Dying Eagle’). In all three stories, more or less explicit moral interpretations are provided. In ‘The Hart and the Vine’, a deer is killed by a hunter because it “could not refrain from” eating “the vine that generously protected [it] with its shade” and thus was an “ungrateful beast” who “could not refrain from acting injuriously to [its] benefactor” (*F* 2:244). In ‘The Dying Eagle’, the bird notices that the arrow killing her “was winged with plumage from one of her own quills” (*F* 2:247). The eagle therefore describes its demise as “double cruelty” for the hunters “furnished themselves from [its] own person with the means of [its] destruction” (*F* 2:247). Godwin associates this with a man who “brings a misfortune upon himself of his own procuring”, though he carefully specifies that the eagle’s “sentiment [...] had no distinct foundation in reality” (*F* 2:248). Lastly, in ‘The Lynx and the Mole’, the lynx’s sole reliance on his eyes and his disparagement of the mole lead to his being killed by “a javelin” while the mole “felt more than ever thankful to providence, for having blessed him with a mind not to repine at his station” (*F* 2:254).

The different angles taken in each story are striking in themselves, insofar as they encourage the child to think about all similar but slightly different situations. However, it is the narrator’s intervention in the final paragraph of ‘The Lynx and the Mole’ that truly creates a much deeper link both between these three stories and between all the fables more generally. Moreover, it adds a layer of interpretation that perhaps makes this sequence one of the most complex in the whole book. It is worth quoting in full:

There is too much about killing in these fables. We kill creatures for their flesh; we kill creatures for their skins; and, which is worst, we kill creatures, when we go a hunting and shooting, for our amusement. Men (though they are very kind and considerate to many animals) appear to most advantage in their conduct to one another. How much care do almost all parents take of their children! How many generous actions do we hear of, that men do for their friends, and even for strangers, giving them money, giving them their time, running into dangers, and sometimes sacrificing their lives to save them! Yes, my dear child, man, though imperfect, is a noble creature; and I hope you will attend to your improvement in your early days, that hereafter you may be worthy to be called, in the best sense of the word, a man (*F* 2:255).

Following a relatively dark set of fables, readers not only encounter the kind of “happy and forgiving tone” Godwin discusses in the preface, they are also forced to consider the actions of humans in the previous three fables. As the killings all involved hunters, humans are put in critical perspective as Godwin presents an ethics of hunting. What matters, then, is not so much the common moral included in the stories, but rather the more general ethical reflection that arises from these three stories taken together. It ends, however, on an optimistic if didactic note. In a direct address to the child reader, Godwin thus praises the best practices of philanthropy and advocates the “improvement” of the child – echoing the perfectibility of man presented in *Political Justice* – and exhorts his readers to follow these injunctions to become “in the best sense of the word, a man”.

#### IV. MORALITY AND NARRATIVE COMPLEXITY

Godwin blurs the lines of conventional morality by adding layers of moral complexity to his stories through deliberately intricate narratives that introduce what Godwin calls “quick, unexpected turns” (*F* 1:3). Robert Anderson, Malini Roy and Richard Gough Thomas have argued that this was consistent with Godwin’s emphasis on the use of private judgment, as well as his understanding of the indeterminacy of meaning.<sup>203</sup> Roy takes ‘The Poor Farmer and the Justice’ (*F* 1:163-171) as her case study, in order to show how Godwin’s *Fables* and their different levels of reading can be understood as a precursor to the best literary practices of children’s book-writing, which she finds in Lewis Carroll.<sup>204</sup>

I will later discuss the criticism of institutional justice that lies at the heart of the story. However, there is even more to the fable than political satire. ‘The Poor Man and the Justice’ contains a complex moral story where we are shown two ethically compromised positions: that of the corrupt justice, that of the poor farmer whose subterfuge allowed him to obtain reparations for the damage caused by the Justice’s bull, but forced him to be dishonest. When he returns home and reconsiders his actions, he finds that the amount of money he obtained from the justice as a compensation was ill-gained because he told a lie. He therefore goes to the church-porch, to have the money “laid out in bread for the poor in the work-house” (*F* 1: 171).

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203 Malini Roy, ‘Celebrating “Wild Tales”’: Lamb and Godwin’s Groundwork for Children’s Literature’, *The Charles Lamb Bulletin*, NS.147 (2009), 122–30; Anderson, ‘Godwin Disguised’, p. 126; Thomas, chap. V.

204 Roy, pp. 128–29.

On the one hand, we have the actualisation of justice – the rich man is forced to acknowledge his guilt, and pays a reparation. This accompanies an off-hand condemnation of a rigged system in which the poor need to revert to untruths in order to receive a fair judgement, delivered by the narrator. On the other, the farmer comes to understand that his action, though motivated by justice, was in itself unjust, and so he concludes that he should not do it again, for he would “rather stand by the loss of half a field of corn, than not tell the honest truth at once” (*F* 1: 171). As Malini Roy states, this “complicates the black-and-white morality”.<sup>205</sup> In this case, there are at least two possible and competing, but also compatible morals that can be extracted: a straightforward, ‘one must not tell lies’ and a more political ‘institutional justice serves the interests of those in power – or, at least, those of the rich’. At the same time, the first moral is also bound up in politics, since it is the subterfuge that made the farmer obtain just reparations, which the narrator is “afraid” he would not have obtained otherwise. Readers consequently face an aporia and are left with both the politically radical and the more conservative readings of this text. Godwin does not provide a way out of this dilemma.

In and of itself, this strategy, as Robert Anderson notes, is “entirely consistent with the rhetorical strategy outlined in *The Enquirer*”.<sup>206</sup> It forces the child to think, to reason, and to judge, in the same way that the complex trial scene that closes the novel *Caleb Williams* forces the adult reader to think, reason and judge. In the novel, just as in the fable, Godwin shows that the institutions are rigged against the protagonist, be it Caleb or the unnamed farmer. We are shown how both protagonists end up reflecting on that their ways of obtaining justice, each concluding that their reasons were flawed and problematic. In the case of *Caleb Williams* it leads to the death of Falkland, after his confession of guilt, and eventually to Caleb’s own crushing sense of personal guilt. Less dramatically, it leads to the farmer’s guilt in the fable, which is resolved, following Godwin’s desire for a “happy and forgiving tone”, in benevolent action, thus adding yet another level of complexity to the story. In both these works, readers are saturated with possible readings, and left with the choice forcefully expressed by Pamela Clemit concerning *Caleb Williams*: “do we collude with Caleb’s version of events” – or the farmer’s – “or learn from his tale”?<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Roy, p. 128.

<sup>206</sup> Anderson, ‘Godwin Disguised’, p. 126.

<sup>207</sup> Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, p. 68. More broadly, on the end of *Caleb Williams* see pp. 64-69; for a contrasting point of view, see Gary J. Handwerk, ‘Of Caleb’s Guilt and Godwin’s Truth: Ideology and Ethics in Caleb Williams’, *English Literary History*, 60.4 (1993), 939–960.

This said, the originality of Godwin's fables with regard to their moral should not be overstated. It is remarkable that such complex stories and connections make it to an early nineteenth-century fable-book, but there remains a number of stories in the *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, that are not as innovative on that account. The moral of 'The Fox and the Stork', to take a single example, is more conventional (*F* 1: 28-35).<sup>208</sup> In the fable, a fox invites a stork for dinner, only to serve soup to the stork in a plate, from which the stork cannot eat because of its beak. The stork, in revenge, invites the fox for dinner the next evening, and serves food in a bottle, from which the fox cannot eat because it does not have a beak. The fox begins to "grow angry" and the stork chides him, saying "he that cannot take a joke, should never have the assurance to make one" (*F* 1: 35), thus delivering the moral of the story. The only difference between Godwin's version of this fable, and for instance, Sarah Trimmer's, is that the moral is delivered by one character to the other, in this case, the stork to the fox, instead of from the author to the reader.<sup>209</sup>

This is not an insignificant difference: the mediation of the moral as it is woven into the story's narrative creates some distance between the precept and the reader, differentiating it from the kind of imperative that is implied by Trimmer's typographically separated moral. Still, it brings Godwin's book of fables closer to the standard practice, since authors like Dodsley also had some of their characters express the moral of their fable.<sup>210</sup> Godwin's *Fables*, then, are a composite of relatively conventional, more or less didactic tales, mixed with particular moments that are much more demanding on the child's reason. The contrast between the straightforwardness of 'The Fox and the Stork' and the complexity of 'The Poor Farmer and the Justice' puts this issue in crucial relief, and it is perhaps doubtful that Godwin would have sold so many of his *Fables* had they all broken from the common style.

## THE FABLE BEYOND ITS (BLURRED) MORAL

### I. A POLITICAL VOICE

Robert Anderson has argued that the ethics and politics of Godwin's *Fables* are deliberately unstable. He claims, for example, that they include a mixture of conservative and more

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208 Other examples include: 'The Sun and the Wind', which bears remarkable structural similarity to 'The Fox and the Stork' and 'The Ass and the Lap-dog.'

209 Sarah Trimmer, *The Ladder to Learning: A Select Collection of Fables; Consisting of Words of One, Two, and Three Syllables; with Original Morals* (J. Harris, 1824), p. 16.

210 See for example, 'The Cameleon' Dodsley, pp. 76–77.

radical politics. The point, he argues, is to open the possibility of critical enquiry within the genre of the fable, or more generally within a category of books that is typically didactic, such as children's books. As a consequence, and given what he sees as the various political and ethical contradictions implied in Godwin's practice as a children's author, he considers it to be "chimerical" to try and categorise Godwin's works as "either radical or conservative".<sup>211</sup> Similarly, and partly given Godwin's own aversion to fixing definite moral meanings, Richard Gough Thomas considers that "from a scholarly perspective, attempting to narrow down the book's political or ethical position is to miss the point of Godwin's exercise", as Godwin would rather see these positions emerge as readers respond to the text rather than having them imposed by the text.<sup>212</sup> While this argument has some virtue, particularly given the argument on morals above, it also leads to a partial reading of the work that does not attempt to recover the more immediately politically critical dimensions of Godwin's book, as is demonstrated by Godwin's targeting of specific issues and institutions that link the work to more concrete contemporary political questions.<sup>213</sup>

Contemporary judicial institutions, for example, appear twice in relative detail ('The Poor Farmer and the Justice', 'The Disputed Oyster'), and once in passing ('The Contractor and the Cobbler') in the two-volume work. For the most part, they are not portrayed in a flattering light. In 'The Farmer and the Justice', Godwin relates the encounter between a peasant and a local justice and, within the story's complex moral structure, Godwin still makes space for a more targeted form of social criticism. He implies that there is both an imbalance of political power and a moral imbalance based upon. On the one hand, the poor farmer realises that he acted in a morally questionable fashion, and therefore puts his ill-made money to good use by donating it to the poor (*F* 1:171). On the other hand, the justice's immorality is expressed both through his diseased appearance as he "was very ill of the gout" as a consequence of his diet of "turbo and venison" (as opposed to the farmer who "had not a pain or an ache about him"; *F* 1:163), and because it is – according to the narrator – probably only thanks to the poor farmer's stratagem that he acts justly:

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211 Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', p. 142.

212 Thomas, p. 149.

213 For an opposing view, see: Grenby, 'Politicizing the Nursery'; see also Anderson's criticism in Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', p. 130.

If the farmer had said at first that it was the justice's bull that had done all the mischief, I am afraid he would have set a very different face on it. But he thought he could not sit there as a justice, and say that there was one rule for a rich man, and another for a poor one. (*F* 1:170).

The implication of the final sentence would suggest to an attentive reader that, given usual circumstances, there is indeed "one rule for a rich man, and another for a poor one".

In 'The Disputed Oyster', Godwin further satirises institutional justice, showing how the institution does not serve justice but rather itself, in a way that echoes 'The Poor Farmer and the Justice'. 'The Disputed Oyster', as the Romantic Circles editors of Godwin's *Fables* note, is an unconventional addition to a book of fables insofar as it was not included in the most popular books of the period (*F* 1: fn46), thus making its presence even more noteworthy. As Godwin retells it, "two men, walking together on the beach of the sea" find an oyster and cannot decide who will eat it, for they cannot share it as, according to the narrator, "your oyster-eaters say, an oyster is spoiled, if it is cut; and they had neither of them a knife" (*F* 1: 115). Unable to decide for themselves which of the two had the better claim to the oyster, and seeing that "a droll fellow [named Tom Smith] happened to be coming along the beach", they decide to "take Tom Smith to be the judge" (*F* 1:118). Instead of choosing one or the other of the walkers, Tom Smith gives in to temptation and eats the oyster himself, before giving "the two disputants each of them a shell" (*F* 1:125). This procedure is then described by Tom as the normal outcome of an institutional judicial process in the contemporary context:

You agreed to go to law for the oyster [...]. Did you never hear that people who go to law for something they dispute about, are often obliged to pay as much as it is worth in expences, and at last get nothing better than an oyster-shell for their pains? (*F* 1:126).

A similar, though less incisive, criticism of the law and its iniquities appears in the last fable of the book, 'The Contractor and the Cobbler'. In this fable, a rich but unhappy contractor grows jealous of his illiterate and poor neighbour the cobbler. Hoping it would bring him peace of mind, the contractor thus asks the cobbler whether he would be willing to sell his

stall. Godwin takes this opportunity to note:

The contractor would not have condescended to parley thus with the cobbler in any country but England. But in England there are laws to defend the poor; and his rich neighbour would not have been suffered to take his stall by violence from the poor cobbler. It is true, the law is rather expensive; but this cobbler had always behaved well; and there were some gentlemen close by, that loved his merry heart, and would not have allowed him to be put upon. (*F* 2:324).

Though this passage contains praise for the laws of England that are designed to protect the poor against the rich, doubt is immediately cast on their general applicability. However, since recourse to “the law is rather expensive”, the cobbler’s protection therefore not only depends on the law, but also on the good relations he has with “some gentlemen close by”. It is because such gentlemen would come to the cobbler’s aid should the contractor attempt to violently expropriate him that he and his business are, in the end, safe. The word of the law, therefore, is not enough if you are poor.

In addition to the issue of law and social class, ‘The Contractor and the Cobbler’ suggests more direct links between Godwin’s *Fables* and contemporary events in Britain. In this case, the ongoing war against Revolutionary France, which Godwin had already opposed in 1793.<sup>214</sup> The contractor, in Godwin’s story, is specifically “a man whose trade is to furnish commodities for the fleets and armies”, not simply, following an 1805 edition of Johnson’s dictionary, “one who makes bargains” (*F* 2:315). This specification allows Godwin to comment on war in general, and profit made from war in particular. The contractor:

thrives upon the misfortunes of mankind. When ten thousand men are killed at a time, and the people at home are oppressed with taxes and well nigh starved, then he is comfortable. If it is war-time, he prays it may last; and if it is peace, he is afraid that, if war does not break out soon, he shall never be able to make the money he wants. What makes him happy, makes all other people miserable (*F* 2:315).

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214 See the unpublished “Essay against reopening the war with France” in *PPW* 2.

One of the contractor's more pronounced anxieties is the possibility that the following day would bring "some news that would make all the nation happy": peace (*F* 2:316). Rather than simply constructing a fable which draws out the differences between the rich and unsatisfied and the happy, hard-working poor, Godwin uses the form of the fable to directly address some of the pressing political issues of the time: war, tax increases and immoral profiteering (during wartime).

The French Revolution and its consequences in Britain are also hinted at earlier in the *Fables*. In 'The Wolf and the Mastiff', Godwin stages the discussion between "a plump, well-fed mastiff" and "a lean and hungry wolf" (*F* 1:192). Interested in being as well-fed as the mastiff, the wolf enquires about the dog's way of life. The mastiff then makes his case, emphasising that he receives "excellent meat every day", but that he is sometimes beaten and often chained. Though he is starving, the wolf refuses to give up his liberty in exchange for food and the occasional "chains and blows" (*F* 1:212). This presentation of the dilemma between liberty and security, or rather between liberty and material prosperity, illustrates a philosophical question about relative value, where Godwin takes the side of the wolf (*F* 1:213).<sup>215</sup> However, it also directly echoes aspects of the British debates on the French Revolution.

A central dimension of the argument in the loyalist response to Thomas Paine and the radicals more generally, was that republican liberty and equality were incompatible with modern commercial society.<sup>216</sup> British prosperity, the argument went, was based on the hierarchies and limitations that emerged through historical processes of negotiation in Britain.<sup>217</sup> Liberty and prosperity are also joined in James Gillray's famous print, 'French Liberty, British Slavery' (1792 – image 3.2).

In this satirical print, Gillray represents French liberty on the left, as a mixture of abject poverty and arrogance, as the ugly sans-culotte declares "vat blessing be de Liberté" while eating raw onions and claiming to "svim in de Milk & Honey." British slavery, by contrast, takes the form of opulence, as a fat John Bull cuts a huge piece of meat, drinks Hock wine,

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215 Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', pp. 49–54; Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', pp. 125–30.

216 For a similar argument, from the perspective of the oppositon of liberty and security, see: Anderson, 'Godwin Disguised', pp. 126–27.

217 Claeys, p. 81.

and complains about “their damned Taxes.” It is clear that Gillray is targeting both those in Britain who complain about taxes while enjoying the security and prosperity offered by the British state and the French revolutionaries and their British supporters. The point is that the language of this criticism opposes (republican) liberty and prosperity, which Godwin then deploys in ‘The Wolf and the Mastiff’, repeating his commitment to liberty and independence rather than opulence under illegitimate political authority.

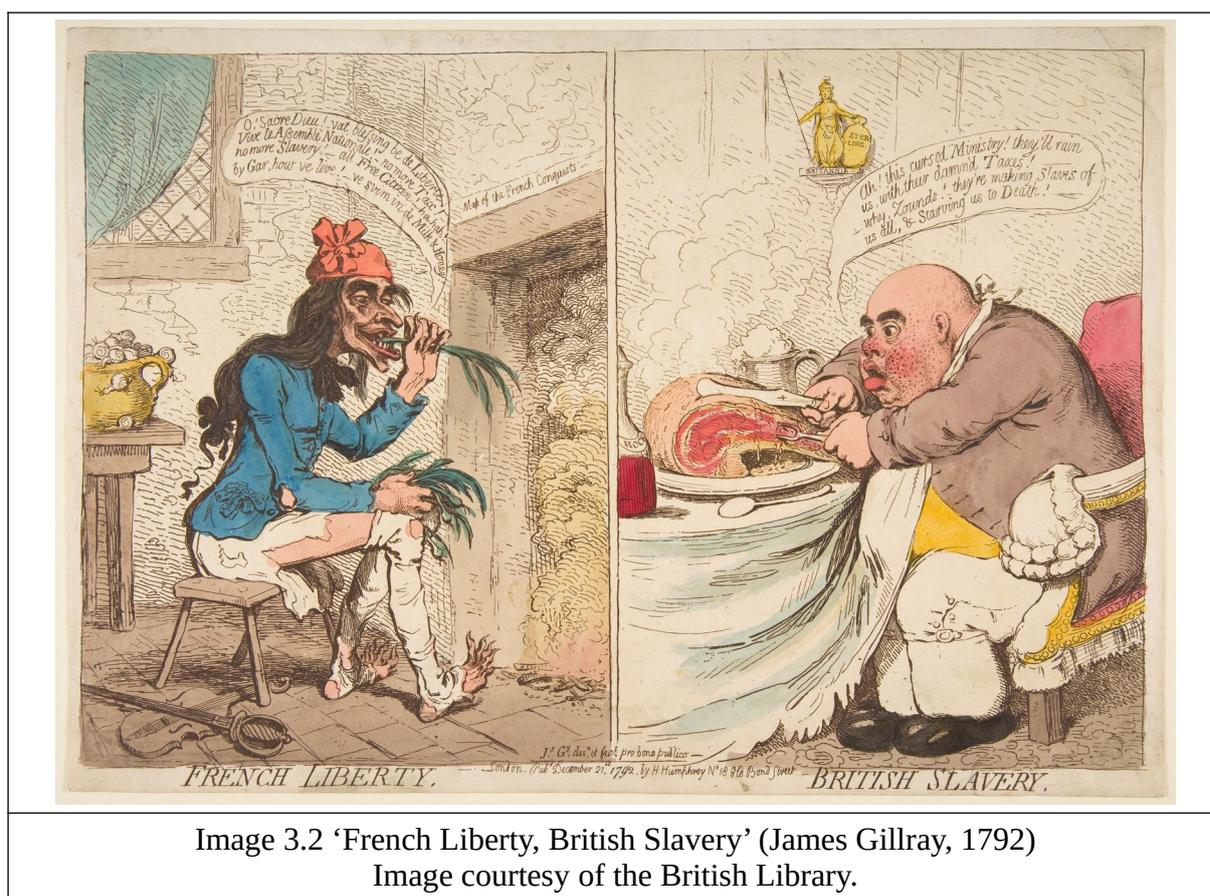


Image 3.2 ‘French Liberty, British Slavery’ (James Gillray, 1792)  
Image courtesy of the British Library.

## II. A TEACHER’S VOICE

‘The Wolf and the Mastiff’ is not simply a political tale. It also features an introduction to natural history. The wolf declares that he and the dog are “originally of the same class [of animals], only with a little difference in our education”, to which the mastiff replies “so, I understand, [...] Dr. Mavor observes in his *Natural History*” (*F* 1:193-194).<sup>218</sup> Godwin is at his most didactic in the *Fables* when he advocates the pursuit and acquisition of knowledge.

<sup>218</sup> William Fordyce Mavor was Scottish educationist and the author of a *Natural History for the Use of Schools* published by Richard Phillips in 1800. For additional details, see ‘Mavor, William Fordyce (1758-1837)’ in the *ODNB*.

The story of ‘Ignoramus and the Student’ is particularly intriguing in this regard, perhaps because its subject is one Godwin so clearly took to heart, and which he treats here with a compelling mixture of humour and candour (*F* 2:207-219). Godwin recounts the interaction between two cousins, one who spent “among his books as many hours as he could consistently with a proper attention to his health”, and an “Ignoramus” who goes “coursing after hares every morning, gaming at the bowling-green every afternoon, and drinking punch and strong ale at one club or another every night” (*F* 2: 208).

The interaction between the two cousins shows the student to be a cultivated reader in all of the humanities and sciences (*F* 2: 213). He is benevolent, since he shares the benefits of his knowledge with fellow human beings (*F* 2: 215). Finally, he is radically honest, wise, and witty as he even sees the benefit of talking with his Ignoramus of a cousin since it teaches him “patience and good-humour” (*F* 2: 218). This whole exposition leaves Ignoramus “abashed” at the end of the tale upon finding that it was “too late” for him to be “a student too” (*F* 2: 219). Godwin drives the point home to the child reader even more forcefully with the last sentence of the fable, which echoes one of the central claims of *The Enquirer*. “The man”, Godwin concludes, “who aspires to be wise and well-informed, must begin with a love of instruction almost from infancy”, which is to say, at the age at which child might be reading Godwin’s *Fables* (*F* 2: 219), and learning from its many teaching moments.

Godwin chose to transform the fable into a genre of more general, if occasionally sporadic, instruction, designed to “awaken the mind” of its young readers without imparting too much unnecessarily detailed knowledge. The book is advertised as such already in the preface:

I have introduced no leading object [for example: “a wolf, a stag, a country-fair, a Heathen God, or the grim spectre of Death”] without a clear and distinct explanation. By this means the little reader will be accustomed to form clear and distinct ideas. By this means my book is made a compendium of the most familiar points of natural history and the knowledge of life, without being subjected to the discouraging arrangements of a book of science. I have intended, as far as I was able, that these volumes should surpass most others in forming the mind of the learner to habits of meditation and reflection (*F* 1: 6).

In this respect, it was not false advertising. Throughout the *Fables*' two volumes there are numerous interventions by the narrator that seek to clarify, specify, and indeed explain a variety of natural and historical phenomena.

'The Sun and the Wind' and 'The Mountain in Labour' both combine Godwin's desire to teach elements of natural science and history with that of complicating conventional morality. The framework of 'The Sun and the Wind' is common to Croxall, Trimmer and Godwin. The wind and the sun are competing, and attempt to determine who is "the most powerful" (Godwin) or "strongest" (Trimmer).<sup>219</sup> In Croxall and Trimmer's versions, the two "agreed to try their strength upon a traveller, which should be able to get his cloak off first" (Croxall), without any further explanation.<sup>220</sup> In Godwin's version, however, the sun and wind have a verbal argument before "a traveller happened to pass along" (*F* 1:254). The wind and sun describe their respective powers and introduce the child to some knowledge of nature. Godwin thus depicts the destructive power of the wind, foreshadowing 'The Oak and the Reed' in the process, by asking "do I not tear up the tallest trees by the roots?" (*F* 1:252). As a reply, the sun concedes:

These are formidable powers; but they do not equal mine. I open the buds and the flowers, to make glad the heart of man. I cause the grass to grow. Every thing that you see through the whole world, that possesses either vegetable or animal life, owes its health and prosperity to me: were my life-giving influence withdrawn, they would all perish (*F* 1:253).

The gentler and more flattering description of the sun's powers itself foreshadows the outcome of the contest in Godwin's fable. Yet, while both Trimmer and Croxall move on to the moral to bring the tale to an end, Godwin uses the sun as a mouthpiece for the moral message before ending on a different instructional note. The point of the story is therefore not quite to demonstrate that "soft and gentle means will often accomplish what force and fury may in vain try to effect" but rather to explain why "the sun was always admitted to precedence over the wind, and [therefore why] Apollo, the charioteer of this great luminary ranked among the Heathen Gods far before Eolus, the ruler of the tempests" (*F* 1:257-258).

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<sup>219</sup> See *F* 1:251 and Trimmer, *The Ladder to Learning*, p. 106.

<sup>220</sup> Croxall, *Fables of Æsop and Others: Translated into English, with Instructive Applications and a Cut Before Each Fable*, p. 76.

The story of ‘The Mountain in Labour’ – where a mountain after much terrifying rumbling, gives birth to a mouse – is very short in Croxall’s collection: a mere five lines followed by a page-long (political) “application” where Croxall expands on the idea of the ridicule that follows “projectors of all kinds, who endeavour by artificial rumours to raise the expectations of mankind, and then by their mean performances defeat and disappoint them”.<sup>221</sup> Likewise, Godwin’s version of ‘The Mountain in Labour’ is one of the shortest fables in the book. Godwin, however, withholds the long-winded epilogue, though he does acknowledge the common use of this “comical fable [...], to ridicule large promises and small performances” (*F* 2:43). What is striking however, is that the emphasis of the text is not on the fable itself. Instead, the story begins with a long paragraph (which takes up about half of the space allotted to ‘The Mountain in Labour’) in which Godwin describes in detail the natural wonders one might see and experience while “ascending high mountains” (*F* 2:40).

Godwin then uses the rumbling and groaning of the mountain in labour – dismissed in Croxall simply as hearsay – to ground the story in geography and geology. The mountains that groan are “called volcanic”, they “have a fire for ever burning within them, that sometimes blazes out at the top” and prior “to the eruptions [...] you may hear a terrible noise in the inside of the mountain” (*F* 2:40). Godwin gives the examples of “mount Etna, and mount Vesuvius” and thus introduces the fable by intervening as a narrator and telling the child-reader: “I suppose it was either at mount Etna or mount Vesuvius, that the thing happened I am going to tell you of” (*F* 2:41). Taken together, these two stories show a direct, if more subversive, consequence of Godwin’s decision to include an impressive number of fields of human knowledge: it adds another layer of meaning to an already rich set of stories. Indeed, the provision of such “extraneous matter”, as Sarah Trimmer would call it, further removes Godwin’s fables from the common form of the genre as a morally instructive story. The point of the book of fables is no longer to be morally instructive, but rather to be instructive *tout court*.

Moreover, the inclusion of a basic introduction to scientific knowledge in the *Fables* is also a sign of Godwin’s commitment to a relatively innovative form of education. In the early

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221 Croxall, *Fables of Æsop and Others: Translated into English, with Instructive Applications and a Cut Before Each Fable*, p. 47.

nineteenth century, it was unusual for endowed schools in England to offer formal instruction in the natural and physical sciences. Nicholas Carlisle's survey of grammar schools in England and Wales shows that outside of reading, writing and arithmetic, the core of the curriculum was in classics and sometimes in mathematics.<sup>222</sup> This was also recognised by William Mavor, the author of the *Natural History for the Use of Schools*, published in 1800 by Godwin's bookseller Richard Phillips, to which Godwin is probably referring in 'The Wolf and the Mastiff'.<sup>223</sup> By encouraging the study of natural history and the sciences through his *Fables*, Godwin follows fellow radical (often Dissenting) educators such as Joseph Priestley, the Edgeworths and Erasmus Darwin, who advocated basic instruction in the natural and physical sciences.<sup>224</sup>

### III. THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN ILLUSTRATOR AND NARRATOR

There was a second key actor in the production of the *Fables* before their publication: William Mulready, the Juvenile Library's illustrator. Not only was *Fables* Godwin's first book to be published under the imprint of the Juvenile Library in 1805, but it was also perhaps the most richly illustrated, at least in its two-volume edition, which included 73 copper plates, placed at the top of the page of each fable. This made the work relatively expensive at 8s for the 1807 two-volume edition, a price that "disqualified them [the *Fables*] for the ordinary use of schools in general",<sup>225</sup> according to Godwin's own assessment in a letter to his patron Josiah Wedgwood dated 27 October 1806. The illustrations of Godwin's *Fables*, like many illustrations in children's books, orient the attention of the reader visually, and frame their reading of the text. There is another sense in which the illustrations can be understood, especially given Godwin's own reflections on the style of the *Fables* in the preface: as a visual counterpoint to an already visual text. Criticising the practice of other fabulists, whose texts are written "in too simple a form" where each story is "dismissed in five or six lines", Godwin advocates instead a way of writing where authors "make [their] narrations pictures, and render objects [they] discourse about, visible to the fancy of the learner" (*F* 1: 3). Thus, in the *Fables* Godwin offers both a literal visualisation of the story with Mulready's plates and a figurative one with the textual narrative. With this in mind, and

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222 Nicholas Carlisle, *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales; Ornamented with Engravings*, 6 vols (London: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1818).

223 See the preface to: William Fordyce Mavor, *Natural History for the Use of Schools: Founded on the Linnaean Arrangement of Animals; with Popular Descriptions in the Manner of Goldsmith and Buffon* (R. Phillips, 1800).

224 Simon, pp. 25–55.

225 MS. Abinger c.18 fol 75-77.

given that the illustrations systematically precede the story (Image 3.3) – a layout decision Godwin probably made himself – the visual elements of the volume contribute to the elaboration of meaning to the reader in three ways, generating an interaction between the reader, the image, and the text. First, they provide the reader with an initial impression of the story, the characters, and indeed the action; second, they underline certain aspects of the story, characters and action; lastly, they provide a model for animals or objects, such as a lion or a peacock, that a London child may never have seen before.

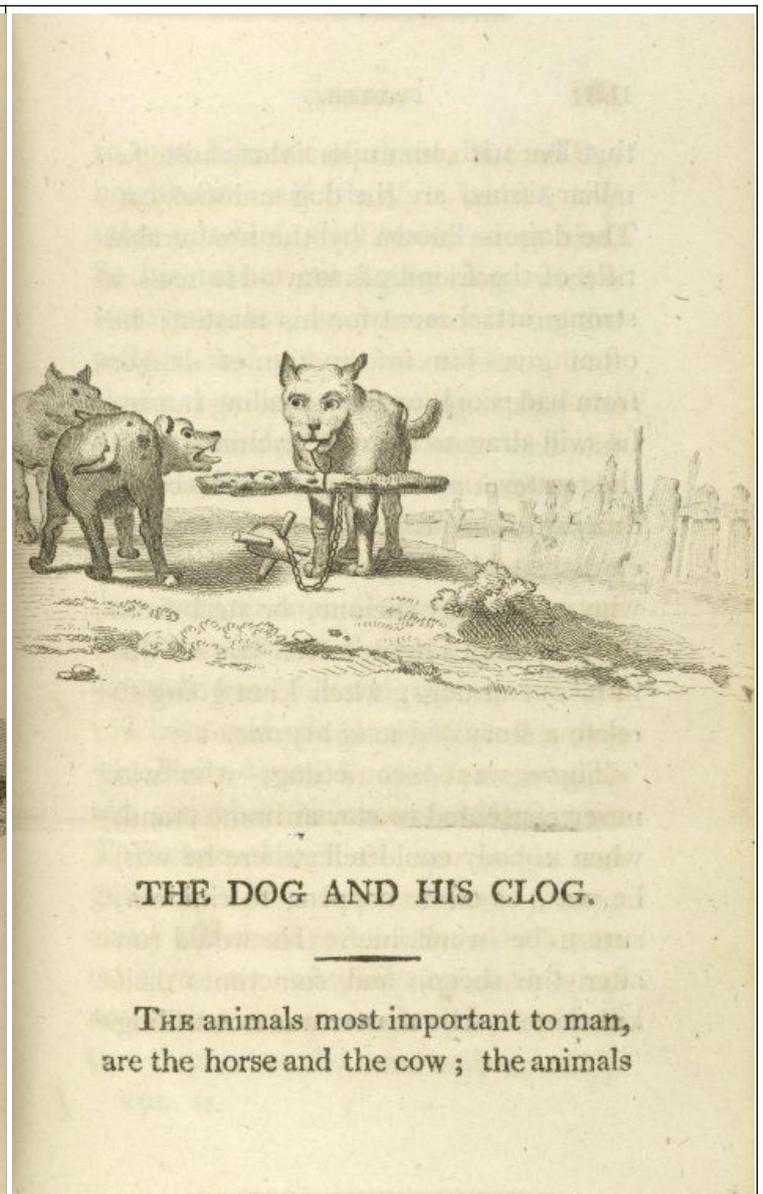
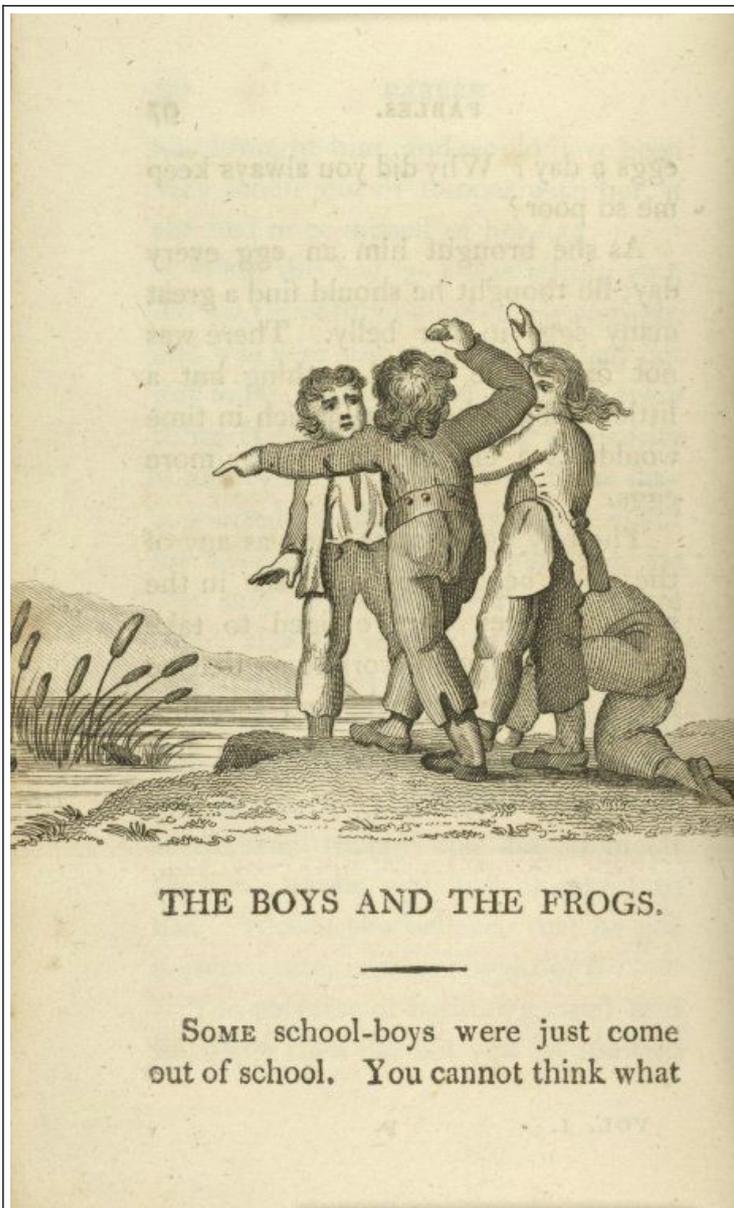


Image 3.3 – Illustrations from ‘The Boys and the Frogs’ and ‘The Dog and his Clog’

In the illustration of ‘The Boys and the Frogs’, the illustrator clearly emphasises the boys’ role in the story as they are at the centre of the image. In the foreground are two children, with their backs turned toward the reader, holding stones in their right hands and looking ready to throw them, while the third child (on the right) leans forward, perhaps to pick up another stone. At the very centre of the image, however (and almost at the centre of the page itself), there is the head of a child facing the other two children as well as the reader. It seems as though that child were standing in the way of the others, and he is looking thoughtfully and gravely at the children before him, both on and off the page. The frogs themselves are barely visible. There is one sitting in the reeds, in the lower-left of the image, but the emphasis is clearly on the children and the dynamics of their movement and disagreement, which is the central point of the story as Godwin retells it. Contradicting Aesop, Godwin relates that it was not “one of the frogs” that admonished the children, showing them why throwing rocks at animals is wrong, but rather one of the children who appealed to the others’ rational moral sense and “convinced” them, leading to a happy resolution of the fable (*F* 1:141-144).

In ‘The Dog and his Clog’, Godwin describes the punishment of a dog for his “mischief”. The tired “master got a great clog, with a transverse bar, as you see it in the picture, and put it upon him” (*F* 2:257; see image. 3.3). This direct reference to the illustration emphasises the relationship between the text and the image, encouraging the child-reader to alternate between the textual and the visual. Moreover, it is uncertain whether children growing up in or around London – a large part of Godwin’s market – would have seen a clog before. The direct reference to the illustration thus indicates a need for a visual aid to help young children better comprehend the story. In this way, the illustration is both a narrative and a pedagogical tool. Given the size and position of the clog hanging from the neck of the dog in the very centre of the image, the reader is immediately able to understand why it would:

Make it uncomfortable for him [the dog] to wander a great way; and the bar would hinder him from forcing his way through hedges, and between the rounds of stiles and gates, as he had been used to do (*F* 2: 258).

Moreover, the illustration foreshadows the resolution of the story itself, as the proud (if perhaps a little silly) face of the clog-wearing dog is echoed in its “strutt[ing] and pranc[ing]”, as it wears the collar and clog as “a collar of knighthood, and [...] a king’s train” (*F* 2:259), while the other two dogs snarl at it.

### CLOSING THE BOOK OF FABLES

Godwin took great risk in his re-writing of the fables. This did not escape the eyes of the successful and influential Sarah Trimmer, who promptly admonished Edward Baldwin for his tales. Godwin’s relatively innovative style, embellishments, and, most importantly, his de-centring of the moral from the fable, led Trimmer to conclude that:

instead of Fables superior to all that have been produced by ancient or modern fabulists, for the instruction of children, the public is presented with a set of *fanciful stories*, destitute, for the most part, of *moral*, and every thing that should characterise a Fable Book.<sup>226</sup>

Indeed, that is the very definition Godwin would give of the fable in his own text. Despite Trimmer’s best critical efforts, Godwin’s *Fables* were generally well received.<sup>227</sup> Their lack of a strict and easily digestible moral did not deter many nineteenth-century readers. In this way, Godwin’s talent as a children’s book author was vindicated. In his effort, Godwin was also part of a long lineage of British fabulists who sought to interrogate the status and place of the fable in society and, as a result, the role of the printed word more broadly.<sup>228</sup> Opposing a culture that sought to tightly control the effect of the printed word, and especially for children, Godwin instead sought to open it up to interpretation, and to deliberately create ambiguous relationships between text and meaning.

Nevertheless, from what we have seen of Godwin’s style in the composition of the *Fables*, and from his understanding of the context in which he was evolving, we can suppose that what Godwin was trying to “secure the benefit of the majority of readers” (*PPW* 5:140), since this was what he believed to be the purpose of all true literature. To do this, he chose two separate but nonetheless related paths. The first is critical, and challenges some aspects

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<sup>226</sup> Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education* vol. 5, p. 296. For the whole review, see pp. 282-297.

<sup>227</sup> See the various reviews in Kenneth W. Graham, pp. 270–81.

<sup>228</sup> On this, see Lewis, *The English Fable*.

of received morality and politics. In the case of 'The Poor Farmer and the Justice', Godwin achieves this by encouraging children to not only begin thinking about the unjust organisation of the world, but also to reflect on the possible paths to obtain justice. Similarly, in his re-writing of 'The Wolf and the Lamb', Godwin undermines the conventional wisdom of the fable, making it show that might sometimes does *not* overcome right. Again, in the fable of 'The Belly and the Limbs', the reader is faced with a more egalitarian and rational arrangement of the body. The second path is related to the definition and use of the fable in the context of education. Instead of providing a single reading, Godwin uses the fable as a medium for the communication of a wide variety of knowledge beyond the moral, awakening the curiosity of the child, and allowing children to discover their own scholarly interests.

The diversity of Godwin's attempts reminds us of his own understanding of the relative difficulty of communicating authorial intention to the reader. On the whole, instead of imposing his authorial will on readers, Godwin creates the conditions for different thoughts to emerge, and tries to dismantle entrenched habits. At the same time, his fables are generally devoid of the cruelty which characterises most versions of tales such as 'The Wolf and the Lamb' or 'The Belly and the Members'. In both of these fables, the conditions Godwin creates are such that a benevolent actor can successfully intervene. In 'The Wolf and the Lamb,' the shepherd saves the innocent lamb, while in 'The Belly and the Members', the belly is able to convince the unjustly rebelling members with reason. To put it more broadly, Godwin's action concerning the 'moral' of his *Fables* is perhaps best characterised as an attempt to remove the basis of the morality of the fable genre. In doing so, Godwin undercuts the foundations of moral commonplaces in society, replacing them by a multiplicity of readings that are ethically, scientifically, geographically and historically instructive.



## CHAPTER 4.

### CHRISTIANS AND HEATHENS.

### RELIGION, IMAGINATION, MORALITY

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Both Godwin's *Bible Stories* and his *Pantheon* received hostile readings by conservative critics. In her review of the *Bible Stories* in the *Guardian of Education*, Sarah Trimmer, spent over twenty pages tearing the book apart, accusing it of promoting a dangerous "modern philosophy" of education in its emphasis on the faculty of imagination. Even worse, Trimmer claims, the book was designed "to dispose the minds of children for that *liberty* and *equality* which is the ultimatum of modern philosophy". In the scathing conclusion to her review, she exclaims: "that such a book as this can be published in a CHRISTIAN COUNTRY is to us surprising!" She ends her review by taking the stance of the watchful guardian that the title of her publication presents and suggests that the author of the *Bible Stories* is part of a larger group of "enemies of religion" who use "the Sacred Volume [...] as an engine of mischief".<sup>229</sup>

The government's informant who wrote the anonymous report to the Home Office on the Juvenile Library in 1813 took particular offence at *The Pantheon* which, he warned, had already been "introduced in the Charter House" school. The reason for the informer's dislike of *The Pantheon* was founded in religion and what he perceived to be the hypocrisy of the author in the design of the text. According to the spy, *The Pantheon*:

Professes to exalt the purity and show the superiority of Christianity over the heathen morality taught in the Grecian and Roman mythology, and then through the whole work improperly excites the curiosity of young persons to read the grossest stories on the subject, and artfully hints [at] the wisdom of the morality of the heathen world.<sup>230</sup>

The sensationalist language of both texts and the position of the texts' authors in English society require us to take these comments with circumspection. Sarah Trimmer was a particularly devout Christian and a well-known political conservative and educationist, while the nameless government informant was probably looking for the seeds of sedition in the later years of the Napoleonic wars. Still, the question remains: were they right? Was Godwin really trying to corrupt the young with his works on the Bible and Greco-Roman mythology?

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229 Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education* vol. 1 pp. 247, 249, 263-264. The emphases and capitalization are in the original text.

230 Quoted in: Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', p. 45.

At first glance, it seems reasonable to argue that the critics were wrong. Commenting on Trimmer's review, Matthew Grenby finds that the criticisms against Godwin's book, even as they mobilized the language of politics, "were less narrowly political, and rather esoteric." All in all, he finds Trimmer to be a fundamentally unreliable source on this issue, and thus raises doubts about the validity of her criticism of Godwin's text.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, the commercial success of these books suggests that they appealed to the dominant ideology and taste of the British lower-to-upper middle classes. Despite this evidence, a closer, contextual reading of both works reveals that Godwin was trying to provide a kind of critical distance regarding religion that was unusual in education at the turn of the nineteenth century.

### CHRISTIANS: THE BIBLE, FOR THE USE OF CHILDREN

In Protestant Britain, and given the growth of Evangelical Protestantism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, communicating the religious truths of the Bible was a significant aspect of a child's early education. A large number of books dealing with the Bible, and with Christian Catechism and religion more generally, were published, circulated and read, not least due to the efforts of Sunday Schools, and the indefatigable Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge.<sup>232</sup> At the same time, there was an ongoing development of various traditions of biblical criticism, which emphasised different aspects, readings and applications of the Bible in the context of education.<sup>233</sup> Godwin's *Bible*

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231 Grenby, 'Politicizing the Nursery', p. 5.

232 Matthew O. Grenby, 'Introductory Essay to: Anonymous. *A Curious Hieroglyphick Bible*', *The Hockliffe Project* <<http://hockliffe.dmu.ac.uk/items/0415.html>> [accessed 18 April 2016]; Scott Mandelbrote, 'The Bible and Didactic Literature in Early Modern England', in *Didactic Literature in England, 1500-1800: Expertise Constructed*, ed. by Natasha Glaisyer and Sara Pennell (Aldershot, Hampshire, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 19–39.

233 On these issues, see for example: Thomas R. Preston, 'Biblical Criticism, Literature, and the Eighteenth Century Reader', in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth Century England*, ed. by Isabel Rivers (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 97–126; Isabel Rivers, 'Dissenting and Methodist Books of Practical Divinity', in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth Century England*, ed. by Isabel Rivers (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 127–64; Mandelbrote; Anne Stott, 'Evangelicalism and Enlightenment: The Educational Agenda of Hannah More', in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 41–55; Mary Clare Martin, 'Marketing Religious Identity: Female Educators, Methodist Culture, and Eighteenth-Century Childhood', in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*, ed. by Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 57–75; Michael Ledger-Lomas, 'Conder and Sons: Dissent and the Oriental Bible in Nineteenth-Century Britain', in *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c.1650-1950*, ed. by Scott Mandelbrote and Michael Ledger-Lomas, First edition (Oxford, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 205–32; For more European and transnational perspectives, see: Dominique Julia, 'Christian Education', in *Enlightenment, Reawakening, and Revolution, 1660-1815*, ed. by Stewart J. Brown and Timothy Tackett, *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, v. 7 (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 147–65; Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton University Press, 2007) especially chapter 5.

*Stories* constitutes his attempt to enter that market. At the same, it gives us an insight into the overflow of adult debates on the use and status of the Bible, into the realm of children's biblical readings.

Mary Jane looms large behind the *Bible Stories*: she convinced Godwin to try his pen at children's books and is likely to have known that a book of bible-related material would be of interest to Tabart's bookshop. In his catalogue of 1801, the bookseller "regretted, that [he] possess[ed] very few books, in which *RELIGIOUS TRUTH* is *skilfully simplified* to the capacity of Children between FIVE and EIGHT Years of Age".<sup>234</sup> While Tabart may have believed Godwin to have written such a book, what Godwin wrote was not concerned with the communication of anything like Christian "religious truths". This said, the book proved relatively successful. It went through an initial print run in 1802 and came out in "a new edition" already in 1803. It was re-edited again in 1804, this time without even Godwin's pseudonym on the title-page, as *Sacred Histories; or Entertaining Narratives and moral Stories, Selected from the Old and New Testament* in 1804.<sup>235</sup>

## I. GODWIN'S BIBLE STORIES IN CONTEXT

Godwin's *Bible Stories* is a work divided into two volumes of roughly 200 pages each, respectively containing 36 and 52 stories. The stories Godwin selects from the Bible are quite diverse, and the reader travels chronologically through the biblical ages from Abraham to Jesus. There is a very clear imbalance in favour of the Old Testament. These stories occupy over four fifths of the text, leaving only the last 58 pages of the second volume for stories taken from the New Testament. The life and example of Jesus are not the focus of the text, though Jesus and a few of his "memorable acts" do make a brief appearance next to those of "the ancient patriarchs judges and kings", to echo the *Bible Stories*' extended title.<sup>236</sup>

However, while this imbalance is striking, it was not unusual for late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century children's authors to select particular aspects of scripture at the expense of others. The anonymously written *Abridgement of the Sacred History of Jesus Christ and His Apostles* (1779), for instance, obviously only deals with the New Testament. This

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<sup>234</sup> Tabart. Emphases in the original. The catalogue lists ten items of religious writings, numbered 123 to 132.

<sup>235</sup> On this, see also Carlson, p. 233.

<sup>236</sup> Scolfield [William Godwin] In the rest of this chapter, I refer to this book in text as *BS* followed by the volume and page number.

contrasts with, for example, Sarah Lawrence's *Stories from the Old Testament* (1844).<sup>237</sup> Selecting specific stories to recount was highly compatible with a broadly Lockean framework of religious education. As early as 1686, in a letter to Edward Clarke, Locke suggested keeping a systematic reading of the Bible out of children's education. He thought that the master should only give "some parts of the scripture" to children, in particular stories such as that "of Joseph and his Brethren, of David and Goliath, of David and Jonathan, etc."<sup>238</sup> This, in part, had to do with the cultural rather than strictly religious significance of these stories. For Locke, stories from the Old Testament were associated with pleasurable reading rather than religious doctrine.<sup>239</sup> Godwin, therefore, was drawing on that particular educational tradition.

In the context of books specifically designed to familiarize children with the Bible, what is more peculiar to the *Bible Stories* is its consistent use of the language used in the Authorised King James version of the Bible. Though Godwin omits certain chapters and verses of the original text, amends others slightly, and changes some aspects of the vocabulary,<sup>240</sup> he follows the style and tone of the Authorised version of the Bible relatively strictly, going so far as to follow the organization of its verses. By contrast, Sarah Lawrence simplified the language. She claimed that "scripture phraseology", though "beautiful [...] as [it] confessedly is" is eventually alienating to the child because as it was not the "language with which his ear was daily familiar".<sup>241</sup> Table 4.1 (below) illustrates the differences between them by comparing excerpts from the story of Isaac and Rebekah.

Lawrence's approach was fairly common. Many authors, and especially Evangelical Christians preferred to re-write the stories "to popularize and simplify the Scriptures, so as to draw children to Christianity".<sup>242</sup> The anonymous "Divine of the Church of England" who penned a *Children's Bible* circulated in both Britain and America, for example, chose to

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237 Anonymous, *An Abridgement of the Sacred History of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. Containing the Most Striking Passages in the New Testament. Adapted to the Understanding of the Meanest Capacities and Designed for the Improvement of Christian Knowledge. Illustrated with Sixty Headpieces, Curiously Engraved on Copper Plates, and Expressing the Subject of Each Passage* (London: Ryland, 1779); Sarah Lawrence, *Stories from the Old Testament* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1844).

238 Quoted in Mandelbrote, p. 36; Locke restates this in: John Locke, pp. 213–14.

239 John Locke, pp. 213–14.

240 I return to all this later in the chapter.

241 Lawrence, *Stories from the Old Testament*, pp. v–vi.

242 Grenby, 'Introductory Essay to: Anonymous. *A Curious Hieroglyphick Bible*'; See also: Manly, 'William Godwin's "School of Morality"', p. 138.

summarise the text and to “adher[e] to a stile simple indeed as possible, but at the same time not absurd”.<sup>243</sup> Even more radical re-workings of the bible include the anonymously written but very popular *Hieroglyphick Bible* published by T. Hodgson in 1783, which went gone through twenty editions by 1812.<sup>244</sup>

Bible, King James Version <sup>245</sup> Gen. 24:1-4	Godwin, <i>BS</i> 1:12-13	Lawrence, <i>Stories from the Old Testament</i> p. 14
<p>And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things.</p> <p>And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:</p> <p>And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:</p> <p>But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.</p>	<p>And Abraham was old, and well stricken in age: and Jehovah had blessed Abraham in all things.</p> <p>And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all he had, Come unto me, I pray thee,</p> <p>And I will make thee swear by Jehovah, my God, which hath blessed me, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell:</p> <p>But thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.</p>	<p>When Isaac was grown up, his father wished to get a wife for him; but he would not have one from the land of Canaan in which he lived, so he called his old and faithful servant, and made him promise to go to Haran, (the country from which he himself had come,) to bring a wife from amongst his relations, who lived there, and who worshipped the true God.</p>
Table 4.1		

243 Anonymous, *The Children's Bible: Or, An History of the Holy Scriptures* (London; Philadelphia, 1763), p. xi.

244 Anonymous, *A Curious Hieroglyphick Bible; or, Select Passages in the Old and New Testaments, Represented with Emblematical Figures, for the Amusement of Youth: Designed Chiefly to Familiarize Tender Age, in a Pleasing and Diverting Manner, with Early Ideas of the Holy Scriptures. To Which Are Subjoined, a Short Account of the Lives of the Evangelists, and Other Pieces, Illustrated with Cuts.*, Twentieth Edition (London: E. Bassam, 1812).

245 *The Bible: Authorized King James Version ; [with Apocrypha]*, ed. by Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Godwin's choice to follow the Authorised King James Bible was also commonplace: writers such as the American Ezra Sampson and Sarah Trimmer, followed the same path.<sup>246</sup> However, what differentiates Godwin's *Bible Stories* from these texts is the absence of commentary on the stories that are recounted. Sarah Trimmer's monumental 6-volume *Sacred History, Selected From the Scriptures; with Annotations and Reflections, Particularly Calculated to Facilitate the Study of the Holy Scriptures in Schools and Families* might be an extreme example of the practice of commenting on biblical stories for the purpose of education but the difference between Godwin's book and hers edifying in this regard. Moreover, her text proved to be popular as well, having gone through six editions between 1788 and 1810. The first chapter of her text thus narrates, in the precise words of the Authorized Bible, the story of the first six days of Creation (Gen. 1). This takes four pages in the 1810 edition of her book, followed by ten pages of commentary. In these, Trimmer expands on the story in a way that is more prosaic, direct and in line with religious worship. She expands on particular moral or doctrinal points of the Christian catechism, including the nature of the Trinity.<sup>247</sup> By contrast, Godwin avoids both moral and theological commentary, which "no child's temper will relish" (*PPW* 5:313), leaving the stories to stand on their own.

In addition to moralizing, Trimmer pushes her attachment to the original text and its theologico-historical truth so far as to include even the most tedious passages of the Old Testament in her book. On the list-like "genealogy of Shem" (Gen. 11), she comments: "This genealogy is preserved in order to shew that Abram descended in a direct line from Shem, the son of Adam and Eve, and to prove afterwards that the Messiah descended from Shem".<sup>248</sup> Godwin does not see these passages as either essential or interesting, they are part of the "many things dry and repulsive to the apprehensions of children to be found in the bible" (*PPW* 5:314). He therefore omits them completely from his own text. Instead, he presents a principle of selection for the stories. It is only those that cause children to experience "infinite delight", and are "so exquisitely fitted to interest the youthful imagination", that are to be included in a biblical work for children (*PPW* 5:315).

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246 Ezra Sampson, *Beauties of the Bible: Being a Selection from the Old and New Testaments, with Various Remarks and Brief Dissertations, Designed for the Use of Christians in General, and Particularly for the Use of Schools, and for the Improvement of Youth*, Third Hudson Edition (Hudson, New York: William E. Norman, 1806); Sarah Trimmer, *Sacred History, Selected from the Scriptures, with Annotations and Reflections, Particularly Calculated to Facilitate the Study of the Holy Scriptures in Schools and Families*, Sixth Edition, 6 vols (London: J. Johnson, F. and C. Rivington, J. Hatchard, 1810) (first published 1788).

247 Trimmer, *Sacred History, Selected from the Scriptures* vol. 1, p. 1-14.

248 Trimmer, *Sacred History, Selected from the Scriptures* vol. 1, pp. 71-72.

## II. A HISTORICAL AND HISTORICIST BIBLE FOR CHILDREN

Godwin's removal of such elements from the reading of biblical stories is especially significant considering the popularity of devotional, moralizing and eventually practice-oriented approaches to religious learning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>249</sup> However, Godwin is not merely saving children from the boredom of reading through patriarchal lineages – among other dryer parts of the Bible – and avoiding moralization and catechism in repeating the stories, text, and language of the Bible. He proposes a fundamentally different reading of the Bible, rooted in a more historically sensitive understanding of the text. Godwin thus achieves a rhetorical *tour de force* in the preface to the *Bible Stories*, as he manages to undermine the religious authority of individuals who choose to simplify or amend the language of the Bible, while at the same time generally undermining scriptural authority.

He begins by establishing the authority of the language and text he uses by claiming that “to detail the histories here recited, in any language than their own, strikes the ear of the compiler as having something in it of the nature of *sacrilege*” (*PPW* 5:315).<sup>250</sup> He therefore implies that writers such as Sarah Lawrence are sacrilegious. However, by referring to himself as a “compiler”, Godwin does not claim authorship, and consequently establishes his text as authoritative because it follows the “literal translation” of the original text, which has kept the “exact phraseology” of the Bible in its original language (*PPW* 5:315). Godwin nevertheless refuses to grant divine authorship to the sacred text, a point which does not ingratiate him to Sarah Trimmer.<sup>251</sup> He therefore praises the quality of the Authorized English translation as that which “preserves that enchanting simplicity and nature which characterise its [the Bible's] *original writers*” (*PPW* 5:315).<sup>252</sup> This point is driven further by the very subtitle of the *Bible Stories*, where the stories are said to have been “extracted from their *original historians*”.

What Godwin advocates in this preface is a *historical* or even a *historicist* reading of the *Bible Stories* and, consequently, such a reading of the Bible itself. The stories “should be read merely as historical tales of ancient times”, as one would read a work of classical

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249 Preston, pp. 105–8.

250 My emphasis.

251 Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education* vol. 2, pp. 251.

252 My emphasis.

history, to learn about “the more memorable events and revolutions in Jewish affairs” (*PPW* 5:315-316). That Godwin was very attached to such a reading is evidenced by the book’s provisional title, “Jewish History”, which Godwin used when recording its composition.<sup>253</sup> Godwin’s “substitution of the word ‘Jehovah’, in lieu of the English translation ‘the LORD’” follows a similar logic, as does his decision to spell ‘Rebekah’ following a transliteration from Hebrew, rather than the more common ‘Rebecca’ of the King James Bible. It is intended to help historicise the Jewish belief system – and therefore the Christian, and therefore the British – by equating the “the God of the Jews” to “the Gods of the Greeks in Homer, or the Gods of the Latins in Ovid” (*PPW* 5:316-317). Godwin acknowledges that this might be poorly received and defends himself against any possible charges by reminding parents and reviewers that ‘Jehovah’ is a “more literal” rendering of the original text than ‘the LORD’ (*PPW* 5:316) and that Christian parents were free “to expound the term Jehovah by the purest and most spiritualised definition of a first cause” (*PPW* 5:317).<sup>254</sup>

There are also more innocuous, but no less significant signs of historicisation interspersed in the text. For example, Godwin constantly converts distances, weights, amounts of money, and other measures from their biblical units into early nineteenth-century units. When recounting the parable of the ten talents, Godwin therefore inserts parenthetical equivalences, illustrating the value of “five talents”, “two talents” and “one talent” by equating them respectively to “936l. 10s.”, “375l.”, and “187l. 10s.” (*BS* 2:159).<sup>255</sup> Earlier in the book, when relating how Abraham came to possess the cave of Machpelah, Godwin indicates in the same fashion that “four hundred shekels of silver” are worth “46l. 5s.” (*BS* 1:11). Similarly, Godwin converts “an ephah” of barley into “a bushel” (*BS* 1:153), the height of Goliath of Gath “was six cubits and a span (11 feet, 10 inches)” (*BS* 1:179), and the head of his spear was as heavy as “six hundred shekels of iron (22 ½ pounds)” (*BS* 1:179). Later in the second volume, in relating the story of Jesus and Lazarus, Godwin adds in parentheses that the “fifteen furlongs” separating Bethany and Jerusalem are “near two miles” (*BS* 2:166-167). By doing so, Godwin reduces the historical distance between the time of the story and 1802 Britain and thus de-sacralises the text.

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253 GD 30 dec. 1801 – 1 June 1802. My thanks to Pamela Clemit for this point.

254 This was obviously not enough to pacify Mrs. Trimmer, see: Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education* vol. 1 pp. 254-255; On this point, see also: Carlson, pp. 235–36.

255 The presentation of the units here is unusual but follows Godwin’s own.

By bringing out into the open the relationship between sacred and secular history, Godwin is perpetuating a point of view that was associated with seventeenth and eighteenth century innovations in biblical criticism that undermined religious truth claims (and were sometimes associated with deism).<sup>256</sup> He is also contributing to the establishment in the early nineteenth century of what Jonathan Sheehan has called a “cultural” bible. Such a cultural reading considers the Bible as a historical artefact, which bears insight into ancient history, much in the same way as Homer does.<sup>257</sup> Even though Godwin’s engagement with the Bible is through children’s literature rather than the more traditional learned field of biblical criticism, this same historical and historicist logic clearly underpins his selection of biblical stories and his decision to have them “detached from the greater mysteries of religion” (PPW 5:315).

### III. STRATEGIES FOR SECULARIZING THE BIBLE

Not only did Godwin give a historicist framework for the Bible through his *Bible Stories*, but he also largely secularized the work. For instance, he avoids engaging with common Christian biblical (and moral) themes such as divine salvation, punishment and reward. More crucially, Godwin successfully brings out human agency while minimizing divine presence in the text itself. It is therefore not simply that Godwin presents these texts as “tales of ancient times”, he omits certain parts of a story to make them fit a more historically believable framework, detached not only from the “greater mysteries of religion”, but from religion itself.

#### 1. THE NAMES OF GOD

It is worth returning to Godwin’s use of ‘Jehovah’. In the beginning of Godwin’s retelling of the story of Isaac and Rebekah, on which I commented earlier, we find Abraham thinking about the marriage of his son Isaac. A closer comparison between the following excerpts from Godwin’s work and the King James Bible reveals Godwin’s modifications:

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256 On this, see, for example, the recent: *Scriptural Authority and Biblical Criticism in the Dutch Golden Age: God’s Word Questioned*, ed. by Dirk Van Miert and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); for a broader view of eighteenth-century British radical biblical criticism, see: Diego Lucci, *Scripture and Deism: The Biblical Criticism of the Eighteenth-Century British Deists* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

257 On deism and the pedagogical use of the Bible, see Sheehan’s *The Enlightenment Bible*, pp. 119-120; on the ‘cultural’ bible see chapters 8 (on Germany) and 9 (on Britain). For a discussion in the context of poetic mythography, see: Marilyn Butler, *Mapping Mythologies: Countercurrents in Eighteenth-Century Poetry and Cultural History* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 16–17.

King James Bible Gen. 24:2-3	Godwin, <i>Bible Stories</i> pp. 12-13
And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all that he had, Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh:	And Abraham said unto his eldest servant of his house, that ruled over all he had, Come unto me, I pray thee,
And I will make thee swear by the LORD, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell:	And I will make thee swear by Jehovah, my God, which hath blessed me, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites among whom I dwell:
Table 4.2	

Godwin's amendment to Abraham's words does not stop with the replacement of "the LORD" with "Jehovah". Instead of qualifying "the LORD" with the biblical "the God of heaven, and the God of the earth", Godwin simply writes "my God" (and repeats the feeling of benediction that was expressed earlier in the passage).<sup>258</sup> Thus, instead of being presented as the supreme being, Jehovah is simply presented as the God in which Abraham believes. Furthermore, as we can see in the story of David and Goliath, Jehovah is not a simple replacement for 'the LORD' but is also used as a substitute for other references to God. This usage provides even more evidence of Godwin's attempt to lower the position of God in the narrative. On two occasions David uses the phrase "the armies of the living God" to describe the armies of the Israelites (1 Sam. 17: 26, 36) and on both occasions Godwin replaces the whole phrase by "Jehovah," who is by extension not allowed to be a "living God" in the text (*BS* 1: 182, 184).<sup>259</sup>

Later in the same story, a slightly different change has the same effect. In the King James Bible, when David approaches Goliath, he says: "I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. 17: 45). By contrast, Godwin simply removes the reference to God as "the LORD of hosts" and simply describes him as "the God of the armies of Israel" (*BS* 1: 186). In comparison, Sarah Lawrence, who does not normally use biblical language, makes an exception in this case and although she avoids mentioning "the God of the armies of Israel", she quotes David saying: "Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts".<sup>260</sup> In

<sup>258</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>259</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>260</sup> Lawrence, *Stories from the Old Testament*, p. 128.

the evangelical Hannah More's *Sacred Dramas*, the author mixes several versions of the references that David makes to God. She records the Israelite saying, "in the dread name of Israel's GOD, I come; / The living LORD OF HOSTS, whom thou defy'st!"<sup>261</sup> In this way, she emphasises the power of the divinity behind David's arm, whereas Godwin emphasises David's own power and intellect. More generally, Godwin avoids the phrase of 'the LORD of hosts', which appears at numerous points in the Old Testament, thus removing a part of the very obvious connection between God, the armies of heaven, God's all-mightiness, and earthly wars.<sup>262</sup>

## 2. THE POWERS OF GOD

Other changes and omissions Godwin equally emphasise human agency and minimise the effects and presence of divine power. Given Godwin's desire to strike and "engage the imagination" of children (*PPW* 5:313), the most striking example of this is his modification of the story of the flight from Egypt, from the book of Exodus. The plagues of Egypt (Exod. 7-12) and the splitting of the Red Sea (Exod. 13-14) are two of the most memorable moments in the whole Exodus, and arguably in the whole Old Testament. They are however omitted in Godwin's text, even though they appear in Sarah Lawrence's much shorter *Stories of the Old Testament*.<sup>263</sup>

Let us start with the plagues of Egypt and the interactions between God, Pharaoh, Moses and Aaron that are related to them. These are, in Godwin's rendition, wholly replaced by the apparition of Jehovah "unto Pharaoh in the visions of the night", where "Jehovah commanded him concerning the children of Israel; and he said, Except thou let them go, I will plague thee, and thy servants, and all the land of Egypt with grievous plagues" (*BS* 1: 112). This takes the place of the lengthy exchanges between God and Moses, whereby God makes Moses "a god to Pharaoh" and makes Moses's brother Aaron his "prophet" (Exod. 7:1), and the sequence of audiences between Moses and Pharaoh, each of which brings a new plague. In Godwin's story, the dream is enough to make "Pharaoh afraid" and send the Hebrews away from Egypt. In this case, supernatural powers are not granted to Moses via the actions of God, and there is no material change to the conditions of the Egyptians, only

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261 *Sacred Dramas* 109.

262 For example, in 1 Sam. 1:11; 2 Sam. 6:18; 1 Kings 19:14; 2 Kings 3:14; among many others.

263 Lawrence, *Stories from the Old Testament*, pp. 82–86.

the threat of change. Furthermore, this threat is only uttered during one of Pharaoh's dreams, where reality and fiction are already blurred. In other words, in Godwin's rendition of the story, God is stripped of his power to cause catastrophic events.

The cataclysmic power of God is a central theme in the flight from Egypt, as Moses parts the Red Sea before letting it drown the Pharaoh and his soldiers. This is entirely omitted in Godwin's rendition. In the book of Exodus, Pharaoh frees the Hebrew slaves, and allows them to leave Egypt before God then "harden[s] Pharaoh's heart, that he shall follow" after the Hebrews, and pursue them into the desert (Exod. 14:4). In Godwin's *Bible Stories*, Pharaoh simply says "begone, and let me see you no more" (BS 1:113), echoing Pharaoh's biblical utterance after the tenth plague, "be gone; and bless me also" (Exod. 12:32). Correspondingly, the powers granted to Moses by God, first to divide the sea and allow safe passage for the Hebrews, and then to stretch "forth his hand over the sea" again, such that "the LORD" can overthrow "the Egyptians in the midst of the sea" (Exod. 21-22, 26-28) are removed from the story of the flight from Egypt.

Moreover, there is a politico-religious dimension to both the modification of the story of the ten plagues of Egypt and the omission of the crossing of the Red Sea. The final plague, the death of the firstborn, is of particular importance in asserting the biblical God's divine supremacy over nations that do not follow him. Thus, when God reports his intentions concerning this last plague (12:12), he says: "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; *and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD*".<sup>264</sup> By avoiding a description of the plagues, Godwin therefore also avoids establishing God's almighty power over that of "all the gods of Egypt". A similar point is made when God warns Moses that he "will harden Pharaoh's heart", sending the Egyptians in pursuit of the Hebrews. His intention is indeed to cause so much ruin that "the Egyptians may know that I [God] am the LORD" (Exod. 14:4). Thus, Godwin does not allow the God of the Bible to create cataclysms, or to assert supremacy over a nation where he is not one of "the national divinities" (PPW 5:317).

Before turning to a broader discussion of Godwin's selection of stories, I will widen my examination of Godwin's amendments by analysing his account of the birth of Jesus. While

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<sup>264</sup> My emphasis.

the annunciation and conception of Christ (Luke 1) do not appear with in the *Bible Stories*, Godwin does describe the birth of Jesus (Luke 2) in a chapter entitled “The Vision of Angels” (BS 2:133-136). The apparition of angels seems to contradict, at least in part, my claim about the removal of God’s power from the text. However, the description of the story, suggested by the title, as a “vision” rather than an actual materialization, which is reminiscent of his use of the dream in the rendering of the story of the flight from Egypt.

But in a Christian context, there is considerably more at stake in this story than the apparition of angels since what is related is the birth of Christ, the Saviour or Messiah of the Christian tradition. Accordingly, in the Gospel according to St. Luke, the angel who appears before Mary and Joseph says “unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings, which shall be to all people. / For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11). Godwin reproduces this paragraph with a small, though significant amendment. The text of the *Bible Stories* much more soberly reads: “And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a deliverer” (BS 2:134). In this way, even though he maintains the appearance of angels, Godwin does not explicitly grant divinity to Jesus, and diminishes his status from “Saviour” to “deliverer”. This set of choices, in addition to the omission of the annunciation and crucifixion, and indeed the repeated omission of the parental link – and identity – between God the Father, the Holy Ghost (who is not mentioned in the *Bible Stories*), and Jesus Christ, provides further evidence that Godwin might be trying to secularise the Bible.

### 3. AVOIDING GOD

Zooming out from a close analysis of individual stories, a broader picture emerges from Godwin’s selection and ordering of stories. Considering his desire to remove “the greater mysteries of religion” from his book, it is understandable that Godwin would avoid much of Genesis, including the creation of the world (Gen. 1-2), the Fall (Gen. 3), the Flood (Gen. 6-9), and God’s interference with the construction of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11). Similarly, any account of the Revelation of St. John would most definitely have required some explanation of such “greater mysteries”. Nevertheless, given the cultural and political importance in Britain of Christianity, some of Godwin’s selections are surprising.

A particularly memorable and also politically and theologically important story that is completely omitted in Godwin's *Bible Stories* is that of the (near) sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22), in which God tests Abraham's faith. This is especially striking given that most of Abraham's and Isaac's lives, including the birth of Isaac, are recounted in the book (*BS* 1:1-34). By contrast, Sarah Trimmer narrates this story in her set of prints of *Sacred History* and its adjoining *Description*, as does Sarah Lawrence in her *Stories from the Old Testament*. In the latter, the sacrifice is the subject of the very first illustration of the book, after the frontispiece (Image 4.1). Entitled "Abraham's Faith," the illustration shows Abraham dropping his knife as an angel, sent by God, clutches his wrist.

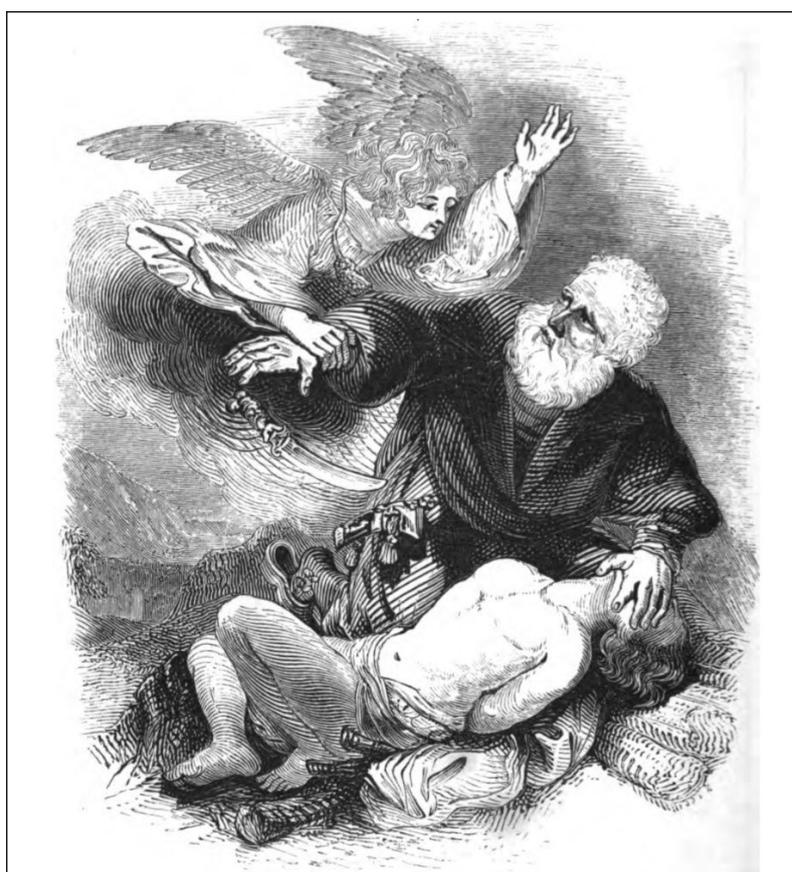


Image 4.1. 'Abraham's Faith'  
Sarah Lawrence *Stories from the Old Testament* (p. 1)

In the context of early nineteenth-century British, Christian, and educational values, the story of Isaac and Abraham serves an important purpose: it inculcates the necessity of faith in God, through the actions of Abraham. In her book, Sarah Lawrence comments:

What was it that gave Abraham strength to be ready to offer up his son? It was that faith in God of which I spoke to you; that trust in his heavenly Father [...]. Abraham was sure that all which God ordered him to do was right.

In the following paragraph, she thus suggests that reverence unto God has priority over duty to one's parents, since the child must "recollect, then, that these very parents were given you by your heavenly Father".<sup>265</sup> To take another example, Sarah Trimmer's account concludes that Abraham is "called the *Father of the faithful*; that is to say, of good people, who love GOD above all things".<sup>266</sup> That Godwin does not recount the story could therefore be understood in two ways that are compatible with Godwinian thought. Firstly, as a decision not to teach unquestioning obedience to a sovereign (divine or temporal); secondly, as a way of undermining Christianity itself, by not teaching one of the central messages of the Bible.

This is even clearer when considering Godwin's most significant omission from the *Bible Stories*: the crucifixion. The exclusion is especially prominent as Godwin builds up a certain expectation by recounting the story of Barabbas, Jesus and Pontius Pilate (*BS 2*: 178-180). This story ends with Pilate asking the assembled people who they want to see released, to which "they all cried, saying, Not this man [Jesus], but Barabbas. / Then Pilate released unto them him that for robbery and murder was cast into prison; and he delivered Jesus to be put to death" (*BS 1*:180). Instead of proceeding to the passion and crucifixion of Christ, the story undergoes an abrupt ellipsis and readers find themselves directly at the point where Joseph of Arimathea receives the corpse of Jesus (*BS 2*:181-182).

The absence of such a story cannot simply be understood as Godwin avoiding "the greater mysteries of religion". There is nothing that would prevent Godwin from simply recounting the story of the crucifixion of Jesus; after all, his punishment was not unusual in Roman Judaea. This would therefore fit perfectly well with Godwin's attempt to historicise the text. Yet Godwin deems it either unimportant, or unnecessary, preferring to narrate some of Jesus's good, if miraculous, deeds, and several parables, though he does not provide an interpretation of any of these parables. By doing this, Godwin chooses to emphasise certain aspects of the life of Jesus and of the New Testament more generally, and at the same time to

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<sup>265</sup> Lawrence, *Stories from the Old Testament*, pp. 10–11.

<sup>266</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *A Description of a Set of Prints of Scripture History; Contained in a Set of Easy Lessons* (London: J. Marshall, 1812), p. 34.

downplay what, in Christianity, is considered to be one of the central points of Jesus's life: his suffering and death for the sake of humanity's salvation. In other words, Godwin tries to lower the status and position of Jesus in the text, just as he tries to lower the status and position of God more generally.

This point is made even more salient by two further characteristics of the *Bible Stories*. First, Godwin goes out of his way to remove Jesus from the final story of the book. Instead of an episode of the life of Jesus, Godwin relates the story of the Prodigal Son (*BS* 2:188-191), but this parable of Jesus (Luke 15), is simply narrated as the reconciliation of a family, bearing no relation whatsoever to the words or deeds of Jesus. It is therefore completely removed from the context of its biblical utterance and loses the symbolic value of the parable. Secondly, Godwin does not include any illustrations involving Spiritual agents in the *Bible Stories* (such as the angels at the birth of Christ), or even a depiction of Jesus. Considering that the *Bible Stories* has ten illustrations, six of which are in the second volume, Godwin's choice not to depict the most important characters of the Bible suggests that he is consciously trying to distance the stories away from Jesus. Just as his modifications to the biblical text undermine Jesus's claim to divinity, his visual choices lessen the dominance of Christ's image in children's memories.

The illustrations for the *Bible Stories* reinforce the historicist, non-religious reading of the text in one final way. Although there are stylistic differences between the illustrations in Sarah Lawrence's *Stories from the Old Testament* and Godwin's *Bible Stories* that can be attributed to changes in printing technology and cost between 1802 and 1844, the kind of meaning conveyed by the illustration is fundamentally different. Unlike images emphasising the divine, such as 'Abraham's Faith', the illustrations for Godwin's *Bible Stories* invite the reader into the broader world that they depict. For instance, the images accompanying the story of the prodigal son (Image 4.2) and the parable of the Good Samaritan (Image 4.3, *BS* 2:162-164) include a detailed background. The prodigal son sits under a palm tree, with a herd of pigs next to him, and raises his eyes to the sky. In the distance, we see a mountain, a city, and a road leading there. In Image 4.3 we see not only the Good Samaritan (whose 'Oriental' headwear is particularly prominent) but also his donkey and other travellers on foot and horseback. This amount of detail draws viewers into the scene, making them think about biblical characters in their historical and physical settings rather than the divine.

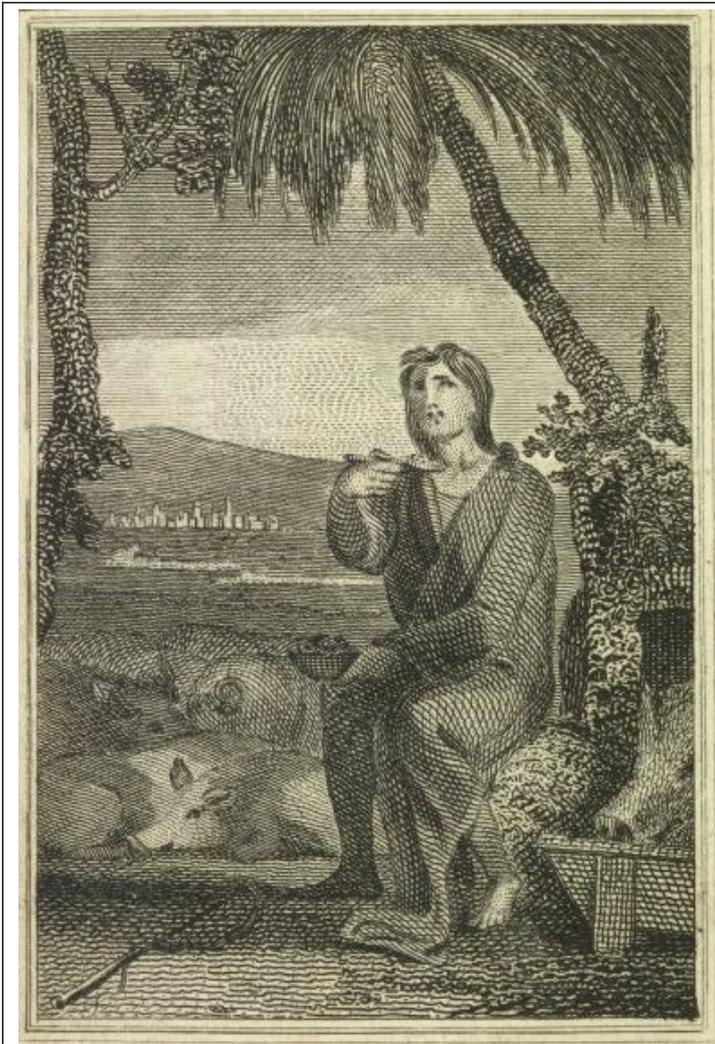


Image 4. 2 'The Prodigal Son'  
From Godwin's *Bible Stories* (p. 188)

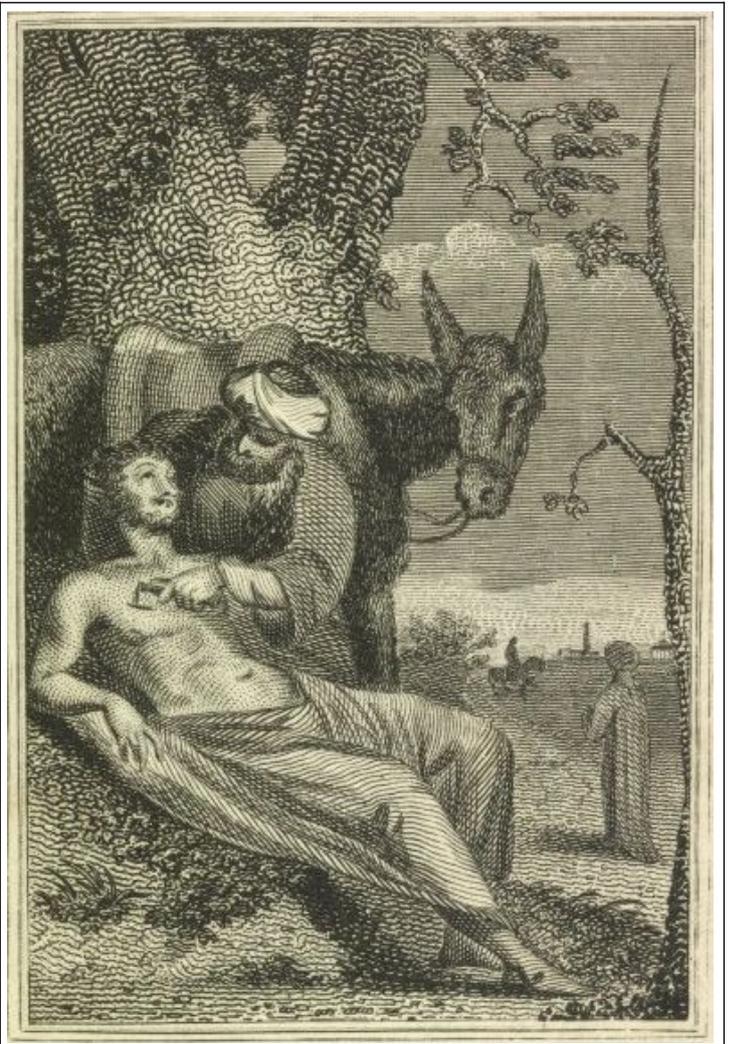


Image 4.3 'The Good Samaritan'  
From Godwin's *Bible Stories* (frontispiece)<sup>267</sup>

While the presence of angels and Godwin's narration of stories such as the Burning Bush (*BS* 1:104-109) and the feeding of the five thousand (*BS* 2:148-151), make it hard to claim that he completely removes God from the *Bible Stories*, there is considerable evidence to suggest that Godwin was trying to present a very different Bible than that which was commonly received: one which was historicised and partly secularised. From terminological details regarding the name of God, to Godwin's refusal to acknowledge God's might by modifying or omitting important biblical stories and lessons and his downplaying of the role and importance of Jesus Christ, there are good reasons to suspect that Godwin was trying to fundamentally undermine the religious reading of the Bible, and as a consequence, early Christian religious education.

<sup>267</sup> Images courtesy of the New York Public Library

### HEATHENS: FROM THE *BIBLE STORIES* TO THE *PANTHEON*

In the preface to *The Pantheon*, Godwin argues that studying mythology is useful, because:

It presents us with an instructive lesson on the nature of the human mind, laying before us the manners and prejudices of a nation entirely different from our own, and showing us to what extravagant and fantastic notions of the invisible world the mind, once bewildered in error, may finally be led.<sup>268</sup>

This claim not only embodies a number of issues and dilemmas linked to the study of heathen religions in a Christian context, it also suggests that Godwin continues in *The Pantheon* the kind of soft sabotage of the *Bible Stories* in *The Pantheon*. Coming to this passage from a culturally Christian mind set, as many of Godwin's patrons would have, it is easy to believe that 'Edward Baldwin' implies that it is the heathen's "mind" that is "bewildered in error" and therefore "led" to "extravagant and fantastic notions of the invisible world". This would be one of the traditional readings of ancient paganism, and indeed, this is the kind of reading that Godwin directly responds to by contrasting his work to the *Pantheon* translated and published by Andrew Tooke. However, given Godwin's *Bible Stories*, in which he suggests that belief in the "God of the Jews" and the "Gods of the Greeks" are equally valid, we might suspect that he had a broader conception of the "extravagant and fantastic notions of the invisible world," which included Christian beliefs.

My final claim regarding the subset of Godwin's books for children that deal with religion and religious stories is that he sought to undermine or, at the very least, question Christian beliefs. He should thus be categorised alongside Edward Gibbon, David Hume, John Keats and Leigh Hunt, who used classical civilizations to criticise Christianity (Hume and Gibbon) and to attack the political order that Christianity legitimised (in the case of Keats and Hunt).<sup>269</sup> This becomes clear once we take into account his orientation of the Bible in the *Bible Stories*, and his rehabilitation of Greco-Roman mythology in relation to Christianity in *The Pantheon*. Understanding this move requires us to consider the difficulties faced by

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268 Baldwin [William Godwin], *The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, p. viii Hereafter in this chapter, I refer to this work in text as *GP* followed by the page number. I use the second edition (1809) as it was the one advertised as 'adopted in the Charter-House school.'

269 Robert M. Ryan, *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789-1824* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

those eighteenth- and nineteenth-century “mythographers”, who wrote largely for children and youth, about heathen religions.<sup>270</sup>

## I. THE DILEMMAS OF CLASSICAL LEARNING

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain remained a Christian country with an established Church that served as a crucial foundation of British society. There was consequently a need to maintain the fabric of society by reinforcing Christian doctrines, which were fundamentally opposed on theological and moral grounds to the heathen religions of the Greeks and Romans.<sup>271</sup> However, Britain also had a long-standing tradition of education in classical literature and languages that would only begin to be challenged in the mid-nineteenth century. This was partly maintained by the statutes of the Grammar Schools, the older chartered schools (such as Charterhouse) and the two universities.<sup>272</sup> Schools and teachers thus faced a significant dilemma: “how was one to read Homer and Virgil intelligently without knowing a good deal about the ‘Pagan Theology’?”<sup>273</sup> Moreover, how was one to write about the sexuality of the Greco-Roman divinities without offending the public morality of the times? The solution that eighteenth and nineteenth-century authors found was to create reference works, or ‘Pantheons’, which were used to introduce Greco-Roman mythology to children in a safe and controlled manner.

To do this, they followed in the steps of medieval and Renaissance writers, and deployed a number of strategies to explain or condemn the Greco-Roman myths. One of the most common techniques used in the long eighteenth century was to interpret myths as historical events, and gods as humans, all of which was later distorted by pagan poets who used generous amounts of hyperbole and deified secular history.<sup>274</sup> By recasting the myth as a piece of secular history, and bringing it down to earth, the mythographer removed the danger stemming from a literal reading of the supernatural powers of the Greek gods: idolatry. Another common way of dealing with myths in a Christian context was through allegory. This strategy enabled mythographers to explain what was understood as scandalous and immoral behaviour on the part of the Greek gods and goddesses. In extracting or creating

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270 Alex Zwerdling, ‘The Mythographers and the Romantic Revival of Greek Myth’, *PMLA*, 79.4 (1964), 447–56.

271 Zwerdling, p. 448.

272 Nicholas Carlisle, *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales; Ornamented with Engravings*, 6 vols (London: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1818), II, p. 13; Simon, pp. 103–5.

273 Zwerdling, p. 447.

274 Zwerdling, p. 448.

allegorical meanings, mythographers were able to sanitise and moralise Greco-Roman mythology, thus making it palatable to eighteenth-century readers, and perhaps especially to schoolmasters.<sup>275</sup>

One of the most successful Pantheons was the one that Godwin was trying to replace: Andrew Tooke's translation of the Jesuit François Pomey's *Pantheum Mythicum*, first published in Britain in 1698. In this text, the study of the Greco-Roman religion is tightly controlled: it is simply and fully condemned in the introductory section of the dialogue as a kind of "idolatry", and the multiplicity of gods is seen as due to "superstitious folly", either caused by "a gross ignorance of the true and only GOD, or through a detestable contempt of him".<sup>276</sup> In interpreting Roman gods allegorically, Tooke also takes the chance to condemn the Roman mores, especially when it comes to sexuality. For instance, Tooke's description of Venus immediately associates her beauty and sensuality with moral depravity. She appears to be the "Goddess of the Graces" but is "in reality [...] an impudent strumpet, and the mistress and president of obscenity" (TP 97). These views are echoed throughout the text, as the book is rife with examples of the patterns and strategies mentioned above.<sup>277</sup>

However, in addition to allegorising, and relating myth to secular histories, Tooke insists on dismissing the Greco-Roman mythology, qualifying the story of the birth of Minerva with the adjective "ridiculous" (TP 88), and having Mystagogus, the teacher, emphatically say that "it is not [his] business now to tell the truth, but fables" (TP 69). What is more, Tooke proves more original than other mythographers in devising strategies to discredit and sanitize Greco-Roman mythology for his readers. For example, he rather incongruously relates Greco-Roman myth to *sacred* rather than secular history, and in this way undermines the claim to originality that the poets might have, since, essentially, they are not only idolaters but also thieves. Thus, "the ancient inventors of fables" are accused of having "borrowed many things from the Holy Scriptures, to patch up their conceits" (TP 66).<sup>278</sup> For example, Bacchus is not only interpreted allegorically, to represent the effects of the excess of wine,

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<sup>275</sup> Zwerdling, p. 450.

<sup>276</sup> Tooke, pp. 1–2. In the rest of this chapter, I refer to Tooke's *Pantheon* in text as TP followed by the page number. While the text is a translation and adaptation of Pomey, for the sake of simplicity and consistency with the British attribution of the text, I consider the author to be Andrew Tooke. I use the thirty-first edition as it is the one Godwin is known to have used. Though the text is a translation of Pomey, and its publication and reception history in Britain is very interesting, I have decided to keep referring to the work as Tooke's, following the convention of early nineteenth century Britain.

<sup>277</sup> See the examples in Zwerdling, pp. 448, 450.

<sup>278</sup> My emphasis.

which among other things, “deprive[s] us of that *reason* which distinguishes men from boys” (TP 67), but it is also argued that he was modelled on Moses (TP 64-65).

In Tooke’s description of Saturn, the father of Jupiter, we find a more extreme example of this combination of allegorical and sacred-historical interpretations. Allegorically, Saturn is said to represent time. Tooke gives a series of arguments in favour of this interpretation, which he draws from Greek etymology, classical sources such as Cicero’s *De Natura Deorum*. He also uses pictorial representations to reinforce this view. He mentions that Saturn is sometimes “painted in the midst between two boys and two girls; and *Time* is surrounded by the different seasons of the year, as parents are by their children” (TP 132-133). More impressively, Tooke draws a numbered list of seven arguments, which, the reader is authoritatively told, “seem persuasive” (TP 130), to prove that Saturn is actually Noah, and to explain how the Greeks and Romans appropriated Noah from the Bible and renamed him Saturn. To do this, Tooke draws on a variety of classical, Hellenistic, and early Christian sources, such as Plato, Petronius, Plutarch, Berossus and Tertullian, cross-referencing them with the Bible (TP 130-132). An argument demonstrating that Noah and Saturn are the same person thus that:

In the time of *Noah* the whole earth spake *one language* [referring in a footnote to Gen. 11:1]; and the ancient mythologists say, that the beasts understood this language. And it is said, that in *Saturn’s* age there was but *one language*, which was common to men and brutes [referring in a footnote to “Plato in Politicis”] (TP 130).

It is with these particular ways of presenting the Greco-Roman religion and mythology that Godwin took issue, and which inform the way he wrote his own *Pantheon*.

## II. REHABILITATING THE CLASSICAL RELIGIONS: GODWIN *VERSUS* TOOKE

Godwin was not fond of Andrew Tooke’s *Pantheon*. In the preface to *The Pantheon* Godwin wrote that Tooke’s work “contains in every page an elaborate calumny upon the Gods of the Greeks” (GP v). In a letter to an unknown recipient, probably written in 1806, he added that it “a very poorly written book”.<sup>279</sup> Godwin therefore set out to replace it with his own work,

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<sup>279</sup> MS Abinger c. 21 fol. 32.

taking a more positive and objective approach to the Greco-Roman religion. In so doing, Godwin considers his *Pantheon* as an attempt to rescue classical mythology. By publishing this book, he claimed to have “vindicated the Heathen mythology from misrepresentation” (*GP* vi). At the same time, Godwin feels the need to shield himself, and his persona Edward Baldwin, from easy criticism, whether in the form of an accusations of unbelief or of corrupting young minds. To do this, Godwin employs two different arguments. The first is a scholarly argument, based on his understanding of the British reception of Marcus Tullius Cicero’s *De Natura Deorum*, while the second is a rhetorical sleight of hand which echoes his defence of biblical language in the preface of the *Bible Stories*.

Cicero’s *The Nature of the Gods* (*De Natura Deorum*), written in 45-44 BCE, is a dialogue in which representatives of the most influential philosophical schools in Cicero’s Rome present and debate their views on the status, form, habitat, and influence in human affairs of the Roman divinities. While Cicero was best known for *On Duties* in the eighteenth century, *The Nature of the Gods* had its fair share of fame.<sup>280</sup> It inspired, for example, David Hume’s famous *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, posthumously and anonymously published in 1779, in which where Hume examines contemporary eighteenth century arguments from design concerning the nature and existence of God, only to arrive at a profoundly sceptical conclusion.<sup>281</sup> The British reception of Cicero’s text was not, however, solely limited to philosophers. Godwin rightly observed that the Christian reading, which he calls the “improper use” of Cicero’s *Nature of the Gods* was what enabled Christian authors to confound readers and dismiss classical religions, by bringing to the fore the “inconsistencies, real or specious” of “the established religion” of the Romans (*GP* vii). It is because the treatise presents a variety of contradictory views on the shape, abilities, and meanings of the gods that it was used by Christians to reject the Greco-Roman religion.

While such views, Godwin claims in the preface to his *Pantheon*, would not have been those of “orthodox believers”, he goes on to say that they are therefore “not to be admitted as a fair

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280 On this, see: Paul Lachlan MacKendrick, *The Philosophical Books of Cicero* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), pp. 276–85. On Cicero’s influence on key British thinkers, see especially pp. 279-283; For a broader discussion of Cicero’s reception in the eighteenth century in Europe (with a focus on Britain nonetheless), see: Matthew Fox, ‘Cicero during the Enlightenment’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero*, ed. by Catherine Steel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 318–36.

281 P. G. Walsh, ‘Introduction’, in *The Nature of the Gods*, by Marcus Tullius Cicero, ed. & trans. by P. G. Walsh (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. xi–xlv (p. xlv); see also the entry on David Hume in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2016 Edition <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2016/>>.

and impartial statement of the Grecian religion” (*GP* vii-viii). Yet, this is precisely what Tooke does in the *Pantheon*, and which enables him to dismiss that religion in its entirety. Tooke therefore weaves many references to Cicero’s text into his book, above all in the sections detailing the names or descent of the Roman gods.<sup>282</sup> He echoes Cotta, the spokesperson of the Academic school in Cicero’s work when he claims that “one answer will not fully satisfy” the question of Jupiter’s descent, for “there is not one *Jupiter*, but many, who are sprung from different families” (*TP* 12).<sup>283</sup> Moreover, references to *The Nature of the Gods* are what allows Tooke to write tediously long lists of “names” for each god, implying their multiplicity, and that they cannot therefore have been real gods. By contrast, Godwin presents what he seems to think would have been a more historically accurate description of the Greco-Roman gods, showing the stories that, presumably, an “orthodox believer” in the “established religion” would have accepted as religious truth. Unlike Tooke, he does not establish the number and names of all the possible Jupiters or Minervas but presents a relatively coherent image of Greco-Roman mythology. Because of this, Godwin’s *Pantheon* is lively and dynamic, unlike its predecessor.

Echoing his defence of the use of biblical language in the preface to the *Bible Stories*, Godwin then presents his work as closer to the application of Christian doctrine than those of faithful Christians who uncharitably represent Greco-Roman mythology. In a direct exposition of the dilemma outlined above, Godwin writes that authors such as Tooke, who purport to be deeply faithful Christians, have been afraid of showing the true nature of Greco-Roman mythology because they are “continually haunted by the fear that [their] pupils might prefer the religion of Jupiter to the religion of Christ” (*GP* vi). By doing this, Godwin suggests, they are showing the weakness of their own faith. “It looks something like blasphemy”, Godwin writes:

For a Christian to think it necessary to the cause in which he is engaged to inveigh against the amours of Jupiter, and to revive all the libels of the ancient Fathers against the religion of the government under which they lived (*GP* vi).

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282 Here are a few instances of Tooke’s reference to Cicero, as they appear in the footnotes to the *Pantheon*: 11-12, 18, 28, 35, 40, 72, 86- 89, 98. There are many more throughout the text.

283 Marcus Tullius Cicero, *The Nature of the Gods*, ed. & trans. by P. G. Walsh (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 127–28.

By contrast, Godwin claims that he did not feel that he ran the “risk” of “seducing one votary from the cross of Christ” by trying to “conciliate the favour of young persons to the fictions of the Greeks” (*GP* vi).

Such a portrayal is a significant instance of Godwin’s wit and irony. More crucially, though, it indicates that Godwin was not only trying to protect himself and the reputation of his pseudonym, but that he also did not believe that he could stray too far from the spirit of Tooke’s *Pantheon*, if his book was to appeal to the public and especially schools. Even though Alex Zwerdling argues, with some justification, that the attitudes toward the Greco-Roman religion were softening at the turn of the nineteenth century, it seems that Godwin was treading a relatively fine line.<sup>284</sup> While his *Pantheon* was generally well-received in the press and eventually by the public, the anonymous review in the *Eclectic Review* was rather negative. It is “still out of our power to recommend” *The Pantheon* “as unexceptionable”, the reviewer wrote, largely because they considered that the overt purpose of the *Pantheon* – to salvage “the Heathen mythology” (*GP* vi) – was objectionable.<sup>285</sup>

The reviewer’s suspiciousness accounts for Godwin’s occasional use of the strategies commonly used by authors to write about Greco-Roman mythology in the eighteenth century and why Godwin seems to write “in the feathers of an orthodox Christian”.<sup>286</sup> One of the most important features of the Greco-Roman religion, Godwin writes, was that “it gave animation and life to all existence” (*GP* 5), and further, “it not only gave sense and life to all inanimate objects; it also personified abstractions” (*GP* 6). At the same time, Godwin indicates that parts of classical religion are simply a particular, exaggerated, reconstruction of real human history. He therefore writes, “Bacchus, for example, we know to have been an early conqueror, who made a successful expedition into India” (*GP* 13). Yet, while Godwin deploys explanatory strategies that were common in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, his use differs significantly from Tooke’s.

Godwin explicitly presents and illustrates the ideas of the allegorical and historical reading of the Greek gods, without condemning their deification of historical actors, and without

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284 Zwerdling, p. 452.

285 *Eclectic Review*, 3, Part 2 (1807) pp. 922-923, reprinted in Kenneth W. Graham, pp. 283-84. For the other reviews, pp. 282-286.

286 Against my interpretation (and for the source of the quote) see: Anderson, ‘Godwin Disguised’, pp. 133-34.

moral remonstrance. Instead, he makes both readings comparable to English experiences. He first illustrates the conception of allegory, “that is, the personifying, or giving visible forms, to abstract ideas”, with a lengthy and partially imperfect quotation from Joseph Addison’s “Vision of Mizrah”, which first appeared in the 159<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Spectator* in 1711 (*GP* 9-12). Secondly, he identifies the deification of historical characters in Greco-Roman myth with the history of other nations, and particularly Britain:

The oldest events in the history of nations are for the most part fabulous, that is, the further men go back in endeavouring to trace the remote history of their national ancestors the nearer they arrive at times of ignorance and obscurity, respecting which nothing certain is known, and whatever is related that is true, is still mixed with fiction and fable (*GP* 12-13).

Godwin continues by taking the example of “our king Arthur” and Geoffrey of Monmouth’s history of “the kings of Britain, from Brito, or Brutus, who is supposed to have come here from the siege of Troy”, which he suggests are myths fundamentally similar to those of the Greeks (*GP* 13).

Godwin and Tooke also differ in their use of strategies to portray the Greco-Roman religion as allegorical or symbolic. Unlike Tooke, Godwin does not use the supposedly allegorical status of the Greco-Roman gods to recover a specific moral point, often used to condemn the mores of the gods, and by extension those of the Greeks and Romans. So, while Tooke’s description of Bacchus is that of a drunk and eternal child (*TP* 67), Godwin depicts him as a bountiful, “merry and jovial” god (*GP* 178). Similarly, Tooke’s description of Venus transformed her into a goddess of depravity whereas Godwin does not hide Venus’s sensuality. She is described as “endowed with every quality that render it [beauty and/or love] alluring and attractive”, and thus evokes “Milton’s Eve [in *Paradise Lost*]” whose countenance and character make her “more desirable” (*GP* 54-55). Yet, Godwin also had to be careful in matters of love and sexuality, not to find himself accused of “administer[ing] libertinism to the fancy of the stripling, or to sully the whiteness of mind of the purest virgin” (vii).

This is a particularly daunting task once we take into account the gendered dimensions of the classical learning, which was often exclusively masculine. In this context, a book like Godwin's *Pantheon*, which was explicitly to be used by "young persons of both sexes", or indeed a book like Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses*, could be one of the few books expressly available for young women to read about classical cultures.<sup>287</sup> Given his considerations that education should be the same for boys and girls, Godwin therefore had to be particularly to avoid accusations of licentiousness. As a result, in the chapter where he describes Vulcan, Godwin proposes an interpretation of the marriage between Vulcan and Venus, out of which Cupid is born, where he suggests that the "passion of love", expressed in the birth of Cupid, is double-edged: it can be honourable, and therefore generate "domestic harmony and parental care", but it can also be "licentious" and, as such, "it is one of the deepest blots to which our nature is exposed" (*GP* 63).

This might seem rather surprising given Godwin's biography and the candour of the *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, though Godwin's careful wording may have been a consequence of the hostile reception of that work. Godwin's candid discussion of Wollstonecraft's sexuality damaged both of their reputations and was used to create a long-lasting caricature of the immorality of the radical movement and of Wollstonecraft in particular.<sup>288</sup> However, when compared with Tooke's, Godwin's treatment of Venus is a significant step towards a less judgmental approach to sexual love and female sexuality in a work for children. Having described the marriage of Vulcan and Venus, Mystagogus the teacher pontificates to his student Palæophilus with the following tirade:

Have you given yourself up to *Venus*? She will make you a *Vulcan*. She will make you filthy, nasty, and black as hell; she will darken your understanding, though you are in the midst of fire: for the fire of *Venus* gives no light, but brings the greatest darkness; it freezes and stupefies the soul, while the body is thawed and melted into pleasures.

Even though Tooke's text was based on a late-seventeenth-century work, it would have fit the dominant attitudes to sexuality in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. At

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<sup>287</sup> Barnett and Gustafson, 'Introduction: The Radical Aesop: William Godwin and the Juvenile Library, 1805-1825' paragraph 28.

<sup>288</sup> Mitzi Myers, 'Godwin's "Memoirs" of Wollstonecraft: The Shaping of Self and Subject', *Studies in Romanticism*, 20.3 (1981), 299 (pp. 301-2).

the time, there was an increasing condemnation of sexualities deemed illegitimate in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as those outside of marriage, those of members of the working classes, or those that not leading to procreation.<sup>289</sup> Because of its wide circulation, Tooke's *Pantheon* would have been influential in introducing children to those attitudes and enforcing them over time. By replacing Tooke's, Godwin's *Pantheon* introduced a less moralistic view of sexuality, but nonetheless one that was acceptable to parents and school teachers.

There are also important differences in the ways in which Godwin and Tooke tackle myths in relation to history. In particular, while Godwin clearly indicates that some parts of Greco-Roman philosophy are historical, he completely abstains from conflating Christian sacred history and Greco-Roman mythology. Andrew Tooke was eager to try to show how the Greeks and the Romans had actually taken elements of Christian sacred history in order to "patch up their conceits" (*TP* 66). To do so, as we have seen, he constructed convoluted and arguments by which he showed how the Greek poets plagiarised the word of God. While Tooke equates Bacchus and Moses, in Godwin's secular historicisation Bacchus is a peaceful conqueror, whose army:

Consisted, not of soldiers, but of men and women in great multitude eminently accomplished in the arts of rural industry: wherever he came, he taught men the science of husbandry and the cultivation of the vine: wherever he came, he was received with festivity and rejoicings (*GP* 181).

When Godwin does refer to Christian doctrines, it is to use them as a tool to clarify Greco-Roman concepts and ideas that would have been obscure to young readers. For instance, there is Godwin's suggestion that "the most frequent use of the word Genius [his translation of the word *dæmon*] is in a sense somewhat similar to that of the Guardian Angel in Christian writers" (*GP* 103).<sup>290</sup>

From this analysis of the differences between Godwin and Tooke, and their respective approaches to mythography, it can be concluded that Godwin took his task of "remedy[ing]"

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<sup>289</sup> Faramerz Dabhoiwala, *The Origins of Sex: A History of the First Sexual Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 351–53.

<sup>290</sup> My emphasis.

the “imperfections” of Tooke’s *Pantheon*, quite seriously (*GP* iii). This involved wholly recasting Tooke’s method and execution, which allowed Godwin to drive a wedge between Christianity and classical pantheism and indeed to cleanse the study of Greco-Roman myth, poetry, and religion from Christian dogma, moralizing, and condemnation altogether. In this sense, we might even go so far as suggesting that, just as Godwin was trying to secularize the Bible, he was equally attempting to secularize the study of classical religions, restoring their moral status which he perceived as having been under assault for too long.

### MAKING CONVERTS?

Godwin’s cultural and religious reformist project emerges from the contextual analysis of the *Pantheon* and the *Bible Stories*. Godwin was clearly trying to change the way in which both the Bible and Greco-Roman mythology were taught, which required a profound shift in their respective cultural value. On the one hand, he removed the “greater mysteries of religion” from the Bible, presenting it instead as a piece of historical evidence of past civilisations. On the other, he separated Greco-Roman paganism from Christian condemnation and morality, restoring their own aesthetic and moral value. Sarah Trimmer and the unnamed spy, with whom we started, were not that wide off the mark.

Godwin seems to have successfully shown the wisdom and beauty of the Greco-Roman religion to many pupils. *The Pantheon* became a classic textbook read by the young Leigh Hunt and John Keats, both of whom would not only meet Godwin, but also pursue literary careers framed by their own reformist politics.<sup>291</sup> It would be overstating the case to say that their political reformism was strongly shaped by *The Pantheon*, especially if Nicholas Roe is right in suggesting that part of the appeal the book was its “dangerously explicit” sexual content.<sup>292</sup> However, there is clear evidence that Edward Baldwin’s *Pantheon* remained one of John Keats’s favourite books, and one which deeply influenced and stimulated his writing of mythologically-inspired poetry.<sup>293</sup>

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291 On this, see: Jeffrey N. Cox, *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and Their Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). On the connections between Godwin and the Cockney School, see: Beth Lau, ‘William Godwin and Cockney School Publishing Circles: Leigh Hunt, Charles Ollier, Taylor and Hessey and Their Authors, Particularly John Keats’, *Romanticism*, 17.2 (2011), 186–94. The meetings of Godwin, Hunt, and Keats are recorded in Godwin’s diary.

292 Roe, p. 37.

293 Alan Osler, ‘Keats and Baldwin’s “Pantheon”’, *The Modern Language Review*, 62.2 (1967), 221–25. On the similarities between the political thought of Keats and Godwin, see: Robert Anderson, ‘Godwin, Keats and Productive Leisure’, *Wordsworth Circle*, 33.1 (2002), 10–13.

## CHAPTER 5.

### HISTORY-TELLING: REFORMING HISTORICAL EDUCATION

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Sarah Trimmer's two-volume *Concise History of England, Comprised in a Set of Easy Lessons Illustrated by Engravings* was published in 1808 by John Harris, the new owner of John Newbery's celebrated children's bookshop in 1801-1802.<sup>294</sup> This was not Trimmer's first foray into history-writing for children: in the 1790s, she had published the two-part *Description of a Set of Prints of English History Contained in a Set of Easy Lessons*. Much of the text of Trimmer's 1808 *Concise History of England* was recycled from this previous work. Godwin saw this book as both a new competitor to his own *History of England for the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, first published in 1806, and as an opportunity to retaliate Trimmer's criticism of his writings in her *Guardian of Education*. And thus, he set out to write an eventually unpublished review, which helps us understand what was at stake in writing histories for children.<sup>295</sup>

Godwin found little to his liking in Trimmer's *Concise History*. He is particularly emphatic in his style, beginning with a confession of "grief" at seeing such a book published. For him, it is "a duty from which we [adults] cannot dispense ourselves, to defend as far as we are able the rising generation from the jargon which comes recommended to us by so celebrated a name as that of Mrs Trimmer". After two short paragraphs of general assault on the book, Godwin "proceed[s] to the ungrateful task of pointing out a few of the extraordinary hallucinations with which this little book abounds".<sup>296</sup> Godwin starts by enumerating "not more than a third part" of the factual mistakes he find in Trimmer's history, which mainly concern the details of dates, names, dynasties and reigns. He presents these errors as the essential failure of Trimmer's text, and hyperbolically claims that, "it is no less than a crime to impose such errors upon children, corrupting all history, & converting that divine blessing of memory into a plague".<sup>297</sup>

Most teachers and historians would agree that factual mistakes are fatal to a history schoolbook, but there is another angle Godwin takes to condemn Trimmer's work: its general disregard for literature, philosophy, science and art. Godwin notes that, "it is another characteristic of the present work, that no such idea as that of literature occurs, from the

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294 'Harris, John (1756-1846)' *ODNB*

295 MS. Abinger c. 19 fols. 10-11 and c. 29 fols. 114-115.

296 MS. Abinger c. 29 fol 114r.

297 MS. Abinger c. 29 fol. 115r.

beginning to the end”. This is a crucial defect of her history, because it downplays what Godwin believed was England’s level of civilization. Without the names of Shakespeare, Milton, Newton or Locke, says Godwin, “we might suppose that we were reading the history of a people no more enlightened than the Turks or the Moguls.”<sup>298</sup> In raising this point, Godwin echoes broader debates concerning the historiographical practices of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Mark Salber Phillips has shown, innovations in the different genres and modes of historical writing of the mid-to-late eighteenth century were constrained by the “ancient and authoritative tradition of political narrative”.<sup>299</sup> These broad themes constitute the focal point of this chapter, where I consider Godwin’s histories for children – the *History of England* (1806), the *History of Rome* (1809) and the *History of Greece* (1821) – in relation to broader issues concerning the purposes of history and historical education in Godwin’s thought. I thus show that Godwin considered how he could improve both how history was written and how it was taught.

### THE VARIETIES OF HISTORY (1750-1830)

It has become somewhat customary to say that, although histories have been written since antiquity,<sup>300</sup> a new form of historical consciousness developed in the late eighteenth and in the early nineteenth centuries, which became particularly important following the American and French Revolutions.<sup>301</sup> As Stephen Bann states, the “rise of history” is a “thread that traverses the entire [Romantic] movement”.<sup>302</sup> Not only was there a new (or renewed), broad interest in the past, but there was also a new historical sense of the present, allowing early nineteenth-century British authors such as William Hazlitt to talk about the “spirit of the age,” a phrase he used as the title for a collection of journalistic “contemporary portraits” of literary and political figures, published in 1825.<sup>303</sup> The development of this new historical consciousness or renewed general interest in history and historicity is often evidenced by a very real increase in the production of literary works grounded in history – such as novels or

298 MS. Abinger c. 29 fol. 115v.

299 Mark Salber Phillips, *Society and Sentiment: Genres of Historical Writing in Britain, 1740-1820* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 7.

300 J. W. Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 2007).

301 See chapter 1 in Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Penguin Books, 1990) for a philosophical discussion of the link between history and the revolutions of the eighteenth century.

302 Stephen Bann, *Romanticism and the Rise of History* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), p. 3.

303 William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age* (London: Henry Colburn, 1825). On this point, see also James Chandler’s ‘History’, in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age. British Culture, 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 354–61 especially pp. 354-355.

poems – concomitant with the production of diverse pieces of historical scholarship, from the mid-eighteenth century onward.<sup>304</sup>

In the period 1750-1850, then, the relationship between a literate audience and the past, be it the English, the Ancient Greek, or any other past, came to be mediated in an increasing variety of ways, through an increasing variety of genres, and with different understandings of the proximity or foreignness of the past.<sup>305</sup> With regard to historical scholarship, texts such as David Hume's ground breaking *History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688* (1754-1761), Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1789) and William Mitford's *History of Greece* (1784-1810), all provided Godwin and countless other readers with crucial points of reference.<sup>306</sup> In the late eighteenth century, as William St Clair notes, history was a very popular genre, as evidenced by its prominence in reading societies.<sup>307</sup> At the same time, British history was being recast in a new light, thanks, on the one hand, to a thriving antiquarian interest in the British past over the course of the eighteenth century (which persisted in the nineteenth century)<sup>308</sup> and, on the other, to the communication and indeed the mythification (and sometimes the complete invention) of that past through the works of Robert Burns, James Macpherson, Thomas Chatterton, William Blake and, later, Walter Scott, among others.<sup>309</sup> Ancient History was an essential point of reference for writers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>310</sup> On the side of children's books, there was a large number of works that parents

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304 Bann, pp. 5–7; Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*.

305 On the question of 'historical distance,' see: Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*; Mark Salber Phillips, 'Relocating Inwardness: Historical Distance and the Transition from Enlightenment to Romantic Historiography', *PMLA*, 118.3 (2003), 436–49.

306 Godwin records reading and re-reading Hume's writings on the history of England between 1793 and at least 1804. He perused Gibbon's text several times, for different purposes, between 1798 and 1834, and consulted Mitford's work on Greece repeatedly from as early as 1791 and as late as 1829 (*GD*). He nevertheless had some reservations about these works. On Mitford, see *PPW* 5:321, on Hume, *PPW* 5:327. On eighteenth-century historiography in Britain and elsewhere, particularly in relation to Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, see also J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999-2015), especially vols. 2, 3 and 4.

307 St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 253.

308 On this subject, see: Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London ; New York: Hambledon and London, 2004).

309 On Robert Burns, Walter Scott, and their relationship to historiography and antiquarianism, see: Gaull, pp. 257–60, 263–76; More broadly on the mythification and invention of the British past, see: Butler, *Mapping Mythologies*. See especially chapter 4 on Macpherson and Chatterton and chapter 6 on Blake.

310 See the comments on Britain by Thomas Kaminski and Bruce Graver, on the ancient Greek and Roman traditions in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, in their entries on 'Neoclassicism' and 'Romanticism' in *A Companion to the Classical Tradition*, ed. by Craig Kallendorf and others, Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007) pp. 57-71 and 72-86 respectively. See also Richard Jenkyns entry on the 'United Kingdom', especially pp. 273-277; For a discussion of the relative importance of Greece or Rome in Romanticism, see the Introduction to Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity*.

and schoolteachers could choose from, perhaps the most famous being those Godwin had read as a child: the abridgements of Oliver Goldsmith's histories.<sup>311</sup> More crucially, perhaps, as Jackie C. Horne has shown, developments in both children's fiction and children's histories can be traced alongside and under the slow influence of these historiographical changes.<sup>312</sup>

Godwin was not only well-read and interested in the topic of history, but he was also an active participant in the multiplicity and the multiplication of historical genres. Godwin thus made innovative uses of various historical periods throughout his literary career to achieve different ends. For instance, as David O'Shaughnessy has shown, the late medieval story of a monk in the 1790 play, *St Dunstan*, serves as a setting to "make an innovative contribution to the political debate on the Test and Corporation Acts".<sup>313</sup> As Gary Handwerk argues, in the novels *St. Leon* (1799), set in the sixteenth century, and *Mandeville* (1817), which begins in England during Civil War Godwin uses "the mode of historical fiction" to "appreciate the more specifically historical dimensions of [the] relation between politics and psychology".<sup>314</sup>

Moreover, in the early years of the nineteenth century, Godwin spent much time writing historical non-fiction. Although they are at the centre of this chapter, the three histories for children are only an extremely partial list of Godwin's contributions to historiography in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. The papers held in the Abinger Collection show that Godwin was planning to write a "History of England of the dimensions of Hume's" and a history of the Roman Empire for adults, under contract with his bookseller Richard Phillips.<sup>315</sup> He wrote two historical biographies: the *Life of Chaucer* (1803) and the *Lives of Edward and John Philips: Nephews and Pupils of Milton* (1815). In both, he not only

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311 See: Tabart; As well as the catalogue in *A Chronological Abridgment of Universal History: To Which Is Added, an Abridged Chronology of the Most Remarkable Discoveries and Inventions Relative to the Arts and Sciences. Translated from the French of the Seventh Edition.* (London: R. and L. Peacock, 1800), pp. 215–16. Peacock's book is a translation and adaptation of; Mathurin Veyssière de La Croze, *Abrégé chronologique de l'histoire universelle. Par M. La Croze, revu, continué et fort augmenté, par M. Formey. 7e édition, à laquelle on a ajouté un Abrégé chronologique des époques des inventions et des découvertes des arts et des sciences, avec une carte géographique de l'ancien continent* (Brussels: Le Francq, 1791).

312 Jackie C. Horne, *History and the Construction of the Child in Early British Children's Literature* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2011).

313 O'Shaughnessy, p. 58. On *St Dunstan* more generally, see pp. 51-81.

314 Gary Handwerk, 'History, Trauma, and the Limits of the Liberal Imagination: William Godwin's Historical Fiction', p. 69; Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, pp. 70–102.

315 See LWG 408, as well as the draft beginning of the history of England: MS. Abinger c. 24 fols. 41-76. This history is also the subject of an 1806 letter to Richard Phillips: MS. Abinger c. 18 fol. 81. Concerning the history of the Roman Empire Godwin was preparing for Phillips, see: MS. Abinger c. 25 fols. 1-12.

discusses the lives of his subjects but also includes lengthy digressions concerning the cultural, political, social world around them.

In doing so, he gave further illustration to a view formed in the early 1790s following his reading of Helvétius and Rousseau, and expressed more forcefully in the revised editions of the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, namely that “the characters of men originate in their external circumstances” (PPW 4: 16-27). For Godwin, from the mid-1790s onward, as evidenced by his biographies, understanding the dispositions and actions of individuals in history required examining the ideas and possibilities offered by their specific social, political and cultural contexts (PPW 4: 24-27). Still, Godwin’s participation in the development of historical discourses was not limited to composing his own works of history: he also reflected on the subjects, composition, value, and use of history and historical education, all of which were subjects of debates throughout the eighteenth century and well into the early nineteenth century.<sup>316</sup>

## **GODWIN AND THE COMPOSITION OF HISTORY (FOR CHILDREN)**

### **I. “THE STUDY OF MANKIND IN A MASS” AND “THE STUDY OF THE INDIVIDUAL”**

Godwin's views on history are, for the most part, found in an essay entitled, ‘Of History and Romance’, prepared in 1797-1798 for a companion volume to his 1797 collection, *The Enquirer*.<sup>317</sup> While the essay was not published before the twentieth century, it seems that Godwin’s ideas on the subject did not undergo any major change, as some of the essay’s ideas were brought to the public not only in *The Enquirer* itself (PPW 5:204-205), but also in Godwin's curious *Essay on Sepulchres* (1809) as well as in the preface to his penultimate novel, *Cloudesley* (1830). In presenting his case, Godwin begins by distinguishing between what he views as the “two principal branches” of history. The first consists of “the study of mankind in a mass, of the progress, the fluctuations, the interests and the vices of society” and especially “the progress and varieties of civilisation”. Its practitioners, Godwin writes, “cannot descend to be busied about any thing less than the condition of nations and the

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316 On these issues, see for example: Phillips, *Society and Sentiment; Rethinking British Romantic History, 1770-1845*, ed. by Porscha Fermanis and John Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

317 The essay was reprinted in PPW 5:290-301. For a thought-provoking analysis, from a different perspective, see: Klancher, ‘Godwin and the Genre Reformers: On Necessity and Contingency in Romantic Narrative Theory’; for a broader view, see: Eva M. Pérez Rodríguez, ‘Education, Conversation, and History: Godwin’s Search for Style in “The Enquirer” and “Of History and Romance”’, *Atlantis*, 25.1 (2003), 81–90.

collation and comparison of successive ages”. The second branch of history deals with “the study of the individual”, narrowing the focus from civilizations to the very particulars of the public and private lives of historical characters (*PPW* 5:291-2).

By comparing and contrasting the advantages and drawbacks of both these modes of historical writing, Godwin provides another point of entry into the historiographical debates of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scholars like Jon Klancher have identified Godwin’s assessment as an early expression of the ‘Romantic’ rejection of ‘Enlightenment’ histories, emphasising contingency over universalising, linear progress.<sup>318</sup> This, however, relies on a relatively strict definition of the concepts of ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘Romanticism’, which can obscure rather than illuminate the diversity of practices and the continuities between the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. It seems to me more useful to recast Godwin’s considerations in terms of Mark Salber Phillips’s concept of ‘historical distance’ and the more general techniques of distantiation that underlie, as he has shown, a wide variety of intellectual endeavours in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>319</sup> Lastly, Godwin’s considerations on “the study of mankind in a mass” and “the study of the individual” show how, for him, notions of historical distance are bound up with moral and ideological considerations. Indeed, while for him both modes of historical writing come with their strengths and weaknesses, in the final analysis, Godwin prefers the latter branch, for pedagogical, utilitarian, political, and reformist reasons.

Godwin considers the fundamental flaw in “the study of mankind in a mass,” to be its inability to “interest our passions” (*PPW* 5:291). He insists that “the study of mankind in a mass” cannot provide readers with “clear ideas” on history, because it deals with abstractions and not motives, actions or characters (*PPW* 5: 292-3). The reader therefore cannot comprehend and order the general knowledge presented to him, which then “crumbles from his grasp” instead of being “cement[ed]” and fully understood (*PPW* 5:292). As a consequence, it cannot help develop the reader’s reason and thus fails to promote social good.

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318 Jon Klancher, ‘Godwin and the Republican Romance: Genre, Politics, and Contingency in Cultural History’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 56.2 (1995), 145–166; see also Weston, ‘History, Memory, and Moral Knowledge’, p. 661; for a broader take on Godwin as rejecting the ‘Enlightenment’ see: Rowland Weston, ‘Politics, Passion and the “Puritan Temper”’: Godwin’s Critique of Enlightened Modernity’, *Studies in Romanticism*, 41.3 (2002), 445–70.

319 Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*; Phillips, ‘Relocating Inwardness’.

Partly related to this lies the question of exemplarity, the second dimension of a socially useful history to which “the study of mankind in a mass” fails to attend. For Godwin, it is in the observation of the actions of men, “the empire of motives whether groveling or elevated” that “we shall be enabled to add, to the knowledge of the past, a sagacity that can penetrate into the depths of futurity” (*PPW* 5:293). A mixture of historical and contemporary comparisons opens paths for self-criticism. “We go forth into the world” to “see what man is”, we study history to “enquire what he was”, and, through comparison and “a sort of magnetism”, we come “to view in ourselves” aspects “which might otherwise have lain for ever undetected” (*PPW* 5: 292). Moreover, and beyond creating new ways to understand ourselves, exemplary histories serve as a call to reformist action. By understanding, or rather contemplating, the characters and actions of “illustrious men, [...] we insensibly imbibe the same spirit, and burn with kindred fires” (*PPW* 5:293). Godwin’s entire essay here assumes that we know who the proper exemplars are, and what the adequate practice of exemplarity is – problems to which I return below. For now, however, let us turn to a larger narrative problem looming over Godwin’s historical writings for children: the constraints of the genre of the history textbook.

Histories for adults could be as long as their authors wished (so long as their publishers agreed), and cover whatever period the author considered interesting. Hume’s *History of England* thus eventually covered the whole period “from the invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution of 1688”. Godwin, by contrast, focused on the period of the Civil War and interregnum in his *History of the Commonwealth*. Histories for the instruction of pupils needed to be relatively small and reasonably short, to keep prices low enough for schools to purchase in bulk. They would also have to be as complete as they could be, and indeed as up to date as possible. Histories reaching modern times, such as Godwin’s *History of England*, would therefore be frequently updated to include a discussion of the years that passed between the initial publication and the re-edition. Moreover, since they were concerned with a whole society, a whole country, or indeed a whole empire, histories for schools had to be, to a large extent, studies of “mankind in a mass”. Godwin was therefore faced with a kind of dilemma: writing histories for the use of schools meant to engage with a genre about which he had serious misgivings.

His narrative solutions, the three histories for children, are at first glance not particularly original, though the division of the *History of England* between the “Short characters of the Kings of England”, the history *per se*, and the appendices, is somewhat unusual.<sup>320</sup> Still, all three works follow a relatively simple chronological outline, and deal with the broad politics of Ancient Greece, the Roman Republic, and Britain from the druids to the Georgian period. In the *History of England*, each chapter usually covers the reign of one monarch or, in the case of the Commonwealth, one Lord Protector. In each of these chapters, Godwin then elaborates on some of the details of the life of each monarch and their court, as well as some of the broader affairs of the kingdom. To take one example, for the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, Godwin covers the contest between Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots; gives some detail concerning their personal lives; depicts Elizabeth as “skilful in government, and of a masculine temper”, presents Lord Burleigh and Sir Francis Walsingham as “the wisest ministers that ever a sovereign was blessed with”, discusses the defeat of the “Invincible Armada”; and finally presents two of his literary heroes, Spenser and Shakespeare.<sup>321</sup> The play on historical distance in the text, then, is relatively limited: the reader remains far away from the objects of history and we are offered a bird’s eye view of the reign.

A closer look at the narrative organization of the histories of Greece and Rome shows Godwin playing with historical distance in a slightly different way. Though the narrative is still basically chronological, it is broken down to briefly focus either on certain events, or on certain individual characters, as introduced by a typographical break and a heading. In doing so, Godwin’s approach is quite distinct from the more continuous narrative of contemporary works such as the fifth edition of Goldsmith’s *History of Greece, Abridged for the Use of Schools* (1804), and from the openly didactic works of those like Sarah Trimmer, whose texts are broken down into bite-sized lessons. In this regard, Godwin’s books are closer to works such as Sarah Lawrence’s *Stories Selected from the History of Greece* (1820), where the reader proceeds from one specific, self-contained narrative to the next.<sup>322</sup> Unlike Lawrence, however, Godwin maintains an overarching narrative framework, which guides his story, and about which he is explicit from an early point. For instance, Godwin suggests that the story of the Roman Republic is, to a large extent, that of the “contention between the

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320 Clemit, ‘Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin’s Juvenile Library, 1805-25’, p. 63.

321 Baldwin [William Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, pp. 118–25.

References to this text and this edition will hereafter be in-text as: *GHOE*, followed by the relevant page number.

322 Sarah Lawrence, *Stories Selected from the History of Greece for Children* (London: Bosey and Sons, 1820).

different orders of the state [the patricians and the plebeians], which lasted with little intermission as long as the republic”.<sup>323</sup>

Although Godwin appears at first glance to follow rather conventional narrative lines for his three histories, the way in which he manipulates historical distance in order to provide added texture to his broad ‘histories of mankind in a mass’ subtly distinguishes his books from those of his competitors. At the same time, Godwin’s successive narrative choices, from the more conventional (the *History of England*) to the less conventional (the histories of Rome and Greece), offer an interesting variety of – perhaps less than fully satisfactory – solutions to the dilemma Godwin faced and which I outlined above: having to write a ‘history of mankind in a mass’ while being fundamentally sceptical regarding its use.

## II. PEDAGOGY, ORGANISATION, AND STYLE IN THE *HISTORY OF ENGLAND*

Godwin’s decision to write his histories as uninterrupted, largely chronological narratives, though relatively usual on the surface, nevertheless served his pedagogical commitment to not overburdening the memory of the child with detail.<sup>324</sup> Godwin plays with the common mode of organizing histories at the time, but uses it in such a way that the focus is on the story, on the narrative itself, rather than on the details that a child reader perusing Trimmer’s *Concise History of England, Comprised in a Set of Easy Lessons* or George Davys’s *Plain and Short History of England, for Children: In Letters from a Father to his Son, with a Set of Questions at the End of each Letter* would be expected to memorize. His only compromise on that matter was the insertion of a single table listing the monarchs of England, located between the sections dealing with the time before the Conquest and those dealing with the period after. This stands in sharp contrast with Trimmer’s book, where lessons frequently end with a table, the first of which is accompanied by a set of instructions, as the author claims that “it will be found of great help to the memory, to learn this and the succeeding tables by heart” (*THoE* 1:7). The injunction to learn specific factual details takes a different expression in the book written by George Davys, a member of the Anglican clergy who would become

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323 Baldwin [William Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, p. 32. In the rest of the chapter, I will refer to this book in-text as: *GHoR* followed by the relevant page number.

324 I discuss this from the perspective of Godwin’s educational theory and from that of the materiality of the book and of the layout in chapter 2. In chapter 8 I present how Godwin’s work was undermined in the later nineteenth century.

the tutor to Princess Victoria.<sup>325</sup> The book is organized into letters “from a father to his son”, with each letter ending in a series of very factual questions, which the (male) reader was required to answer. In fact, he “must get somebody to ask [him] these questions, to see whether [he] can give the proper answers to them”, and he “must be very particular about the dates”.<sup>326</sup>

In the *History of England*, Godwin deploys a particular strategy to address the potential questions raised by a sceptical parent or tutor who believed that memorisation is the only valuable way to learn history. In the preface, Godwin places himself as a writer of children’s books, as a parent, and as a tutor. Playing these three roles together, he claims:

I am accustomed to consult my children in this humble species of writing in which I have engaged. I put the two or three first sections of this work into their hands as a specimen. Their remark was, *How easy this is! Why, we learn it by heart, almost as fast as we read it!* (GHOE vi).

Thus Godwin not only writes a text organised as an uninterrupted narrative, which prevents the memorisation of unnecessary details and excites the imagination and the passions, while at the same time he reassures the parent, tutor, or schoolteacher that such a narrative is actually better according to their own pedagogical views. Given the pains Godwin went through to write such a text, and to present himself in this way, it is particularly ironic that a mid-century re-edition of Godwin's *History of England* was adapted to include questions similar to those in Davys's book.<sup>327</sup>

All three books use of a familiar style, though Trimmer's is perhaps the least conversational in tone, while Davys's is perhaps the most. Godwin's view was generally that books for children should be written in a “mode of familiar and playful writing”, as this fosters the child's imagination by touching his or her “passions” (GHOE iii). However, the familiar style can also reinforce the narrative authority. Indeed, the staging of the familiar conversation in Davys's *Plain and Short History of England*, for instance, enables the writer to take a particularly authoritative voice as it plays, and hinges, on a particular kind of traditionally

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<sup>325</sup> ‘Davys, George (1780-1864)’, *ODNB*

<sup>326</sup> Davys, pp. 8–9.

<sup>327</sup> Edward Baldwin [William Godwin] and W. S. Kenny, *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (London: T. Allman and Son, 1850). I return to Kenny's *History of England* in the conclusion.

hierarchical relationship: that between a father and his son. Godwin's familiar tone is of a different kind and allows for a more open-ended reading of the *History of England*.

This is reinforced by Godwin's use of questions. While Davys used closed, narrowly factual questions, Godwin presents his child-reader with questions that do not suppose a single correct answer, to be found within the text and learned by heart. For example, in a hardly politically innocent question following a discussion of British imperial conquests and losses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Godwin writes:

While we lost an empire in the West, we gained one in the East Indies: Which was most worth having? The colonies of America were too large and too distant for us to hope to retain them long in subjection: yet they had English feelings and spoke the English language: the inhabitants of our East-India dominions (much larger than these) are Hindoos and Moors, speaking the Hindoo, the Arabic or the Persian, and can be kept in subjection only by the sword (*GHoE* 169-170).

Godwin might have hoped that the child would conclude that neither are actually “worth having”. However, Godwin's answer is not obviously available to the reader. Thus, unlike the questions in Davys's text, Godwin's question here requires the child-readers to think about what could be the correct answer. To put it another way, it forces the child to go outside of the text, and appeals to his or her private judgment and reasoning ability. These are two characteristics, as Mark Philp has shown, that Godwin values highly, not least for their capacity to foster progressive political change.<sup>328</sup> These strategies are therefore a fascinating illustration of Godwin's commitment to the moral autonomy of the child, which he forcefully expressed in *The Enquirer*.

### III. BRINGING CULTURE TO CHILDREN'S HISTORIES

Godwin's histories are particularly interesting in their inclusion of art, literature and science, and the relative lack of emphasis on warfare and the details of high politics. In each chapter of the *History of England*, for example, Godwin takes care to present the most important scientific, literary, and more generally cultural characters of each age, in Britain and beyond. While he reserves lengthier praise for Shakespeare (*GHoE* 124-125) and Milton (*GHoE*

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<sup>328</sup> Philp, *Godwin's Political Justice*.

141), he mentions a variety of other writers such as Chaucer (84), Thomas More (113), Ben Jonson (131) and Dryden (146) as well as his contemporaries Samuel Johnson and James Boswell (174). In addition to these, Godwin mentions, the medieval political reformer and early translator of the Bible John Wycliffe (89-90), the first English printer, William Caxton (104), “the great masters [...] Michael Angelo, Raphael and Titian” (113), and Isaac Newton, “the greatest natural philosopher that ever existed” (145).

Moreover, Godwin’s long appendices to the *History of England*, designed to give additional detail, and connect and clarify different types of information included in the book, have culture broadly understood as one of their central concerns. They begin with a presentation of religion where readers are reminded of various facts, such as that the “Greek and Roman” religion was that “of Homer and Virgil” and that a book “called the Edda” is “the Bible of” the “Scandinavian” religion (*GHoE* 175). Godwin also presents the different “Ages of Literature” discussed in the text, providing a short chronology of literary history and repeating the names of whom he considers to be each age’s most prominent authors (190-193). Eventually, Godwin closes his appendices, having gone through references to “battles, sieges, trials, executions, and extraordinary events” and “public characters”, by returning to culture and art (212-224). The last pages that children would read thus included a discussion of not only major works and authors throughout the history of the world, but also of the poetry of the “Scalds, called also the Scandinavian or Runic poets” and the writings of “the most profound and excellent writers among the Monks [...] the Schoolmen” (219-220).

This is in stark contrast to other similar history books of the period. Sarah Trimmer’s, for example, is a fundamentally classical historical narrative, primarily dealing with the domestic and international policies of monarchs, with wars and only secondarily presenting some considerations on private affairs. She often ends her lessons with an assessment of the reign of a monarch. Of Elizabeth I, Trimmer writes:

This Queen had great qualities for governing, and her name will ever be glorious for the success of the British arms under her wise and prudent administration, and her steady support of the Protestant religion; but she was subject to passions, which led her into actions that reflect great discredit on her memory.<sup>329</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Sarah Trimmer, *A Concise History of England, Comprised in a Set of Easy Lessons Illustrated by Engravings: Being a Continuation of the Series of Historical Books for Children.*, 2 vols (London: J. Harris, 1808), II, vols 1,

At no point in the text is there a discussion of literature, or the standing of literary figures in relation to political ones, or the evolution of English science, art and culture more broadly. Goldsmith's hugely popular *History of England in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to his Son* (1764), published by John Newbery, which Godwin read in his youth, follows a similar model.<sup>330</sup> Closer to Godwin's own time of publication, works deploying an even more familiar language, such as George Davys's *Plain and Short History of England*, or Elizabeth Helme's *The History of England Related in Familiar Conversations, by a Father to his Children* also share this approach to the history of England.

Godwin's histories of Greece and Rome share this emphasis on philosophers and other literati who are, at best, only mentioned in other histories. For instance, all histories of Greece for children introduce Solon as the great Athenian legislator. Some, like Goldsmith's, also mention that Solon was one of a group of "seven wise men of Greece," which included "Thales of Miletus, Solon of Athens, Chilo of Lacedæmon, Pittacus of Mitylene, Periander of Corinth, and Bias and Cleobulus".<sup>331</sup> Only Godwin includes a detailed, four-page discussion of these "seven wise men" in his narrative. He considers them crucial to the "commencement of the Grecian philosophy", and sees them as having established what we could describe as an ideal republic of letters, or an ideal Godwinian community of sincere intellects.<sup>332</sup> Godwin thus assures his readers that each of the seven wise men:

Considered it as his greatest privilege to have six friends endowed with intellectual capacity and observation not inferior to his own: we do not find that there was among them the smallest jealousy: and they would have been ashamed, if they had not spoken and written to each other with the most entire freedom and unreserve (*GHoG* 59-60).

To illustrate this, Godwin relates the story of the circulation of "a golden tripod of considerable value" between the seven wise men. The oracle of Apollo claimed that the

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55–56. References to this text and this edition will hereafter be in-text as: *THoE*, followed by the relevant volume and page number.

330 See chapter 2 for Godwin's youthful readings.

331 Oliver Goldsmith, *Dr. Goldsmith's History of Greece, Abridged, for the Use of Schools*, Fifth Edition (London, 1804), pp. 15–16.

332 Edward Baldwin [Godwin], *History of Greece: From the Earliest Records of That Country to the Time in Which It Was Reduced Into a Roman Province. Illustrated with Maps and Portraits. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, Second Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1822), pp. 59–62. In the rest of this chapter, references to this work will be in-text as: *GHoG* followed by the page number.

tripod ought to “belong to him who is wisest” (*GHoG* 60). Its circulation indicates that each of the men considered the others to be equally wise and that none of them was too proud to claim it for himself. Even Thales, who receives it first and last, does not keep it: he offers it instead to Apollo (*GHoG* 60).

Godwin contrasts the behaviour of the seven wise men with contemporary practices, implying a desire to return to this ideal form of the republic of letters:

This is a beautiful story: how frankly did these great men acknowledge the merits of each other: how different was their conduct from the heart-burnings and detractions which have too often been seen among men of extraordinary attainments in modern times! (*GHoG* 60-61).

Thales’s position as the first recipient of the tripod indicates a different hierarchy between the seven wise men than that constructed by others writers at the time. Oliver Goldsmith, for instance, uses the story of the seven wise men to glorify the politician and lawgiver Solon as the most accomplished of them all. Godwin places Solon in second position, after Thales (*GHoG* 59). He gives no explicit reason for this ordering, yet the implication of Thales being the first (and last) recipient of the tripod suggest that it is “him who is wisest”. Moreover, “the judges *unanimously* decided that the tripod belonged to” him (*GHoG* 60).<sup>333</sup> Rather than praising a politician whose constitution was celebrated, Godwin preferred to commemorate Thales, who investigated the “abstruser sciences: the nature of the human mind and the knowledge of life, [which] are the most valuable subjects of curiosity” (*GHoG* 65).

However, doubts are soon raised concerning Thales’s wisdom. This leads the child to question both the status of Thales as a wise man and his arguments themselves. In a later chapter dedicated to the mathematician, Godwin describes how Thales made Solon believe that his son was dead, in order to persuade the Athenian that “a life of celibacy” is more valuable than a “life of wedlock” (*GHoG* 65-68). At the end of this tale, Godwin condemns the use of a lie for the purposes of persuasion before then questioning Thales’s argument, namely, that the potential grief at losing a child is enough to prevent having one in the first place. Opposing this view, Godwin argues that, “it is not wise to refuse a good thing, because

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333 My emphasis.

we may sometime or other be deprived of it [...]: a stock or a stone only can be secured against the pains of privations” (*GHoG* 68). He ends the chapter, however, by offering another argumentative avenue that Thales could have used in order to demonstrate that, for some purposes, “a life of celibacy” is more valuable than one of marriage:

Thales might indeed have been in the right, if he had merely said, that the state he had chosen was necessary to the pursuits in which he was engaged, and that it can rarely happen that a man shall arrive at great scientific or literary eminence, who is entangled in the connections of human society (*GHoG* 68).

This evokes Godwin’s practice of multiplying the interpretive possibilities of *Fables*. Here, the child is offered different views on the character of Thales and on the answer to the question that Thales and Solon were trying to answer. It is up to child readers to disentangle the story and make up their minds.

By emphasising culture and philosophy, Godwin downplayed the importance of political affairs and war, even when using historical characters known for their roles in politics and the army. In Godwin’s *History of Rome*, unlike other histories of Rome for children, the politician, general and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero is one of the most important characters in the later part of the narrative. Godwin dedicates three full chapters to “one of the most eminent men the world ever saw”, and repeatedly mentions him, his actions, and his political positions as an exemplary Roman republican over 30 pages in a book less than 300 pages long (*GHoR* 229).<sup>334</sup> Moreover, though Cicero was a man of war as well as a politician and loyal republican, Godwin downplays his role in war and instead stresses his political and literary achievements. This shows Godwin’s relative disdain for warfare in comparison to culture. The difference between Godwin and other authors in that regard can be illustrated by a further example: the final confrontation between Cæsar and Pompey at Pharsalia. Elizabeth Helme spends nine pages depicting the course and outcome of the battle. This includes, for example, gruesome detail about Cæsar’s tactic of sending “six cohorts who were to serve as a reinforcement to advance, and to strike particularly at the enemies faces [sic]”.<sup>335</sup> This can

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<sup>334</sup> I return to these issues below

<sup>335</sup> Elizabeth Helme, *The History of Rome, From the Foundation of the City to the Fall of the Eastern Empire, Related in Familiar Conversations, by a Father to His Children: Interspersed with Moral and Instructive Remarks, and Observations on the Most Leading and Interesting Subjects*, 4 vols (Brentford: P. Norbury, 1808) vol. 2 p. 73 .

be compared with the full section on the “Battle of Pharsalia” in Godwin’s *History of Rome*:

This was in the year 704: good use was made, by the lieutenants of Pompey and the friends of liberty, of the ensuing winter, and that general took the field next year in the plains of Thessaly with more numerous forces than those of his assailant: they met at Pharsalia, and there the battle was fought, which gave to Cæsar the empire of the world (*GHoR* 240).

Even when we account for the differences in length and chronology between the works of the two authors, the sobriety of Godwin’s description of the battle of Pharsalia provides a striking contrast with Helme’s detailed depiction.

Godwin’s attempt to make culture and manners a crucial part of children’s histories puts him at the cutting edge of the genre. In general, histories for children remained committed to the conventional versions of exemplarity, even though these had been abandoned from histories for adults by the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>336</sup> Works of history such as Goldsmith’s, Helme’s and Trimmer’s follow a more established tradition of historiography in this respect, emphasising military and stately virtue. Still, despite their relative originality, Godwin’s histories of England, Greece and Rome are still limited in ways identified by the young Jane Austen in her parody of Goldsmith’s history. This piece highlights how male-centre histories tended to be, and Godwin’s was no exception. His work can therefore be contrasted with Charlotte Smith and Mary Hays’s *History of England* (1806), who famously foreground female characters.<sup>337</sup> This said, as we will see in chapter 7, Godwin’s *Life of Lady Jane Grey* indicates that he did believe that there were women in history whose examples were worth celebrating.

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336 George H. Nadel, ‘Philosophy of History before Historicism’, *History and Theory*, 3.3 (1964), 291–315 (p. 314).

337 For a discussion of women writing history in the period, see: Devoney Looser, *British Women Writers and the Writing of History, 1670-1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000). On Jane Austen’s biting parody of Goldsmith, see pp. 187-188; for a more specific focus on children’s histories, and Charlotte Smith in particular, see: Greg Kucich, ‘The History Girls. Charlotte Smith’s *History of England* and the Politics of Women’s Educational History’, in *Rethinking British Romantic History, 1770-1845*, ed. by Porscha Fermanis and John Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 35–53. Austen’s parody was recently included in: Jane Austen, *Love and Freindship: And Other Youthful Writings*, ed. by Christine Alexander (United Kingdom: Penguin Classics, 2015).

The centrality of culture in the histories England, Greece and Rome is also significant because it is aligned with Godwin's pedagogical commitments. The mere mention of a variety of authors and artists in the histories creates the possibility that child readers will enquire further, thus achieving one of the central purposes of early education (*PPW* 5:85). Moreover, this provides ideas for reading beyond their schoolbooks, thus helping children develop "an early taste for reading" which Godwin considers essential to a "man's future intellect" since "he that loves reading, has every thing within his reach. He has but to desire; and he may possess himself of every species of wisdom to judge, and power to perform" (*PPW* 5:95). Beyond pedagogy, the formation of a desire to read and of a cultured mind create the conditions for social and political progress. As he wrote in the preface to the *Enquirer*, "the cause of political reform, and the cause of intellectual and literary refinement, are inseparably connected" (*PPW* 5:79). Writing histories in this way, Godwin may be seen as sowing the seeds of the just society that he envisioned in *Political Justice*.

## TRUTH-TELLING AND HISTORY-TEACHING

### I. FACT OR FICTION? THE QUESTION OF HISTORICAL TRUTH

In addition to grappling with historiographical questions of thematic emphasis and distance, Godwin's more abstract discussions of historical writing raise the following question: what kind of claim to truth does history have? This is partly related to that of historical distance but is more crucially linked with the activity of the historian as a writer. In order to explore this issue, Godwin finds a counterpoint to history writing of this kind in novel writing, effectively arguing that fictional literature may have stronger claims to truth than history when it comes to the ascription of motives to individuals. In doing this, Godwin contributes once again to one of the crucial lines of engagement of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century historiography: the relationship between history and fiction.<sup>338</sup>

At his most provocative, Godwin equates history and fiction. In the essay 'Of Posthumous Fame' in *The Enquirer*, Godwin writes that "history is in reality a tissue of fables" (*PPW* 5:204). This is a radical take on the comments Rousseau makes about history in a footnote to a story by Herodotus he retells in *Emile*. For Rousseau:

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<sup>338</sup> The blurring of the lines between history and fiction in the Romantic period as a whole are brought to light in Porscha Fermanis and John Regan, 'Introduction', in *Rethinking British Romantic History, 1770-1845*, ed. by Porscha Fermanis and John Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–31.

Les anciens historiens sont remplis de vues dont on pourrait faire usage, quand même les faits qui les présentent seraient faux [...]; comme s'il importait beaucoup qu'un fait fut vrai, pourvu qu'on en pût tirer une instruction utile. Les hommes sensés doivent regarder l'histoire comme un tissu de fables, dont la morale est très appropriée au coeur humain.<sup>339</sup>

Nevertheless, Godwin's radicalisation of Rousseau ought to be qualified. Godwin clarifies in the essays, 'Of Posthumous Fame' and 'Of History and Romance' that he is not suggesting here that there is no element of truth to history. Rather, his point is that the complexity of historical processes, and especially the complexity of interweaving motives that underlie any decision made by an individual, force the historian to weave educated guesses into the narrative (*PPW* 5:204, 298; *CNM* 7:6-7).

Stressing this, he declares:

The conjectures of the historian must be built upon a knowledge of the characters of his personages. But we never know any man's character. My most intimate and sagacious friend continually misapprehends my motives. He is in most cases a little worse judge of them than myself and I am perpetually mistaken (*PPW* 5:300).

In contrast, "the writer of romance" is able "to understand the character which is the creature of his own fancy" (*PPW* 5:300). Therefore, one of the tentative conclusions of Godwin's essay 'Of History and Romance' is that 'romance' (that is to say, the novel) has, in principle, a stronger claim to truth than history. Still, Godwin seems to resist this view to an extent, and restricts its implications to restore history's position in relation to fiction. For him, fully understanding the ways in which characters in a novel would act in their given situations "requires [from the author] a sagacity scarcely less than divine" (*PPW* 5:301). This requirement of full and total knowledge of the psychology of a character is slightly relaxed in the case of history writing as the decisions taken by the "personages" are recorded in the events of history. The issue, then, is one of reconstruction and recovery, rather than one of complete and consistent invention (*PPW* 5:301).

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339 Rousseau, *Émile ou De l'éducation*, p. 222.

Nevertheless, reconstruction and recovery are only possible with evidence, and evidence itself is faulty and fragmentary. As a consequence, Godwin acknowledges that historians fictitiously reconstruct the past by interpreting the sources they have. In writing, a historian relies on evidence but, Godwin notes, “nothing is more uncertain, more contradictory, more unsatisfying, than the evidence of facts” (*PPW* 5:297). And thus, the historian must arrange “the broken fragments, and the scattered ruins of evidence”, telling the story that “they choose to tell” (*PPW* 5:297). In doing this, “it must be admitted” that the work produced by a historian “bears too near a resemblance to fable” (*PPW* 5:297). In other words, truth and fiction are both inextricably part of history for Godwin. This, he notes, is particularly true in the case of ancient history, where evidence is limited, but there is no indication that the same statements would not hold for other historical periods.

Godwin suggests that the best histories are those that successfully blend history and fiction. He considers as fundamentally flawed both the genre of “the mere chronicle of facts” – though of all historical genres, it comes “nearest the truth” – and a kind of historical scepticism based on “logical deduction and calculation of probabilities”, which he sees as “the mode principally prevalent in modern times” (*PPW* 5:297-8). The former is limited because it is “the mere skeleton of history”, it lacks “the muscles, the articulations, everything in which the life emphatically resides” (*PPW* 5:297). The latter is flawed because it is overly philosophical, and while it “may be of use as a whetstone upon which to sharpen our faculty of discrimination”, it cannot touch our sensitivity. It is not “pregnant with the most generous motives and the most fascinating examples” (*PPW* 5:297-8). In other words, both these genres lack the kind of interpretive and narrative features by which we are made to relate to history. They lack actors, motivations, and an adequate narrative logic from which we may “derive instruction” from history, understand the past, and relate, however imperfectly, to its actors (*PPW* 5:297). This is why Godwin suggests in ‘Of History and Romance’ that total veracity might not matter that much, or even be truly desirable.<sup>340</sup>

Godwin repeats this in the preface to the *History of Rome*. Here, he acknowledges the existence of a scholarly debate concerning the veracity of certain episodes of Roman history

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340 For a slightly different take on this issue, based on Godwin’s understanding of reading practices, see: Noelle Gallagher, ‘Don Quixote and the Sentimental Reader of History in the Works of William Godwin’, in *Historical Writing in Britain, 1688-1830: Visions of History*, ed. by Ben Dew and Fiona L. Price (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 162–81 (pp. 169–70).

only to dismiss it, especially in the case of a history for children, because he sees it as undermining the very purpose of history: to provide useful moral examples. He writes:

It has been disputed whether Mucius ever thrust his hand into the fire, whether Curtius leaped the gulph, or Regulus returned to Carthage; and some writers, following up on this hint, have endeavoured, by sophistical reasonings and subtle distinctions, to set aside almost every example of Roman virtue on record. [...] Youth is not the period of criticism and disquisition. If these narratives are to be destroyed, let that task be reserved for a riper age [...]; in the mean time let our children reap the benefits of such instructive and animating examples (*GHoR* iv-v).

Bringing back the language of “fables”, that he had already deployed in the essay ‘Of History and Romance’, Godwin argues in this preface that even if the stories are untrue, they remain more useful than true history because they are “more full of moral, and of encouragement to noble sentiments and actions, than all the other narratives, *fictitious or true*, which mere man ever produced” (*GHoR* v).<sup>341</sup> Godwin thus considers full truthfulness no more fundamental for histories for children than for adults.

## II. EXEMPLARITY, OR THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY.

The question of truth and fiction in history is linked to Godwin’s conception of history as providing instructive examples and a believable, if not necessarily truthful, narrative. This reveals Godwin’s position in a long-standing debate in eighteenth-century Britain “between those who identified history primarily as a faithful narrative and those who saw it above all as a literature of instruction”.<sup>342</sup> In his study on the use of Rome in the Romantic period, Jonathan Sachs has pushed this line of argument, showing how Godwin’s articulation of Roman examples “provides key evidence for the continuity of Godwin’s political, philosophic, and literary positions”.<sup>343</sup> In particular, he links Godwin’s use of Rome to an educational programme seeking to provide examples, serving as “historical proof of the possibility of general benevolence”, and as guides to action.<sup>344</sup> By contrast, Rowland Weston

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<sup>341</sup> My emphasis. For the parallel argument in “Of History and Romance” see: *PPW* 5:297.

<sup>342</sup> Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 21–22.

<sup>343</sup> Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity*, p. 66.

<sup>344</sup> Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity*, p. 72.

has argued that by the early 1800s, Godwin had sided with Adam Smith and repudiated the Stoic ideal of classical, heroic exemplary virtue, in favour of “more naturalistic depictions of domestic sociability”.<sup>345</sup>

While I do not necessarily disagree with Sachs’s interpretation of Godwin’s use of Rome, especially when it comes to his interpretation of *Political Justice* and how it relates to the development of the novel as a genre, it is worth extending these reflections to the rest of Godwin’s children’s histories for two reasons. Firstly, it should be noted that Godwin’s comments on the subject in ‘Of History and Romance’ do not include strict distinctions between ancient and modern history. Secondly, even if we were only to restrict ourselves to a discussion of Rome, Sachs only cursorily deals with Godwin’s *History of Rome*, simply declaring that it relies “on exemplary heroes” thus providing “tidy moral lessons”.<sup>346</sup> Moreover, Weston’s challenge to reading Godwin as an exemplary historian deserves more attention. There is no doubt that by the early nineteenth century Godwin partly shifted focus from the heroically perfect to the domestic, proximate and fallible, a point to which I will return later, but I am far from sure that this amounted to a thorough repudiation of classical exemplarity.

Weston’s account of the rejection of classical exemplarity relies on Godwin’s *Life of Chaucer* in the broader context of his novel-writing and the revisions of *Political Justice*. In this reading, Godwin’s early nineteenth-century positive re-appraisal of certain aspects of an idealised feudal order, such as “the (often overlooked) paternalistic concern of social superiors to their inferior” (in the *Life of Chaucer*) is combined with a more sceptical outlook on progress (in the *Enquirer* and in the second and third editions of *Political Justice*), and a new emphasis on domestic sensibility, sympathy, and “the quotidian” (especially in the novels).<sup>347</sup> Taken together, these are indicative of a gradual rejection of the ideal of the “disengaged,” rational, “self-conscious” benevolent individual, associated with “republican Rome” and “‘puritan’ modernity”.<sup>348</sup>

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345 Weston, ‘Politics, Passion and the “Puritan Temper”’, pp. 466–68.

346 Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity*, p. 17.

347 Weston, ‘Politics, Passion and the “Puritan Temper”’, p. 462.

348 Weston, ‘Politics, Passion and the “Puritan Temper”’, p. 467.

However, like many others in the early nineteenth century, Godwin maintained an emphasis on classical Roman exemplars. In the preface to the *History of Rome*, Godwin claims that he “endeavour[ed] to do justice to [...] Fabricius, and Regulus, and Camillus, and Scipio”, who are “so delineated [...] as should best excite the admiration of the young student” (*GHoR* iii). Furthermore, in the body of the text we find the two Decii explicitly referred to as “illustrious” examples of courage, and virtue, whose dedication and public-spirited sacrifice “encouraged and shamed” Roman soldiers to fight (*GHoR* 95). In defence of Weston, it could be argued that Godwin half-heartedly held onto this form of exemplarity, in order to remain within the traditional bounds of a popular genre and maximize sales. However, we find an open commitment to the forward-looking form of exemplarity that Jonathan Sachs discusses, and to the excellence of the Roman republicans in the *Letter of Advice to a Young American* (1818). There, Godwin writes:

Another thing that may be a great and most essential aid to cultivating moral sentiments, will consist in our studying the best models, and figuring to ourselves the most excellent things of which human nature is capable. For this purpose there is nothing so valuable as the histories of Greece and Rome (*PPW* 5:321).

Unlike the ‘classical’ or ‘neo-classical’ histories which emphasised the need to imitate (or avoid imitating) the examples of “men of action” and whose literary models were often followed by children’s authors,<sup>349</sup> Godwin emphasises the usefulness of contemplating their behaviour for the development of “moral sentiments”. Godwin’s exemplarity, then, is dependent on a combination of sensibility, sympathy, and the intellectual work of representing “to ourselves the most excellent things of which human nature is capable”, which leads to understanding the virtues rather than simply imitating virtuous actions. It is in this spirit that Godwin recommends the study of the Middle Ages, which, he claims provides better examples domestic practices than “the purest ages of antiquity” (*PPW* 5:322). In so doing, Godwin modifies exemplarity in order for it to be less narrowly defined, but he still ultimately upholds the exemplary value of history.

The sentimental exemplary frame of the *Letter of Advice to a Young American* gives us a first taste of the thorough re-description of exemplarity that Godwin attempts in the first years of

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349 Nadel, p. 314.

the nineteenth century. In the oft-ignored *Essay on the Sepulchres* (1809),<sup>350</sup> Godwin proposes to mark the burial places of, in the first instance, the British “illustrious dead” with “a white cross of wood, with a wooden slab at the foot of it” (*PPW* 6:7). As Rowland Weston has shown, Godwin argued that this memorial would create the conditions for a sympathetic, imaginary contemplation of the exemplary dead. In this contemplation, a “community of the living and the dead” (to use Weston’s phrase) emerges.<sup>351</sup> In this community, the dead come to life. For Godwin, they are “not dead”, but “still with us in their stories, in their words, in their writings, in the consequences that do not cease to flow fresh from what they did” (*PPW* 6:23). Thanks to this community and the sympathetic and sentimental form of exemplarity, the contemplator is likely to engage in individual and social reform.

What is perhaps even more crucial is the variety of exemplary figures that Godwin mentions in the *Essay*, whom he considers to be “the genuine heroes of the times that have been, [...] the reformers, the instructors, and improvers of their contemporaries” (*PPW* 6:6). Alongside “Fabricius, and Regulus, and Gracchus, and Scipio” – Roman republican figures embodying the classical virtues of self-effacement and public spirit and military patriotism – we find philosophers, poets and divines, such as “Socrates, and Plato, [...] Chaucer, and Milton, and Thomas Aquinas, and Thomas à Becket”, and even fictional characters such as “Don Quixote” and “Clarissa Harlowe” (*PPW* 6: 23-24). Godwin further suggests that it is in fact the writers that have the best claim to our attention, especially when compared with the military heroes, for:

Military and naval achievements are of temporary operation: the victories of Cimon and Scipio are passed away; these great heroes have dwindled into a name; but whole Plato, and Xenophon, and Virgil have descended to us, undefaced, undismembered, and complete. [...] I can ruminate upon their lessons and sentiments at leisure, till my whole soul is lighted up with the spirit of these authors (*PPW* 6:28).

Thus, we understand the presence, if fleeting, of great authors and thinkers in the histories of Greece, Rome and England, alongside traditional republican heroes.

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350 Notable and illuminating commentaries on this text nevertheless include: Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, chap. 12; Weston, ‘History, Memory, and Moral Knowledge’.

351 Weston, ‘History, Memory, and Moral Knowledge’, p. 652.

Given this extension and reshaping of exemplarity as a sympathetic relationship with the “illustrious dead”, we can easily understand the general project of Godwin’s histories for children as a new form of exemplary history, adapted to his reformism as well as his political, aesthetic and philosophical outlooks. Instead of providing “neat moral lessons”, Godwin supplies a wider set of examples that can serve as the basis upon which the young reader will build “moral sentiments”.<sup>352</sup> The point is not for the student to simply imitate or emulate the glorious dead, but rather to understand and combine as far as possible, the different “excellencies” in the history of politics, everyday life, and literature, so that they can become “independent and generous” individuals, ready to contribute to the reform and improvement of society (PPW 5:322).

### III. A PRACTICAL COURSE OF HISTORICAL EDUCATION

Godwin considered history to be at its core a genre of instructive literature, directed at both male and female children, attached to truthfulness but not completely bound by it, and intended to provide a variety of exemplary figures, taken from the worlds of politics, philosophy, literature and art. In spite of this, these broad reflections on historical distance and the purpose of history only offer certain hints concerning the establishment of a clear practical programme for Godwinian historical education. This may appear trivial: after all, Godwin’s practical programme of historical education is presented in the very act of publishing histories of Rome, Greece and England. It may have been, however, that this was solely motivated by material interest, given that these histories were commonly taught at school and understood to be useful. By considering them in the broader context of Godwin’s writings on historical education, we can specify what Godwin considered to be crucial topics or periods in the study of history, in particular concerning the *History of England*. In short, we can understand some further reasons why Godwin chose specifically to write a *History of England*, a *History of Rome* and a *History of Greece*.

To do this, we must return to the letters Godwin sent to the “young American”, Joseph V. Bevan. The young man began a correspondence with Godwin while touring England, Scotland and Ireland in the early nineteenth century. Godwin saw this as an opportunity to publish on education again under his own name. This allowed him to restate and reclaim

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<sup>352</sup> On this, see the preface to *The Enquirer*, especially the last paragraph (PPW 5:79)

some of the arguments he presented pseudonymously in his children's books. Thus, he writes that his views on education can be found "in the Preface to a small book for children, entitled, 'Scripture Histories, given in the words of the original', in two volumes" (PPW 5:320). The first letter was published in 1818 in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and soon after circulated in Philadelphia's *Analytic Magazine*. History, both ancient and modern, formed a large part of the course of education, while poetry (as well as criticism), philosophy, and languages were the other main components of Godwin's recommended course of education. In addition to developing the exemplary value of history and linking it to the development of our "moral sentiments", Godwin claims that there are three specific periods, antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the seventeenth century, and three distinct geographical spaces, Greece, the former Roman empire, and Britain, the study of which is particularly well-adapted to the purposes Godwin lays out. Unsurprisingly, these are all covered in Godwin's histories for children.

Concerning ancient history, it is worth noting that between 1797 and 1818, Godwin softened his stance on the use of modern histories and historical abridgements. In *The Enquirer*, he had forcefully condemned both in his essay 'Of the Study of the Classics', going so far as to claim that "nothing is so wretched a waste of time as the study" of such modern texts. He recommended instead Greek and Latin authors (PPW 5:100). By the time he writes the letter to Bevan, he is ready to heartily recommend "Rollin's Ancient History, and Vertot's Revolutions of Rome", along with ancient historians, such as Plutarch, Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus (PPW 5:321-2). It is hard to say with certainty whether it was writing abridgements that made Godwin change his mind, or if it was a change of heart that gave him the energy to write abridgements. Yet, Godwin's remarks in the preface of the *Pantheon* already indicate a turn to a more inclusive educational project, which does not necessarily rely on the knowledge of Greek or Latin. After all, if you have read *The Pantheon*, he writes, "there is no absolute necessity that these productions [of Homer, Horace, and Virgil] should be read at all" (GP vi).

Godwin's comments on the study of the history of England are even more striking. I mentioned above that Godwin considered the Middle Ages to be of crucial importance in education, as the code of chivalry and the knights are particularly useful social examples. In addition, Godwin writes in his *Letter of Advice to a Young American* that the "feudal system

is one of the most extraordinary productions of the human mind” (PPW 5:327). He argues that the philosophy of the Middle Ages, and the conditions that formed it, require further attention. This is part of Godwin’s agenda in the *Life of Chaucer*, where he also finds a much decried medieval practice, the tournament, to be particularly striking for the imagination, given the ideals of chivalry.<sup>353</sup> Correspondingly, the first edition of the *History of England*, and the later ‘luxury editions’ all contain the engraving of a medieval tournament, accompanied by a discussion of “certain features of courage, refinement and humanity” that characterise the figure of the knight (GHoE 78).

“Next to the age of feudality and chivalry,” Godwin continues, the seventeenth century is most worthy of study (PPW 5: 327). As the correspondence carries on, however, we can clearly see that Godwin is referring to the Civil War and the period of the Commonwealth which he had already discussed in *Mandeville*, and to which he would return in his major work of historiography, the *History of the Commonwealth* (1824-1828). Furthermore, in his last letter to Bevan, he makes it clear that it is not just the period that should be studied, but Godwin’s own pantheon of heroes: “Milton, Algernon Sydney, Martin, Vane, President Bradshaw, President Scott, his successor in office Ludlow, Henry Nevil, Henry Ireton, Robert Blake” (PPW 5:337). Many of these names reappear among others in a letter Godwin sent to Percy Shelley on 8 June 1818, in which he presents an idea for a book that “Mary, perhaps, would like to write”. This book, “to be called *The Lives of the Commonwealth’s Men*” would be a collective biography of the “genuine Republicans” of the Civil War and Commonwealth, with whose politics Godwin sympathised and whose names were held in contempt as “Regicides”.<sup>354</sup> With this list of republican characters, whose lives Godwin wanted to vindicate, two questions must be raised: that of the politics of historical education, and more specifically that of the politics of Godwin’s histories for children, to which we now turn, and the question of the place of biography in Godwinian education, to which I return in chapter 7.

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353 William Godwin, *Life of Chaucer, the Early English Poet: Including Memoirs of His Near Friend and Kinsman, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster: With Sketches of the Manners, Opinions, Arts and Literature of England in the Fourteenth Century*, 2 vols (London: Richard Phillips, 1803), vol. 1, pp. 125–127.

354 Godwin to Shelley, 8 June 1818. MS.Abinger c. 66, fols. 44-45 (original); c. 19, fols. 73-74 (fair copy); c. 77 fols. 53-55 (paginated copy in unknown hand).

## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **HISTORICAL REFORM:**

### **POLITICS AND GODWIN'S CHILDREN'S HISTORIES** \_\_\_\_\_

In addition to criticising Trimmer's Concise History of England, Comprised in a Set of Easy Lessons Illustrated by Engravings because it ignores the cultural dimensions of English history, Godwin rejects the work on political grounds. "Mrs. Trimmer" Godwin writes, "is the most resolute advocate for despotism and arbitrary power we remember to have met with for a century past under the name of an historian." He illustrates this by turning to the seventeenth century and the conflict between the Crown and Parliament, "to which", he claims, "we [the English] are indebted for all the liberties we enjoy".<sup>355</sup> For Godwin, and for many Whigs and radicals at the time, this conflict was central to the establishment of English liberties because it led to the imposition of limits on the power of the monarch. They saw Charles I as an illegitimate or at least unworthy monarch precisely because he sought to wield absolute power and opposed a Parliament that defended liberty. In that sense, the war was just and justified: it was a conflict over the preservation of liberty. Godwin thus condemns Trimmer's historical narrative because it portrays Parliament as an unjust aggressor against a legitimate king. For Godwin, then, children's histories appear to be a space for the circulation of political ideas and the presentation of political arguments through historiography, not just a space to reconsider the status and form of history.

## **ENGLAND (1): THE CIVIL WAR AND THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION**

### **I. POLITICAL CONTROVERSIES IN HISTORIES FOR ADULTS (1750-1800)**

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, historical writing was a platform for political arguments about the state of British politics and the legitimacy of the British government after the Glorious Revolution. This spanned the entire political spectrum of the times: on the one hand, authors such as David Hume put forward histories that challenged those written in the Whig tradition and attacked the received views on the reign of the Stuarts and the Civil War. On the other hand, Whigs and radicals, such as Catharine Macaulay and John Millar, wrote histories to counter the Humean narrative of the Civil War, but disagreed on the interpretation of the Glorious Revolution. Though Godwin had not read either Catharine Macaulay or John Millar's views on the Civil War and the Glorious Revolution in 1806, my point here is to indicate the variety of political vantage points concerning the history of the

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355 MS. Abinger c. 29 fol. 115v.

period, which started with the events leading up to the Civil War and ended with the revolution of 1688. As an avid reader, an educated individual and a member of literary and political circles, Godwin knew and understood these different positions.<sup>356</sup>

Hume praised Charles I and his character, going so far as to even “shed a generous tear” at his fate.<sup>357</sup> At the same time, Hume emphasised the Commons’ claims to increased power rather than the absolutist tendencies of the Crown, thus shifting the weight of responsibility for the war onto Parliament, while condemning attempts to resist established political authority.<sup>358</sup> All in all, as Hugh Trevor-Roper noted, Hume considered that “the structure of English society contained the means of correction” and, consequently, that “there was no need, in the 1640s, of civil war”.<sup>359</sup> Catharine Macaulay gave her *History of England* a different and much more radical edge than other eighteenth-century histories.<sup>360</sup> Her use of history was deeply politically motivated as a republican response to the generous loyalist treatment of Charles I by Hume and Clarendon.<sup>361</sup> It also put forward a defence of a republican political order and advocated the liberties of women.<sup>362</sup> To do so, Macaulay deployed different variants of the vocabulary of liberty. She also had recourse to the trope of the “Norman Yoke”, a radical motif serving to ground demands for increased participation and liberties in a mythical past of Anglo-Saxon freedom: the old constitution.<sup>363</sup> Like

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356 See Godwin’s comment about ‘Hume and the whig historians’ in *PPW* 5: 300. For a broader discussion on these issues, see: Morrow, ‘Republicanism and Public Virtue’, pp. 645–47; and more recently: John Morrow, ‘Introduction’, in *History of the Commonwealth of England*, by William Godwin, ed. by John Morrow, 8 vols (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2002).

357 David Hume, ‘My Own Life’ in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. by Eugene Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), pp. xxxi–xli (p. xxxviii).

358 See for example Hume’s comments on the arguments that immediately preceded the beginning of the Civil War: David Hume, *The History of Great Britain, Under the House of Stuart*, The Second Edition Corrected, 2 vols (London: A. Millar, 1759), pp. 320–21. See more generally the chapter 6 of the reign of Charles I which deals with the years 1641 and 1642; See also: Mark Salber Phillips, “‘The Most Illustrious Philosopher and Historian of the Age’: Hume’s *History of England*”, in *A Companion to Hume*, ed. by Elizabeth Schmidt Radcliffe (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), pp. 406–22 (p. 416); R. C. Richardson, *The Debate on the English Revolution* (London: Methuen, 1977), p. 46.

359 H. R. Trevor-Roper, ‘David Hume, Historian’, in *History and the Enlightenment*, ed. by John Robertson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 120–28 (p. 126).

360 Catharine Macaulay, *The History of England, from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line*, 8 vols. (London, J. Nourse, 1763–1783).

361 For a biography of Catharine Macaulay, see: Bridget Hill, *The Republican Virago: The Life and Times of Catharine Macaulay, Historian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); for a different take, with a transatlantic side, see: Kate Davies, *Catharine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); for an intellectual history of Macaulay’s feminism in relation to her *History* see: Wendy Robins, ‘Contending for Laurels: Catharine Macaulay: History and Feminism in Eighteenth-Century, England’ (unpublished PhD Dissertation, European University Institute, 2011).

362 Robins, pp. 97, 181; Hill, p. 31; Philip Hicks, ‘Catharine Macaulay’s Civil War: Gender, History, and Republicanism in Georgian Britain’, *Journal of British Studies*, 41.02 (2002), 170–98 (pp. 174–75).

363 Hill, pp. 31–32; on Macaulay’s languages of liberty, see: Robins, pp. 181–216; on her use of the constitution,

Godwin in his essay ‘Of History and Romance’, she presents the period of the Commonwealth as “the brightest age that ever adorned the page of history”, contrasting it with the situation following the ‘Glorious Revolution’.<sup>364</sup>

Like Catharine Macaulay, the Scottish writer John Millar sought to challenge Hume’s interpretation of the history of England. In his *Historical View of the English Government from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain to the Revolution in 1688*, published in 1803, he specifically identified what he saw as the authoritarian tendencies of Charles I, who is described as having “remained immovable in his plans of despotism”, in the period immediately preceding the Civil War.<sup>365</sup> However, his interpretation of the Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689, with the accession of William of Orange to the throne and the enactment of the Bill of Rights in 1689 differed from Macaulay’s. For Catharine Macaulay, the system established after 1689:

Opens a wider field for more corrupt abuses, than ever were all the monarchical, oligarchical, and aristocratical tyrannies in the world, because, under the specious appearance of democratical privilege, the people are really and truly enslaved to a small part of the community.<sup>366</sup>

In contrast, for John Millar, “we must ever look up to our great deliverer [William of Orange] with admiration and with gratitude”, as he conducted “the important revolution” that delivered “solid advantages [...] to Britain, and to all Europe”.<sup>367</sup> Following the Whig tradition, he interprets the political order after 1689 as a victory against despotism and a return to the spirit of the English constitution which “may be traced back to very remote antiquity”.<sup>368</sup>

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see: Ann Thomson, ‘Catharine Macaulay et La Constitution Anglo-Saxonne’, in *Le Joug Normand. L’interprétation de La Conquête Normande Dans La Pensée Politique Anglaise Des 17e et 18e Siècles*, ed. by Pierre Lurbe (Caen: Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2004), pp. 123–38. For Godwin’s comments on the period *PPW* 5:296-297.

364 Hill, p. 35.

365 John Millar, *An Historical View of the English Government, from the Settlement of the Saxons in Britain to the Revolution in 1688*, ed. by Mark Phillips and Dale R. Smith (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2006), p. 544.

366 Macaulay, VIII, p. 330.

367 Millar, pp. 657–58.

368 Millar, p. 663.

In the opening decades of the nineteenth century, Godwin clarified his own historiographical and political position in relation to such views and showed an increasing interest in the period.<sup>369</sup> It appears in a brief comment in ‘Of History and Romance’, where Godwin already describes it as “the only portion of our history interesting to the heart of man” although “its noblest virtues are obscured by the vile jargon of fanaticism and hypocrisy” (PPW 5:296-297). In preparing to write the novel *Fleetwood* (1805), Godwin read the *Memoirs* of the Civil War republican Edmund Ludlow, and the Earl of Clarendon’s *History of the Rebellion*. Both Godwin’s final title for the novel and its working title, “Lambert”, are allusions to Commonwealth generals (CNM 5: v, vii). In 1806, he was under contract to write a history of England of his own, which would update, correct and eventually replace that of Hume. Like Catharine Macaulay, Godwin considered Hume far too generous with Charles I and the house of Stuart (PPW 5:327). This constitutes Godwin’s immediate context for dealing with the period in his *History of England* for children.

In the years that followed this publication, his interest in the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and their aftermath would continue growing. He dealt with one of his Commonwealth-era heroes, John Milton, in the *Lives of Edward and John Philips* (1815). His following novel, *Mandeville* (1817) is set at the time of the Civil War. Eventually; he wrote a four-volume *History of the Commonwealth of England* (1824-1828) which, as John Morrow has shown, amounted to an attempt to “rescue the Republicans” from misrepresentation,<sup>370</sup> and to “establish the English commonwealth as a ground for serious theoretical speculations on government”.<sup>371</sup>

## II. GODWIN THE CHILDREN’S WHIG?

For Godwin, the political conflict expressed through the historiography of the Civil War was to be conducted not only in histories for adults but also in those for children and schools. In his letters to Joseph Bevan, Godwin had already condemned Hume for his excessive “partiality” to the Stuarts (PPW 5:327). There is a similar partiality in the works of Sarah Trimmer and George Davys, who both refuse to give any legitimacy to the claims of

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369 I am grateful to Pamela Clemit for bringing this point to my attention. See also her discussion in *The Godwinian Novel*, pp. 83–84.

370 It was recently reprinted in: William Godwin, *History of the Commonwealth of England*, ed. by John Morrow, 8 vols (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2002). The quote is from Morrow’s ‘Introduction’, p. xiv.

371 Morrow, ‘Republicanism and Public Virtue’, p. 648.

parliamentarians, but adopt a positive view of the king, his character and his government. In Trimmer's account, members of the House of Commons are described as individuals who simply desired to encroach upon the king's prerogatives. They did so deviously, by using "the King's necessities [to crush the rebellion in Scotland]" in order to seize "the opportunity of accomplishing their original purpose of lessening his prerogative" (*THoE* 2:77). Charles I, however, was "certainly a very virtuous character", "though not free from faults" (*THoE* 2:95-96). In his version of the story, Davys sheds an equally gentle light on the king, whom he describes as a man with "a mild and gentle disposition" and who "would have been glad to have been at peace with all men" (*DHoE* 181). Being in complete opposition to the claims of Parliament, Davys does not even adopt the term of 'Civil War'. Instead, he refers to it as a "rebellion" against a lawful king of good character (*DHoE* 182, 184). In contrast, Godwin claims that Parliament had "resolved to place the liberties of their country on a firm foundation" (*GHoE* 141), avoiding the pitfall of absolutist monarchy, sought after by Charles I. The king is therefore presented first and foremost as the man who "resolved to call no more parliaments" and who thus would have turned England into "one of the most despotic governments in the world" (*GHoE* 142). In contrast to both Davys and Trimmer, Godwin clearly sided with Parliament and his narrative reflects this bias and his political activism.

Descriptions of the regicide provide the occasion to go further into the details of the construction of the politics of children's histories of England. They reveal a specific instance in which historical distance and sentiment are used politically in children's literature. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his parliamentary bias, Godwin passes over the execution of Charles I quite quickly, leaving it in the background and far from the mind of the reader. Davys and Trimmer bring it to the forefront and follow Hume in encouraging their readers to "shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I".<sup>372</sup> Trimmer relates that it was impossible "to describe the grief, indignation and astonishment, which took place throughout the whole nation" after the regicide (*THoE* 2:94-95). Davys's account of the execution is in a similar spirit. He speaks of the "sad sight" which caused "spectators" to show "the most mournful signs of grief and sorrow" as they witnessed "so horrible a deed" (*DHoE* 187). Trimmer makes use of an additional tool to reduce distance: she accompanies her sentimental description with a chillingly detailed illustration of the execution of Charles I, entitled "King Charles's Martyrdom", thus generating both narrative and visual proximity (*THoE* 2:93).

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372 Hume, 'My Own Life', p. xxxviii.

Despite Godwin's growing interest in the period of the Commonwealth, it is superficially treated in his *History of England* for children. He does not mention republicanism or the political order established before Cromwell's assumption of the title of Lord Protector. This is perhaps not surprising, given the war with Revolutionary France, and the association of republicanism with the French regime, revolutionary demands and, ultimately, disorder at home and abroad. In this context, it would have been difficult to present and defend, especially without harming the Juvenile Library. Nevertheless, Godwin's treatment of the figure of Oliver Cromwell and his political impact differs markedly from that of his contemporaries. In the 1806 edition, Cromwell is described as "a pitiful, canting hypocrite; but he governed this nation with more vigour and glory, than any king that ever sat upon the throne" (*GHoE* 138). In the revised edition of the text, published in 1807, Godwin keeps the second half of the description, but more soberly adapts the beginning to claim that Cromwell "was a great pretender to godliness and humility".<sup>373</sup> By contrast, popular authors like Davys and Trimmer condemned Cromwell and the Commonwealth without mercy. After simply describing the Commonwealth as a usurpation of the crown by Parliament, they depict Cromwell as a man of pure ambition, whose "government was detested by the whole nation" (*THoE* 2:109, see also *DHoE* 190-191), and who became "tormented in his mind" and afraid for his life as a result (*DHoE* 195).<sup>374</sup> Rather than presenting Cromwell and his administration as wholly incompetent and morally wrong, (though he does criticise Cromwell's morals) Godwin pays greater attention to his political greatness, particularly in an international context. "Since the reign of queen Elizabeth", Godwin writes, "England had had very little influence among the nations of Europe: Cromwel raised his country to the highest importance" (*GHoE* 140).

Godwin's presentation of Cromwell stands in sharp contrast to that of popular works of history for children, yet it is not radical. It avoids the extreme antipathy of radicals and republicans like Catharine Macaulay and that of the high Tories. It is carefully crafted to follow the more moderate views on Cromwell that circulated in historical writing for adults in the eighteenth century, which readily admit Cromwell's success in foreign policy.<sup>375</sup>

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373 Baldwin [William Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, p. 148.

374 See also, for example: Elizabeth Helme, *The History of England Related in Familiar Conversations, by a Father to His Children: Interspersed with Moral and Instructive Remarks, and Observations on the Most Leading and Interesting Subjects*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1804), vol. 2, p. 154.

375 Blair Worden, *Roundhead Reputations: The English Civil Wars and the Passions of Posterity* (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 220. On Cromwell's reputation in the eighteenth century, see chap. 8 more generally. of.

However, there are two aspects of the chapter on Cromwell that are significantly more radical. First, the very inclusion of a specific chapter centred on Cromwell, as Pamela Clemit has noted, was radical in that it broke the sequence of legitimate monarchs that was followed by most children's historians at the time.<sup>376</sup> In a second, more radical move the reader is made to question whether Cromwell was, in fact, such a great man, despite his military abilities and the extent of his conquests, from a more republican perspective.

Closing the chapter on Cromwell, Godwin puts the achievements of one of his heroes, the poet and republican John Milton, in the spotlight. Among the achievements Godwin decides to highlight are Milton's masterpiece, *Paradise Lost*, and the more significantly political *Defence for the People of England*, in which Milton attempted "to prove that they [the people] had done right to cut off king Charles's head" (*GHOE* 141). The emphasis on the *Defence for the People of England* is striking not only because Godwin presents a defence of regicide, but also because it fundamentally brings literature and politics together. This move, April London suggests in her discussion of the *Lives of Edward and John Philips* that this move was particularly radical in the early nineteenth century as there was an increasingly vocal argument attempting to separate the literary from the political.<sup>377</sup> In this context, the open question to the child reader with which Godwin ends the chapter then becomes both more pressing and more radical: "Which was the greater man, Cromwel, the politic and successful lord protector of England, or Milton, his Latin secretary?" (*GHOE* 151).<sup>378</sup>

Given Godwin's politics, the Glorious Revolution receives a surprisingly warm retelling, though he does not present it with as much flourish as George Davys and Sarah Trimmer. In the *History of England*, he associates the Glorious Revolution with victory in the "contention between power and liberty", seeing in William of Orange's accession and the passing of the Bill of Rights the settlement "in favour of freedom [of] all the questions which, of late years, had been at issue between the king and the people" (*GHOE* 162). This differs significantly from his presentation of the events in 'Of History and Romance'. There, he wrote:

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376 Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', p. 66.

377 London, p. 38.

378 The comparison between Cromwell and Milton and Godwin's views on it are taken up again in William Godwin, *Lives of Edward and John Philips: Nephews and Pupils of Milton. Including Various Particulars of the Literary and Political History of Their Times* (Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1815), pp. 25-31.

From the moment that the grand contest excited under the Stuarts was quieted by the Revolution, our history assumes its most insipid and insufferable form. It is the history of negotiations and tricks; it is the history of revenues and debts; it is the history of corruption and political profligacy; but it is not the history of genuine, independent man (*PPW* 5: 297).

Either Godwin changed his views on the Revolution between the writing of the essay ‘Of History and Romance’, the publication of the *History of England for the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, and again when he composed his republican *History of the Commonwealth*, or he considered it problematic or overly risky to write a radical history of the seventeenth century in a book for use in schools. The latter seems more likely. Godwin was soliciting money and advertising his business to aristocratic Whigs such as Henry Vassall Fox (Lord Holland) and James Maitland (Lord Lauderdale).<sup>379</sup> Adopting a radical stance on the Glorious Revolution would have probably harmed his sales and made his situation all the more precarious. Furthermore, it could have damaged the reputation of Edward Baldwin by attracting fatally hostile criticism, making things even worse. These material considerations aside, Godwin's relative stability of opinion in the nineteenth century should be noted alongside his continued commitment to a version of republicanism that was embodied by heroes such as Algernon Sydney and John Milton.

## ENGLAND (2): THE KING'S LEGITIMACY CONTESTED

There are more surprising places in English history where Godwin inserted different political twists, especially concerning the legitimacy and powers of kings. The less negative characterisation of Cromwell and indeed his very inclusion as a ruler of England already provide an example of this.<sup>380</sup> Godwin's treatment of the peasants' rebellion of 1381 and his retelling of the story of Perkin Warbeck are two further examples of his taking a critical stance on the established history of the English monarchy. With these, we find a radical pattern to Godwin's *History of England*, which gives it a sharper political edge.

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379 See, for example, his letters to Henry Vassall Fox (Lord Holland), dated 1806 and 1807, MS. Abinger c. 18 fols. 68-69 and 98-99, see also his letter to James Maitland (Lord Lauderdale) on 15 November 1806, MS. Abinger c. 18. 79-80.

380 Clemit, ‘Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25’, p. 66.

## I. WAT TYLER AND RICHARD II

In Godwin's *History of England*, the story of Wat Tyler serves as a way to criticise the monarchy by reversing the common narrative, related by George Davys and Sarah Trimmer, of the noble actions of the young Richard II. The basic facts remain the same in all three texts. Under the last of the Plantagenets, a poll-tax was levied by the Crown. The people took up arms against this under the leadership of a man assuming the name of Wat Tyler. They were then met in the field by the king, Richard II, who eventually restores order to the country after the death of Wat Tyler (*GHoE* 91-93, *THoE* 1:146-149, *DHoE* 81-83). However, the way in which order is restored differs greatly between Davys, Trimmer and Godwin.

In Davys and Trimmer's texts, after the death of Wat Tyler at the hands of the king's followers, Richard II comes "very weakly guarded" to Smithfield and conducts his noblest action (indeed, the only one he is commended for). In the words of Sarah Trimmer:

Observing the mob preparing to revenge [Tyler's] death, the king boldly advanced, and with an affable and intrepid countenance cried out, 'What is the matter, my good people? Are ye angry that you have lost your leader. I am your king; I will be your leader.' On which they implicitly followed him; and soon after all the rebels submitted (*THoE* 1:147-148).

The king is described here in a very positive light. His words seem to have a power to pacify the crowd and break the spell that Wat Tyler and the "seditious preacher", John Ball, put on "the minds of the common people" (*THoE* 1:147). Thus, the power of the king is asserted and legitimated and his role as the head of the nation is vindicated.<sup>381</sup>

Godwin, by contrast, paints a wholly different picture. Instead of showing "prudence and presence of mind" (*THoE* 1:149), the king is portrayed as a trickster:

King Richard rode forth from his own people to meet the rebels: he called out to *follow him who was their king, and he would grant them whatever they should require*: he led them into the open fields: while they were debating on terms with

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<sup>381</sup> For Davys's essentially similar treatment, see *DHoE* 82-83

him, a considerable military force was collected: the multitude lost their opportunity, and the insurrection was soon after suppressed and vigorously punished (*GHoE* 92-93).

In this narrative the king does not restore order peacefully: his authority does not rest on the truth and power of his words and leadership, but rather on the power of the sword and dishonesty. Thus, while in Trimmer's text, Richard II is a kind, responsible king, in Godwin's story he is simply a tyrant. However, there is more to this case than simply a difference of fact and presentation. Godwin makes use of inventive narration to reconstruct this story as a struggle between liberty and oppression.

Godwin's retelling of Wat Tyler's rebellion is set in the context of a discussion on the subject of liberty. The author begins the chapter by establishing that "there was such a thing as liberty in England" at the time, "but it was confined to the lords and holders of estates" (*GHoE* 90). This is quickly emphasised by Godwin writing that "the greater part of the country people were slaves" (*GHoE* 90). This situation was beginning to change as "the commons, by means of the progress of trade and good sense, rose in process of time to a certain importance". This change was accelerating since "as much had been obtained", the people "naturally wished for more" (*GHoE* 90). The rebellion, then, comes after the Crown's imposition of a new tax: an attack on the peacefully and progressively obtained liberty of the commons. The story is thus partly set as a struggle between the liberty of the commons, defended by Wat Tyler and his "multitude" and the dominion of the king. This should not be over-interpreted. Godwin does not fully approve of the rebellion, and especially not its violence, which he condemns, with a rather typical elitism, as the "outrageous excesses" of the "common people" who "feel themselves masters" (*GHoE* 91). Nevertheless, the "opportunity" of the "multitude" is described as an attempt to entrench the liberty of the commons in a struggle against the power of the king.

## II. RICHARD III & PERKIN WARBECK

If the story of Richard II and Wat Tyler shows that monarchical power and just demands for liberty can be at odds, Godwin's re-telling of the story of Perkin Warbeck and Richard III raises questions about the very legitimacy of the English crown since at least the end of the

War of the Roses. The commonly accepted story is (and was, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) the following: after the death of Edward IV in April 1483, his brother Richard, Duke of Gloucester was chosen to govern England as Protector, until the accession of the late king's son, Edward V (aged 12 at the time), to the throne. In the summer of 1483, Richard devised a plot to seize the throne and had both of Edward IV's sons placed in the Tower of London, where they then disappeared. Both children are said to have been murdered in the late summer, on the orders of Richard, now King Richard III, though this was never ascertained. In the 1490s, during the reign of Henry VII, a man named Perkin Warbeck, backed by a number of European nobles, claimed to be Richard, Duke of York, son of Edward IV, and therefore legitimate heir to the throne of England. His rebellion was defeated, and in 1497 he confessed to being an impostor born in Tournai (now Belgium).<sup>382</sup>

In the *History of England*, however, Godwin openly doubts the conventional story of the murders in the tower: "Richard Crookback I believe was not crooked," he writes "and perhaps not a murderer" (*GHoE* 106). In the chapter introducing the reign of Henry VII, he provides evidence supporting this, relating that Perkin Warbeck "succeeded in convincing Margaret duchess of Burgundy, sister to Edward IV and Richard III, of the soundness of his pretensions" (*GHoE* 110). By contrast, in his *Stories Selected from the History of England*, John Wilson Croker echoes Oliver Goldsmith and foregrounds the imposture, presenting Perkin Warbeck as "the son of a poor Jew in Flanders".<sup>383</sup> Acknowledging that some misguided people still "believe that he was the true Plantagenet", Croker states that "Perkin himself at last confessed that he was not".<sup>384</sup> Unlike authors whose certainty is forcefully expressed, Godwin ends the discussion on Perkin Warbeck by recalling the doubts he expressed in the previous chapter: "Was he [Perkin] the duke of York or was he an impostor? In other words, which was the true murderer, Richard III, or his accuser, Henry VII? This is one of the most difficult questions in history" (*GHoE* 110).

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382 This story was and remains the source of controversy. See: Alison Weir, *Richard III and the Princes in the Tower* (Random House, 2014). See also the entries 'Edward V (1470-1483)', 'Richard, duke of York and duke of Norfolk (1473-1483)', 'Warbeck, Perkin (c. 1474-1499)' and 'Richard III (1452-1485)' in the *ODNB*.

383 J[ohn]. W[ilson] C[roker], *Stories Selected from the History of England from the Conquest to the Revolution*, Third Edition (London: John Murray, 1817), p. 125; see also in: Oliver Goldsmith, *An History of England in a Series of Letters from a Nobleman to His Son* (London: T. Carnan, 1786), I, p. 218.

384 Croker, p. 130. See also: Helme, *The History of England Related in Familiar Conversations, by a Father to His Children: Interspersed with Moral and Instructive Remarks, and Observations on the Most Leading and Interesting Subjects*, vol. 1, p. 284, and *DHoE*, pp. 126-127.

Pamela Clemit has already noted that the inclusion of Perkin Warbeck, and the serious character of Godwin's enquiry upset the usual order of English history.<sup>385</sup> The significance of this attack, however, can be better grasped given the revision Godwin makes to the 1806 text of the *History of England*, for the new stereotype edition published in 1812 and again in 1827, when it was re-printed by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy. Instead of openly doubting the murder, Godwin has the chapter on Richard III claim that "Richard Crookback reaped small advantage by his cruelty and usurpation: after a reign of two years he was slain in the battle of Bosworth".<sup>386</sup> However, this was only a small cosmetic change: throughout the editions the body of the text itself remained the same. We can therefore suppose that Godwin felt the need to react to pressures concerning the openly radical suggestion that Richard III was not a murderer, but was not willing to alter the rest of text and its subversive message. Godwin wanted his *History of England* to suggest the illegitimacy of the English crown following the War of the Roses, and especially that of the House of Tudor, which he described as particularly despotic (PPW 5:297). Despite the Whig nature of Godwin's *History of England* as a whole, it is clear that he did find the opportunity to introduce a radical critical edge, thus advancing subversive political opinions.

## GREECE, ROME AND THE BRITISH POLITICAL IMAGINATION

### I. USING THE CLASSICAL FOR MODERN PURPOSES

In his study of elite cultures in the eighteenth century, Philip Ayres noted "the propensity of the English aristocracy and gentry to fashion themselves as virtuous Romans in the century following the Revolution settlement of 1688-9."<sup>387</sup> Ayres argues that the appropriation of Roman models rhetorically underpinned the model of an aristocratic or oligarchic republic developed after 1688, and contributed to undermining the attempts at obtaining a "more thorough-going, democratising revolution than that already achieved."<sup>388</sup> Though this was especially true in the first half of the eighteenth century, references to ideals of Roman oligarchic virtue continued to be present in British political discourses, especially perhaps in

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385 Clemit, 'Philosophical Anarchism in the Schoolroom: William Godwin's Juvenile Library, 1805-25', pp. 63-67.

386 Edward Baldwin [Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, Stereotype edition (London: M.J. Godwin, 1812); Edward Baldwin [Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, A New Edition, Embellished with Portraits (London: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1827).

387 Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. xiii.

388 Ayres, p. 4.

Parliament. Burke thus appealed to such ideals when prosecuting Warren Hastings after his indictment for corruption and mismanagement in his Indian administration and “the Foxite Whigs” could identify “with the elder and younger Brutuses” in order to defend republican liberty in the context of the British response to the French Revolution.<sup>389</sup>

The American and French re-interpretation and re-appropriation of classical imagery, forms, and ideas in the late eighteenth century amounted to a dual challenge to the English perception of the 1688 settlement as based on the same classical virtues.<sup>390</sup> In continuity with these reformulations, the English Jacobins used ancient Greek and Roman history to advance their own political agenda. John Thelwall, for example, as Gregory Claeys notes, took inspiration from “the abuses of monarchy and aristocracy in ancient Rome” to draw parallels with the political situation in Britain in the 1790s. In the case of Thelwall, at least, this allowed him to draw on the political thought and action of figures such as Socrates, Demosthenes and Cicero when making arguments for radical political reform in Britain. It also enabled him to formally comply with Pitt and Grenville’s ‘Gagging Acts’ of 1795, which essentially criminalised radical speech.<sup>391</sup>

The description of ideals and the formulation of political claims based on classical history were also the result of political debates that operated throughout the British historiography on the period. These concerned both the legacy of the Republic and the Empire, providing examples of popular government, a mixed constitution and paradigmatic emperors.<sup>392</sup> Ancient history also offered a framework with which to describe British politics through analogy. In discussing Edward Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, J. G. A. Pocock notes Gibbon’s claim that the corruption of Rome was, in part, due

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389 Ayres, p. 166.

390 J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, Second Edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003) For the American case, see; Winterer Caroline, ‘From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America’, *The Journal of American History*, 91.4 (2005), 1264–1290. For the French case, see for example: Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture, 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 28–29, 33–34.. See also the recent critical assessment in Wilfried Nippel, *Ancient and Modern Democracy: Two Concepts of Liberty?*, trans. by Keith Tribe (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), chaps 4–5.

391 Claeys, pp. 140–41. On the ‘Gagging Acts’ see for example Godwin’s anonymously published *Considerations on Lord Grenville’s and Mr. Pitt’s Bills, concerning Treasonable and Seditious Practices, and Unlawful Assemblies in PPW 2*.

392 C Akça Ataç, ‘Roman Historiography of Eighteenth-Century Britain Beyond Gibbon: Ancient Norms of Empire for Moderns’, in *A Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, ed. by Sophie Bourgault and Robert Alan Sparling (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 469–503.

to the shift in control over the armies from the Senate “into the hands of the *imperatores*”. This, following Pocock, could easily function as an analogy for eighteenth-century Britain, where:

It could be alleged that their [the Hanoverian kings’] rule was reinforced by a standing army paid out of funds not wholly controlled by parliamentary grants, and that these funds extended the crown’s influence over parliament.<sup>393</sup>

What was true for domestic politics held for imperial politics too. As Kostas Vlassopoulos recently noted:

The history of the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, the relationships between ancient imperial centres and their colonies, or the connection between the expansion of the Roman Empire and the loss of Roman liberty could provide models of comprehension for unprecedented contemporary developments.<sup>394</sup>

The multiplication of references to Rome and the varieties of their meanings thus illustrate what Jonathan Sachs noted in *Romantic Antiquity*, namely that “the Roman past[...] was crucial in eighteenth-century Britain for articulating a coherent yet flexible set of models with which one could both attack or defend various models of political power”.<sup>395</sup> Although Rome undoubtedly loomed large in the late eighteenth century, references to ancient Greece also served the dual purpose of reviewing domestic politics and providing a model for imperial organization.

In particular, historians and philosophers sought to compare Britain with both Athens and Sparta, condemning or praising each city’s political, social and imperial organization depending on the subject at hand. More generally, the relationship between ancient Greece and the present was an important locus of debate, and different versions of political organisation at home and abroad were expressed in part by adopting or rejecting parts, or all

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393 J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 6 vols (Cambridge, U.K.; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2003), III, p. 314.

394 Kostas Vlassopoulos, ‘Imperial Encounters: Discourses on Empire and the Uses of Ancient History during the Eighteenth Century’, in *Classics and Imperialism in the British Empire*, ed. by Mark Bradley (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 29–53 (p. 32).

395 Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity*, p. 32; See also his: ‘Republicanism: Ancient Rome and Literary Modernity in British Romanticism’, in *Romans and Romantics*, ed. by Timothy Saunders and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 23–42.

of, ancient Greek political systems.<sup>396</sup> William Mitford's *History of Greece* (1784-1810) – mentioned with some politically motivated disapproval in Godwin's *Letter to a Young American* (PPW 5: 321) – was, for example, the work of a Tory member of Parliament, caught up in the debates around the French Revolution.<sup>397</sup> Its thorough condemnation of Athens was thus related to what Mitford perceived as a “disregard upon principle for property”, which found a parallel in revolutionary France.<sup>398</sup> Other historians, as Akça Ataç and Kostas Vlassopoulos have argued, saw in Sparta the kind of mixed government they admired in Britain, but ultimately found Athens to be a more useful model for imperial governance, even supplanting the Roman example.<sup>399</sup> As Anthony Pagden has shown, the Achaean League came to be viewed by figures like Andrew Fletcher and James Wilson as superior to both the Athenian and the Roman models for contemporary purposes. They saw in the relations between Greek city states a possible model for a world order based on both expansion and commerce.<sup>400</sup> In short, not only did the histories of ancient Greece and Rome provide exemplary characters, but they also gave models and a language to discuss and represent domestic and imperial politics.

Given, then, that ancient Greece and Rome were continually present as points of reference for British politics over the course of the long eighteenth century, how does Godwin use them? His considerations in *The Enquirer* leave little doubt concerning his views on the excellence of ancient republics and the ancient republicans compared with the character of his contemporaries. After all:

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396 For Sparta, see, for example, the recent brief philosophical survey in: Varad Mehta, ‘Sparta, Modernity, Enlightenment’, in *On Civic Republicanism: Ancient Lessons for Global Politics*, ed. by Neven Leddy and Geoffrey C Kellow (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2016), pp. 205–25; On Athens, see: Kyriacos Demetriou, ‘In Defence of the British Constitution: Theoretical Implications of the Debate over Athenian Democracy in Britain, 1770-1850’, *History of Political Thought*, 17.2 (1996), 280–297; Karen E. Whedbee, ‘The Tyranny of Athens: Representations of Rhetorical Democracy in Eighteenth-century Britain’, *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 33.4 (2003), 65–85. On a similar trend in France, see: Sophie Bourgault, ‘Philhellenism among the *Philosophes*: Ancient Greece in French Enlightenment Historiography’, in *A Companion to Enlightenment Historiography*, ed. by Sophie Bourgault and Robert Alan Sparling (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 437–68.

397 The following edition is usually considered authoritative: William Mitford, *The History of Greece*, 8 vols (London and Edinburgh: T. Cadell & Blackwood and sons, 1838).

398 Quoted in Nippel, p. 248. See also: Brendan A. Rapple, ‘Ideology and History: William Mitford’s History of Greece (1784-1810)’, *Papers on Language and Literature*, 37.4 (2001), 361–81; C Akça Ataç, ‘Imperial Lessons from Athens and Sparta: Eighteenth-Century British Histories of Ancient Greece’, *History of Political Thought*, 27.4 (2006), 642–60 (pp. 646–47).

399 Akça Ataç, ‘Imperial Lessons from Athens and Sparta’; Vlassopoulos, p. 42.

400 Anthony Pagden, *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-c. 1800* (Yale University Press, 1995), p. 188.

The ancients were giants, but we, their degenerate successors, are pygmies. There was something in the nature of the Greek and Roman republics that expanded the fire in the soul. He that sees not this, if he have had an adequate opportunity to see it, must be destitute of some of the first principles of discrimination. He that feels not the comparative magnitude of their views must be himself the partaker of a slow-working and unelevated soul (*PPW* 5:295).

However, in what way, if any, is this translated into the histories of Greece and Rome that he wrote “for the use of schools and young persons”? To use Pocock’s words, do these texts fulfil the “function of ancient history” at the time and “problematise modernity”?<sup>401</sup>

## II. THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

One of the first ways in which Godwin problematises his own time with the publication of the *History of Rome* is simply through the choice of its chronology and the related narrative choice of solely telling the history of the rise, decline, and eventual fall of the Roman Republic. By starting with the founding of Rome and ending soon after the final “thread [...] of Roman liberty was spun”, with the deaths of Brutus and Cassius (*GHoR* 256), Godwin emphasised the connections between Roman republicanism and liberty, showing the different points at which he interpreted the Romans as having compromised their own virtue. To round off his narrative, Godwin adds a chapter on the battle of Actium, and ends with one on Horace and Virgil. These are typographically and discursively distinct. In the first edition, they are printed in italics (a feature which disappears in the post-1825 editions),<sup>402</sup> and Godwin carefully notes that, “the quarrels of the tyrants make no proper part of the history of the Roman republic” (*GHoR* 256 – this remains in the later editions). Furthermore, and to emphasise the connections between excellence and the republic, he stresses that “the most eminent literary geniuses of Rome”, Horace and Virgil, “were bred under the republic” even though they “flourished in the court of the emperor Augustus” (*GHoR* 257).

In a sense, this was a dangerous move. Even though this type of chronology and structure was not completely unprecedented,<sup>403</sup> it was nevertheless quite unusual in the context of

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401 Pocock, III, p. 349.

402 See the editions published by Baldwin & Cradock in 1835, by Thomas Tegg in 1844, and by William Tegg in 1862.

403 See for instance: Anonymous, *A New Roman History, from the Foundation of Rome to the End of the*

publications for the use of schools and children. Authors of textbooks tended to carry the narrative at least onto the fall of the Western empire at the hands of Germanic tribes, as Goldsmith does in his *Roman History*, or even discuss – at more or less length – the fall of the Eastern Empire in 1453, as writers like Elizabeth Helme, Sarah Trimmer, Elizabeth Sewell and Julia Corner did.<sup>404</sup> Such books responded to and created an expectation. Reviewers writing for the *European Magazine and London Review* and the *Monthly Review* were thus critical of Godwin’s choice. In the former, the reviewer argued that the Empire and its “enormities” were the logical conclusion of the trajectory of the republic, thus forming “the moral” to the whole Roman history, which therefore, ought to be told – perhaps in “a second volume”.<sup>405</sup> The reviewer for the *Monthly Review* tackled the issue of chronology in a slightly different way. Instead of tying the totality of Roman history to a “system”, they claimed that the history of the empire also offered figures worthy of notice, especially emperors such as “Titus, Vespasian, and Trajan [...], while the cruelties of Claudius and Nero serve to make Arria’s heroism and Seneca’s resignation more conspicuous”.<sup>406</sup> Despite this, Godwin’s *History of Rome* was sufficiently successful to be reprinted long after the downfall of the Juvenile Library.

With the absence of any discussion of the emperors, Godwin offers no yardstick with which to assess the quality of the later mixed monarchical governments of the Roman empire and which served as a way to assess domestic and imperial politics in Britain. However, it allowed Godwin to offer an alternative narrative for the corruption of the republic, placed much earlier than in other histories. He emphasises the material conditions and institutional mechanisms that allowed the republic to flourish (or to fade), and to raise exemplars who truly embodied the republican spirit of early Rome. At different points in the *History of*

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*Commonwealth* (London: E. Newbery, 1800).

404 Oliver Goldsmith, *Dr. Goldsmith’s Roman History, Abridged by Himself, for the Use of Schools* (London: G. Leigh and S. Sotheby; W. J. and J. Richardson; J. Sotheby; F. and C. Rivington; Scatcherd and Letterman; Wilkie and Robinson; C. Law; Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme; Cadell and Davies; and T. Kay, 1807); Elizabeth Helme, *The History of Rome, From the Foundation of the City to the Fall of the Eastern Empire, Related in Familiar Conversations, by a Father to His Children: Interspersed with Moral and Instructive Remarks, and Observations on the Most Leading and Interesting Subjects*, 4 vols (Brentford: P. Norbury, 1808); Sarah Trimmer, *New and Comprehensive Lessons, Containing a General Outline of the Roman History*. (London: J. Harris, 1818); Elizabeth Sewell, *The Child’s First History of Rome* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1849); Julia Corner, *The History of Rome: From the Earliest Period to the Close of the Empire. Adapted for Youth, Schools, and Families, A New Edition, with Chronological Table* (London: Dean & Son, 1856). Hereafter, Goldsmith’s *Roman History* and the anonymous *New Roman History* will be cited as *GsRH* and *NRH* followed by the relevant page numbers.

405 Printed in Kenneth W. Graham, pp. 298–99.

406 Reproduced in Kenneth W. Graham, p. 299.

*Rome*, Godwin describes the institutional arrangements and evolution of the political structure of ancient Rome. While this is not unusual, Godwin places far greater emphasis on this than, for example, Oliver Goldsmith in his *Roman History* or the anonymous author of the *New Roman History* published by Newbery. For instance, while all three mention some of the reforms carried out by Servius Tullius, only Godwin dwells on them, offering a lengthy and balanced assessment of the reforms. The length of text allotted to this is in itself a clear indicator: Godwin spends the better part of five pages discussing the details of Servius Tullius's reforms (*GHoR* 13-18), whereas Goldsmith and the author of the *New Roman History* only respectively write two short paragraphs and a single sentence on the subject (*GsRH* 19, *NRH* 4). That Godwin writes distinct, relatively long chapters on the political and economic issues of debts and the agrarian law (*GHoR* 32-38 and 45-49 respectively) provides a further example of Godwin's particular interest in the institutions of the republic and its ability to deal with problems as they appeared.

From these various discussions we can identify a variety of radical Whiggism in the politics of the *History of Rome*. It is distinctly anti-monarchical, but also distrustful of a purely popular form of government. Here again, the example of Servius Tullius is enlightening. The particular excellence of this Roman king is precisely due to the fact that "he resolved to change the government of the state from a monarchy to a republic" as he "judged the powers intrusted to the king of Rome to be greater than it was for the good of the state to confide to one man, and for life" (*GHoR* 13-14). However, he was also wary of handing over power to the poor and uneducated. That Godwin subscribed to this position (or at least pretended to) is echoed and clarified further in the chapter entitled "Dissentions Concerning the Abolition of Debts". There he sees the "contention" between plebeians and patricians as an integral part of the excellence of the republic, as it:

Produced some mischief, and a great deal of good; if the people had possessed the whole authority of government, it would have wanted sobriety and consistency; and if the government had been entirely in the senate, the members of that assembly, who were chosen into it for life, would have grown insolent, indolent, and degenerate (*GHoR* 32).

Following a variation of republican mixed-government Godwin thus seems to advocate a form of mixed oligarchic and democratic constitution, with little place for monarchy.

However, the oligarchic framework is tempered by two further points which relate to more radical elements of his philosophy and politics: (1) the demand for the redistribution of wealth, implied by his conception of justice, and (2) the recognition of the need for constitutional flexibility so that institutions can effectively reflect social progress.<sup>407</sup> Concerning the former, when discussing the issue of the debts of the plebeians to the patricians, for instance, he falls squarely on the side of the plebeians, describing them as war heroes and emphasising the justice of their claim to debt relief (*GHoR* 35). In the chapter on the “Agrarian Law”, Godwin recognises the appearance of justice in the scheme to redistribute the land of early Roman conquests, but sees that in practice “the territories added to the Roman state seemed only to increase the wealth of the rich, without relieving the wants of the destitute” (*GHoR* 46-47).

In his narrative, Godwin therefore commends the actions of Spurius Cassius Viscellinus, despite their eventual failure. This Roman politician proposed an agrarian law that would distribute property more equally, and which implied a just redistribution of “property acquired by [the] notorious fraud and deception” of rich patricians (*GHoR* 47). Concerning the need for constitutional flexibility, it suffices to note the approval with which Godwin describes the legal requirement that “one of the two consuls should always be a plebeian”, noting that it was “a change due to the increasing virtues and excellence of the Roman people” (*GHoR* 85). Thus, we have an illustration of Godwin’s views of political, institutional and social progress. The *demos* must be allowed to reap the benefits of general prosperity and, as it becomes increasingly virtuous, it becomes entitled to political power. Institutions must then change in order to reflect the increasing virtue of the *demos* and, in this case, must become more democratic.

At the same time, it seems that Godwin’s political agenda in the *History of Rome* is more explicitly anti-imperialist than simply in its choice of chronology. Godwin pinpoints the moment at which the Romans lose their liberty and republican excellence. This occurs at the beginning of the successful expansion of their dominion, and as they become increasingly

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wealthy. Of course, it might be argued that Godwin's association of luxury and vice was a commonplace in both devoutly Christian accounts and republican accounts. Yet, the emphasis in Godwin's narrative is on the process of expansion. Thus, in the chapter entitled "Degeneracy of the Romans", shortly after the mid-point of Godwin's *History of Rome*, the reader is presented with the statement that, "the fall of Rome was as substantially decided by the second Punic war as the fall of Carthage" (*GHoR* 163). Following Godwin's narrative, the fall of Carthage brought the opportunity for the Romans to dominate large amounts of territory, and to desire more as "the career of conquest and *empire*, once prosperously begun, is not easily stopped". Godwin then notes the illegitimate dimension of conquest, describing it as a form of "usurpation" (*GHoR* 164). Due to this conquest, "wealth and luxury, and all the evils which crowd in their train, became naturalised in Rome", and thus "the little venerable republic that had bred a Cincinnatus, a Decius, a Curtius, a Regulus, and a Fabricius, was no more" (*GHoR* 164-165).

### III. VIRTUE AND ELOQUENCE: CICERO IN THE *HISTORY OF ROME*

The list of names quoted here should serve as a reminder that despite broader, systemic considerations, Godwin was also putting forward exemplars. Rather than expanding on Godwin's use of common exemplary figures, it seems to me more revealing to study Godwin's attention on Cicero. Though Cicero appears as a character in both Goldsmith's *Roman History* and in the *New Roman History* published by Newbery, he is never a central character. In Goldsmith, he is mentioned on three occasions. First in the account of the Catiline conspiracy (*GsRH* 123-124); then, in the context of the war between Pompey and Caesar, where he is very positively mentioned alongside Cato as a supporter of Pompey (*GsRH* 137); his final appearance is simply a reference to his death "by Anthony's command" (*GsRH* 168). The orator, philosopher and politician makes a more distinctive appearance in the *New Roman History*, where the author recounts in greater detail Cicero's way of investigating and exposing the Catiline conspiracy (*NRH* 78-79). His banishment and return to Rome are also more vividly depicted (*NRH* 87-88), as is his death (*NRH* 116-117). In the *History of Rome*, however, Godwin uses Cicero to provide a late exemplar of distinctively Roman republican virtue, as a way to tackle obliquely the conflict between Caesar and Pompey – comparing them both unfavourably to Cicero – and to demonstrate the power of truth.

The narrative Godwin weaves for Cicero resembles that of a tragic character, trying to save and reinstate a slowly but surely decaying republican virtue. As he first appears, in the context of a discussion of the Catalinarian conspiracy, Godwin writes that “fortunately for the republic”, Catiline, “was encountered by one of the most eminent men the world ever saw, Marcus Tullius Cicero” (*GHoR* 229). Though Cicero convinced the Senate of Catiline’s “black designs” (*GHoR* 229), and thus temporarily saved the republic and the excellence of its institutions, it was doomed to fail. “The talents however and the virtues of Cicero were exerted in vain” and as the triumvirate of Pompey, Caesar, and Crassus took power over Rome, “the time was now hastening on when the liberties of Rome were to be no more” (*GHoR* 230). Godwin continues to portray Cicero as the safeguard of Roman liberty in the following chapter. As the “three conspirators against the liberties of their country”, Pompey, Caesar and Crassus “marked the commencement of their usurpation” by banishing Cicero, who had spent his life defending the republic (*GHoR* 236).

After discussing Cicero’s banishment and eventual return, Godwin continues to depict Cicero as an active politician trying to protect the liberties of Rome above all else. He is portrayed as one of the true heroes of the war between Pompey and Caesar, alongside Cato of Utica, who committed suicide “as the Stoic philosophy prompted him to do”, since to him “the world without liberty was worthless” (*GHoR* 245). Unlike Cato, however, Cicero removed himself from public life under the reign of Caesar, but, “as despotism was extinguished with the despot”, he is once again depicted as trying to restore the republic and its virtues. Thus, says Godwin, Cicero courageously wrote “those fourteen speeches against Mark Anthony, commonly called the Philippics of Cicero”, thanks to his “genius, inspired with a generous indignation” (*GHoR* 251).

Once again, we are reminded of the power of Cicero’s eloquence. It was this power that resulted in his banishment, for Caesar, Pompey and Crassus, according to Godwin, “could not endure the boldness and fervour of his eloquence”, which they had witnessed in defence of the virtues of the republic when confronting Catiline (*GHoR* 236). The Catalinarian conspiracy and the eloquence of Cicero are crucial for Godwin, and his treatment of the affair stands in sharp contrast to Goldsmith’s *Roman History* and the *New Roman History*. In these two works, the authors emphasise the shrewdness of Cicero in extracting information from Fulvia (*GsRH* 124; *NRH* 78) whereas Godwin stressed the power of Cicero’s oratory

(*GHoR* 229-230). In particular, he describes the confrontation between Cicero and Catiline before the senators, when Cicero “so completely laid open the black designs of the man [Catiline], and overwhelmed him with such an astonishing torrent of eloquence, that Catiline was confounded” and could not answer, as the senate had been fully convinced of the truth, and was thus “shrinking from him with indignation” (*GHoR* 229-230). In so doing, Godwin illustrates a point that he clarified in the revisions of the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*: truth, when “adequately communicated” is “omnipotent” (*PPW* 4:41).

#### IV. LAWS AND LEGISLATORS: BETWEEN REPUBLICANISM AND WHIGGISM

Godwin’s histories of Greece and Rome are, on the whole, quite similar. Politically, there is a similar emphasis on the public spiritedness of many exemplary figures, and strikingly similar comments on process and the consequences of republican political arrangements and the beneficial conflicts between the aristocratic and democratic segments of the political order. In a chapter dealing with the usurpation of Pisistratus, Godwin thus notes:

In every republican government, where the smallest portion of liberty is permitted to exist, there are always two parties, the favourers of aristocracy, and the favourers of democracy; the party of the nobles, and the party of the people: it is possible for persons adhering to either of these, to be honest men and true patriots: the democracy is certainly necessary for the preservation of liberty; the aristocracy may be equally necessary for the cultivation of wisdom and elevated sentiments, and for defeating violence and excesses (*GHoG* 74).

There is also much institutional commentary based on the works of specific legislators. Aside from some introductory comments, the first chapter is dedicated to the “Laws of Minos”. Later chapters dedicated to the constitutional politics of ancient Greece include, for example: one on the institution of “Republican Government” in different parts of Greece, qualified by Godwin – borrowing from Charles Rollin – as a “revolution [...], that was perhaps more striking than any other” (*GHoG* 23);<sup>408</sup> another entitled “Laws of Lycurgus”; and a finally chapter entitled “Solon” which largely addresses his activity as a legislator.

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408 Charles Rollin, *Histoire Ancienne Des Egyptiens, Des Carthaginois, Des Assyriens, Des Babyloniens, Des Medes et Des Perses, Des Macédoniens, Des Grecs*. (Paris: Estienne, 1740), II, pp. 18–20.

It was far from uncommon for children's books on the history of Greece to include some discussion of political reforms. This was perhaps to be expected since, as we have seen, the political order of ancient Greece, like that of ancient Rome, was regarded by many as a central model for modern government. Nevertheless, Godwin's insistence on the importance of institutions, and on that of the figure of the legislator – which he might have borrowed from Rousseau<sup>409</sup> – set his *History of Greece* apart from such common texts as *Dr. Goldsmith's History of Greece, Abridged, For the Use of Schools*. Furthermore, the length of his discussions on institutions makes his book stand out. To take the most striking example: Godwin's discussion of Lycurgus and the institutions of Sparta takes up almost 15 pages out of a 263-page narrative (*GHoG* 24-38); in comparison, Goldsmith's discussion of the Spartan institutions is slightly less than 10 pages, in a 309-page text.<sup>410</sup> None of this, of course, tells us what Godwin is doing with Minos, Lycurgus, or Solon. After all, conservative historians such as Mitford could comment on them, adopting “the standard, conservative pro-Spartan line”, to condemn the Athenian mode of democratic governance as leading to unending disorder.<sup>411</sup> What did Godwin – whose elitism sometimes veered on the aristocratic, despite his otherwise egalitarian views – do with them?

First, it should be noted that he is clearly positive about all three legislators, emphasising their ability to foster freedom, though he is not wholly uncritical.<sup>412</sup> After presenting the main tenets of the political organisation laid down by Minos, Godwin thus writes:

We are presented with men superior to the ordinary level of the human race, and institutions which, if they were not so well authenticated in evidence, might seem like fables invented for the amusement of the curious (*GHoG* 8).

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409 Godwin's point are indeed very similar to those in: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social: précédé de Discours sur l'économie politique et de Du contrat social, première version et suivi de Fragments politiques*, ed. by Robert Derathé (Paris: Gallimard, 1993) book II, chapter 8.

410 Goldsmith, *Dr. Goldsmith's History of Greece, Abridged, for the Use of Schools*, pp. 15–25.

411 See the useful comparisons between Mitford and Grote in: James Kirstead, 'Grote's Athens: The Character of Democracy', in *Brill's Companion to George Grote and the Classical Tradition*, ed. by Kyriakos N. Dēmētriou, Brill's Companions to Classical Reception (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 161–210; Paul Cartledge, 'Grote's Sparta/Sparta's Grote', in *Brill's Companion to George Grote and the Classical Tradition*, ed. by Kyriakos N. Dēmētriou, Brill's Companions to Classical Reception (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 255–72.

412 See for example his discussion of the “practice of *the exposing of children*, which our principles and our religion teach us to abhor” (*GHoG* 28).

The institutions of Sparta, laid down by Lycurgus, receive similar honours. They are hailed as “one of the two great causes of the admiration in which Greece has been held by all succeeding ages” (*GHoG* 24). Finally, it is because of his body of laws, which set up not “the best institutions, but the best they [the Athenians] were able to bear” (*GHoG* 56), that Solon came to be recognised generally “to represent the qualities of a philosophical mind, a penetrating judgment and a humane and philanthropical temper, combined in almost as great a degree of excellence as the nature of man will admit” (*GHoG* 51). Of these institutions, however, it is clearly those of Sparta that receive the most attention and praise.

It is also while discussing the excellence of the institutions of Sparta that Godwin deals with a crucial problem: the compatibility of slavery with a valid conception of freedom. To reject the obvious claim that slavery and freedom are incompatible, Godwin tries to push the reader into a form of historicist relativism, grounded in a biblical invocation:

We hear it frequently said by thoughtless persons in our own times, that the ancient Greeks and Romans had no true understanding of liberty, because they had slaves: this is by no means a sound remark: to judge rightly of the conduct of any man or body of men, we must in imagination put ourselves in their place: he who acts up to the light he possesses, and the rules that have been delivered to him, must either be acquitted, or at any rate not harshly condemned: the ancient Greeks and Romans were not Christians; and it would be unreasonable to require of them, that their actions should be squared according to our Saviour’s Sermon on the Mount:— *to whom much is given, of him much shall be required* (*GHoG* 36-37).

Thus, it is possible for “the ancient Greeks and Romans” to have a “true *understanding* of liberty” despite the fact that they had slaves and that their “conduct”, from the perspective of a nineteenth-century reader, could be seen objectionable.<sup>413</sup> Instead of condemning the ancients and abandoning their conception of liberty and their political institutions, Godwin partially vindicates them and suggests that his readers – with their additional knowledge partly derived from the teachings of Jesus – may actualize this “true understanding of freedom” in a more coherent and comprehensive way.

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413 My emphasis.

Another feature of the descriptions of the laws of Minos and Lycurgus is the emphasis put on material and political equality and its benefits (*GHoG* 6-8, 27 respectively). This finds a weaker echo in Godwin's praise of the abolition of debt slavery, or "the despotic authority" of the creditor over the debtor (*GHoG* 52), as well as his discussion of the division of political power according to property rules (*GHoG* 52-53). Here again, however, there is a fundamental difference between the way in which Godwin writes about Sparta, and the way in which he describes Crete and Athens. Godwin draws a direct parallel between Lycurgus's reforms and his own time; to use Mark Salber Philips's language, Godwin shrinks the historical distance. Though Lycurgus's act of expropriation, followed by the equal redistribution of land to free citizens of Sparta "appears to modern observers a violent measure, and such as would be submitted to by the richer citizens of very few states," it was in fact a crucial cornerstone to "place the equality of his countrymen upon a more immoveable basis" (*GHoG* 27).

Despite Godwin's admiration for certain versions of material and political equality, he displays a form Whig elitism with regards to ancient history that is somewhat similar to that embraced by British politicians following the Revolution settlement of 1688. We find this in his praise of the more aristocratic dimensions of constitutions, particularly that of Athens. Thus, while "the general assembly of the people [...] possessed, as they had done from the earliest records of Athens, the absolute power of state", Godwin commends Solon's attempt "in some degree to set bounds to this power, by instituting a senate, or council of five hundred, with whom all laws and public measures were to originate" (*GHoG* 53). Furthermore, he reserves his utmost praise for the "court of Areopagus," which he describes as "the most admirable of all the institutions of Solon" (*GHoG* 54). The distinction of its members (archons and former archons) and its mode of enquiry were what "raised it to the eminence it afterward possessed" (*GHoG* 54). Yet, "the limits which Solon endeavoured to prescribe upon the powers of the assembly of the people of Athens, were by no means uniformly effectual" and thus Athens was liable to "violence and excesses" (*GHoG* 55, 74). Still, in spite of its elitist bias, of the three histories he wrote "for the use of schools and young persons", Godwin's *History of Greece* appears to be the most openly political and radical in its defence of the benefits of a republican order based on relative material and political equality.

### A FRUSTRATING ENDEAVOUR? LESSONS FROM THE COMPOSITION OF THE *HISTORY OF GREECE*

All of Godwin's Juvenile Library books were published in the first five years of the business and we know from Godwin's diary that each was written without interruption in just a few months. In contrast, the *History of Greece* was only published toward the end of Godwin's Juvenile Library years, in 1822, though he records starting to write it in 1809.<sup>414</sup> By the time he completed the manuscript, Godwin had finally decided that he was not going to write books for children anymore, and in the preface to that book, dated November 1821, he wrote apologetically:

The History of Greece ought to have followed immediately upon the History of Rome. But various circumstances, and more than all, increasing years, prevented its being finished. The friends of the author, and a part of the public, have never ceased to urge him, by publishing the present volume, to render the cycle of histories, Greece, Rome, and England, complete; and he has now, though late, yielded to the agreeable importunity (*GHoG*: iii).

It is uncertain how much urging was actually done by Godwin's "friends", or any part of the "public". There do not seem to be any written traces of such behaviour, aside from a letter from one Francis Wrangham (probably the politically liberal Anglican clergyman) that Godwin received in March 1810. He alone enquired about "any work [by Baldwin] on Grecian or English History resembling" the *History of Rome*.<sup>415</sup> Still, twelve years separate the publication of the *History of Rome* and that of the *History of Greece*; this is a long time to withstand unceasing public demand. It is therefore unlikely that pressure from friends or customers drove Godwin's eventual publication of the text in 1821.

Why, then, did he publish it? Was it a desperate attempt to bring in new customers? This is possible, but the Juvenile Library's financial problems were not new in 1821, and therefore do not explain why Godwin did not complete the *History of Greece* earlier. Did Godwin simply want to complete his cycle of histories? This is also unlikely given the complex history of the composition of the *History of Greece*, all the more so when compared to the

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415 MS. Abinger c. 10 fols. 96-97.

rather straightforward composition of Godwin's other two histories. I thus contend that it was the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832) that pushed Godwin to address the excellence of the ancient Greeks, despite earlier frustrations. Godwin's *History of Greece* should therefore be understood as a political intervention, not only because of its republican content, but also because it reflects a radical British attitude to the international political struggle of the day.

The first appearance of the *History of Greece* in the diary closely follows Godwin's finishing touches on the *History of Rome*. On 30 May 1809, Godwin only notes "Rome, p. 130, fin". During the next two days, Godwin revises the text, and writes a part of the preface, which he completes on 17 June. In the meanwhile, he starts working on the *History of Greece*, writing over 50 pages by 15 July 1809 in 21 sittings. He does not return to the text for over a year: the next entry concerning the *History of Greece* is 19 August 1810 (perhaps Wrangham's letter has something to do with this). Though Godwin seems to have enthusiastically worked on the text in the late summer and early autumn of that year, by the time he stopped writing on 1 October 1810, Godwin had completed just under 90 pages of the manuscript. The *History of Greece* then disappears from the diary for over two years, returning at a point when Greece is on Godwin's mind, on 13 October 1812. He had just read the first two cantos of Lord Byron's philhellenic *Childe Harold*, but he was beginning his conversations with Percy Bysshe Shelley, and they debated the value and use of Greco-Roman antiquity.<sup>416</sup> This return to the text is intense but short-lived. Godwin records working on the text eleven times in two weeks. He would not return to it for over eight years. Starting on 23 March 1821, after having briefly revised the text in late 1820, Godwin seems to have found a new motivation. He revisits the text and starts writing new material in earnest in April. Over the following months, the *History of Greece* appears over one hundred times in the diary, more than the number of appearances of the *History of England* and the *History of Rome* combined.

This corresponds to the beginning of the Greek War of Independence, when the Greeks and their supporters abroad forged a kind of spiritual filiation between the ancient republican spirit and the claim to liberty from Ottoman rule.<sup>417</sup> Despite the fact that Godwin kept

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416 Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity*, pp. 23, 41. See also the letter Godwin wrote to Percy Shelley on the subject of history, dated 10 December 1812, MS Abinger c. 19 fols. 50-51.

417 On this point, see: William St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of*

himself informed on international matters, there is no clear evidence that he already knew on 23 March of the uprisings earlier that month.<sup>418</sup> It is possible that he received such news in conversation from members of his circle, but no trace of this remains. However, it is unlikely that Godwin remained unaware of the Greek situation once the British newspapers started circulating information. *The Times* first published a brief report on the insurrection on 30 March 1821 (in a digest of news from Paris, dated 28 March),<sup>419</sup> and continued reporting on the events in April and in the following months and years. Indeed, as William St Clair has shown, starting in the late spring of 1821, the issue of the Greek War of Independence looms larger and larger in the British press and general consciousness, as volunteers – the most famous of all being Lord Byron – depart for Greece to fight alongside the revolutionaries.<sup>420</sup>

By the summer of 1821, when Godwin enters the most intensive period of his composition of the *History of Greece*, it is likely that he was aware of the ongoing conflict. There is clear evidence that he had some knowledge of it long before sending the manuscript to the press. Godwin wrote the preface to the book in November 1821, but in a letter he received from his young protégé Henry Blanch Rosser, dated 23 October 1821, the young man wrote: “the Greeks have my every thing but my hopes. They would beat the Turks, but there remains the Holy Alliance”.<sup>421</sup> This letter must have been an answer to the missive Godwin sent Rosser on 19 October.<sup>422</sup> From the style of Rosser’s remark on the Greek situation, it is probable that Godwin raised the subject and expressed some sympathy for the Greek cause.

Godwin’s own sympathy for the Greek cause, combined with that of the Whigs and radicals more generally in Britain, provided a politically and commercially viable context for Godwin’s more radical and republican *History of Greece*, with its positive account of the laws of Lycurgus and Solon and its emphasis on the struggle between various forms of despotism and liberty. An advertisement accompanying the publication appeared in the Whig-oriented *Morning Chronicle* (to which Godwin had contributed on several occasions)

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*Independence* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2008) especially chapter 2. On the Greek war of independence more generally, see for example the relatively recent: David Brewer, *The Flame of Freedom: The Greek War of Independence, 1821-1833* (London: J. Murray, 2001).

418 Godwin for example noted in his diary entry of 6 July 1820 “Revolution of Naples”

419 “Second Express From Paris.” *Times* [London, England] 30 Mar. 1821: 3. *The Times Digital Archive*. [Accessed 9 April 2016].

420 On the involvement of the British in the Greek war of independence, see chapters 5, 6, 15 and 16 in St. Clair, *That Greece Might Still Be Free: The Philhellenes in the War of Independence*.

421 MS. Abinger c. 12 fol. 110.

422 Godwin records writing Rosser that day in his diary.

directly related the contemporary situation, ancient history and the book:

Now that the Greeks are engaged in the most strenuous efforts to recover their liberty, it cannot be uninteresting to any class of readers, to learn, or to recollect, what sort of men the Ancient Greeks were; for whose sake our sympathy is so strongly excited to their posterity.<sup>423</sup>

The international political context, then, provided an opportunity for a more radical history, which may well have led Godwin to overcome his frustration with children's histories and led him to finish the last, neglected work of 'Edward Baldwin, Esq'.

### SUCCESSFUL HISTORICAL REFORM?

In the last two chapters, I outlined the two major ways through which Godwin attempted to change the way history was taught. The first is historiographical, the second political. Historiographically, as we saw in chapter 5, Godwin introduces an important dimension of eighteenth-century historiography to children's history schoolbooks: the history of culture and manners. Popular schoolbooks of the period focused on high politics, the specific characters of rulers or monarchs, their conquests and other sources of glory or dishonour. While Godwin did not omit this important element of school histories, he balanced the narrative by introducing, wherever he could, details about the life of those authors, thinkers, and artists that he considered important. This was linked to considerations on individual, and thus social and political reforms, through Godwin's central concept in the study of history: exemplarity. Although it appears to be an old-fashioned view of history, Godwin's understanding of exemplarity, was considerably more capacious than that of his contemporaries, who tended to focus on political virtues. The reform of children's historiography, coupled with this broader interpretation of exemplarity, is at the heart of Godwin's historiographical project.

At the same time, history – both ancient and modern – was crucial to the communication of political ideas and the formation of the political narratives of British modernity. Godwin was well aware of this and his histories reflect it. He did not always feel free to express his own

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423 Quoted by the editors of the *Godwin Diary*. <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/works/grec02.html#bibl1-bibl>  
[Accessed 16 May 2016]

views – recall his treatment of the Glorious Revolution – due to the nature of the Juvenile Library. Nevertheless, Godwin grasped opportunities to develop narratives of liberty and to question the righteousness and benefits of imperial conquest. The thoroughly republican chronological frame in the *History of Rome* provides the most acute example of his attempt at reforming contemporary political views through a historical narrative. Godwin's works of history for children, then, are fundamentally linked to a broad reformist project.

However, some of Godwin's bolder claims, questioning the entrenched view of Richard III as a murderer for example, were just too provocative. He therefore had to change how these propositions were framed. Ultimately, this proved particularly frustrating for him. The stuttering composition of the *History of Greece* provides additional evidence of Godwin's frustration with his work as a children's author. Seen in this light, the *History of England*, the *History of Rome* and the *History of Greece* provide a sense of the possibilities and limits of Godwin's work in the Juvenile Library as a whole.

## CHAPTER 7.

### LIVES OF CHILDREN, LIVES FOR CHILDREN: HISTORY, BIOGRAPHY, EXEMPLARITY, IDEOLOGY \_\_\_\_\_

Godwin's *The Looking-Glass* and *Life of Lady Jane Grey* embody a second dimension of his historiographical attempt to reform education, childhood and society.<sup>424</sup> As biographies, they fall well within what Mark Salber Phillips has called "the full family of historical representation" in the late eighteenth century.<sup>425</sup> Yet, they are quite different from Godwin's histories "for the use of schools and young persons", analysed in the previous chapter. They are not intended as schoolbooks, and are both shorter and cheaper than the three histories. Being just above 110 pages each, they are about half the length of the histories of Rome and Greece, and priced at one shilling, at least in their first editions in 1805 (for *The Looking-Glass*) and 1806 (for the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*), they were on the cheaper and most accessible end of the Juvenile Library catalogue, available to the broadest possible audience. Lastly, and perhaps because, as biographies, these books were designed for an audience outside of classrooms or other spaces of instruction, Godwin chose to write these works not as Edward Baldwin, his usual Juvenile Library pseudonym, but as Theophilus Marcliffe.

In the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, Godwin presents the tragic story of an unwilling queen, who finds herself caught in a political situation that she did not fully anticipate. In doing so, Godwin explores the broader political and social context of late sixteenth-century England, with an emphasis on the religious dimension of political conflict. With *The Looking-Glass*, Godwin retraces the early years of the main illustrator of his children's books, William Mulready (1786-1863), though he is not identified by name in the story. The book then takes us from Ireland to London, to the Royal Academy Schools, and eventually brings us to the point when Mulready reaches financial independence. Godwin must have been quite taken by the young man and his conversation, as he completed *The Looking-Glass* just months after having first met Mulready in early 1805 when the artist was nineteen.<sup>426</sup>

Reviews were mainly short, rather positive, but not particularly enthusiastic. There are two exceptions here that are worth noting, insofar as they suggest some directions of analysis. The *Critical Review* claimed to have "no hesitation in recommending" the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* to children. Echoing Godwin's own words in the preface, the reviewers claim that the book is not only "adapted [...] to interest the affections, and to soften the heart," but that it

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424 Carlson, p. 240.

425 Mark Salber Phillips, *On Historical Distance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 141.

426 In his diary, Godwin records meeting Mulready on 5 March 1805.

also “may serve to stimulate the juvenile reader to the study of English history.”<sup>427</sup> The *Anti-Jacobin Review*, considering that a children’s book, and especially a “Mirror”, should impart “upon children, as well as upon adults [...] that it is their bounden duty to endeavour to attain as nearly to perfection as possible,” found *The Looking-Glass* lacking. Its realism, that is its attempt to present a more balanced character, went contrary to the magazine’s ethical stance. For the reviewer, children “should never see *faults* unaccompanied by *punishment*, not *merit* without *reward*.”<sup>428</sup>

In this chapter, I consider both of these texts in the context of biographical writing in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, especially insofar as Godwin was interested in the use of biography as a form of historical writing. Moreover, these two texts, with their exemplary dimension, ought to be located in the context of the more didactic literature for children of the period. Yet, they also need to be contextualised differently: the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* is much closer to Godwin’s *Life of Chaucer* than *The Looking-Glass*. It is, therefore, a more conventional type of biographical writing, even though, given the dearth of single-individual biographies for children, it was quite original in this regard. In contrast, *The Looking-Glass* is not only closer to the *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* with its sharp focus on a single character, but also, in its narrative form, to the genre of the novel. Furthermore, it is similar, on the surface, to popular children’s tales such as *The History of Little Jack*, which have been interpreted as representative of an emerging bourgeois ideology that grounded success on merit and self-reliance.<sup>429</sup> Both works, then, show how Godwin complemented his more conventional pieces – written under the pseudonym of Edward Baldwin – with more innovative works of children’s literature, while continuing to circulate political and educational ideas that were dear to him, for the use of both parents and children.

## THE USE AND USEFULNESS OF BIOGRAPHY

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, biography emerged as a popular genre of historical writing.<sup>430</sup> It professed to offer a number of benefits and, as a form of historical

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427 Kenneth W. Graham, p. 288.

428 See the review in: Graham, pp. 281–82. Emphasis in the original. For the other reviews of *The Looking Glass* see pp. 281–282, for those of the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* see p. 288.

429 Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, chap. 2.

430 See the marked increase in the publication of biographical writings in Table 1.1 Michael F. Suarez, ‘Towards a Bibliometric Analysis of the Surviving Record, 1701–1800’, in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press,

writing, was sometimes presented as superior to more usual histories. As Bisset argued in 1793, in the preface to his biographical sketch of the authors of *The Spectator*:

No species of writing combines in it a greater degree of interest and instruction than Biography. Our sympathy is most powerfully excited by the view of those situations and passions, which, by a small effort of the imagination, we can approximate to ourselves. Hence Biography often engages our attention and affections more deeply than History.<sup>431</sup>

Similar claims, though perhaps less radically expressed, can be found in Samuel Johnson's famous 1750 *Rambler* essay on biography. In addition, Johnson points to the need and usefulness of entering the domestic sphere as a biographer, for it is in "the domestick privacies, and [...] the minute details of daily life, [that] exterior appendages are cast aside, and men excel each other only by prudence and by virtue."<sup>432</sup>

In stressing the connection between private and public life, mobilizing the sympathy of the reader, and emphasising the moral and exemplary components of individual lives, biographies were initially seen as particularly suited for children, and for women (who might otherwise be reading sentimental novels). In the later part of the eighteenth century, biography was also becoming a more acceptable genre for the adult male reader.<sup>433</sup> In its educational dimension, biography was also intimately connected to the more established genre of conduct literature, although, as Julian North notes, these became increasingly distinct during the Romantic period. In particular, claims to "historical authenticity" provided a space for biography to flourish and contributed to the opening of the study of history to women, for example through the writing of female collective biographies that could be used in schools for girls.<sup>434</sup>

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1998), v, p. 45.

431 *The Spectator*, ed. by Robert Bisset, 8 vols (London: G. Robertson, J. Cuthell, J. Lackington, 1793), vol. 1, vii.

432 The essay is in *The Rambler* 60, 30 October 1750. Reprinted in: Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, 6 vols (London: J. Payne and J. Bouquet, 1752), vol. 2, pp. 207–215.

433 Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, pp. 111–33.

434 Julian North, *The Domestication of Genius: Biography and the Romantic Poet* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 15–25; Philip Hicks, 'Female Worthies and the Genres of Women's History', in *Historical Writing in Britain, 1688-1830: Visions of History*, ed. by Ben Dew and Fiona Price (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 18–33; For a striking example of this, see: Mary Pilkington, *A Mirror for the Female Sex. Historical Beauties for Young Ladies.*, Second Edition (London: Vernor and Hood, 1799) and especially her introduction to the book. For a broader view on women's life writing, see: Amy Culley, *British Women's Life Writing, 1760-1840: Friendship, Community, and Collaboration* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

These mid-to-late eighteenth and nineteenth-century developments all inform Godwin's practice as a biographer for both children and adults. Godwin's main achievements in biography were contemporaneous with his serious return to educational thought and practice. The *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, at once a biography of Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin's own autobiography, was published in 1798.<sup>435</sup> Five years later came Godwin's first attempt at a full-length literary biography, a *Life of Chaucer* characterised by the comprehensive contextualisation of the medieval author. This was followed in 1815 by the *Life of Edward and John Philips, Nephews of Milton*, which Godwin used to understand the character of Milton in greater detail, and the history of the Civil War and Commonwealth. These three texts show different dimensions of Godwin's use of biography, and indeed two different ways of using historical distance, which are helpful for understanding Godwin's work as a biographer of and for children.

The *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, a much shorter work than the *Life of Chaucer* and the *Lives of Edward and John Philips* also remains much closer to its subject, Mary Wollstonecraft. There are not many direct references to or discussions of broader social or cultural trends to which Godwin would want to draw the reader's attention. This is probably due to the contemporaneity of the author, reader and subject in this case, although Godwin does spend more time discussing both national and international politics in the *History of Life of William Pitt*, published just five years after the death of the first Earl of Chatham. As Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker have shown, the proximity and the domesticity of the narrative of the *Memoirs* serves a broader purpose linked to Godwin's refined ideas of social change in relation to sensibility, developed in the late 1790s. In particular, they argue that such proximity allows the transformative possibilities of sincerity to emerge, and displays the workings of a character who was not only able to improve herself, but was also "an agent of change in others, including" Godwin. In that sense, Mary Wollstonecraft is a 'female worthy', who connects the individual and the social, who is exemplary not only as an accomplished woman, but also as a positive agent for social and political change.<sup>436</sup>

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435 See chapters IX and X in *CNM* 1: 127-141; for a more accessible edition, enriched with a helpful introduction and useful contextual material see: William Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker (Peterborough, Ont.; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2001).

436 See Clemit and Walker's introduction to: Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* Especially pp. 14-24 (the quote is from p. 22); On this point and on the *Memoirs* more broadly, see also: Myers, 'Godwin's "Memoirs" of Wollstonecraft'.

In contrast, in the *Life of Chaucer* and the *Lives of Edward and John Philips*, Godwin not only presents the life of his subjects (including their private affairs), but also details the social, political and cultural context that structured the ways in which these lives were lived. In the first volume of the *Life of Chaucer*, for example, six of twenty-three chapters are dedicated to contextual discussions of various kinds. They include a detailed discussion of the “diversions of our ancestors in the fourteenth century” (chapters V-VII),<sup>437</sup> as well as details concerning the religious organisation of England at the time (chapter IV), architectural history (chapter VIII), and the history of art (chapter IX). These are only the chapters where there is very little concerning Chaucer directly. Even in chapters where Chaucer takes a greater focus, Godwin often describes contextual elements in detail. This is the case in the first three chapters. There, Godwin not only relates the birth of the poet, his education and “school-boy amusements”, but also gives a detailed account of the city of London – and so Chaucer’s youthful surroundings – and of the literary tradition of chivalrous romance that, Godwin argues, formed the “visionary scenery by which his genius was awakened”.<sup>438</sup> As April London notes, the similarly thorough contextualisation and “thickly descriptive evocation” of Milton’s nephews, through which Godwin foregrounds the connections between politics and literature, testifies to his “interest in making the past vividly present to his readers”.<sup>439</sup> In so doing, Godwin is not only stimulating our imagination and educating us thanks to its mobilization,<sup>440</sup> but he is also foregrounding the effects of broad social structures on individual lives, which Godwin called “external circumstances”, and which were increasingly important in the later editions of *Political Justice*.<sup>441</sup>

The comparatively stronger emphasis on the domestic in the *Memoirs* and on the systemic in the *Life of Chaucer* indicates two complementary ways in which the history of individuals can be tackled. Relating these two texts to the essay ‘Of History and Romance’, Godwin shows in the biographies both the proximate and distant “successive circumstances” under which “a character acts” and how that “character increases and assimilates new substances to its own” (PPW 5:301). With the *Memoirs*, Godwin shows especially the “materials merely

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437 See the table of contents, and the chapters themselves in: Godwin, *Life of Chaucer*.

438 Godwin, *Life of Chaucer*, vol. 1, p. 35.

439 London, p. 45; On the *Lives of Edward and John Philips* see also: Tilottama Rajan, ‘Uncertain Futures: History and Genealogy in William Godwin’s The Lives of Edward and John Philips, Nephews and Pupils of Milton’, *Milton Quarterly*, 32.3 (1998), 75–86.

440 On this point, see also: North, pp. 108–9.

441 See PPW 4: 16-28. On Godwin’s lives in relation to history, see also: Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel*, pp. 81–84.

human”, the personal and domestic relations and situations, thanks to which a character as exemplary as Mary Wollstonecraft’s emerged. Thus readers can “insensibly imbibe the same spirit, and burn with kindred fires” (PPW 5:293). With the *Life of Chaucer* we are made to better understand how “the machine of society” functioned in the late Middle Ages and how an exemplary poet could emerge in that context, respond to it and embody the poetic excellence that could arise from it. Godwin thus grounds his work on “the reciprocity of biography and history”,<sup>442</sup> which frames his attempt to provide an antidote to the late eighteenth-century hierarchies governing historical discourse, which saw histories as the master genre and biography as the challenger.<sup>443</sup> Godwin attempts to deliver on his exhortation to the historian who, as a “liberal and spirited benefactor of his species, must connect the two branches of history together, and regard the knowledge of the individual, as that which alone gives energy and utility to the records of our social existence” (PPW 5:293-294).

Godwin takes a similar approach in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* and *The Looking-Glass*. The *Life of Lady Jane Grey* takes the place of Chaucer and *The Looking-Glass* echoes the *Memoirs*. Being further away in time, the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* provides an occasion to tackle broader questions in English history, relating them to their consequences for individual lives, and especially the life of such an exemplary character as Jane Grey. In contrast, *The Looking-Glass*, being the story of a living young person only a decade or so older than the children perusing the book, allows Godwin to focus more consistently on a single character and his actions, feelings and immediate situation. In the following two sections, I will take each of these texts individually, stressing these points and showing what Godwin was doing with these two kinds of biography. With such examples as those of Mary Wollstonecraft, Geoffrey Chaucer, Jane Grey and William Mulready, readers young and old could, “by comparison [...] engage in the solemn act of self-investigation” and feed “the hidden fire within us” for the benefit of society (PPW 5:292).

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442 Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, p. 143.

443 For a broader discussion of these issues, see: Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, chaps 4–5.

## **THE LIFE OF LADY JANE GREY: PERSONALISING ENGLISH HISTORY**

### **I. GODWIN, JANE GREY AND ENGLISH HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY**

It was not unusual to find Jane Grey among the exemplary characters of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century collective biographies, for both adults and children. In works for children, she appears for example in the second editions of the *Juvenile Plutarch* (1806) and Mary Pilkington's *Mirror for the Female Sex* (1799). For an audience comprising older children and adults, Jane Grey is featured in both Mary Hays' *Female Biography* (1803) and Pilkington's *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters* (1804). Aside from such works, her life was related in a chapbook published in 1816 by the Bristol Church of England Tract Society as well as in an anonymous 1791 book which included "defence of her claim to the crown".<sup>444</sup> Lastly, Jane Grey was one of the few female characters that were regularly present in histories of England for both children and adults. Hume presents a short defence of her claim to the throne and delineates her accomplishments and excellence in detail.<sup>445</sup> Grey also featured in popular works for children such as the histories of England by Elizabeth Helme, Oliver Goldsmith and Godwin's own.<sup>446</sup>

Despite this, Godwin was unique in writing a full-length biography for children. Though life-writing was an increasingly popular genre, biographers for children at the turn of the nineteenth century tended to write collective rather than individual biographies of historical characters. The 1801 catalogue of Benjamin Tabart's popular children's bookshop lists only one individual biography in the texts directed at readers younger than fifteen – Roscoe's *Life of Lorenzo de Medicis*, published in two expensive quartos. Readers older than fifteen are

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444 Anonymous, *The Juvenile Plutarch*, Second Edition, 2 vols (London: Tabart and Co., 1806); Mary Pilkington, *A Mirror for the Female Sex. Historical Beauties for Young Ladies.*, Second Edition (London: Vernor and Hood, 1799); Mary Hays, *Female Biography: Or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of All Ages and Countries. Alphabetically Arranged*, 5 vols. (London: Richard Phillips, 1803); Mary Pilkington, *Memoirs of Celebrated Female Characters: Who Have Distinguished Themselves by Their Talents and Virtues in Every Age and Nation; Containing the Most Extensive Collection of Illustrious Examples of Feminine Excellence Ever Published; in Which the Virtuous and the Vicious Are Painted in Their True Colours* (London: Albion Press, 1804); Anonymous, *The Life and Death of Lady Jane Grey*. (Bristol: J. Richardson, 1816); Anonymous, *The History of Jane Grey, Queen of England: With a Defence of Her Claim to the Crown*. (London: T. Wilkins, 1791).

445 David Hume, *The History of Great Britain, Under the House of Tudor*, The Second Edition Corrected, 2 vols (London: A. Millar, 1759), pp. 342, 349.

446 Jane Grey appears at different points in the second volume (conversations 20 and 21) of: Helme, *The History of England Related in Familiar Conversations, by a Father to His Children: Interspersed with Moral and Instructive Remarks, and Observations on the Most Leading and Interesting Subjects*; see also: Goldsmith, 1, pp. 267–69, 272; *GHoE* 117.

directed to works like Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and William Hayley's *Life of Milton*.<sup>447</sup> A search through Andrea Immel's index to Sarah Trimmer's reviews in the *Guardian of Education* shows us a similar scarcity of individual historical biographies for the use of young children. The two full-length lives that Trimmer reviews are MacGowan's adaptation of the biblical *Life of Joseph*, and a *History of Prince Lee Boo*, which narrates the life of a native of Palau who came back to England with Captain Henry Wilson of the East India Company.<sup>448</sup> Thus, while there are a number of fictional biographies of animals or even objects, seen by Samuel Pickering "as the only kind of novel generally thought acceptable for children in the late eighteenth century", there were only few longer historical biographies available.<sup>449</sup> In this context, Godwin's *Life of Jane Grey* was both prudent, since the subject was a well-known and well-respected historical character, and daring, since the format was unusual for the time. Godwin's decision to try and successfully introduce an individual biography in such a market testifies to his strong belief in the capacity of the genre to have an effect on readers.

Godwin's choice of genre was not the only point of originality. The narrative model he followed, that of a contextual biography, was also unusual in children's books at the time. Though the story told is that of Jane Grey, her ascension to the crown, and her eventual demise at the hands of Queen Mary, he sets Jane Grey's life in its wider circumstances, which he delineates in the preface and describes as "those great objects" of the history of England: "the *Reformation*, and the *Revival of Learning*."<sup>450</sup> Godwin delivers on this promise. Alongside Jane Grey's lineage, birth and early life, he defines "the *Revival of Learning*" as the period in the sixteenth century when "the books of many Greek authors were brought to light, which had long been neglected, and the study of the Greek language became a sort of fashion". By way of further illustration, he introduces some of the most prominent scholars of the period: "Sir Anthony Cooke, Sir John Cheke, Roger Ascham" (*JG* 4-5).

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447 Tabart.

448 Andrea Immel and Mitzi Myers, *Revolutionary Reviewing: Sarah Trimmer's Guardian of Education and the Cultural Politics of Juvenile Literature: An Index to the Guardian* ([Los Angeles]: Dept. of Special Collections, University Research Library, University of California Los Angeles, 1990). See also the entry on Lee Boo in the *DNB*.

449 Samuel F. Pickering, 'The Evolution of a Genre: Fictional Biographies for Children in the Eighteenth Century', *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 7.1 (1977), 1-23 (p. 2).

450 Marcliffe [William Godwin], *Life of Lady Jane Grey, and of Lord Guildford Dudley Her Husband.*, p. iv. Emphasis in the original. In what follows, I will refer to this book in-text as *JG* followed by the page number.

Godwin consistently discusses issues related to the Reformation and the problematic relationship between Catholics and Protestants following the reign of Henry VIII, and until the reign of James II, after which “it became one of the laws of England, that no popish prince should ever sit upon our Protestant throne” (*JG* 51). Indeed, the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* is framed by various discussions of the persecutions perpetrated by both Catholics and Protestants, and their social and political consequences, which amount to a plea for religious toleration.<sup>451</sup> By writing this complex contextual biography of Jane Grey for children, Godwin was thus not simply writing the story of another ‘female worthy’, but rather placed such a narrative into a broader historiographical model. In so doing, he complemented his heavily male-centred schoolbook by re-inscribing (some) women into the history of England. Godwin’s advertisement for Theophilus Marcliffe’s *Life of Lady Jane Grey* in the preface to Edward Baldwin’s *History of England* (*GHoE* v), then, was not simple commercial shrewdness: it was a way to bring attention to the history of women. Like the *Life of Chaucer*, the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* embodies Godwin’s view of “the reciprocity of biography and history”<sup>452</sup> by inverting the dynamic of the *History of England*, which only briefly focused on certain individuals and was, more generally, a ‘history of mankind in a mass’. It is then thanks to this reciprocal relationship between history and biography and to the complexity it implies, that Godwin is able to call into question aspects of the exemplarity of Jane Grey, and to present critical reflections on English history to his child readers.

## II. AN EXAMPLE “FOR THE FAIREST HALF OF THE RISING GENERATION”

Since biographical works for children usually had an explicitly exemplary, didactic, and moral aim, the presence of Jane Grey was justified by the perception of her exemplarity. She was considered a ‘female worthy’. Writers usually stress three dimensions of her character, which were emphasised differently according to the preferences of authors: (1) her abilities as a female scholar; (2) her female sensitivity and domestic propriety; (3) her religiosity especially insofar as it gave her strength of resolve. To take a particularly striking example, in the table of contents of her *Mirror for the Female Sex*, Mary Pilkington indicates Jane Grey as an illustration of the virtues of “religion” and the especially female qualities of “politeness of address and polish of manners” and “forgiveness of injuries”.<sup>453</sup> In the

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451 I return to this point later in the chapter.

452 Phillips, *Society and Sentiment*, p. 143.

453 Pilkington, pp. xvii, xxii, xxiv in the following pages, I refer to Pilkington’s *Mirror for the Female Sex* in-text as *MFS* followed by the page number.

narrative illustrating these especially important virtues, Pilkington also refers positively to Jane Grey's scholarship, especially perhaps to her learning of languages particularly associated with both the Bible and humanist education, as "she was completely mistress of the Latin and Greek languages, and had some proficiency in the Hebrew" (*MFS* 7). Other writers, such as the author of the *Juvenile Plutarch*, also presented her scholarly accomplishments, though they are latched, almost as an afterthought, onto the more female-gendered works of "needle-work, fair-hand writing, and music".<sup>454</sup> Moreover, the authors do not fail to describe her as a "virtuous, amiable, and pious daughter", who "received the dismal tidings [of her condemnation to death] with her accustomed mildness and religious resignation" (*JP* 1:50).

To a certain extent, Godwin's text is a variation on this pattern. He does indeed find Jane Grey to be "the most perfect model of a meritorious young creature of the female sex, to be found in history: her example is therefore the fittest possible to be held up to the fairest half of the rising generation" (*JG* iii). He then foregrounds certain dimensions of Jane Grey's character at the expense of others. Unlike the *Juvenile Plutarch* which only emphasises Grey's scholarly accomplishments after her domestic virtues, Godwin considers the latter as the afterthought. Already in the title page, Jane Grey is thus described as:

This young Lady [who] at Twelve Years of Age understood Eight Languages, was for Nine Days Queen of England, and was Beheaded in the Tower in the Seventeenth Year of her Age, being at that Time the most Amiable and Accomplished Woman in Europe. (*JG* title page)

Later, in the midst of the description of Grey's intellectual abilities, Godwin then simply states that Jane did not "in pursuit of these extraordinary [scholarly] acquisitions, fall into neglect of those more useful and ornamental arts, which are peculiarly to be desired in the female sex", before then returning to a discussion of her scholarship (*JG* 9).

Moreover, Godwin places less emphasis on Jane Grey's feminine sensitivity than other authors. When describing her refusal to take the crown, for instance, he reports an erudite

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<sup>454</sup> Anonymous, *The Juvenile Plutarch*, Second Edition, 2 vols (London: Tabart and Co., 1806), vol. 1, p. 45. A presentation of her scholarly accomplishments takes the better part of the next two pages. In what follows, I will refer to this work in-text as *JP* followed by the volume and page number.

speech, displaying her grasp of recent English history, and her judgment on her “liberty”, as an individual, which “is more to be desired than the chain” of the monarchy, “with what precious stones soever it be adorned, or of what gold soever framed” (*JG* 44-45). After quoting (or, rather, inventing) Jane Grey’s position, he underlines the “firmness and sobriety” of her speech, which “confounded” Northumberland, Jane’s parents, and her husband (*JG* 47). However, it is because of discursive and emotional violence, when Jane Grey was “assaulted” by her family and their exhortations, that “she yielded” and took the crown (*JG* 47). In contrast, Mary Pilkington indicates that Jane’s initial refusal and eventual persuasion are indicative of her “*humility and justice*” (*MFS* 5).<sup>455</sup> Lying somewhere between those two positions, the author of the *Juvenile Plutarch* notes that Lady Jane Grey “pointed out with energy” the better claims of Mary, and “the danger” of trying to usurp the crown, though her first reaction is to “burst into tears” (*JP* 1:48).

This is not to say that Godwin does not express admiration for Jane Grey’s humility and sensitivity. Both Godwin and Pilkington find themselves struck by her forgiveness. The author of the *Mirror for the Female Sex* even elevates that ability to the status of one of her most exemplary traits (*MFS* 7, 233). Similarly, Godwin writes, as soon as Lady Jane learns that her father was “more disturbed at the thought of being the author of her death than with the expectation of his own”:

[...] She recollected that he was her father, and that all he had done, however mistaken (as, poor man, he had been through life), was intended in kindness; and she forgave him. She was too nobly indifferent to life, to feel the injury he had done her in all its bitterness (*JG* 93-94).

There is, however, a broader critical gesture suggested by Godwin’s narrative arrangements on the subject.

In Godwin’s *Jane Grey*, female and domestic sensitivity are closely associated with the eventual demise of the young woman. In this context, the exemplary status of sensitivity becomes unclear, and also ties Godwin’s treatment of Jane Grey to his ongoing reflection on the problems posed by personal affections.<sup>456</sup> For Godwin, Jane Grey’s “sobriety and

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<sup>455</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>456</sup> Susan Manly makes a similar point, but takes it in a slightly different direction in: ‘William Godwin’s “School

firmness” of argument against assuming the crown was defeated “at once by the artful persuasions of Northumberland [her father-in-law], the expostulations of her father, the intreaties of her mother, and the intercessions of her husband”, Lord Guildford Dudley (*JG* 47). While this is also found in the *Juvenile Plutarch*, where Jane Grey is “overcome by the force of parental authority, and the more endearing arguments of a beloved partner”, Godwin’s emphasis is peculiarly strong. Not only does he use military vocabulary – Jane Grey was “assaulted” and eventually “yielded” – which increases the urgency of the matter, but he also returns to the issue of personal affections toward the end of the short book. There, he notes that it was because of Jane Grey’s “truly conjugal affection” for her husband that she accepted a crown she did not want, nor thought herself entitled to (*JG* 97). Thus, despite the “respect expressed [...] for marriage” in the novel *Fleetwood*, published in 1805 (*CNM* 5:14), which Mark Philp has seen as evidence of his taking “up the mature mantle of family man and loving husband”,<sup>457</sup> the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* shows that Godwin remained suspicious of the effects of marriage, since “conjugal affection” and the tension between private judgment and personal attachments leads an exemplary woman to her death.<sup>458</sup>

In his treatment of Jane Grey’s religiosity, Godwin undermines the usual reading by contextualising and de-centring her Protestant zeal. One of the central points of Mary Pilkington’s narrative in the *Mirror for the Female Sex* is her description of Jane Grey’s firmness in keeping true to the Protestant faith, despite her impending death, which she met with religious “calmness and resignation”, and Queen Mary’s attempts to convert her by sending “several Roman Catholic priests” to her prison cell (*MFS* 6). References to Jane Grey’s zealous Protestantism and its benefits are also common in the *Juvenile Plutarch*. The author stresses how Jane Grey remained firmly grounded in the Protestant religion even while awaiting death. Accordingly, her “principles were those of truth and conviction”, defended “with strength and firmness; yet with *meekness and Christian charity*” (*JP* 1:51).<sup>459</sup> This attitude is contrasted with that of Queen Mary, “a blind bigot to the Romish religion, and as superstitious as she was cruel” (*JP* 1:50). Godwin’s discussion of Jane Grey’s religiosity, in contrast, is couched in his broader considerations on the complex relationship between Catholics and Protestants in England, to which I will return.

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of Morality”, pp. 140–41.

457 Philp, *Godwin’s Political Justice*, p. 175.

458 For Godwin’s view on marriage and the problem of private judgment, in a slightly different key than what I discuss here, see: *PPW* 3: 453, 4: 377. See also Philp, *Godwin’s Political Justice*, p. 182.

459 My emphasis. Note also the intersection of gendered expectations and religion here.

Thus, while Godwin does suggest that Protestantism is doctrinally superior to Catholicism, which he described as bringing “the empire of superstition and darkness over the world” (*JG* 49), he does not shy away from describing both Protestants and Catholics as intolerant. In doing so, he suggests that it was the Protestants who were responsible for violent religious conflict in the first instance. They were the ones who initially “burned the crucifixes” of the Catholics, who then, “by way of retort, burned the Protestants alive” (*JG* 29). This contextualisation colours all mentions of religion in the text, and thus, what is exemplary in Lady Jane Grey is not the fact that she “was a zealous Protestant”, ready to die a martyr for her faith, but rather that she wanted “to protect the true faith from persecution, and to prevent the superstition and idolatry, which had so long overshadowed the island, from being restored to power” (*JG* 63). The point, then, is not to glorify the Protestant religion, but rather to stress, firstly, the problem of religious persecution – for which the Protestants are partly responsible – and, secondly, that of superstition, which, following the common view in Britain, Godwin identified with Catholicism.

Godwin undermines two crucial dimensions of the representation of Jane Grey as an exemplar of femininity: the domestic, as most authors describe her as a perfect daughter and wife; and the religious. In doing this, Godwin makes a broader historical and moral claim. The great example “for the fairest half of the rising generation” is an exemplary scholar, an enquiring reader who prefers “reading the *Phaedon* of Plato in the original Greek” to accompanying part of the court “a-hunting” (*JG* 12), whose quiet, free and learned life was only brought to an end as a consequence of circumstances largely outside her control.

### III. HISTORY, RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE *LIFE OF LADY JANE GREY*

Just as Godwin used his histories for children to convey certain political messages, his contextual discussions in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* allowed him to express some of his political and social commitments. The central example of this is the discussion of religion, which effectively frames the book from beginning to end. This was then related to his interpretation of Jane Grey’s exemplarity. As we saw, Godwin’s first mention of the religious conflict comes just at the end of the first quarter of the text where he explains Northumberland’s plot. He describes the Reformation, the “tyranny” of Rome over Britain, and some of the most striking doctrinal differences between Catholicism and Protestantism

(*JG* 26-28). He then turns to the “quarrel [that] grew to a very violent one” (*JG* 28):

Neither party were contented to say their prayers in their own way. The Papists insisted that the Protestants should have crucifixes, and the Protestants that the Papists should go without them. The Protestants burned the crucifixes; and the Papists, by way of retort, burned the Protestants alive. Both parties had arguments to satisfy them that they acted properly; but it was very wrong of the Protestants to burn their neighbours’ crucifixes, and it was exceedingly wicked of the Papists to burn their neighbours alive.

Although Godwin does frame Catholicism as tyrannical and even suggests it is “nonsense” from a religious and political point of view, his account remains balanced and committed to religious toleration. This commitment is repeated at the end of the text when, after having briefly discussed the “calamitous reign” of the Catholic Queen Mary and her “burning of the Protestants”, Godwin describes the religious conflict as fundamentally political (*JG* 108-109). The contention was over “who should possess the archbishoprics, and bishoprics, and deaneries and archdeaconries, and other places of great value and respectability, and call themselves the church of England” (*JG* 110). Godwin also explicitly displaces the issue of personal belief, arguing that “a person may believe in transubstantiation, and say his prayers with a little ivory image standing before him, and yet be a very worthy man” (*JG* 109-110).

Godwin’s plea for religious toleration is however given particular urgency due to the fact that the position of Catholics in British society was a central political concern of the time. The Gordon Riots of 1780, still present in individual and collective memory at the turn of the century, had marked the beginning of a conservative “mood”, which included a stronger anti-Catholic sentiment despite the end of legal discrimination against Catholics in 1829.<sup>460</sup> Moreover, by the time of publication of the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, Ireland and its Catholic majority had very recently been absorbed by the United Kingdom through the Act of Union in 1800, which set the terms of the ‘Irish Question’ for the rest of the nineteenth century and contributed to the increasing sectarianism of the island.<sup>461</sup> Godwin’s argument in favour of religious toleration and peace between Catholics and Protestants should therefore be understood in the context of his increasing interest in Ireland following six-week tour of the

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<sup>460</sup> Hilton, p. 30.

<sup>461</sup> Hilton, pp. 74–82, 96–97.

island in 1800, and which he expressed in his published and unpublished works, including his sixth novel, *Mandeville* (1817), and *The Looking-Glass*.<sup>462</sup>

*Mandeville* opens with a description of the state of Ireland at the time of the Civil War where religion and politics are directly, if “incidentally”, linked:

But there was another and a deeper discontent at work in this unhappy country [Ireland]. The majority of its population was Catholic, and all the religious emoluments of Ireland were reserved for the Protestants. The country had struggled for ages for her independence; it was a war of the oppressor against the oppressed; of civilized man, or man claiming to be such, against man almost in a state of barbarism; and, incidentally only, for nearly a century past, of the two great denominations of the Christian religion against each other (*CNM* 6: 11).

What Godwin presents in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* is therefore best understood as a timely commentary on contemporary religious politics, which emphasises the political circumstances of the contention between Catholics and Protestants – themes to which Godwin returns later in his career as a novelist.

Godwin makes further political points in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*. These concern the general organisation of political life and the operation and institutionalisation of political power. The book includes more or less subtle criticism of ranks and the monarchical order. For instance, Godwin uses Jane Grey as a contrast to the usual idleness and arrogance of the gentry and nobility, especially their youth: “though [Jane Grey was] of noble and royal descent, she did not think that excused her from the performance of her duties, or the cultivation of her mind” (*JG* 9). Godwin pursues this line of argument on the following page, this time particularly targeting noblewomen who, unlike Jane Grey, “thought their high station sufficiently authorized them to trifle away their days, and domineer among their attendants” (*JG* 10).

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462 I am grateful to Jenny McAuley for bringing my attention to this during her presentation entitled ‘An English Radical Takes the Wicklow Tour: Godwin’s Letters on Ireland, July-September 1800’ (Newcastle University, June 2017). On the tour, see also Pamela Clemit and Jenny McAuley, “‘A Nation in Its Last Moments’: William Godwin’s Visit to Ireland, 1800”, *History Ireland*, 2 July 2015 <<http://www.historyireland.com/volume-23/a-nation-in-its-last-moments-william-godwins-visit-to-ireland-1800/>> [accessed 19 July 2017]. I return to Irishness in *The Looking-Glass* briefly below.

Later, as Godwin introduces Northumberland's plot, he raises deeper questions concerning the nature of monarchy and the source of legitimate political power. He begins by suggesting that monarchical power is unstable and problematic because of the powers courtiers have over the king, who in turn has power over others. On the one hand, courtiers who are ambitious or vain "have many temptations to deceive" the king. On the other, even "kings that are grown-up men, and wise men too", can be "grossly deceived" and thus act on imprudent and egoistic advice from courtiers (JG 22). In other words, the institutions of monarchical power lead to poor political decision-making. At the same time, Godwin suggests that political power resides in the aggregated opinion of individual subjects. The reason that Mary ascended to the throne was because "the sobriety of the people of England would not suffer the rules of succession to be thus violated" (JG 50). Thus, the possibility of Mary's accession to the throne and the legitimacy of her political power resided in the consent of the general population. Though this obviously does not amount to a republican argument, it has a democratic bent and enables the child to reflect critically upon the nature and legitimacy of political power generally and of monarchical power in particular.

In line with his reflections in *Political Justice* and in *Caleb Williams*, Godwin is also encouraging children to reflect on the institutions of state justice, prison especially. Godwin's description of jail in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* is quite close to that presented in *Caleb Williams*. In both texts, Godwin begins by describing the harsh living conditions of prisoners, before emphasising the naked operation of arbitrary power – a constant thread in republican thought. In *Caleb Williams* Godwin describes both the physical and material dimension of the prison, with "the massy doors, the resounding locks", and the human dimension. The latter is described in strictly political terms, for the gaolers' "tyranny had no other limit than their own caprice" (CNM 3:158, 160). A similar language is employed in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*:

A prison is a dreary abode, and, if the prisoners desire any amusement, they must apply for leave to have a book, a pen, or paper, which is sometimes granted, and oftener refused. Every thing depends on the caprice of their superintendents who are seldom indisposed to make those who are under their government feel their power (JG 73).

By describing a prison more generally and not focusing solely on the imprisonment of Jane Grey, Godwin presents the child with something that, as he claimed in *Caleb Williams*, was not usually thought about: the conditions “of those who committed offence against, or became obnoxious to suspicion from the community” (CNM 3:158). As he interweaves different levels of narrative, from the narrowly biographical to the broader historiographical, Godwin presents a complex narrative, where an exemplary model is used to address questions about power, religion and politics.

### **“A CHILD LIKE OTHERS” THE PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG BOY**

#### **I. GENRE, HISTORICAL DISTANCE AND EXEMPLARITY IN *THE LOOKING-GLASS***

Unlike the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, Godwin’s biography of the young William Mulready, *The Looking-Glass*, portrays life in London at the end of the eighteenth century. It depicts a contemporary childhood in a modest family. In the preface addressed to the child reader, Godwin openly says that, “the artist related to me his history”.<sup>463</sup> The closeness between the subject of the biography and the author-narrator of *The Looking-Glass* is then emphasised by turns of phrase which imply a conversation between the two. We are told that “the earliest particular leading” to the artist’s love of drawing “which he has been able to recollect”, relates to an acquaintance of the boy’s father (*TLG* 3). In this sense, *The Looking-Glass* can be located in the tradition of the conversational memoir, and resembles texts such as Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* (1791),<sup>464</sup> and Godwin’s own *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which he stresses that “the facts detailed in the following pages, are principally taken from the mouth of the person to whom they relate”.<sup>465</sup>

This conversational model is joined by a narrative in which the artist is much more intimately characterized, thanks to a wealth of detail that was unavailable to Godwin in writing the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*. Instead of describing the general context and the details of social, political and religious relations, he depicts the dynamics and accidents of

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463 Theophilus Marcliffe [William Godwin], *The Looking-Glass: A True History of the Early Years of an Artist* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805), p. 3. In the following pages, I will refer to this work in-text as *TLG* followed by the page number.

464 See the extract from Boswell in Appendix A.2 Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, pp. 125–28.

465 Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, pp. 43–44.

Mulready's family and educational life, as well as his encounters with people outside the family circle, all of which lead him to become a successful and self-realised artist. Early in the book, for instance, Godwin relates a moment of domestic sociability that appears to determine the professional path of the young boy. Mulready's father, we are told, "amused himself with sketching hares and dogs", and though he did so "only once, and that for the diversion of his little boy, who during the performance was seated on his knee" the effects were striking: "this sort of pictorial composition, forcibly seized upon the boy's attention" (*TLG* 4-5). This narrative strategy is based on Godwin's understanding of the effect of candour and intimacy in biography, which he first expressed in the *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. There, he claims that, "the more fully we are presented with the picture and story" of exemplary characters, "the more generally shall we feel in ourselves an attachment to their fate, and a sympathy in their excellencies".<sup>466</sup>

At the same time, and despite Godwin's assertions concerning the veracity of the tale,<sup>467</sup> aspects of the narrative style of *The Looking-Glass* bring it closer to both the didactic fictional story-books of the time and novels proper. Godwin's heavier reliance on dialogue and his more focused narrative recall Thomas Day's highly popular tales, such as *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1783-1789), or works like Newbery's *History of Little Goody Two-Shoes* (1765). However, these narrative features are combined with an attention to accidents of life, details, and the development of the psychology and skill of the main character, that are uncharacteristic of the didactic works of the period. In her reading of the work, Malini Roy somewhat anachronistically aligns the "complexity of linguistic registers" and the ambivalence of certain parts of Godwin's narrative with the tradition of the *künstlerroman*.<sup>468</sup> While I am not quite willing to categorise *The Looking-Glass* in this way, the novelistic style of the work does make it a more compelling read. More importantly, however, this narrative style, the complexity of character and the apparent veracity of the tale, are related to the complex form of exemplarity expressed through *The Looking-Glass*, which differs those explored earlier in this thesis.

In Godwin's histories, exemplarity was often related to his ability to delve into the description of particular actions taken by historical characters. Historical personages were

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<sup>466</sup> Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, p. 43.

<sup>467</sup> See for example *TLG* viii, 83

<sup>468</sup> Roy, p. 129.

exemplary insofar as they displayed specific virtues at equally specific points in time. A similar form of exemplarity appears in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, though Godwin is able to contextualise her actions in much greater detail, leading to a more complex reading of Jane Grey as a feminine example. As we have seen, a second, more spiritual form of exemplarity, described in Godwin's 'Essay on the Sepulchres', also appears in the three children's histories. Neither of these versions of exemplarity, however, dealt with the potentially pernicious effects of emulation or sympathetic engagement. By contrast, in the preface to *The Looking-Glass*, Godwin identifies a problem with exemplarity, or, to use his vocabulary, "emulation". The price to pay for "so good a thing as emulation" he writes, may well be a certain amount of "envy, hatred and malice" (*TLG* v-vi). Emulation is often driven by a competitive spirit between individuals, which mixes "unkindness" with "rivalship" (*TLG* vi). Godwin offers a solution: to "emulate the excellence of persons we never saw, and of the dead" (*TLG* vii). In *The Looking-Glass*, Godwin works with a person whom readers "never saw", but with whom they are led to have a deeper connection, based on a recognition of proximity, even of identity.

Instead of presenting the exploits of historical heroes, Godwin relies on the fact that the artist depicted in *The Looking-Glass* is *not* a hero, but "a child like others" (*TLG* ix). In the second part of the preface, which Godwin addresses to a "young reader", he stresses that his character is neither "bombastic" nor "impossible" and that his achievements are related to his "merit", which, Godwin continues, "my young friend, is within your reach too" (*TLG* ix). Pushing his readers to identify with the central character of the narrative as much as possible, Godwin generalises his point concerning the progress of the artist makes through his own hard work. Even if the "young reader" is not to become an artist, like the protagonist of *The Looking-Glass*, the "little story-book need not be of the less use", for "every art is like every other art" (*TLG* x-xi). What should matter for the future of the readers of *The Looking-Glass* is the fact that the protagonist "loved the employment and the studies to which his efforts were devoted" (*TLG* xii), which were ultimately the root of his success.

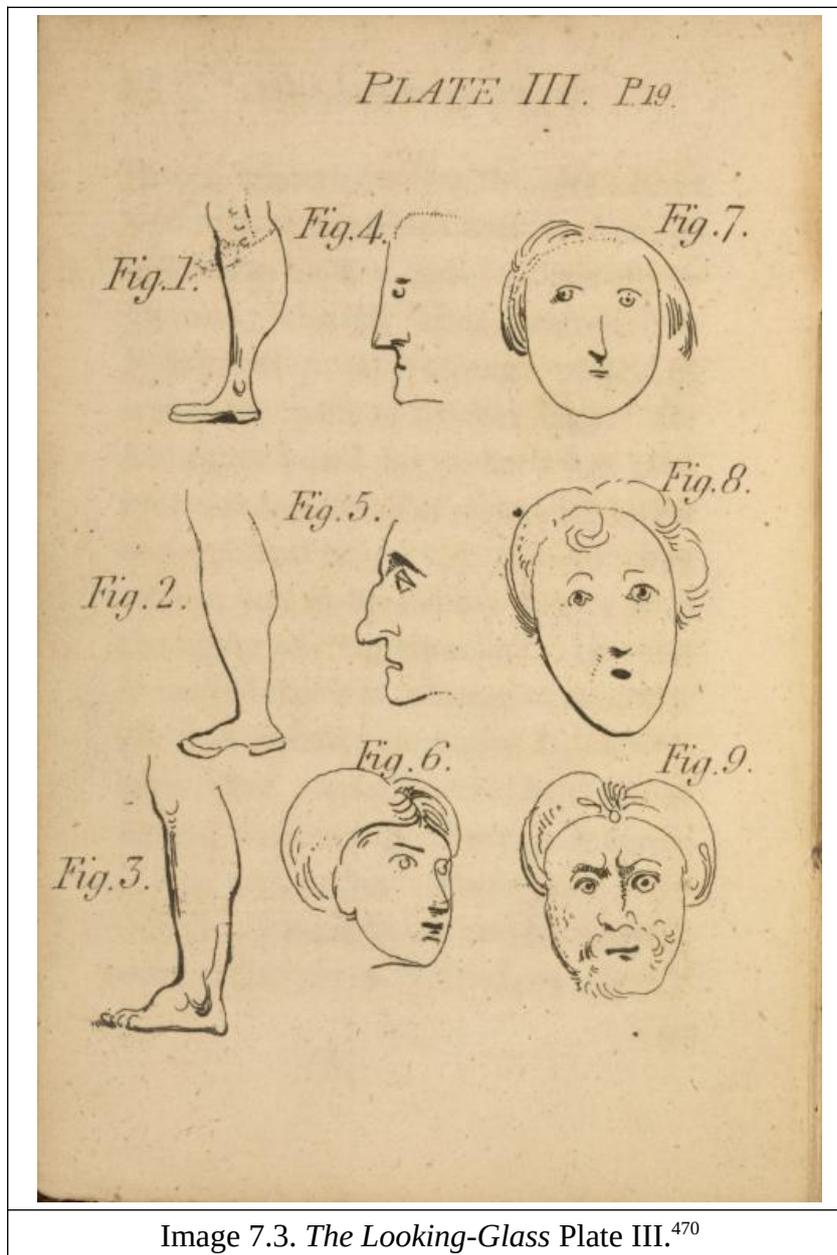
The proximity between the artist and the child-reader is reinforced by the fact that the progress of the child is not only narrated, but also shown through a particularly striking and self-conscious use of illustrations. As we have seen, given the impact of Locke's pedagogical thought on educational writers in the late eighteenth century, it was not unusual for

children’s book authors to use illustrations in order to facilitate learning, and to impress specific scenes upon readers’ memories. Godwin’s book of fables used illustrations in this way, as did Sarah Trimmer’s *Concise History of England*. The illustrations in *The Looking-Glass* however serve to visually convey the technical and artistic progress of the protagonist. This is done, for example, when Godwin’s narrative leads the child from the crude and only more or less realistic beasts of Plate I (TLG 5; image 7.1), back to the much more elaborate frontispiece, described as the reproduction of “an original drawing by a boy of nine years of age”, which Godwin encourages his readers to study (TLG 34; image 7.2).



Progress is also conveyed within a single-page illustration. Plate III (image 7.3), therefore allows Godwin to not only state that the child artist made progress, thanks to his observations of other drawings and “upon the handsome and well-made figure of his father”

(TLG 22), but also *what* progress was made in material terms. Godwin thus very clearly describes both process and result.



The five pages that follow Plate III thus contain frequent references to the different figures, and their proximity on the page encourages the child to carefully observe and compare them. The text supports the child reader in making these comparisons by drawing attention to the progress from Mulready's "crude conception" of the human face, where "a strait line" constitutes "the outline of the nose [...] see Plate III. Fig. 4," to a more sophisticated

<sup>470</sup> Image courtesy of the New York Public Library

understanding where “a certain swelling in particular, is commonly to be found about the middle of the line” of the nose – “for these improvements, see Plate III. Fig. 5” (*TLG* 20-21). Eventually, we arrive at the final portrait, which shows “the human face in a subsequent state of improvement, with some hint of the countenance of Mr John Kemble”, the famous Drury Lane and Covent Garden actor (*TLG* 24). In the process of describing these “improvements” Godwin also includes a brief drawing lesson, perhaps in the hopes that child readers would try to emulate Mulready.

Godwin’s story, however, is not one of constant progress and permanent exemplarity. For the character to be believable, and to diminish the “envy, hatred and malice” inherent in emulation, he cannot be perfect.<sup>471</sup> He uses a particularly appropriate metaphor, given the subject of the book, to express this outlook: “a picture is nothing without shadow; and a character is nothing without a few darker strokes in it” (*TLG* 55). For him, a successful exemplary character cannot simply be, like Goody Two-Shoes, a thinly veiled mouthpiece for virtue. A purely virtuous character loses its identifiable humanity and discourages the child reader from even attempting to follow the steps of the exemplar:

If I [the narrator] described my personage without faults, you [the reader] would scarcely know him for a being of your own species, and you would scarcely have the courage while you are reading, to say, I will try and do as well as he did (*TLG* 55-56).

Mulready is therefore described at times as arrogant, such as when he says “with an air of self-complacence” that he had “left off copying” (*TLG* 42). In addition, Godwin deploys racist stereotypes about the Irish to describe the child as “somewhat coarse, rash and savage [...] always getting into one unlucky scrape or another” (*TLG* 55, 57), in spite of the education he received. The less palatable sides of Mulready’s character allow for stronger sympathetic engagement: the hero is imperfect, just like the reader. Children reading the book therefore find themselves drawn closer to the main character and are more likely to emulate his behaviour.

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471 Carlson, p. 244.

This approach however was not without problems. Above all, it was a commercial risk. The ambivalence of a story touted as a moral tale – not least thanks to its title – led the reviewer of the fiercely conservative *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* to condemn the text.<sup>472</sup> More troubling, however, were its potential moral effects: if readers identified too closely with the artist, they might reflect his vices as well as (or rather than) his virtues. Thus, Godwin downplays the child’s vices, and warns the reader to only “imitate what he [the artist] did that was best; you [reader] will have faults enough of your own”. Playing further on the desire for recognition, Godwin closes the paragraph noting that “it was not his [the artists’] faults that made him worthy of a niche in history” (*TLG* 56). Instead, Mulready’s claim to posterity was through merit and hard work in a field of his own choosing, which allowed him to bring his talents to fruition.

## II. BETWEEN GODWINIAN BENEVOLENCE AND BOURGEOIS INDIVIDUALISM

*The Looking-Glass* is quite original in the different ways in which it deploys exemplarity. However, the narrative of progress seems to bind the biography to one of the most conventional story types: the hard-worker who overcomes all odds, and eventually becomes successful and independent.<sup>473</sup> In this case, the story ends as the artist achieves full financial independence, thus removing his burden on his parents and bringing them “the delight, so ravishing to a parental bosom, of seeing their son daily rise to further distinction and eminence” (*TLG* 117-118). On the surface, then, we can locate *The Looking-Glass* in a much broader tradition of moral tales of hard work such as Thomas Day’s *History of Little Jack* (1788), and the familiar *History of Little Goody Two-Shoes*. In all three texts, children of very little means conquer adversity and achieve success, whether it is artistic flourishing and financial independence (*The Looking-Glass*); becoming a great teacher and doing good works with one’s hard-earned money and position (*The History of Little Goody Two Shoes*); or becoming a successful and frugal industrialist (*The History of Little Jack*). Thus we have evidence supporting Isaac Kramnick’s claim that Godwin was a kind of “bourgeois radical” whose works, especially *The Looking-Glass*, embody and circulate “the new bourgeois ideology” at the centre of which we find:

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472 See: Kenneth W. Graham, pp. 281–82.

473 For a broader discussion of the genre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see chapter 4: Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, for the Victorian period see: Christopher Parkes, *Children’s Literature and Capitalism: Fictions of Social Mobility in Britain, 1850-1914*, 2012 edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

The solitary individual responsible for his or her own fate – not the heir to a family title or the member of a guild but the self-reliant individual alone in the marketplace of merit and talent, who earned either success or failure.<sup>474</sup>

Godwin's emphasis on "merit" and the artist's ongoing hard work while he "never allowed himself to flag" in the preface to *The Looking-Glass* lends even more credence to this position.

Yet, Godwin's artist does not fit comfortably alongside Kramnick's "new bourgeois models – engineers, scientists, and industrial entrepreneurs", who rather reflects his own bias regarding the necessity of art for social progress.<sup>475</sup> Moreover, in contrast to many of the moral tales of hard work, the artist is not an orphan: on the contrary, his parents are described as ever-present and ready to support their child in his endeavours, especially after being encouraged to do so by the child's other mentors.<sup>476</sup> It can be argued that Godwin was merely being respectful of Mulready's real life, while trying to align it with the bourgeois ideological position as best he could. Thus, his repeated emphasis on the fact that the child was supposed to be "under every disadvantage of a humble situation and a total absence of instruction and assistance" (*TLG* ix), or was indeed "a self-taught artist, prompted by an impulse he felt within, and scarcely ever receiving any external advantage or encouragement" (*TLG* 74-75). Yet, Godwin also breaks the narrative flow of his story in order to stress the impact of the child's parents on his success:

While I admire the diligence and application of the boy, I should be very sorry to forget that the merits of his parents toward him were very extraordinary [...], they redoubled their assiduity in business; mother, as well as father, found the means of turning time to profit and they sometimes sat up whole nights, that they might increase their power of doing justice to his talents (*TLG* 63-64).

However, parents are not the only figures who encourage and push the young artist. What is truly striking in *The Looking-Glass* is the extent to which Godwin's child artist is largely *not* a fully self-reliant individual, despite the author's affirmations in the text.

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<sup>474</sup> Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism*, p. 100.

<sup>475</sup> Carlson, p. 244.

<sup>476</sup> Carlson, p. 242. On the ideological use of orphans, see Kramnick, p. 113. For Godwin's description of the help Mulready's parents gave their child, see: *TLG* 45, 48-49, 62-64, 74-75, 117.

After emphasising the influence of Corny, a friend of the child's father, on the father's amusements with drawing, which prove invaluable for development of the artist's early taste for art in chapter I (TLG 3-6), Godwin turns to the child's peers at Mr Underwood's day school in chapter II. As "he examined" the drawings of those schoolmates "who owed to the liberality of their parents the advantage of a drawing master", the protagonist "learned to correct his crude conceptions of the human form" (TLG 19-20). In the following chapter, "the boy" meets "the new master" at his school, a Mr Night (TLG 27), who "encouraged him to persist" in the direction of "the arts of design" and helped him do so by giving him drawings, "which he advised him to copy" (TLG 28-29). In addition to drawings, and "to stimulate the little lad to perseverance" Mr Night narrates the story of two famous London engravers named Heath and Sharp who started "with no greater advantages" than the young artist, and who now lived off their art (TLG 29-30).<sup>477</sup> Stressing the social nature of the artist's success, both in technical and in material terms, Godwin also relates the artist's acquaintance with "a poor working man" who gave the child "implements, canvas, and chalk of a better sort than that to which the boy had hitherto been accustomed" (TLG 31). As Godwin ends chapter III, and just before describing the artistic achievements of the child, he tells the reader that it was thanks to "the notice and encouragement he [the boy] experienced from Mr Night, [that] he rose somewhat higher than he had done in the same way about a year before, under Mr Underwood" – again emphasising the role that close personal relationships play in the artist's education and success (TLG 33-34).

The end of chapter III marks about one third of *The Looking-Glass*, yet the importance of encounters with teachers and mentors does not fade. On the contrary, in the following chapter the boy meets Mr Graham, an artist who not only provides the child with the opportunity to pursue a more formal artistic education (TLG 43-44), but also – crucially – tells the child's father "how much promise of excellence appeared to display itself in his son" and suggests that the child "should receive all manner of encouragement" (TLG 45). Haphazard encounters continue to play an important role in leading the young artist from one mentor to the next. Thanks to "a boot maker, a friend of the father's", the child is taken

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<sup>477</sup> These were most likely James Heath and William Sharp, both of whom are listed in the *ODNB*. Godwin definitely knew William Sharp and records meeting him several times. He also almost certainly knew James Heath through their mutual connection with the bookseller George Robinson (Godwin records meeting a 'Heath' with Robinson on 24 March 1789), and as Heath was the signed engraver of the frontispiece of the first edition of the *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. I am grateful to Pamela Clemit for this piece of information.

under the wing of Mr Corbet who eventually helps him further his formal understanding of art by studying anatomy (*TLG* 79-80, 87), before becoming “of opinion that his progress was sufficient to entitle him to an admission to draw in the Royal Academy” (*TLG* 93). This leads the child to his final mentor, Mr Thomas Banks, a sculptor and fellow of the Royal Academy<sup>478</sup> who, after a short time, accepts to instruct the child, grows fond of him, and finally “recommended to him to repair to a drawing-school”, where “the master of the school was flattered at receiving a pupil with such a recommendation” (*TLG* 100-101). However, due to the fact that the drawing-master, “who was an ill economist, found it necessary to disappear” it is Mr Banks who, we are told in chapters VIII and IX, instructs and encourages the child until his final admission to the Royal Academy.

It could still be argued that *The Looking-Glass* is a sophisticated version of bourgeois individualism, linked to the emergence of liberalism and that Godwin is therefore simply providing a further example of this kind of ideological literature. After all, the child progresses from mentor to mentor thanks to his growing talents and continuing hard work. Mr Banks initially sends the child home, to “make a better drawing of the Apollo”, before agreeing to see him again and eventually give him instruction (*TLG* 100-101). In this reading, like in the *History of Little Jack*, the characters that the protagonist meets are simply offering him rewards for his good works. There are two dimensions of Godwin’s text that resist this reading, however. The first is the recognition of the influence of chance in the lives of individuals. I have mentioned that the boy’s encounter with Mr Corbet was the result of the fortuitous presence of a friend of the child’s father. Chance also played a role in the case of Mr Banks, as he was only chosen as a potential sponsor because “it happened” to be “the first name which presented itself” in the “list or catalogue” the child and Mr Corbet were consulting (*TLG* 94). Moreover, the emphasis on the encouragement and sympathy that the child receives from those who recognise his worth is better described as the function of a social system of benevolence that demands that society recognise an individual’s worth. It is therefore an enactment of the general applications of the rules of justice that Godwin describes in the *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. The child’s parents and mentors act in accordance with the requirements for just action: as individuals, they are “bound to employ” their “time for the production of the greatest quantity of general good” (*PPW* 3:53).

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478 Thomas Banks, was also an acquaintance of Godwin’s. The sculptor moved in radical circles, and especially Horne Tooke’s (see: *GD*).

So, rather than a bourgeois individualist story, we have a tale of Godwinian benevolence, where individuals recognise the true worth of the child artist and enable him to flourish. He, in time, gratifies society with his art. There are so many of such encounters, and they are so beneficial to the child, that Godwin seems to have felt the need to undercut claims of implausibility. He self-consciously remarks:

It is one circumstance worthy of remark in this narrative, that, though it is all true history, there is [not] one bad man in it. Every personage that occurs, is kind and willing to assist and forward the honest views of his neighbour, as far as it obviously and easily lies in his power to do (*TLG* 83).<sup>479</sup>

Rather than a story of virtuous and victorious individualism we are therefore shown a story of mutual aid, as well as the benefits of a society based on benevolence.

### **ANOTHER REFLECTION: EXEMPLARY PARENTING**

Good, or rather, *just* parenting is crucial to the artist's success in *The Looking-Glass*, and Godwin recognised it as such. Though I argued that this helped Godwin undermine what Isaac Kramnick called the bourgeois individualist narrative, it also served as a way to present an exemplary figure for parents as well as for children. Julie Ann Carlson suggests a similar point, in her remark that "to parents, even of meagre means, *The Looking-Glass* reflects an enabling image".<sup>480</sup> This suggests that, in writing *The Looking-Glass*, Godwin had parent readers as well as child readers in mind. Godwin habitually addressed parents in his prefaces, and used those to advance particular arguments, yet with both of the biographies, he goes a step further and offers different reflections of parenting. Doing this, Godwin does not merely suggest, as Carlson claims, that "the bottom line of good parenting" is to "be a good model",<sup>481</sup> but also offers further reflections on parenting and education that echo and clarify some of the positions he expressed in *The Enquirer*. Between the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* and *The Looking Glass*, we are shown two opposing versions of education. One is domineering

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479 In a twist of irony, I had to put the 'not' between square brackets: there was a printing mistake in the first edition of *The Looking-Glass*, whereby the passage said "there is one bad man" instead of what I quote. Godwin indicates this at the end of the book, as he lists the errata (*TLG* 118). I should be thankful to the printer, R. Wilks, from Chancery Lane: the oddity of this sentence given the mistake was the reason it stood out as I was reading the text.

480 Carlson, p. 242.

481 Carlson, p. 242.

and, as we have seen above, manipulative, which eventually leads to the child's demise, while the other is attentive and essentially child-led, or, as more modern educational thinkers would describe it, child-centred.<sup>482</sup>

In her reading of the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, Susan Manly argued that, although Jane Grey would have been even more accomplished without her "parents' coldness and brutality towards her, which led her to turn to books for consolation", this was still an essential cause of her "extraordinary intellectual accomplishments and learning".<sup>483</sup> I agree with Manly when she contends that Godwin, through the voice of Jane Grey in the text, attributes some of the responsibility for her accomplishments to the severity of her parents. However, her reading neglects one half of the educational equation: the merits of her instructor, Mr Aylmer. In Jane Grey's words to the scholar Roger Ascham, her love of learning is the consequence of "one of the greatest benefits that ever God gave me", which is to have "so sharp and severe parents, *and so gentle a schoolmaster*" (*JG* 13).<sup>484</sup> This matters, as it is the contrast between Jane Grey's parents and her schoolmaster that leads to our understanding "how wrong that system of education is, which treats a free and apt disposition with severity" (*JG* 15). Jane Grey reports a chilling story of her parents' tyranny, for, whatever she does, it must always be done:

In such weight, measure, and number, even so perfectly as God made the world; or else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea presently sometimes with pinches, nips, and bobs, and other ways (which I will not name, for the honour I bear them), so without measure misordered, that I think myself in hell (*JG* 14).

By contrast, Mr Aylmer teaches her "so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to learning that I think all the time nothing, whiles I am with him" (*JG* 14-15). The reason Jane Grey loves learning, then, is because Mr Aylmer acts in many ways like a Godwinian tutor.

Mr Aylmer is described as acting in a Godwinian fashion in two different ways, one being related to the result of his education, the other to his method. First, we know that Mr Aylmer

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<sup>482</sup> For a historical overview of child-centred education, see: Doddington and Hilton, chap. 1.

<sup>483</sup> Manly, 'William Godwin's "School of Morality"', p. 140.

<sup>484</sup> My emphasis.

acted like a Godwinian tutor because Jane Grey finds happiness in learning. The teacher thus successfully delivered on “the true object of education, [...] the generation of happiness” (PPW 5:83). Moreover, he was able to help Jane Grey reach happiness through reading Plato, which, Godwin suggests in the first essay of *The Enquirer* and his own bookishness, is a “more exquisite, more solid, more durable and more constantly accessible” source of pleasure and happiness than play (PPW 5:83). Second, Mr Aylmer acted like a Godwinian tutor because his teaching is associated with the realisation of Jane Grey’s freedom and reason, since he does not tyrannise her learning, but rather provides her with “fair allurements”. Translating this into the language of the essay ‘Of the Communication of Knowledge’ in *The Enquirer*, we are simply told that Mr Aylmer gave his “pupil a motive to learn”, and thus fulfilled “the first object of a system of [Godwinian] instructing” (PPW 5:115).

Good parenting, then, is lacking in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*. It is so lacking that it leads to Jane Grey’s death, because it is “purely out of obedience” to her parents that she accepted her “advancement to royalty” (JG 59). Conversely, good parenting is a central feature of *The Looking-Glass*, and the engagement with parent-readers as well as child-readers is much more direct than in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*. After describing the “judicious conduct” of Mulready’s father with regards to the child’s reading (TLG 47-48), Godwin interrupts the story and writes:

This circumstance affords a strong hint to parents, which is further enforced in many parts of our narrative, how much, though in a humble station they may do for their children, if they are possessed of a sound judgment, and actuated with a genuine solicitude for their children’s welfare (TLG 48-49).

There is good reason therefore for Julie Ann Carlson to note that *The Looking-Glass* “reflects an enabling image” to parents. It provides them with a positive example or role model.<sup>485</sup> However, we can specify what kind of educational behaviour Godwin stresses, thereby showing how he was attempting, through this children’s book, to communicate points he made in *The Enquirer*.

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485 Carlson, p. 242.

The location of the direct address to parents quoted above is far from innocent. It occurs in a chapter which has little to do with the child's artistic development, but rather focuses on his general intellectual endeavours, and specifically with the emergence of a taste for reading – a central theme in *The Enquirer*. In the essay 'Of an Early Taste for Reading', Godwin insists on the desirability of reading in children, given that "books are the depository of every thing that is most honourable to man", and affirms that "an early taste in reading" is "a most promising indication", though "it must be added by favourable circumstances, or the early reader may degenerate into an unproductive pedant, or a literary idler" (PPW 5: 95, 96-97). The narrator's approving judgment of the father's actions in directing the son's reading suggests that the father was providing such "favourable circumstances". This is perhaps not least because the list of works he procures for the child includes one of Godwin's favourite works, *Don Quixote*, which he also recommended to the young American Joseph Bevan (PPW 5:322). In doing so, Godwin is therefore suggesting to the child-reader what to read, and advising the parent reader what should be "recommended to or procured for" the child. The cautious wording recalls the fact that, in the end, Godwin believes that children should be free to choose their own course of reading, which the boy in *The Looking-Glass* is shown to do (TLG 49).<sup>486</sup>

In *The Enquirer*, Godwin claimed that theoretical enquiries about education are written "to assist the adult in discovering how to fashion the youthful mind" (PPW 5:113). Works like *The Enquirer* are designed to reform the educator, in the hope that they would nurture an even more reformed generation. Books for children, such as the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* and *The Looking-Glass*, had an even broader set of aims. Through them, Godwin could attempt to form those being educated and to reform the educator. He could use their wide readership to communicate ideas initially formulated in a work that had a restricted audience.

### A GALLERY OF MIRRORS

Life-writing for children gave Godwin a variety of opportunities to build on one of the most important of his historiographical and educational concepts: exemplarity. *The Looking-Glass* and the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, however, show the different routes Godwin could take to develop exemplary stories, making use of different forms of historical or narrative distance.

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486 Unsurprisingly, the books the child reads on his own (and purchases) are Shakespeare's plays, some of Godwin's favourite texts, and also recommended to Joseph Bevan (PPW 5: 323).

With the former, he could build a sophisticated model or mirror, based on a complex character whose psychology we are able to follow. This relied on the proximity between the child-reader and the child-artist, sustained throughout the book by the use of both text and illustration. Unlike many of the moralising ‘mirrors’ of the time, or those story books such as the *History of Little Jack*, which *The Looking-Glass* superficially resembles, Godwin presented a critical view of emulation that built on the reader’s ability to identify critically with both the protagonist’s positive qualities and his defects, in order to encourage both emulation and self-criticism. With *The Life of Lady Jane Grey*, Godwin could develop a well-known exemplary female character and bring the history of England to female readers.

These two biographies also have something to offer their adult-readers: a mirror with which to reflect on their own educational practices. In addition to presenting his own pedagogical views while writing for children, then, Godwin tried to reform the educators themselves, as they purchased and perused the books they intended to give their children. Perhaps some recognised themselves Jane Grey’s parents – always demanding perfection and resorting to cruel punishments – in which case Mr Aylmer’s Godwinian tutoring would offer a new model for them to reflect upon. Others, especially parents of the lower-middle classes, might see new ways of “doing justice” to their children, thanks to the prominent role of Mulready’s parents in his success.

At the same time, these lives allowed Godwin to tackle much broader social and political issues. In the *Life of Lady Jane Grey*, Godwin reflected on the question of religious toleration and the relationship between Catholics and Protestants, just as the Irish question came to the fore of political life. Moreover, it remained in Godwin’s mind for a longer period, and he returned to these issues in discussions with Percy Shelley as the latter went to Ireland in 1812, as well as in the novel *Mandeville*. Finally, *The Looking-Glass*, offers readers a glimpse into a more benevolent society, where individuals’ talents bear fruit despite harsh material circumstances.



# EPILOGUE.

## REFORMING THE YOUTH?

### GODWIN'S PROJECT AND ITS AFTERLIVES

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#### ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

##### I. AN ENDURING (RELATIVE) SUCCESS?

When the Juvenile Library went bankrupt in 1825, Godwin sold the copyrights of many of his more popular works to the booksellers Baldwin, Cradock and Joy. This included the Lambs' *Tales from Shakespear* (a work that has since its publication never been out of print in Britain), the *Adventures of Ulysses*, Mary Jane Godwin's translation of Johannes Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson*, and several school books, including most of Godwin's works published under the name of Edward Baldwin.<sup>487</sup> The works purchased by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy were then reprinted and continued circulating in the latter part of the 1820s and well into the 1830s, as the advertisement page of an 1836 edition of the *History of England* indicates.<sup>488</sup> The treatment of these works after the purchase of the copyright differed depending on the book. The original text usually remained unchanged, although the Baldwin, Cradock and Joy editions had a different type-settings and sometimes new illustrations, which they especially commissioned.

The *History of England*, however, underwent some more significant changes. The 1836 "new edition" of that work was printed for Baldwin and Cradock and the text was revised and updated to include the first decades of the nineteenth century. There is, for example, a brief narrative of the events leading up to the revolutions of 1830, and the establishment of the July Monarchy in France.<sup>489</sup> More central to the history of England, it also includes a short presentation of the notable events of the reign of George IV, such as "the passing of the Roman Catholic Bill, in 1829, whereby the former civil and political disabilities of the Catholics were nearly entirely removed."<sup>490</sup> Far from ending with Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, many of Godwin's books for children were edited and printed anew from the 1840s to the 1860s.

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487 MS Abinger c. 38 fol. 19.

488 Edward Baldwin [Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, A New Edition (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1836) See the advertisement opposite p. 182.

489 Baldwin [Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, p. 139.

490 Baldwin [Godwin], *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, p. 141.

In the late 1830s, it seems that the owner of the copyright of the most popular of Godwin's children's books, the *History of Greece*, the *History of Rome*, the *Fables* and the *Pantheon*, was the bookseller, Thomas Tegg. The focus of his business was on reprints and cheap editions of works that were either out of copyright, or whose copyright they managed to obtain at an attractive price.<sup>491</sup> An 1844 edition of Godwin's *History of Rome*, published by Thomas Tegg, features an advertisement page for "valuable school books by Edward Baldwin, Esq.", which includes the *History of Greece*, the *Pantheon*, and the *Fables*.<sup>492</sup> While it is difficult to assess the success of these books in the late 1830s and the 1840s, Thomas Tegg must have thought that they were sufficiently marketable for his time that he went through the trouble of type-setting them anew.

The same may be said of Tegg's major competitor George Routledge who, by the 1850s, appears to have been in possession of the copyright for the Juvenile Library's various books edited or written by Frederick Mylius, including *School Dictionary*, to which the 'New Guide to the English Tongue' remained affixed.<sup>493</sup> This does not mean that they necessarily expected the works to have high numbers of sales. Rather they thought that Godwin's books were sufficiently cheap to reprint and circulate, and that the company would at least break even. A better indicator of the enduring success, or at least the continued relative profitability, of Godwin's books for children is the fact that Thomas Tegg's son, William Tegg, continued to reprint updated editions of Godwin's works in the 1860s. The collections of The British Library hold 1862 editions of both Godwin's *History of Rome* and his *History of Greece*, in editions that were "revised and improved" by a William Stopford Kenny, schoolmaster and "accomplished chess player".<sup>494</sup>

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491 James J. Barnes and Patience P. Barnes, 'Reassessing the Reputation of Thomas Tegg, London Publisher, 1776-1846', *Book History*, 3.1 (2000), 45-60.

492 Edward Baldwin [Godwin], *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, Seventh Edition (London: Thomas Tegg, 1844), p. viii.

493 See p. 30 of the advertisements in J. Stirling Coyne, *Pippins & Pies; or Sketches out of School. Being the Adventures and Misadventures of Master Frank Pickleberry during That Month He Was Home for the Holidays*. (London: G. Routledge & Co., 1855).

494 See 'Kenny, William Stopford (1787/8-1867) in the ODNB. Edward Baldwin [William Godwin] and W. S. Kenny, *History of Greece: From the Earliest Records of That Country to the Time in Which It Was Reduced Into a Roman Province. Illustrated with Maps and Portraits. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, A New Edition Revised and Improved by W. S. Kenny (London: William Tegg, 1862); Edward Baldwin [William Godwin] and W. S. Kenny, *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons.*, A New Edition Revised and Improved by W. S. Kenny (London: William Tegg, 1862).

## II. LATER VICTORIAN POINTS OF VIEW

Despite Godwin's histories for children remaining in print for a large part of the later nineteenth century, commentators sympathetic to and respectful of Godwin's works for children have received the histories less generously than Godwin's other books for children. For example, in the afterword of an 1885 facsimile edition of Godwin's life of William Mulready for the use of children, *The Looking Glass*, the pre-Raphaelite art critic Frederic George Stephens remarked:

[Godwin's] histories [for children] were all sketches, written at speed by an accomplished compiler, but of no critical or historical value, and only noteworthy on account of the compactness and clearness with which the experiments of condensation from then accepted sources were effected by a dextrous penman.<sup>495</sup>

Only a few years earlier, Godwin's first biographer, Charles Kegan Paul, took an even more critical view of these works. While he notes that "many men of middle age must remember that their first introduction to History was through the medium of these little books, excellently printed and illustrated", he concludes that, since the publication of Barthold Georg Niebuhr's *Roman History* (first translated into English in 1827), Godwin's histories could not "now be read with advantage by the young, in whom we might wish to cultivate, if it might be, some historic sense."<sup>496</sup>

Attacking Godwin on pedagogical form rather than content, the Victorian educationalist William Stopford Kenny, who, as I mentioned above, "revised and improved" all three of Godwin's histories, went directly against the grain of Godwin's pedagogical choices. Kenny's 'improvements' essentially take the form of detailed sets of "Questions for Examination" at the end of each chapter of the textbook.<sup>497</sup> These are not open-ended and do not encourage the child to think about historical processes and actions. Instead, these questions are clearly designed for rote learning: they either use the exact phrasing of Godwin's text, simply revising the syntax to formulate a question, or consist of very factual questions about specific dates or events. To illustrate this, here is a selection of half of the

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495 Theophilus Marcliffe [Godwin], *The Looking-Glass: A True History of the Early Years of an Artist*, ed. by F. G. Stephens, A Fac-Simile reprint of the Original Edition (London: Bemrose & Sons, 1885), p. 122.

496 Kegan Paul, pp. 131–32 vol. 2.

497 See the two works cited above and: Baldwin [William Godwin] and Kenny, *The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*.

questions Kenny asks the child reader at the end of the first chapter of the 1862 edition of the *History of Rome*:

How was Ancient Rome governed? – How many kings of Rome were there? – In what respects is the history of Rome interesting? – Give reasons why Rome excelled Athens in its government. – How was Rome founded, and who was its first king? – In what year was it founded? – How did Romulus replenish his infant state? – What is an asylum in modern language? – By what means did these Roman robbers get themselves wives?

The most open-ended question here is: “In what respects is the history of Rome interesting?” Yet, it refers back to a very specific passage of the text where Godwin identifies these “respects”. The child is therefore expected to repeat two reasons expressed in the book’s first paragraph: “Rome governed the whole known world to a greater extent and for a longer time, than it was ever governed by any other single power” and Roman “citizens carried public virtue further than they were ever carried by mortal men besides.”<sup>498</sup> Following Godwin’s pedagogical inclinations – that teachers should explain why it is interesting or important to learn something – it is more likely he intended to present these introductory words as reasons to study the history of Rome rather than items to learn by rote.

W. S. Kenny’s decision to ‘revise and improve’ Godwin’s texts thus confirms two important features of Godwin’s books. First, it confirms that they were well-crafted. Their style and mode of organization was sufficiently praiseworthy that later schoolmasters such as W. S. Kenny thought they were worth reviving and perpetuating (at least before the 1870s). Second, and more crucially, it confirms that there were enduring radical pedagogical elements to Godwin’s books. The lack of obvious points for rote learning in Godwin’s original text, which already set him apart from many of his contemporaries, had to be corrected in the later nineteenth century for it to be considered as a truly useful schoolbook for the times. With W. S. Kenny’s editions, Godwin’s text endures, but much of its spirit is lost due to the question-and-answer formula that dominates the pedagogical thrust of the work. Godwin’s fight against rote learning was lost.

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498 Baldwin [William Godwin] and Kenny, *History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons.*, p. 1.

### III. A TRANSATLANTIC HISTORY OF THE JUVENILE LIBRARY?

Leaving the British Isles, a reception history of Godwin's works for children might also consider their presence in the United States. There are traces of Godwin's works under American imprints. I have found, for instance, six different editions of the *Fables, Ancient and Modern* published while the Juvenile Library was still active. Of these, four seem to have been abridgements printed in 1807 by the Sidney Press in New Haven for Increase Cooke and Co, and in 1819, 1820 and 1824 for John Babcock and Son. The two other early nineteenth-century American editions of the *Fables* were published in Philadelphia by Jacob Johnson and Benjamin Warner (1811) and Benjamin Warner on his own (1818).<sup>499</sup> However, the publishing history of Godwin's *Fables* in America does not end with the Juvenile Library or in the early nineteenth century: Baldwin's *Fables* were reprinted in New York by Robert B. Collins in 1854.

The American editions of Baldwin's *Fables* show different marks of adaptation to the American market and to the specific conditions of publication in the early republic. Thus, changes to Godwin's work in the New Haven editions are not limited to the selection of the stories; their order is changed, the text is set in a much tighter way than the works for the Juvenile Library, and the books are printed with new illustrations, in a style very different from Mulready's. Moreover, while the 1807 edition includes Godwin's preface, the 1819 edition, being much shorter, does not. Unlike the versions of the *Fables* published in New Haven, these editions include all 71 stories as well as Godwin's preface and Mulready's illustrations. In the 1811 edition, the stories are reprinted in the order in which they were printed by Godwin, however, this changes in the 1818 edition. There, the book closes on 'The Astrologer in a Pit' rather than 'The Contractor and the Cobbler'. The exact clientele of these works is uncertain, but the advertisement page presenting Babcock and Son of Church-Street in New Haven suggests that their 1819 edition of Godwin's *Fables* could have been used in schools. Babcock's catalogue also included popular works for children written by well-known non-conformist educationalists, such as Isaac Watt's *Divine Songs* and Anna Laetitia Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose*. It was also probably sold either cheaply as a chapbook, as it was just 35 pages long, or more expensively when bound together with other works.<sup>500</sup>

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499 For more on Johnson & Warner, and publishing in Philadelphia more generally, see: Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

500 This is the case of the 1824 Babcock edition, which was printed with other prose fables.

Further research is necessary to assess the significance of these changes and the more general presence of Godwin's books for children in America. What can be shown here, as a starting point, is that Godwin's *Fables* were sufficiently successful, or at least sufficiently well-known, to have been reprinted several times in different parts of America. American editions of the *Fables* list at least five cities where they would have been sold: New Haven, Philadelphia and New York, as stated above, as well as Richmond, Virginia and Charleston, South Carolina where the 1818 Philadelphia edition and the 1820 and 1824 New Haven editions could be found respectively. The study of Godwin's works for children, then, only begins with the contributions he made during his lifetime, which I discussed throughout this thesis. It is however part of a broader international intellectual and cultural history of children's literature which has yet to be explored.

## CONCLUSIONS

To return to the spy with whom this thesis began, and whose comments gives it its title: as Godwin giving "an opportunity for every principle professed by the infidels and republicans of these days to be introduced to their notice"? The shortest answer is: yes, in a way. As a writer of works for children, Godwin proposed a reformed set of building blocks for British society in the opening decades of the nineteenth century. Always a firm believer in the possibility of progress given the right circumstances, his writings for children subtly displace received notions of morality, religion, history, politics, and society and thus create the conditions for critical reflection. Rather than imposing an alternative view of the world on the mind of the child from the top down, Godwin sought to free the child from habitual thinking. In so doing, he could hope to see children "banish from [their] mind every modification of prepossession and prejudice", moulding them in the image Godwin had of himself and the ideal Godwinian subject, as enquirers (*PPW* 5:78). With children forming habits of enquiry and developing their "intellectual and literary refinement" through their reading of his works, Godwin could hope that "political reform, [...] kindness and universal philanthropy" would prevail in the new generation (*PPW* 5:79).

In his children's books Godwin systematically tackled aspects of the educational, cultural and intellectual life of Britain and sought to provide children with perspectives that they were unlikely to find elsewhere. Moreover, he aspired to broaden children's horizons in the

context of an educational culture for children and adults that was dominated by the conservative reaction to the French Revolution and the ensuing wars. By adapting the kinds of stories that formed the bedrock of British literary culture – the *Bible Stories*, the *Pantheon* and the *Fables* – Godwin sought to create a distance that would lead children to rethink their own position in the social order, not to mention the social order itself. As a historian of Britain, Republican Rome and Ancient Greece, Godwin formally innovated within the genre of the history schoolbook and presented a set of political views that were closer to his own form of republicanism. Finally, as a biographer, Godwin continued innovating while reflecting on political and religious issues in the *Life of Lady Jane Grey* and the effects of philanthropic social relations in *The Looking-Glass*.

The historicisation and secularisation of the *Bible Stories* offered children a new interpretative framework for a text seen as a central pillar of morality and social life in Britain. The positive reassessment of classical paganism in the *Pantheon* provides a counterpoint to the historical reading of Christianity, encouraging the comparison between world views. Similarly, the moral indecisiveness of the *Fables, Ancient and Modern*, directly ran against the grain of habitually received morality and introduced not only moral complexity but also deeper and wider reflection on all aspects of human life and action. Taken together, these three works should therefore be understood as a subtle but sustained attack on an order that imposed certain forms of morality and order from above, through tradition and habit.

Tackling a different area of knowledge, Godwin innovates the pedagogy and narrative form of history. He mixes the systemic, the individual and the exemplary in such a way that the histories provided different avenues through which children could understand their own proximate and distant past. At the same time, Godwin's histories were designed to open children's minds to a variety of political arrangements and to the histories of literature and science. Similarly, the two biographies that Godwin wrote for children provide points of reflection and comparison. Reading them, children can reflect on and assess the situation of individuals who, in the text, are close to them in age and (in the case of *The Looking-Glass*) situation. Like the *Bible Stories*, *Pantheon* and *Fables*, Godwin's historical and biographical works for children thus provide the child, and to a lesser extent the parent, with new ways of thinking that they are to consider critically.

Though my study of Godwin's children's books is perhaps mostly of interest to fellow Godwin scholars and, more broadly, to scholars of British culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is also intended to be read as an intellectual history through children's books. Historiographically, this thesis is a plea for closer cooperation between intellectual, cultural and literary history. From the outset, I have considered that children's books were not only expressions of aesthetic and pedagogical commitments, but significantly contributed to the circulation, expression and conflict of a wider and more varied set of ideas that were broadly discussed in society. Crucial elements that structure any society, such as the knowledge of its own historical past or of its cultural foundations, can, through children's literature, be imposed and their hegemony reinforced. Conversely, their cultural dominance can be questioned and, eventually, overturned. This can be done through innovations in narrative form, the presentation of arguments and the choice of and framework for ideas and stories to be circulated.

One of the central claims in this thesis has therefore been that children's books were one of the many venues in which intellectual debate continued. From the intersection of intellectual, cultural and literary history, my reading of William Godwin's works for children has shown how we can read and contextualise such books in order to understand how authors are acting on society by writing such works. By considering works for children as interventions in different intellectual debates, structured not only by the different languages or discourses available to their authors on a variety of subjects, but also by literary traditions and material incentives linked to the market in which these books were commercialised, I have therefore shown how William Godwin pursued an agenda of broad cultural reform centred on the education of the young.

In so doing, I have been contributing to an intellectual history of the opening decades of the nineteenth century through a reading of works that are rarely examined by intellectual historians. Despite the move away from a strictly canonical approach to intellectual history and even though intellectual historians have productively borrowed from many neighbouring disciplines, there is very little work that seriously considers the benefits of applying intellectual historical methods to the study of children's books.<sup>501</sup> The price has been the

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501 On recent developments in intellectual history and on its connections with other disciplines, see: *Palgrave Advances in Intellectual History*, ed. by Richard Whatmore and Brian Young (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History*, ed. by Darrin M. McMahan and Samuel Moyn

exclusion of a wide variety of works and media through which ideas and arguments are woven into society and through which they can become hegemonic, or lose their preeminence. This, in my view, is a limitation that intellectual historians ought to overcome. It is my hope that this thesis contributes to this work.

Intellectual histories through children's books, as this study shows, can help develop "subtler characterisations of the relations between ideas and the broader social and political developments" occurring in the world. This, as Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian Young have argued, should be the fundamental purpose of intellectual history.<sup>502</sup> By reading Godwin's *Pantheon*, for example, in relation to the text it was publicly trying to supplant, the very popular *Pantheon* by Andrew Tooke and in the context of religious and classical education in Britain, I show how schoolbooks were a space in which questions of religion could be debated through competing secular and religious explanations of Greek mythology. Furthermore, I identify how these were embedded in cultural products and communicated to different audiences of both adults (teachers and parents), and children. As a consequence, we gain some insight into a set of related debates on education, the role of classical culture, and the importance of Christianity in early nineteenth-century Britain.

An in-depth analysis of the relationship between sources like children's books and broader social, intellectual and cultural developments requires relatively narrow chronological and geographical boundaries. In this respect, focusing on a single author helps circumscribe the study. This, however, goes against a recent trend in history. In their recent *History Manifesto*, David Armitage and Jo Guldi have argued that, to be relevant in today's political climate, historians ought to embrace the *longue durée* again and to more generally broaden their geographical and chronological horizons.<sup>503</sup> Armitage has encouraged such an approach for intellectual history in particular. He advocates the use of digital methods to write "histories in ideas" that focus on one "big idea", are "transtemporal" and proceed via what he calls

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); On the argument for a return to the canon, the now classic exposition is: Dominick Lacapra, 'Rethinking Intellectual History and Reading Texts', *History and Theory*, 19.3 (1980), 245–76; for its more recent exposition, dealing explicitly with the 'Cambridge School' approach, see: Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Citizens to Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought from Antiquity to the Middle Ages* (London: Verso, 2008).

502 'General Introduction', in *History, Religion, and Culture: British Intellectual History, 1750-1950*, ed. by Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian W. Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 1–21 (p. 14).

503 Jo Guldi and David Armitage, *The History Manifesto* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

“serial contextualism”, or the diachronic juxtaposition of intellectual contexts.<sup>504</sup> The proposal is tempting: Armitage claims that this is how historians will reach a wider audience of professionals, and many historians believe that they should indeed be listened to as professionals, because history has much to say about the present. Yet, the focus on “big ideas” over long stretches of time can also be misleadingly presentist. As the big ideas of today are not necessarily those of the past, there is a constant risk of reading too much into past authors. Moreover, the “serial contextualism” Armitage demands a simplification of Quentin Skinner’s idea of context, thus remaining purely intellectual. However, recognizing and bringing the complexity of the relationship between ideas and the world to the fore requires reinscribing ideas in broader and interconnected cultural, economic, social and intellectual contexts. It demands a thicker, more detailed description of society than that which can be provided in a *longue durée* study.

Children’s books caused scandals in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Sarah Trimmer’s objections to works such as Godwin’s *Bible Stories* and *Fables* are echoed in the outrage caused by recent publications. The reception of Bini Adamczak’s openly political *Communism for Kids*, with which I started this thesis, is a clear example of this, as is the reaction to Claire Fanek’s and Marc Daniau’s more innocent *Tous à Poil!*, whose approach to nudity was considered disgraceful by the French right-wing politician Jean-François Copé.<sup>505</sup> That children’s books cause such debate shows that they are worth studying, though it is not the only reason why we should do so. It is my hope that this thesis shows one way they can be productively analysed, by way of examining the relevance of William Godwin’s work in the early nineteenth century.

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504 David Armitage, ‘What’s the Big Idea? Intellectual History and the *Longue Durée*’, *History of European Ideas*, 38.4 (2012), 493–507; he has since bolstered his theoretical claims through an empirical study: David Armitage, *Civil Wars: A History in Ideas* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

505 Claire Franek and Marc Daniau, *Tous à poil!* (Rodez: Editions du Rouergue, 2011); ‘Jean-François Copé s’emporte contre le livre pour enfants « Tous à poil »’, *Le Monde.fr* <[http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2014/02/10/cope-s-outrre-contre-le-livre-pour-enfants-tous-a-poil\\_4363155\\_823448.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2014/02/10/cope-s-outrre-contre-le-livre-pour-enfants-tous-a-poil_4363155_823448.html)> [accessed 19 November 2014].





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Constable Papers, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

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#### IMAGES

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From: Baldwin, Edward [pseudonym of William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805) [one-volume edition]

‘Fable 60’

From: Baldwin, Edward [pseudonym of William Godwin], *Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, Second Edition, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1807)

‘Frontispiece’

‘The Boys and the Frogs’

‘The Dog and his Clog’

‘The Fox and Grapes’

From: *The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, First Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1806); and the third edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1810)

‘Venus’

From: Marcliffe, Theophilus [pseudonym of William Godwin], *The Looking-Glass: A True History of the Early Years of an Artist* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805)

‘Frontispiece’

‘Plate I’

‘Plate III’

**BY OTHER ARTISTS**

Note: the identity of the illustrator is not clear. It is not likely that it was William Mulready, as Godwin only meets him in 1805.

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<<http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>>

### CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Note: this list is *not* an exhaustive list of the existing editions of Godwin's works for children. It only contains the works mentioned in this thesis.

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#### AS EDWARD BALDWIN

*Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, 2 vols. (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805)

*Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805)  
[one-volume edition]

Baldwin [William Godwin], Edward, *Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, Second Edition, 2 vols (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1807)

*Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, (New Haven: Increase Cooke & Co., 1807)

*Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson & Benjamin Warner, 1811)

*Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, (Philadelphia: Benjamin Warner, 1818)

*Fables Ancient and Modern Adapted for the Use of Children*, (New Haven: John Babcock and Son, 1819) [re-edited in 1820 and 1824]

*Fables Ancient and Modern*, ed. by Suzanne L. Barnett and Katherine Benett Gustafson (Romantic Circles, 2014) <[http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin\\_fables/index.html](http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/godwin_fables/index.html)>  
[accessed 11 August 2014]

*The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806)

*The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons, A New Edition* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1807)

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*The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, A New Edition, Embellished with Portraits (London: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1827)

*The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, A New Edition (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1836)

*The History of England. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons* (London: T. Allman and Son, 1850) ['revised and improved' by W. S. Kenny]

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*History of Rome: From the Building of the City to the Ruin of the Republic. Illustrated with Maps and Other Plates. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, Seventh Edition (London: Thomas Tegg, 1844)

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*The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, First Edition (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1806)

*The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, Second Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1809)

*The Pantheon: Or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome. For the Use of Schools, and Young Persons of Both Sexes*, Third Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1810)

*History of Greece: From the Earliest Records of That Country to the Time in Which It Was Reduced Into a Roman Province. Illustrated with Maps and Portraits. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, Second Edition (London: M.J. Godwin & Co., 1822)

*History of Greece: From the Earliest Records of That Country to the Time in Which It Was Reduced Into a Roman Province. Illustrated with Maps and Portraits. For the Use of Schools and Young Persons*, A New Edition Revised and Improved by W. S. Kenny (London: William Tegg, 1862)

### **AS THEOPHILUS MARCLIFFE**

*The Looking-Glass: A True History of the Early Years of an Artist* (London: Thomas Hodgkins, 1805)

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*Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, gen. ed. by Mark Philp, 8 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992)

*Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, gen. ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1993)

*Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. by Pamela Clemit and Gina Luria Walker (Peterborough, Ont. ; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Press, 2001)

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- , *Outlines of English History, Chiefly Extracted from the History of England by Edward Baldwin, Esq. For the Use of Children from Four to Eight Years of Age.* (London: M. J. Godwin, 1814)
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