

Judging Justice: Godwin's Critique of Judgment in *Caleb Williams* and Other Novels

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I.

What does political justice mean, when the text by this name insists that we think justice beyond institutions and so beyond or before the political? Though William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* deals with the ideological and repressive state apparatuses that are part of the limited realm of objective spirit in G. W. F. Hegel's analysis of civil society (*Elements of the Philosophy of Right* [1822]), for Godwin the political must constantly be made responsible to individual reason and conscience, which is to say ethics, or "spirit" in a more expansive sense. Refusing to separate political and moral science,¹ Godwin un-works all categorical imperatives by emphasizing the differences that impede judging even similar cases uniformly. "No two crimes," he insists, "were ever alike; and therefore the reducing them . . . to general classes . . . is absurd."² To judge a crime by the act is simple enough. Yet as Godwin insists, in dissociating exteriority as mechanism from an unknowable interiority,

Man, like every other machine the operations of which can be made the object of our senses, may, in a certain sense, be affirmed to consist of two parts, the external and the internal. The form which his actions assume is one thing; the principle from which they flow is another. With the former it is possible we should be acquainted; respecting the latter there is no species of evidence which can adequately inform us.³

If we judge a man by his actions, we fail to take into account his intentions. But if we base our judgment on intention our analysis must become "unlimited."⁴ The only categorical imperative that survives this analysis is the dissolution of government, institutions. But institution ultimately means not just social and political structures but anything that has been instituted, including concepts

with public and collective authority. Indeed Godwin often uses “institution” in the singular to connote the activity as well as products of normalization: “positive institution” is the process by which obedience is compelled, sometimes through “positive law” but sometimes in more invisible ways.⁵ As such, positive institution is not unlike what Michel Foucault calls discourse. Given this broad use of the term, a theory of the dissolution of institutions can found political theory only as the most radical, unlimited form of deconstruction. Or in Godwin’s words, if “government” goes beyond the “public institutions” to which we commonly attach its effects and power, and “insinuate[s] itself” into the arts and even into “our personal dispositions” and “most secret retirements,” if government is an attitude, who “shall define the extent of its operation,” and thus the work of dissolving “governmentality”?⁶

First published in 1793, three years after Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), and then revised in 1798, Godwin’s *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* has much in common with the Kantian project of critique, as contemporaries like Crabb Robinson and Franz Von Baader pointed out.⁷ For it is not so much a key work of liberal evolutionism as a critique of judgment at the site of practical reason in its intersection with institutional rationality. Godwin shares Kant’s extension of the term “judgment” to the very *habitus* of thought as the relating of particular cases to universal rules.⁸ Indeed, repudiating the view that “positive institutions ought to leave me free in matters of conscience, but may properly interfere with my conduct in civil concerns,” Godwin goes well beyond Kant’s notion of “enlightenment” as freedom of thought but not conduct.⁹ Godwin’s use of the term judgment extends to education, not to mention literature. Arguing against a system of national education that would institutionalize current opinion, he insists that “no vice can be more destructive than that which teaches us to regard any judgment as final.”¹⁰ Judgment must always be individual and infinitely self-differing. Democracy, the judgment of the people, is the tyranny of the majority. Thus Godwin criticizes “national assemblies” because of the uniformity of opinion they impose in finally bringing things to a vote phrased in some way that suppresses differences: “A multitude of men, after all our ingenuity, will still remain a multitude of men.”¹¹ For Godwin, who thus anticipates Jean-Luc Nancy’s critique of “society” as distinct from “community,”¹² any collectivity, party, or group interferes with the individual’s relation to his own conscience.¹³ Juries are collectives that are at least more local than national assemblies, and Godwin does indeed prefer judgment by “juries” to the decisions by a magistrate that occur in *Caleb Williams*. But even juries are flawed because they must finally reach a decision: the ideal jury for Godwin would be one that “invite[s]” rather than “decide[s],” that recommends a “mode of adjusting controversies, without the prerogative of dictating that adjustment.”¹⁴

Godwin’s reservations about “decision” are pursued more philosophically by Kant. Kant distinguished between determinant judgment, which subsumes

particular cases under established rules, and reflective judgment, in which “only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found.” The absence of this universal means that judgment is not bound to things as they are, but also means that such judgments cannot be grounded: the reflective judgment operates by a “transcendental” principle that it can “only give itself . . . as a law, and cannot derive” from elsewhere.¹⁵ Godwin too faced this dilemma at the very heart of a Dissenting tradition that included Rational Dissenters and sectarian fanatics: namely that if individuals judge according to conscience through the law that Reason gives itself, Reason risks being a form of auto-affection. But for Godwin more than Kant, who is still uneasy with not privileging determination, judgment must always be reflective if thought is not to be determined by prejudice. One cannot separate public “conduct” from “conscience” or “private judgment” to which public conduct is always answerable.¹⁶ Reason can avoid auto-affection, but only by making (self-)reflection “unlimited.”¹⁷

Kant’s separation of reflective from determinant judgment corresponds to his distinction between ideas of Reason and concepts of the understanding, in which concepts determine thought in terms of what we already know, while ideas (such as the “idea[.]” of freedom) lack this specificity and are a basis for future reflection. Among Kant’s own utopian ideas are the ideals of cosmopolitan history and the “League of Peace,” which later became the basis for the League of Nations—ideas developed in his political essays, some of which were translated by John Richardson in 1797.¹⁸ These ideas, and the very notion of the idea, form a further ground of affinity with Godwin, as political justice too is an “idea” of Reason, not to be limited by established concepts or institutions. The Kantian idea, as something “to come,” has been important for a continental tradition of thinking about justice that includes Jacques Derrida and Jean-François Lyotard. For Derrida, this idea is nevertheless limited by being the infinite abstraction into the future of an ideal whose content cannot or need not be worked on now but whose contours we already know. Derrida thus complains that the idea is both “too futural,” in not “think[ing] the deferral of difference in terms of ‘now,’ and not futural enough” in already knowing “what tomorrow should be.”¹⁹ Derrida in effect criticizes Kant for putting off into the infinite future the task of thinking through the inadequacies of the Idea, while already deciding what the Idea is and thus predetermining this future.

Regardless of whether or not Derrida is correct, Godwin too would fall into this bad infinity as premature utopianism if we literalized his idea of the dissolution of government as the disappearance of all civil structures. This anarchism (a notion about which Godwin is ambivalent) would then be a position determined in advance of all reflection even if its arrival is infinitely deferred; it would be its own form of institution. Yet political justice, I suggest, is the process rather than product of reflective judgment. It is the ongoing work of unworking what in the very taking of positions fails to do justice to the other, through a skeptical sifting of all positions in terms of their discursive exclu-

sions. If Godwin does sometimes seem to urge an actual dissolution of government, this projection knows itself to be a form of romance. As Derrida also concedes, one cannot entirely dispense with the Kantian Idea,²⁰ nor do without the romance of a just future as provocation and inspiration. In his intricately deconstructive essay, "Of History and Romance," written in the year he revised *Political Justice*, Godwin provocatively claims that the romance writer is the true historian. He promotes a romance dedicated to ideas over a history organized by concepts, only to turn round and make the "bold outlines" of romance accountable to the minute shades of particular situations and characters.²¹ In exploring these minute particulars, it is fiction or narrative that Godwin sees as forcing us to confront the problem of political *justice*, of institutions that are just, in the present. At the same time justice "now" will always seem impossible, since the political or moral is always an (im)position. Thus we need the romance of theory in *Political Justice* as a horizon against which to think the aporia of the term "political" justice within a negative dialectic: all the more so in the deeply pessimistic later fiction. Indeed Godwin still speaks of *Political Justice* as his "favourite work" years later when he had profoundly qualified its theoretical fantasies.²²

Through their use of the tropes of trial and confession, Godwin's novels all foreground the aporia between the political or the moral (as distinct from the ethical) and justice, between passing judgment and truly doing justice to the other. This difference can also be seen as one between the Novel as a form of Hegelian objective spirit and narrative as answerable to the subject, for in what follows I argue that Godwin puts on trial the very genre of the Novel as judgment: the very reaching of a moral decision formalized by "deciding" the plot. In the process, he also calls into question our own ability to constitute ourselves as whole subjects through the power of judgment. Godwin's novels are often significantly unended. Thus *Mandeville* (1817), which deals with the confused history of the Cromwellian period, positions itself as written at the end of the protagonist's life, but concludes traumatically in the aftermath of Charles Mandeville's assault on the marriage coach carrying his sister Henrietta and his rival Clifford, on the threshold of the Restoration. Godwin had planned four volumes, but the novel, "instead of ending . . . breaks off in the middle,"²³ with the defacement of Charles's face in the assault. *Fleetwood* (1805), Godwin's earlier novel about misogynistic domestic relations, ends disappointingly by promising and withdrawing a reconciliation between Fleetwood and his wife Mary. And finally *Caleb Williams*, even as it seems committed to the "decisiveness of a trial,"²⁴ has two endings.

These refusals of a definitive ending make it difficult to use the concluding of the plot as a way of drawing conclusions. A political criticism, a literary criticism that reads for political conclusions either by identifying Godwin with some form of critique or subjecting him to a critique, is also at issue here, since such criticism too is a form of institution. In *Political Justice* Godwin raises the

question of literature as the dissolution of juridical institutions, in terms that recall his own use of narrative in *Caleb Williams*. Insisting that judgment must be the right of judgment we exercise over judgment itself, Godwin writes of the judgment elicited by the difference between the “narratives” of condemned criminals and the “construction that was put upon them by their judges.”²⁵ He thus gives literature the role of a critique of judgment. But the burden of his fiction, I suggest, is that the critique so generated, the critique we judge literature to have produced, is itself inscribed in the very work it institutes: that of narrative as a genealogy of morals and a process of unlimited reflection.

Issues of law, libel, and punishment raised in *Political Justice* are pursued throughout *Caleb Williams*, which is concerned with the stories we construct about others and ourselves, the self-interest of interpretation, and with judgment and justice. There are two stories in play, Caleb’s and Falkland’s, the latter also largely conveyed by Caleb, who says ingenuously that to “avoid confusion . . . I shall drop the person of Collins, and assume myself to be the historian of our patron.”²⁶ But here it is useful to distinguish between stories within the text, and narrative as its overall mode. I use the term “narrative” to suggest something more complex than a story: the process by which this story is produced, which puts the story, in Julia Kristeva’s phrase, *en procès*: in process/on trial.²⁷ A story, according to Godwin, is a form of rhetoric, told “with great artifice and appearance of consistency.”²⁸ The stories of Caleb and Falkland are fictionalized arguments, which aim at a vindication of their authors; they are speech acts, and Godwin was highly suspicious of speech acts.²⁹ By contrast, narrative, according to Lyotard, “recounts a differend or differends.”³⁰ Lyotard’s comments on narrative occur in the course of his larger discussion of the “differend” as the catalyst for an (im)possible justice foreclosed by the institutions of the public sphere. The paradigmatic structure for this foreclosure is the binarism of the law, even when it operates by what Godwin calls the enlightened “maxim of hearing both sides,”³¹ for a differend occurs when there is “a case of conflict, between . . . parties” which “cannot be equitably resolved” within the law “for lack of a judgment applicable to both arguments.” A differend is something that cannot be put into “phrases,” because the parties lack a shared language in which their claims can be adjudicated.³² The differend, I suggest, occurs with particular intensity in narrative, because of what Lyotard calls an “unleashing of the now,”³³ wherein the “event” in its affective and motivational complexity exceeds its syntagmatic reduction within the plot. Or, as Godwin says, in elaborating on the way his novels unfold as analyses of “the private and internal operations of the mind,” the “folds of the human heart” and “the endless intermixture of motive with motive” make it difficult to reduce “event” to summarizable “action.”³⁴

In the end Lyotard sees narrative as an institution of the public sphere that closes down the differend. He equates the epistemology of narrative with a reading for plot in which “the occurrence, with its potentiality (*puissance*) of

differends . . . is domesticated by the recurrence of the before/after."³⁵ Godwin too is aware of "the diachronic operator, or operator of successivity,"³⁶ which results in "incident follow[ing] upon incident, in a kind of breathless succession."³⁷ Nevertheless, for Godwin literature is a medium in which we move beyond this considering of "every incident in its obvious sense," to turn the story "a thousand ways, and examine it in every point of view," so that what begins as "distinct and satisfactory . . . gradually" becomes "mysterious."³⁸ The words are Caleb's as he describes his response to Collins's history of Falkland. But they apply equally to Caleb's own story or whatever story we construct from Godwin's narrative.

If stories subordinate the event to a structure or "moral," as Godwin calls it in "Of Choice in Reading," it is the *reading* of stories, foregrounded by the way the novel thematizes their mediation and transmission, that reactivates the differend which the plot closes down. Hence Godwin's theorization of an "individual" (rather than general) reading anchored in private judgment as a magnetic field of unstable elective affinities that opens up the "event":

We go forth into the world . . . and when we return home and engage in the solemn act of self-investigation, our most useful employment is to produce the materials we have collected abroad, and, by a sort of magnetism, cause those particulars to start out to view in ourselves, which might otherwise have lain forever undetected.³⁹

The *stories* of Caleb and Falkland each claim to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. But because it contains so many different stories, the *narrative*, though told by Caleb, becomes a magnetic field of interactions between characters, and characters and readers, that is in excess of Caleb's actual story. By the end, then, the "plain and unadulterated tale" Caleb promises has become a "half-told and mangled tale" that must be repeatedly discarded and rewritten, to the point that the very ending of the story is written and then crossed out.⁴⁰ The problem of doing justice has to do with this difference, or differend, between "tale" or "story"—terms Godwin repeatedly foregrounds⁴¹—and the more complex chemistry of a narrative that puts them in process/on trial.

Godwin's suspicion of stories is tied up with his profound distrust of any form of institution, any public declaration of a truth. A tale or story, for Godwin, seeks to be "plausible" by seeming "complete."⁴² But this completeness is achieved by entering "with minuteness" only into "some parts of the story."⁴³ Inasmuch as a story, to adapt Lyotard, is a legal "demonstration, by means of well-formed phrases and of procedures for establishing the existence of their referent,"⁴⁴ it is the phrases and procedures that establish the referent, these procedures being "consistency," "progress," and "probability."⁴⁵ A story is thus not a recording of events but a performance that posits or imposes itself at the cost of a certain violence towards what it leaves out. A story thus has the same

structure of institution as the various other linguistic or speech acts that Godwin distrusts as forms of imposition that curtail the free use of reason: oaths, declarations, contracts, constitutions. Yet it is not the case that Godwin's suspicion of stories for being too well-made implies a truth above rhetoric that frustratingly eludes him in his fiction.⁴⁶ Rather, it is through the conflict of stories that we sense truth as the differend, the desire for justice, produced by its very misrepresentation.

The third volume of *Caleb Williams* might well seem to imply a clear truth beyond the (mis)representations of language. Here Caleb, as he flees persecution, becomes the subject of the most preposterous stories, which the reader can easily reverse to produce the truth. In *Political Justice*, Godwin seems to uphold precisely this simplicity of "the truth," when he argues against the censoring of libellous stories on the grounds that Reason will always find its way to truth.⁴⁷ But this argument must be read alongside his rebuttal of censorship in "Of Choice in Reading," where he claims that a text's meaning consists in its "tendency" rather than "moral," thus suggesting that truth is by no means simple. The tendency or effect varies by reader and "cannot be completely ascertained but by the experiment." Restricting a text's circulation because of its moral or intention is futile because there is no correlation between moral and tendency: a pernicious work may have salutary effects and vice versa.⁴⁸ If a text is not what it says but what it does,⁴⁹ then truth itself must be radically rethought. Truth cannot be something known in advance, but is the totality of a text's effects and the attempt to understand them, bearing in mind that even the most egregious misrepresentations may contain a grain of truth or produce some aspect of truth as their effect.⁵⁰

From this perspective, the third volume of *Caleb Williams* is not a demonstration *a contrario* that a firm truth exists. Nor is the choice between Caleb's own story and the falsehoods spread about him intended analogically to guide a choice between the stories of Caleb and Falkland. Rather the proliferation of assumed identities, forgeries, and calumnies foregrounds the constant danger of misjudgment, and the way judgment is never in-itself but is always tropologically constituted by a turning away or aversion that becomes a turning towards or sympathy. Judgment is an effect, and it is only by rigorously scrutinizing the genealogy of such effects that we can arrive at truth as a tropological and contingent process: a differend. That truth is tropological, in the sense of trope as "turning," is an important point to stress. Thus the vindication of Caleb in the reader's mind that occurs in the third volume is produced by a turning away from, an aversion to the stories about him, rather than being based on the absolute justice of his conduct towards Falkland. And similarly our judgment in Caleb's favor in the middle of the novel is tropologically produced by an aversion to Falkland's abuse of the judicial system. But this requires that we judge Falkland only by his actions rather than also by how these actions came about. And as Godwin suggests, "The folds of the human heart, the endless intermix-

ture of motive with motive, and the difficulty of assigning which of these had the greatest effect in producing a given action . . . all render the attempt to pass a sound judgment upon the characters of men to a great degree impossible."⁵¹ Thus as we remember and work through to the beginnings of this narrative, we cannot avoid some sympathy for Falkland, based on the injustice of holding him responsible for the murder of someone who was so monstrously unjust, not only to him but to others for whom he was concerned. Yet this turning towards Falkland is itself unstably produced by a turning away from Caleb's overcharged curiosity: a curiosity we share, and which is not without justice.

The resolution of reading in a judgment, through the bringing of the plot to a decision, is further complicated by the novel's genesis, which Godwin made part of its paratext. As he explains in his 1832 Preface to *Fleetwood*, though he wrote *Caleb Williams* in linear fashion starting with the first volume, he imagined and sketched it in reverse, proceeding from the third to the first volume. The third volume was conceived as a "series of adventures of flight and pursuit," built around the dyad of "pursuer" and "victim," and oriented to plot and action. But in the second volume Godwin had to come up with a "dramatic and impressive situation adequate to account for" the pursuer's behavior, while in the first he employed his "metaphysical dissecting knife in tracing and laying bare the involutions of motive" behind this situation.⁵² The work Godwin constructs in moving the plot forward to its conclusion thus contains its own deconstruction in the form of a pre-text or *avant-texte*, the term that the editorial theorist Jean Bellemin-Noel coins for the drafts and sketches that precede and underlie the text.⁵³ This *avant-texte* works back from a suspense story entirely under the sign of the diachronic operator to a receding origin: the intricacies of Caleb's and Falkland's early relationship and, beyond that, of Falkland's history which precedes the time of narration. Or to evoke the terms Godwin will introduce in "Of History and Romance," the archeology set up by this *avant-texte* moves from a "general history" of the operations of power and political injustice in the third volume, to an "individual history" that follows each protagonist into his separate "closet."⁵⁴ This archeology unravels the "external" mechanisms of the narrative as story into the fundamental obscurity of the characters' motives which "no species of evidence . . . can adequately" allow us to judge.⁵⁵

Moreover, it is not only a question of the "two or three sheets of demy writing-paper" assembled in reverse order to the text.⁵⁶ We would know nothing of this earlier compositional stage without Godwin's later account of the text's genesis. The *avant-texte* is therefore also an *après-texte*, an afterthought that unworks the text, preventing it from being in-itself. It discloses a difference between the text's execution and conception, perhaps a difference within its very conception. Thus on the one hand Godwin takes credit for a consummately well-made story. He claims a "great advantage in this carrying back" of his "invention from the ultimate conclusion to the first commencement of my story."⁵⁷ On the other hand, he confesses that the cause was invented after the effect, and

thus that the narrative arose as a process of supplementation in which a second volume had to be conceived to explain the third, and a first to explain the second. Not only does the structurality of the text's structure suggest a Humean *inadequacy* of cause to effect. Our knowledge of the text's history also impedes any straightforward reading, compelling us to read forwards to a judgment to be arrived at in the concluding trial scene, and backwards to the psychological intensities of the protagonists' histories that persist throughout the text as a ground of indecision about this judgment.

The problem of judgment and justice comes to a head in the reflective process Godwin set in motion by concluding *Caleb Williams* and then completely changing the ending four days later. This reversal, which makes re-vision the engine of narrativity, reflects the way the text's writing has become for Godwin a form of self-reading that is known "only in the experiment." That both versions of the novel culminate in a trial because of Caleb's capital accusation against Falkland makes explicit an imperative built into all narrative: to resolve the plot, to reach a decision. But there is a curious redundancy in joining the textual to a legal decision, since we already know that Falkland is guilty of Tyrrel's murder. Why arrive at a conclusion at which we have already arrived? The decision demanded of the reader must therefore be of another kind: an ethical rather than a legal decision. This decision, however, is more difficult, since the ethical is the awareness of judgment as tropological, and is a dis-integration of the subject (self-)constituted by judgment. For Caleb's need to proclaim Falkland's guilt publicly stands in place of, and is a supplement for, Caleb's innocence about which we, and even he, are less sure. On the other hand, were we to condemn Caleb for his excessive curiosity, this judgment too would simply turn away from the difficulty of excusing Falkland for letting the Hawkinses die for Tyrrel's murder, even if we understand, or forget, Falkland's murder of Tyrrel. In concluding only to abruptly unravel his conclusion, Godwin therefore calls into question the very morality of the novel as a juridical form that enjoins its readers to reach a verdict.

This incommensurability of the ethical and legal is not yet present in the original ending, which is still a critique of civil institutions, not of "institution" in general. Based on the original ending we can still treat the text as a "general history," focused on an individual *story* to be sure, but as an illustration of the "causes that operate universally upon masses of men."⁵⁸ In the original ending, Caleb is denied justice at the trial, is imprisoned, and goes mad. Doing justice, for the reader, is a matter of reversing the law's injustice. Political justice, even if unattainable now, is something definite: the dissolution, literally or through critique, of the existing judicial and class system. Political justice in this ending can be decided within a discourse of rights that assumes damages rather than wrongs. Damages, as Lyotard explains, result from an injury done by one party to another within a shared discourse, and can be repaired within the rules of that discourse.⁵⁹ The damage done to Caleb would thus be repaired by a public

finding of Falkland's guilt, as Caleb assumes. But a wrong results from the differend that occurs when the two parties do not speak the same language, or when the discourse in which the judgment is passed is not that of one of the parties,⁶⁰ as would have been the case if Falkland had originally been convicted of Tyrrel's murder. Most importantly, though Lyotard does not say it, a wrong results when one is oneself an inhabitant of incommensurable "phrase regimens."⁶¹ A wrong is a wrong done to oneself and not just a wrong one suffers.

The wrongs involved in the dispute between Caleb and Falkland are multiple, all the more so because we will inevitably translate them into the wrong phrases. "Wrongs," the word Godwin used in pairing Wollstonecraft's unfinished *Wrongs of Woman* with what he saw as her less daring *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*,⁶² cannot be litigated within the public sphere because they cannot, or cannot yet, be redressed through rights. Falkland points to a wrong done when Caleb exposes his past out of an "adoration" of truth "for its own sake" rather than for "the happiness it is calculated to produce."⁶³ One can dismiss Falkland's utilitarian argument as sophistry and his attachment to his reputation as shallow. But is reputation really the issue? "Reputation" is the phrase he uses to justify his conduct, and the term used by commentators to phrase Godwin's novel as a critique of the *ancien régime*. But reputation is simply an outward simulacrum for some part of truth that is lost if we "reduce" Falkland to being only a murderer.⁶⁴ At the same time, the wrong done to Caleb's concept of "truth" by Falkland's acquittal is as inestimable as the wrong done to Falkland in destroying his reputation. "Truth" too is a figure for the multiple losses that would result from leaving the case of Falkland alone. And yet Caleb betrays the extent to which truth for him is also an institution tied up with his own self-representation, in the Freudian slip that leads him to ask Falkland why he, Caleb, "should sign away my own reputation for the better maintaining of yours."⁶⁵

The revised ending thus presses beyond the formalities of the legal hearing to put Caleb and Falkland in a face-to-face relationship, also removing the agents of "administrative justice" present in the more polemically angry first ending.⁶⁶ In the new ending, confronted with an appallingly emaciated Falkland, Caleb makes himself responsible for Falkland's suffering and conduct, moving Falkland to withdraw his resistance to Caleb's charges. But how do we respond to this incredible embrace of confessions? Do we give back to Caleb the claim to justness he concedes, as Falkland with equal generosity does? Or is confession a form of bad faith that takes back what it gives in self-congratulation and forfeits what it reclaims? Perhaps Caleb's confession and entire tale, as Falkland insists in the original ending,⁶⁷ are a form of sophistry that produces truth as the auto-affectation of one's own voice. For even in their most heartfelt professions of sincerity the characters speak too well, so well that we suspect their positions are produced purely in language, like the too-seamless causality of the novel itself which Godwin marks in his Preface to *Fleetwood*. Indeed the utopian rec-

conciliation is belied by the manipulative complexities of Caleb's and Falkland's previous relationship and the realities of the situation. After all, Caleb does not entirely yield the case to Falkland. Much of his speech is concerned with how *Falkland* has missed opportunities to resolve the issue between them,⁶⁸ which returns us to the past relationship between the two men, even as it also betrays the continuing desire for vindication that underlies Caleb's generosity.

But we should not too easily allow the idealism of the revised ending to be swallowed up in a hermeneutics of suspicion. The concluding scene does not bring things to a decision, but rather stages an irresolvable ethical moment in excess of any judgment: be it in favor of one of the parties or in favor of the resolution of the dispute in an impulsive, unsustainable reconciliation that achieves justice now. The concluding scene is a form of what Lyotard, commenting on Kant, calls *Begebenheit*: "an event or act of . . . deliverance" which "delivers itself into human history."⁶⁹ Rather than being limited to what is given—a *Gegebene* "which can never do anything more than validate the phrase that describes it"—a *Begebenheit* is an unanticipated generosity within narrative, an event that gives itself to the future, reopening a space for the differend that narrative recounts but finally closes down. The event in question does not literally occur, but is rather "an index" or sign (of itself): "This event would merely indicate and not prove that humanity is capable of being" both the cause of its problems and the "author of its progress."⁷⁰ Lyotard is here discussing Kant's comments on the French Revolution, which, as the problem of whether change is possible at all, is also in the background of *Caleb Williams*.⁷¹ The issue he takes up is how Kant can approach the Revolution in such a way that his (romantic) enthusiasm about it can be consistent with his rigorously critical attitude. From a strictly critical perspective, "revolutionary politics"—including the revolution in feeling that Godwin stages at the end of *Caleb Williams*—"rests upon a transcendental illusion" that confuses "what is presentable as an object for a cognitive phrase" with the object of "a speculative and/or ethical phrase."⁷² Yet Kant's sympathy for the Revolution suggests that he could see a "passage" from the cognitive phrase dealing with things as they are to the speculative phrase "which awaits the progress of freedom."⁷³ He could see the same "phenomenon grasped in the field of human history" as presenting "qua example . . . the object of a discourse of despair," while as "guiding thread" it presents a metaphor for "the discourse of emancipation."⁷⁴

On the other hand, this passage is, precisely, speculative: a passage from one phrase regime to another, and not from one actuality to another. Changing phrases allows us to conceive of a new ending for history, yet "not according to the rule of direct presentation proper to cognitives but according to the free, analogical presentation" of dialectic.⁷⁵ Hence the incredible quality of Godwin's new ending, which is the "most inconsistent possible 'passage,' the impasse as 'passage,'"⁷⁶ or the idea produced by the very impossibility of passage. The revised ending of *Caleb Williams* does not happen mimetically but hypothetically.

It is a form of enthusiasm, which Kant carefully distinguishes from *Schwärmerei*. Whereas the latter proceeds to a “noncritical passage,” enthusiasm provides a “supremely paradoxical presentation: what Kant calls a ‘mere negative presentation’” that “sees nothing, or rather sees that what can be seen is nothing.”⁷⁷ On closer scrutiny, the dialectic of romance and history is necessary if we are to think justice “now” and not only in the future; this scene’s resolution of the impasse will still turn out to be phrased in the wrong ways, for a phrase regime is always, for Godwin too, a false reduction of a certain “chaos” of thought and perception “into a grammatical and intelligible form.”⁷⁸ Nevertheless, as Lyotard argues with reference to Kant, the sign of history is not groundless. For if we limit ourselves to “immediate, intuitive data” and ascertain on the basis of things as they are that “political history is chaos,” the “disappointment accompanying the ascertainment is in itself a sign” that we desire something more.⁷⁹ The disappointment produced in *Caleb Williams* by the original ending, a cognitive phrase that knows things as they are, is the sign that causes Godwin to write another ending, but only as what Kant calls a paralogism (an argument that unfolds logically but is based on a groundless proposition), or a hypotyposis: a figure for a concept that “only reason can think, and to which no sensible intuition can be adequate.”⁸⁰

II.

If the two endings perform the difference between judgment and justice, this process is the prototype for reading all Godwin’s novels as trials of judgment, for these novels, even though they do not deal directly with the judicial system, contain scenes of flagrant misjudgment such as Fleetwood’s Othello-like conviction that his wife Mary is guilty of adultery, or the verdict against Mandeville in the schoolboy trial that finds him guilty of hiding anti-monarchist cartoons. More important, the novels all continue from *Caleb Williams* in the use they make of the related form of confession, and in the way they extend Godwin’s emphasis on the responsibility of private judgment in *Political Justice*.

Pointing to the seminality of his first novel for his later fiction, Godwin in the 1832 Preface to *Fleetwood* tells us that he began *Caleb Williams* “as is the more usual way, in the third person,” but grew dissatisfied with a heterodiegetic narration and made “the hero of [the] tale his own historian”; in “this mode I persisted in all my subsequent . . . fiction.”⁸¹ Given Godwin’s distrust of stories, we can ask why he allowed his heroes the privilege of homodiegesis, though in the form of confession, as a story that disavows itself. It is not that he saw confession as a form of transparent communication, since *Fleetwood* (1805) is the narrative of a confession and not the story it institutes. This is equally true of *St. Leon* (1798), the confession of a Renaissance aristocrat who receives the philosopher’s stone from a stranger, thus allowing him to pursue his dreams of unlimited wealth, life, and social perfection at the cost of alienating his family.

But we should not simply be skeptical of Fleetwood's and St. Leon's stories, as critics assume in treating confession as a form whose truth is rhetorically produced through the false sincerity of a turning upon oneself. Such readings constitute *St. Leon* as a critique of masculine ambition, or *Fleetwood* as a critique of Rousseauvian education and the misogyny at the heart of political idealism from the Enlightenment to the Jacobinism of Godwin's own time. The critique may be Godwin's critique of his character, or it may be our critique of his complicity with his hero from a more enlightened contemporary perspective. But, as Derrida says, such "critique always operates in view of the decision after or by means of a judgment," and "the authority of judgment or of the critical evaluation" cannot be "the final authority" for justice.⁸² Or as Foucault concedes, although only in passing, critique is itself "a line of development of the arts of governing," and thus a form of institution.⁸³

To be sure St. Leon, in seeking to win our sympathy by confessing his errors, might be trying to profit from them, like the felon who sells his memoirs to the media. But if we judge him purely by his wife Marguerite's standards of female care and middle-class thrift, we ignore the political imagination at work in his reconstruction of Hungary. And we are guilty of a sanctimony he avoids by at least putting his being at risk in the world of gambling, prodigality, and political desire. As Jean-Paul Sartre argues in discussing bad faith, good faith—the belief that one's own character is not also topologically produced by a turning away from the other—is the worst form of false consciousness. In Sartre's example, the homosexual would be even more in bad faith if he confessed "what he is," since he is not simply a legal or moral category. His bad faith is in some sense forced on him, as Caleb too discovers when he assumes false identities to protect the "truth" of what he is. Indeed we who make the other confess are worse instances of bad faith, since bad faith reflects the very structure of the human as being other than what it is: as "being what it is not, and not being what it is."⁸⁴

On the one hand, then, confession is the prime example of what Joel Faflak calls the "pornography of the talking cure," in which the perpetuation of mere talk, even in the form of a so-called (psycho)analysis, "economizes" the dis-ease it discloses within an established, even hypocritical, social circuitry. This complicity of confession with what Faflak calls "moral management" is all the more powerful because by "telling all," as Foucault argues, the subject is normalized, thus analogically procuring the confessions and normalization of his readers.⁸⁵ On the other hand, Godwin evokes the form of confession precisely to remind us of the interpellations at work in the penitential apparatus. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of Mandeville, whose refusal to be cured breaks open the institution of confession to expose the pathology of normalization.⁸⁶

In making his heroes their own historians, Godwin goes beyond morality to an ethics that insists on reading as a responsibility to this excess within the subject. For the very form of the first person requires a certain identification with

the narrator, which is intensified by the double way that confession constitutes him as a legal subject who must be the object of a judgment, and a spiritual subject in search of understanding. This identification may be deeply “perverse,” even to the point of doing a wrong to ourselves. Godwin first thematizes the perversity of identifications in the psychotic interlude, modeled on the mouse-trap scene in *Hamlet*, where Caleb and Falkland are discussing Alexander the Great.⁸⁷ Falkland obstinately identifies with Alexander in the face of Caleb’s more enlightened critique of his brutality and megalomania. Caleb is of course morally correct and says what we “ourselves” would say. So if we still identify with Falkland, it is not because we agree with him, but because we are disturbed at the unnerving “pleasure” that Caleb takes in manipulating him into “the situation of a fish that plays with the bait employed to entrap him.”⁸⁸ But as the phrase suggests, Falkland’s praise for Alexander is itself of a particular and perverse kind. It is a way of resisting Caleb’s game, while playing with and playing into Caleb’s caricature of him to disclose a certain madness underlying the rationality of judgment that is the goal of Caleb’s attempt to produce Falkland’s confession. As a Hitchcockian psychoanalysis of this psychosis of judgment, the scene models in Falkland’s affinity with Alexander or Caleb’s own “magical sympathy” with his patron,⁸⁹ a weird quasi-identification in which “particulars” “start out to view in ourselves, which might otherwise” lie “undetected.”⁹⁰ For the point of this later account of the magnetic field of reading and re-narration is that the affinities it describes are not between whole subjects, but involve part-objects and parts of subjects unbound from the wholes in which they are found. These affinities are beyond good and evil and, if unleashed, produce a kind of madness, as happens in the scene with Falkland. But when “we return home and engage in the solemn act of self-investigation,”⁹¹ they become the object of an unlimited analysis of the transference and counter-transference involved in the process of judgment whereby we constitute ourselves as “whole” subjects.

The mousetrap scene is the prototype for the trial of judgment in which the voyeurism of confession forces us to engage in all Godwin’s subsequent novels, for just as we identify with Falkland’s part-identification with Alexander, there is a magical sympathy or elective affinity between the reader and Fleetwood that instinctively grasps the differend foreclosed by a more straightforward judgment. Commenting on the chemistry of elective affinities, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe links affinity to substances that are *antithetical* and which “perhaps precisely because they are so . . . seek and embrace one another, modify one another and together form a new substance.”⁹² Fleetwood, then, draws in the reader through an unstable compound of attraction and repulsion, wherein his marriage to Mary operates as a free radical that cannot be bound within an obvious story about the incestuous structure of patriarchy. Thus it would be wrong to reduce Fleetwood, who is a broken man at the end, to the misogyny betrayed by his treatment of Mary. Rather he is drawn to her by a profound

restlessness with social structures. This restlessness traverses the entire novel, expressing itself symptomatically in Fleetwood's initial *ennui*, his attraction to Mary's melancholia after her parents' death by drowning, and this drowning itself, in which Fleetwood discerns a "suicide," as if the idea represented by the MacNeils has failed.⁹³ Indeed this idea is itself incoherent, in ways that uncannily foretell the contradictions between Godwin's own ideals and behavior in the 1790s and his treatment of his daughter years after writing *Fleetwood*.⁹⁴ For MacNeil, having gone against social conventions in his own marriage to protect the rights of woman, and despite being critical of Rousseau's ideas on women's education, thinks nothing of making his daughter a toy for his middle-aged friend. Fleetwood, in his turn, uses woman as a mere fetish for his own melancholia, and is then impelled to destroy a marriage that has always been in bad faith.

But the novel's misogyny is not simply self-indulgent. Rather Fleetwood's compulsion to destroy the attachments he has created, as a way of also destroying what is flawed in himself, functions as a form of death-drive. The Romantic name for this death-drive is irony or infinite absolute negativity: the negation of the real from the viewpoint of the ideal and of the ideal from that of the real. Irony, as Søren Kierkegaard defines it, is a radical aversion, in which particular phenomena are negated only as alibis, like what Jacques Lacan will later call the *objet petit à*, for the way all "existence has become alien to the ironic subject."⁹⁵ Paradoxically, Fleetwood can express this aversion against any form of institution only as a violence towards the other that is, like the trauma which literally concludes *Mandeville*, a form of automutilation. Yet as Jean Baudrillard says, despite being aimed against *eros*, the death-drive is deeply idealistic: it "dissolves assemblages . . . and undoes Eros' organic discourse by returning things to an inorganic, *ungebunden*, state, in a certain sense to utopia as opposed to the articulate and constructive topics of Eros," of institutions.⁹⁶

But to do justice to Fleetwood in the above terms is by no means easy. For the female or enlightened reader must identify against the grain with a character who is sordidly, not even Byronically, disturbing. Similarly, in *Mandeville* sympathy with the deeply wounded, misanthropic Charles Mandeville requires that we perversely turn against his rival Clifford, who seems the very embodiment of generosity and reason. For his part, Mandeville, whose hatred of Clifford only increases when he becomes engaged to Charles's sister Henrietta, is a classic case of male envy, an example—or helpless symptom—of a society that exchanges women as commodities. Thus, in identifying with Mandeville, we do not simply refuse the good as conventional. The female reader also renounces, or at least defers, the desires of the only female character in the text, even if she thereby becomes the surrogate for Henrietta's failed and im-possible desire to love her brother as well as her future husband.

Such identifications, uneasy as they are, disturb our ability to constitute ourselves as whole subjects through the power of judgment, which Godwin, going

well beyond Kant, dis-integrates. Moreover, it is the aesthetic, and specifically narrative as an unbinding of the particulars concentrated in the event, that allows for such perverse identifications, since we would not identify in the same way with Mandeville in real life. The question then arises of whether the aesthetic is a form of irresponsibility, or whether it is the space for a different kind of judgment and an ethics beyond morality. Yet because the ethical relation to the other can involve a wrong to oneself, narrative justice as responsibility to a subject is not anything as simple as identifying with the narrators of these homosocial, homodiegetic histories. It is rather a responsibility to the subject we become by (not) identifying with these subjects, a dis-integration of the power of judgment. For a wrong is done both if we vindicate the hero by allowing him to be the only speaker in a narrative that includes others, yet also if we judge him in an idiom that is not the one in which he presents his case.

Moreover, the very act of identification, as a sympathetic turning towards an other and a perverse turning against oneself, is deeply tropological and re-turns on itself. It is too ingenuous to say that in empathizing with Godwin's misanthropes we engage in a self-sacrificing ethics. On some level, we also realize our own desire by identifying as part-subjects with characters we should critique, in a fantasy of transgression that lets us experience Caleb's much-vaunted "truth" psychoanalytically rather than morally. Such is the case in the self-destruction that concludes Mandeville's history as a traumatic return to the scene of his psychic birth in the violence of the novel's opening in Ireland, for in *Mandeville*, the union between the Presbyterian Henrietta and the Royalist Clifford, a late convert to Catholicism, is the very epitome of "institution": an inscription of the political on the domestic that recalls Sir Walter Scott's masculine imposition of the rule of history on romance in the recently published *Waverley* (1814), where the marriage of Edward and Rose confirms the Act of Union. Charles's futile assault on the marriage coach that announces the impending event of the Restoration figures our frustration with this accommodation, yet only as a fantasy. For this desperate gesture also unreasonably destroys all forms of reconciliation, all hopes of phrasing things differently that are cathected with the figure of Henrietta, yet also abjected by her over-idealization. As a process in which we are affectively displaced between characters, as a form that consists in this displacement rather than the establishment of structure, narrative thus continuously puts the judgments it reaches on trial/in process.

The analysis provoked by narrative as a setting in motion of this force of displacement is necessarily "unlimited," given the profound incoherence that Godwin sees at the heart of "character" as a circumstantial, contingent aggregation of impulses. It is this incoherence that leads St. Leon to describe himself as an "equivocal character, assuming different names,"⁹⁷ and leads Caleb to conclude by saying that he now has "no character" to vindicate.⁹⁸ This auto-destruction of its main characters is the death-drive that impels all Godwin's major novels towards their uncompleted endings. While Godwin's earlier pro-

tagonists manage to assume a character through the imposition of a discourse (of “reputation” or “truth”) on something more amorphous, Mandeville is entirely without a center, unable to take up a coherent political position in what purports to be a political novel. The novel begins with his memory of his traumatic delivery from his parents’ death in the Irish Uprising of 1641, into the hands of a warped Calvinist priest and later a misanthropic and melancholic uncle. As the primal scene of his psychic birth, the slaughter in Ireland brings the infant Charles into being as a *corps morcelé*, a paranoid-schizoid body in bits and pieces rather than an integrated subject. Thereafter, as Scott’s biographer John Gibson Lockhart complained, there is no reason for anything Mandeville does: “a causeless aversion preys upon his soul.”⁹⁹ Since his character is pure aversion, Mandeville cannot be judged as “homosocial” or “misanthropic.” Rather these pathologies, including his incestuously possessive attachment to his sister, are tropes; they are the form taken by his turning away from things as they are. And because we receive Mandeville’s confession within the analytic scene of narrative, it is our responsibility to imagine what this turning away cannot turn towards.

The political backdrop of *Mandeville* is similarly decentered, in ways that make politics, like character, a scarred and defaced project. The novel is set in the Cromwellian period: the site for Godwin of what Jon Klancher calls “the unavailability to modern Britain of its own revolutionary moment.”¹⁰⁰ It is a historical novel in which, paradoxically, Mandeville’s psychic history usurps the foreground, while the clash of religious and political factions provides the background. But this clash cannot be mapped in terms of dialectically meaningful differences, since Godwin does not follow Scott in focalizing events through an epic contest of opposed sides.¹⁰¹ As Slavoj Žižek argues, the ideological field is normally made up of a “multitude of ‘floating signifiers’” whose “identity is ‘open’” until they are structured into a unified field “through the intervention of a certain ‘nodal point.’” This *point de capiton*, an issue such as the conflict of Cromwell and Charles II, “‘quilts’ them, stops their sliding and fixes their meaning.”¹⁰² But in *Mandeville* this point that would give shape to the novel’s animosities has disappeared. Instead the narrative breaks down into a series of power struggles on the Royalist side, while the other side, the Republican side, is oddly absent from the diegesis. More than any identifiable conflict, the novel manifests what Žižek calls the “Real of antagonism” for which factions or class struggle are simply a “name.” As Žižek argues, antagonism, far from being “the ultimate referent which anchors and limits the unending drift of the signifiers” in the form of a dialectical point, is “the very force of their constant displacement.” This is why in Godwin’s novel the specifics of political oppositions—what it means to be Catholic or Presbyterian, or a Presbyterian supporting the Royalists, or a Presbyterian turned Catholic—scarcely matter. Such antagonisms function, in this Hobbesian political universe, simply as “operator[s] of dislocation.” Political (or religious, or sexual) difference, rather

than providing the meaning of the text, is a symptom: "that which 'skews' the discursive universe," "that on account of which every *symbolization* of . . . difference is unstable and displaced with regard to itself." "Sheer antagonism" rather than ideologically legible differences forms the traumatic core of this novel.¹⁰³

It is against this backdrop that Mandeville's confession leaves us the task of finding the creative residue in pathology, given a subject whose desire is skewed by the perversion of institutions. Godwin's novels all reduce their subjects to their underlying paranoid origins, so as to disclose, through character as a symptom of the social, what Žižek calls the gap between "the explicit symbolic texture and its phantasmic background." They break down the "public text" of politics (in *Mandeville*), truth and justice (in *Caleb Williams*), or the domestic politics of Jacobinism (in *Fleetwood*) into the "obscene libidinal foundation[s]" that are its "phantasmic support."¹⁰⁴ In *Mandeville*, in particular, this disintegration of characters and their stories goes hand in hand with a radical deconstruction of the ideological field itself. This deconstruction is the dark side of what *Political Justice* had attempted before Godwin had confronted the madness of culture: a deconstruction of institutions that is necessary if we are to bring forth what cannot be phrased in the articulate and constructive topics of ideology.

To be sure, Godwin's later novels leave us with little reason for optimism "now." While Caleb and Falkland undergo a revolution in feeling that may or may not be convincing, *Fleetwood* and *Mandeville* remain obstinately the same throughout. In these novels Godwin does not repeat the reconciliation fantasized in *Caleb Williams*. Rather, he submits the romance of justice to the particularities of history: the intricate entwinement of political, social, psychic, and domestic history. *Fleetwood* promises a reunion between Fleetwood and Mary only to withdraw it as a worse wrong: the wrong that occurs when novels on the wrongs of woman end with marriage or the forgiveness of these wrongs. In *Mandeville* the clash between the protagonists antithetically mimics the face-to-face encounter of Caleb and Falkland, even to the point of the scarring of Mandeville's face. As for the promise of the novel's setting in the Cromwellian period, the historical backdrop of the novel is the scene of a lost republican moment that never materializes since, disappointingly, there are no republican heroes in the text.

Yet political justice is throughout the absent cause of a historical scene so chaotic that one cannot tell left from right, right from wrong, or one side from another in a novel where each side seems to divide into further sides. Political justice, as the imperative to go beyond the mere rearrangement of the characters inhabiting the power structure to discern the psychic wrongs done by the very institution of "politics," enters the text through the distance between then and now. This distance further opens into the distance between "now" for Godwin and the now of our own reading. History thus functions as a negative *Begebenheit*, a space in which trauma can become a gift that "gives itself" to the

future, provoking us to phrase things differently. Indeed Godwin's well-known "necessitarianism"—his insistence that man is originally a *tabula rasa*, and that human beings are purely products of circumstances—is nothing but a belief that things could be phrased differently. The "sign" that there could be something other than the unrelieved darkness of the "now" is our disappointment that the republican revolution produces nothing but conflict; that this novel about the psychic history of a traumatized individual never becomes the historical novel it promises to be; that there is not even a republican hero in this novel by the author of *Political Justice*, but only a character who takes political sides out of the most personal aversions. Disappointment, as Percy Shelley recognized when he wrote of how hope "creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates," is fundamentally messianic.¹⁰⁵ This is to say that the reconciliation imagined in *Caleb Williams*, though (im)possible here, remains the horizon within which we can approach these novels speculatively and beyond their cognitive phrasing of the impasses with which they end.

NOTES

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1. William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* [1798], ed. F. E. L. Priestley, 3 vols. (Toronto, 1946), I:2.

2. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:347.

3. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:348.

4. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:350.

5. Godwin, *Political Justice*, I:175–78.

6. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, I:4–6. Michel Foucault uses the term "governmentality" to describe the techniques by which individuals are rendered as governable subjects. Insofar as governmentality extends even to such apparently private and subjective matters as acts of kindness, his use is anticipated by Godwin's use of the term government (*The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer [New York, 1997], 156).

7. See, for example, *Crabb Robinson in Germany 1800–1805. Extracts from his correspondence*, ed. Edith J. Morley (Oxford, 1929), 105, 113. By at least 1795–96 Godwin could have known of Kant, who was translated into English in 1798, through F. A. Nitsch, author of *A General and Introductory View of Professor Kant's Principles Concerning Man, the World and the Deity* (London, 1796). Nitsch and Godwin frequented the same circles; see *The Correspondence (1779–1843) of Mary Hays, British Novelist*, ed. Marilyn L. Brooks (Lewiston, 2004), 447, 447n293–94. For another reading of Kant and Godwin, see David Collings, "The Romance of the Impossible: William Godwin in the Empty Place of Reason," *ELH* 70 (2003): 847–74, 850–54. On the knowledge of Kant in England, see René Wellek, *Immanuel Kant in England, 1793–1838* (New Haven, 1931). Wellek mentions Franz von Baader's interest in Godwin during the period of his interest in Kant (28).

8. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* [1790], ed. Paul Guyer, trans. Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge, 2000), 66–67.

9. Godwin, *Political Justice*, I:175. In "What is Enlightenment?" (1784), Kant separates conscience from conduct when he gives the example of the soldier who as a "private"

individual must obey orders, although in his "public" role as a scholar he cannot be prevented from criticizing the government (*Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey [Indianapolis, 1983], 41–48, 42–43). Kant's use of the terms "private" and "public" is the opposite of Godwin's more normal usage, and thus contains a veiled irony. Nevertheless his hedging of his bets reflects the way that caution for him is part of judgment.

10. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:300.
11. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:204–5.
12. Jean-Luc Nancy, "The Inoperative Community," *The Inoperative Community*, ed. Peter Connor, trans. Connor et al (Minneapolis, 1991), 1–42, 9–12.
13. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:203.
14. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:211.
15. Kant, *Judgment*, 67.
16. Godwin, *Political Justice*, I:175.
17. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:350.
18. Kant, *Essays and Treatises on Moral, Political and Various Philosophical Subjects* by E. Kant. *From the German by the Translator of The Principles of Critical Philosophy*, trans. John Richardson, 2 vols. (London, 1798–99).
19. Jacques Derrida, "Nietzsche and the Machine," *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews, 1971–2002*, ed. and trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, 2002), 215–56, 242.
20. Derrida, "Nietzsche and the Machine," 242.
21. Godwin, "Of History and Romance," in *Caleb Williams*, ed. Gary Handwerk and Arnold A. Markley (Peterborough, 2000), 453–67, 466–67.
22. Godwin, "Preface" to the 1832 Standard Edition of *Fleetwood*, in *Caleb Williams*, 443–50, 444.
23. B. J. Tysdahl, *William Godwin as Novelist* (London, 1981), 132.
24. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 169.
25. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:276, 354.
26. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 66.
27. See Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* [1974], trans. Margaret Waller (New York, 1984).
28. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 437.
29. See Angela Esterhammer, "Godwin's Suspicion of Speech Acts," *Studies in Romanticism* 39, no. 4 (2000): 553–78, 554–56.
30. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* [1983], trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis, 1988), 151.
31. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 403.
32. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 1.
33. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 151–52.
34. Godwin, "Preface" to *Fleetwood*, 448; "Preface" to *Cloudesley*, in *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. Pamela Clemit, vol. 5 (London, 1992), 6–8, 7.
35. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 152. Lyotard's word for "event" is *l'évènement*, which in contemporary French philosophy signifies a "now" with an explosive surplus of affect/effect, which cannot be placed within a syntagm (such as plot, which is a form of causality and thus rationality). An event is something like a "happening." In the passage cited, Lyotard's word for what is rendered in the English translation as "narrative" is actually *récit* (story). While his initial account of *récit* as containing a number of differends is closer to my definition of "narrative," his account of the genre as closing down this difference is consistent with his use of the term *récit* and my use of the word story (Lyotard, *Le Différend* [Paris, 1983], 218–19).
36. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 152.
37. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 210.
38. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 179–80.
39. Godwin, "Of History and Romance," 455.

40. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 431, 434.
41. See, for instance, Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 59, 145, 179, 184, 210, 216, 235, 246, 254, 403, 431, and 432.
42. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 235, 254.
43. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 436.
44. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 8.
45. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 179, 436.
46. See Esterhammer, 554–56.
47. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:270, 274–76.
48. Godwin, “Of Choice in Reading,” *The Enquirer: Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature in a Series of Essays* [1798], ed. A. M. Kelley (New York, 1965), 129–46, 132–33, 136–38.
49. Godwin, “Of History and Romance,” 461.
50. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:274.
51. Godwin, “Preface” to *Cloudesley*, 7.
52. Godwin, “Preface” to *Fleetwood*, 445–48.
53. Jean Bellemin-Noël, *Le texte et l’avant texte: les brouillons d’un poème de Milosz* (Paris, 1972), 15.
54. Godwin, “Of History and Romance,” 453–55, 458.
55. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:358.
56. Godwin, “Preface” to *Fleetwood*, 446.
57. Godwin, “Preface” to *Fleetwood*, 350.
58. Godwin, “Of History and Romance,” 454.
59. Lyotard, *The Differend*, xi
60. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 5.
61. Lyotard, *The Differend*, xii.
62. Godwin, *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* [1798] (Oxford, 1993), 83–84.
63. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 384.
64. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 330.
65. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 385.
66. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 438.
67. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 437.
68. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 429–30.
69. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 164.
70. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 164.
71. On the complexities of Godwin’s novel as a contribution to “the pamphlet debate on the French Revolution,” see Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford, 1993), 36, and more generally 35–69.
72. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 162.
73. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 163.
74. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 163–64.
75. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 163.
76. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 166.
77. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 166.
78. Godwin, *Political Justice*, II:204.
79. Lyotard, *The Differend*, 163.
80. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 225.
81. Godwin, “Preface” to *Fleetwood*, 448.
82. Derrida, “‘There is No One Narcissism’: Autobiophotographies,” *Points . . . Interviews 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf et al (Stanford, 1995), 196–215, 212.
83. Foucault, *Politics of Truth*, 29.

84. See Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* [1943], trans. Hazel Barnes (New York, 1956), 105–8.

85. See Joel Faflak, "Romanticism and the Pornography of Talking," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 27, no. 1 (2005): 77–97; and "Speaking of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*: The Talking Cure and the Psychopathology of Enlightenment," *English Studies in Canada* 31, no. 2–3 (2005): 99–122, 104–9. See also Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley et al (New York, 1997), 223–52, 244–45; and *The History of Sexuality Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Hurley (New York, 1980), 58–65.

86. Godwin, *Mandeville. A Tale of the Seventeenth Century in England* [1817], vol. 6, *The Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin*, ed. Clemit (London, 1992). For a more detailed reading see Tilottama Rajan, "The Disfiguration of Enlightenment: War, Trauma, and the Historical Novel in Godwin's *Mandeville*," *Godwinian Moments*, ed. Victoria Myers and Robert Maniquis (forthcoming, 2010).

87. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 183–87.

88. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 180, 182.

89. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 186.

90. Godwin, "Of History and Romance," 455.

91. Godwin, "Of History and Romance," 455.

92. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Elective Affinities* [1809], trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth, 1971), 52–53. The term "affinity" had traditionally meant the attraction of like for like. It was only later that it came to mean the attraction between opposites or, in the nineteenth century, between electronegative and electropositive substances, leading to decomposition (see Trevor Levere, *Transforming Matter: A History of Chemistry from Alchemy to the Buckyball* [Baltimore, 2001], 35, 89).

93. Godwin, *Fleetwood: Or, The New Man of Feeling* [1805, 1832], ed. Handwerk and Markley (Peterborough, 2001), 268.

94. See Rajan, "Mary Shelley's Mathilda: Melancholy and the Political Economy of Romanticism," *Studies in the Novel* 26 (1994): 43–68, 52–54.

95. Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony* [1841], trans. Lee M. Capel (Bloomington, 1965), 276.

96. Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London, 1993), 149.

97. Godwin, *St. Leon*, ed. Clemit (Oxford, 1994), 475.

98. Godwin, *Caleb Williams*, 434.

99. John Gibson Lockhart, "Review of *Mandeville*," *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 2 (December 1817): 268–79, 271.

100. Jon Klancher, "Godwin and the Genre Reformers: On Necessity and Contingency in Romantic Narrative Theory," *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming Literature, 1789–1837*, ed. Rajan and Julia Wright (Cambridge, 1998), 21–38, 32.

101. On the (Hegelian) dialectical logic of Sir Walter Scott's historical novels, see Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Harmondsworth, 1976), 26–29, 57–58.

102. Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, 1989), 87–89.

103. Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London, 1997), 216.

104. See Žižek, *Plague of Fantasies*, 18, 27.

105. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound: A Lyrical Drama* [1820], in *Shelley's Poetry and Prose*, ed. Donald H. Reiman and Neil Fraistat, 2nd ed. (New York, 2002), 202–86, IV.573–74.

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