# Originating, Establishing, and Innovating Queer Gothicism: Walpole, Godwin, and Godwin Jr.

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English, Theatre, Film & Media

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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**Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the depiction of transgressive desire in English literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This research considers how and why gothic literature encoded language connoting homoerotic and homosocial sexual desire. By analysing the works of Horace Walpole, William Godwin, and William Godwin Jr., this thesis examines how references to homoerotic and homosocial bonds, primarily between men, are initiated, established, and expanded upon respectively between these three authors. Notably, the initiation of queer gothicism by Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) establishes the key tropes of the effeminate aristocrat, the Girardian triangle, the blurring of *la petite mort* and the concept of the sublime, as well as the gothic double. Homoeroticism becomes a key feature of Gothic texts, as established in William Godwin's *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams* (1794), where Godwin highlights the ease of male entrapment into the charming ways of aristocratic men. By interconnecting the Gothic genre and queer representation, Godwin Jr. offers a unique perspective on gender and sexuality in their text *The Transfusion; or, the Orphans of Unwalden* (1835). When analysing these three texts in close succession, insight is gained into the progression of how transgressive sexual relationships were discussed, considered, and presented to the public. This thesis simultaneously gleans into the progression of knowledge on sexual desire while offering a historical understanding for the encoded language used to discuss sexuality.

**Acknowledgements**

This project weaves together ideas of sexuality and spirituality within primarily Romantic-era literature. I would like to first thank the wonderful Dr. Michelle Faubert for her masterful knowledge of Romantic-era literature. Michelle fostered my passion for Romantic authors and poets throughout my undergraduate and graduate degree and helped me navigate complex ideas and novels during my studies. Michelle's keen comments and suggestions helped keep this project neat and tidy. Second, thank you to Dr. Erin Keating for helping ground my understanding of the history of sexuality and gender. Erin's invaluable reading and theory suggestions along with detailed comments helped structure integral background information. Third, thank you to Dr. Justin Jaron Lewis for providing key insight into the blending of religion, gender, and sexuality in this thesis. I would also like to thank Dr. Lucas Tromly for chairing the thesis defence. Together, these advisors and committee members served as integral academic insights for the completion of this project, and I am greatly honoured to have worked with them.

Thank you to the donors of the Fay Lando Memorial Prize, the Lyla May Guest Hugill Scholarship in English, the Nancy Moncrieff Scholarship in English, and the Senator Thomas Alexander Crerar Scholarship. I would also like to thank the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for having granted me the University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship. The various awards granted to me throughout this program made pursuing these ideas possible.

Thank you to Athina Dinos and Ross Hoople for their endless dedication and support throughout my education. Thank you to Robin Hoople for inspiring my drive towards English literature, and to Irene and Basil Dinos for their endless academic support.

Thank you to my wonderful husband Christopher J.R.R. Penner for his constant care and flexibility throughout this program, and to Cuddy and Toby who were integral study partners.

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## Introduction

The Romantic era in Britain was a time of polemical considerations, experimental exploration, and radical movements. Romantic scholars engage in matters relating to class, gender, sex, and society that require continual investigation, especially in the modern day. Of interest for the present research is the contemplation of how Romantic-period authors engage with the emerging understandings of sex, gender, and sexuality in their literature and polemical works. Freedom, the rights of humans, as well as the soul's function and placement are key curiosities of the Romantic era that are pertinent to a discussion of transgressive sexual relationships of the time. To support the development of language that identifies differing sexualities that began emerging in the Romantic era, this introduction will examine the following topics: first, a history of sexuality in and before the Romantic era; second, the inclusion of transgressive sexual desire in literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth century; and, third, the scientific and polemical perspectives on sex and gender in the Romantic era.

Supporting this thesis are the theoretical findings of the following academic researchers: Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: The Introduction* (1976); George Haggerty's *Queer Gothic* (2006); Eve Sedgwick's analysis of homosocial and homosexual themes in early literature from their text, *Between Men* (2015); Iwona Janicka's connection of Judith Butler to René Girard's gender and queer theories in *Theorizing Contemporary Anarchism: Solidarity, Mimesis and Radical Social Change* (2017) alongside Butler and Girard's original theories; and Richard Sha's connection of sex to the soul in the text *Perverse Romanticism* (2009). Foucault's text highlights the shifting ideologies of how transgressive sexual practices were viewed and considered throughout Western society. Haggerty focuses on how the gothic genre's inclusion of transgressive sexual desire is integral to how ideas about sexuality are theorized and understood today. Sedgwick focuses on the inclusion of homosexual, homoerotic, and homosocial

relationships in literature of the past by primarily highlighting the dynamics of male-male relationships and providing key contextual background to the queer analysis of literature from the eighteenth century. Janicka takes two theoretical perspectives, Butler's gender performativity from *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Girard's theory on mimetic desire from *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1961), to analyse their impactful statements with a feminist and queer-theory approach. Sha, on the other hand, focuses on providing a historical background to the opinions on sex in the Romantic era and how scientists were disconnecting reproduction from pleasure. By separating the function of pleasure during sex from the human need to reproduce, references to sexual pleasure in gothic literature initiate integral discourse linking sexual acts and human liberation.

This thesis will add to the theories and discussions of Sedgwick, Janicka, Butler, Girard, and Sha to better understand how specific authors of gothic literature are including transgressive sexual desire in their literature. Combining a clear historical background of the Romantic era with theories on sex, gender, and queerness will contribute to this examination on the perspective of Romantic-era writing. The works of Horace Walpole, William Godwin, and William Godwin Jr. initiate, establish, and expand upon the inclusion of homoerotic and homosocial relationships in their gothic literature. Notably, Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) initiates the gothic as a queer genre that is established in future texts such as William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794). The impact of interconnecting the gothic genre and queer representation eventually provides Godwin Jr. the opportunity to create a pro-transgender perspective in his text *The Orphans of Unwalden, or, the Soul's Transfusion* (1835). Overall, this analysis intends to examine and understand primarily how homosexual, homoerotic, and homosocial bonds were discussed and included in gothic literature. The way the gothic genre was initiated and developed by key

authors, such as Walpole, Godwin, and Godwin Jr., challenges societally normalized notions of sexual desire through the inclusion of transgressive sexual relationships.

**1) Critical History: *Queer Gothic* and *The History of Sexuality: Volume One***

Gothicism, as highlighted by Haggerty in *Queer Gothic*, "offered a testing ground for many unauthorized genders and sexualities, including sodomy, tribadism, romantic friendship (male and female), incest, [… and] pedophilia" (2). This condensed list from Haggerty includes just a few transgressive sexual desires that, in a society heavily policing and surveilling sexual activity, are included in gothicism to help establish the genre as counterculture to societal control of sexual practices at the time. Michel Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality: Volume I*, considers that the "primary concern was not repression of the sex of the classes to be exploited, but rather the body, vigor, longevity, progeniture, and descent of the classes that 'ruled'" (123). Mechanisms of control to establish this protection of inheritance included "canonical law, the Christian pastoral, and civil law" as bodies of power that "governed sexual practices" (37). Though this repression was originally intended to maintain the elite's lineage as pure and healthy, the repression of the ruling class eventually extended to others "as a means of social control and political subjugation" (123). The structures of surveillance and control intended to target specifically those in higher classes initially served to maintain the lineage and health of the governing class that eventually extended to the populace of the West as a whole.

Significantly, gothic literature explores the experiences of the marginalized who are subject to terror, fear, and persecution from the strictures of society. Interestingly, Foucault highlights that not only transgressive sex was controlled by these governing bodies but that the heterosexual "marriage relation was the most intense focus of constraints[, …] it was spoken of more than anything else [, …] it was required to give a detailed accounting of itself [, … and i]t

was under constant surveillance" (37). In one interpretation Foucault explains, all sexual acts were under surveillance due to the "strict economy of reproduction" (36) since "[o]ne of the great innovations in the techniques of power in the eighteenth century was the emergence of 'population' as an economic and political problem: population as wealth, population as manpower or labor capacity, population balanced between its own growth and the resources it commanded" (25). This possible excuse for why transgressive desire was limited is because population is the primary source of economic growth, meaning European governments were incentivized to limit unproductive and transgressive sexual practices through rigorous laws and population control. Within this thesis, the term "transgressive sexual desire" relates to sexual desires and practices unauthorized by societal norms because this term is the key phrase utilised to discuss historical queerness by critics like Foucault. Significantly, though transgressive sexual desire does hold negative connotations and conflates many differing sexualities, this thesis intends to primarily analyse the desires that arise between men for other men within the historical context of the eighteenth century, though some of the other previously mentioned gothic transgressive desires will be discussed as well.

The term "queer," in this thesis, aligns with Haggerty's definition in *Queer Gothic* to represent sexual identity established as a countercultural tool that dismantles the dominant structures of society and establishes individualism in a society focused on population control. Foucault highlights that "where there is power, there is resistance" (95). The fact that "power's hold on sex is maintained through language" (83) is only true so long as the discourse of this power is maintained and enforced to all those being controlled. Therefore, when censorship over "calling sex by its name" was considered to be at its height "one sees a veritable discursive explosion" (17) regarding sex that is directly the result of societal norms. Suppressing sexual

desire through governmental and religious control "likely did produce, as a countereffect, a valorization and intensification of indecent speech [, which resulted in] the multiplication of discourses concerning sex" (18). Therefore, an obsession and intensification of discussing sex and sexual practice is a direct result of its suppression with the attempt to control the populus. Since there was such a heavy "policing of statements" (18), "a whole rhetoric of allusion and metaphor was codified" (17) to discuss transgressive sexual practice as a mechanism to defy societal expectations, meaning "narrations must be decorated with the most numerous and searching details" (21). Sex becomes a featured discourse in spite of the intended effect of suppression. Though this discourse gained significant popularity, it is heavily coded, hidden, and secretive. Overall, the control of sexual practices of the rich resulted in a revolution of self-identification through the intensified discussions of transgressive sexual practice that allows queer identities to begin forming.

Haggerty offers an extensive analysis of how the gothic genre is a primary location to express sexual action from the moment of the genre's inception. Haggerty highlights how sexual tension is embedded into the subtext of the gothic genre: "Transgressive social-sexual relationships are the most basic common denominator of gothic writing, and from the moment in the early pages of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* when the anti-hero Manfred presses his suit on the fiancée of his deceased son, […] a gothic trope is fixed: terror is almost always sexual terror, and fear, and flight, and incarceration, and escape are almost always colored by the exoticism of transgressive sexual aggression" (Haggerty 2). It is clearly established that "all normative […] configurations of human interaction are insistently challenged and in some cases significantly undermined" (3) in gothic fiction, which begins defining how queer is utilised by

Haggerty. Furthermore, editor Frederick Frank of *The Castle of Otranto* highlights relevant facts about the reception of Walpole's literature:

> Like so much Romantic art, *The Castle of Otranto* is also an intense personal expression of the artist's buried emotional life, an ersatz journal of secret sexual tensions and anxieties. Some recent readings of *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysterious Mother* explain Walpole's compulsion to Gothicize as a way of confronting his homosexuality, masculine inadequacies, and lifelong sublimated fear of the father, Sir Robert Walpole, the most powerful politician in England. (23-24)

Critics of Walpole's literature consider the extent to which Walpole's personal life affected his literature considering main features of his texts include sexually transgressive terror conflated with aristocratic authority figures. With this context in mind, "sexuality becomes a form of public madness that defies the culture that would attempt to control, contain, or even know it" (Haggerty 13). Authors writing in the gothic genre utilise this medium to undermine and challenge societal norms.

This thesis is in agreement with Haggerty given that readings of gothicism invite a creative dismantling of societal structures that inhibit inherent human behaviour as is illuminated through sexually transgressive relationships. Critics Sarah Faber and Kerstin-Anja Münderlein add to the considerations of Haggerty in *Rethinking Gothic Transgressions of Gender and Sexuality* (2024), arguing that transgressive relationships are closely interconnected to the gothic genre:

> Queerness in terms of gender and sexuality has a long tradition of being present, even common in the Gothic. Queer topics weave through Gothic works from the start, and throughout historical periods when queerness was otherwise rarely publicly discussed,

> and certainly not empathetically portrayed, in most Western mainstream media. Meanwhile, Gothic texts spanning the centuries […] have become important to the LGBTQIA+ community today and are often seen as part of a queer canon because they were touchstones of rare queer representation in Western countries throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. (2)

Faber and Münderlein note how intertwined gothicism is with queer readings of literature throughout time, including at the very beginning from Walpole. This finding of these integral critics reflects Haggerty's consideration that "[g]othic novels articulate more complex 'sexualities' [..., and t]heories of sexuality that depend on the gothic […] would be more varied, more sexually complex, less bettering, and more polymorphously perverse than any thus far considered" (19). The gothic novel invites a complicated reading of its literature because of its unique, diverse, and intricate traits that allow for a large breadth of otherwise transgressive topics. This thesis considers that the importance placed by critics on the gothic genre's challenging of societal heteronormative control is fundamental to the sexual representation in society throughout history.

Haggerty argues that transgressive sexual aggression is essential to gothic literary pieces as established by tropes of fear, incarceration, terror, and escape. Though these tropes are classical representations of the gothic, it is important to also consider that other tropes and patterns of gothic literature are intended sources of opposing normative society through transgressive sexual acts. Critic A. A. Markley, in their paper "Tainted Wethers of the Flock: Homosexuality and Homosocial Desire in Mary Shelley's Novels," highlights key overlapping concepts from gothic texts to help decode the hidden sexual themes of gothicism. Markley briefly explains how "Sedgwick's model of homosocial desire, founded on René Girard's model

of 'triangular desire,' is the desire that men feel for intense social bonds with other men—bonds that are characteristically mediated through women" (Markley 120-121). Sedgwick paves the way for interpreters of literature to consider how transgressive sexual desire such as homosexuality could be written into literature through Girard's concept of mimetic triangles.

With there being so many competing ideologies of how transgressive relationships, a reflection on the history of sexual identity in the eighteenth-century proves useful. In this time, it was more the identification of being in homoerotic relationships than the act itself that became something to fear, and the "label *sodomite* [emphasis in original] was flung at politicians and papists as well as at people from Italy, France, and Spain—from just about anywhere but England [… because by] implication, the term was meant to regulate Englishness as much as to describe any particular form of sexual behavior" (Haggerty 69). The homoerotic and effeminate structures, then, hold the capacity to be anti-English. Critic Declan Kavanagh's opinions, in *Effeminate Years* (2017), on written accounts of homoeroticism notes that the "pattern of describing but not describing is embedded within the dynamics of what we currently call homophobia [… because] homophobia by its very logic calls forth the idea of certain sexual acts between men only to dispel them" (Kavanagh 14). This opinion, however, ignores the fact that calling forth the idea of sex between men subtly in literature closely reflects how heterosexual sex was written into literature. Godwin includes homoeroticism specifically, as opposed to just any eroticism, because male-to-male relationships are viewed as being against established English identity and therefore counter to hegemonic ideologies of the time.

Furthermore, Godwin's own belief system provides insight into why transgressive sex is integral to his literature. Alex Gold clarifies that "In *Thoughts on Man* [(1831)], Godwin identifies love as the inevitable antagonist of 'equity' and 'independence'" (Godwin qt. by Gold

137) because love "cannot exist in its purest form and with a genuine ardour, where the parties are, and are felt by each other to be, on an equality" (137). Therefore, Godwin's polemical ideologies suggest he has issues with any exploitation of power regardless of gender, and *Caleb Williams* is a text where more than just the aristocratic characters are engaging in abundant homoerotic and homosocial behaviours. Godwin's opinions about love focus the issue that love and idolization can cause a power imbalance which leads to the exploitation of one party over the other. Furthermore, Michael McKeon, in "Historicizing Patriarchy: The Emergence of Gender Difference in England, 1660-1760," highlights how "[t]he normative model of male aristocracy traditionally shared some of the standard markers of femininity—not only a fine luxuriance of dress, but also a softness and whiteness of complexion" (311). Aristocratic powers that Godwin dismantles are aesthetically interconnected with traditionally considered female gendered traits that further establishes a key connection between effeminate behaviours and aristocratic lords. This thesis—focused largely on homoerotic and homosocial relationship between men—will analyse how transgressive sexuality highlights the inequality brought about by the aristocratic classes and undermine the enforcement of strict heteronormativity. From the literature of Walpole, Godwin, and Godwin Jr., those with power hold the authority to incite transgressive desire from others no matter the status or gender of the other. This thesis considers that Godwin's inclusion of transgressive sexual practice and how it portrays power differentials between gothic characters.

The legal and societal constraints surrounding transgressive sexuality offer the simple argument that any accusation of sympathy towards "sodomistic" relationships is inherently problematic. Analysing the similar ways the gothic authors include transgressive sexual relationships into their literature requires a considerable amount of contextual knowledge

surrounding how sexuality was understood at the time. This thesis intends to examine instances of transgressive forms of desire and relationships to reflect on gothicism.

**2) Linguistics of Sexuality: Progressive Language Restricted by Gender Binaries**

Diverse sexual desire has existed throughout time. For example, Alexander the Great, a significant historic figure whose actions are a topic of debate in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, is anachronistically known as having been "undoubtedly bisexual" (Cartledge 13). In ancient Macedonia and Greece, sexual relationships between men and boys were known as "pederasty [, which] was thought to foster masculine, especially martial, bravery" (13). Ancient Macedonian society expressed pride for Alexander the Great, including the myths and legends where he is stated to have sexually "loved at least two men" (13), because such relationships were normalized in that ancient culture. When accounting for the shift in languages, cultural impacts, and societal norms throughout history, there have been difficulties in comprehending the diction to discuss different sexual relationships. Andrew Elfenbein highlights that William Godwin's wife Mary "Wollstonecraft, like all eighteenth-century writers, had no words like 'homosexual' or 'heterosexual' in her vocabulary [… , and s]exuality had no language of its own in the eighteenth century" (qtd. in Friedman 428). Elfenbein's observation raises the question of how sexuality was differently discussed and considered throughout antiquity compared to now.

Jen Manion's book *Female Husbands: A Trans History* (2020) highlights the coinage of the term the "female husband" that originates from the first public account of a marriage between two women in the eighteenth century. Charles Hamilton, who was assigned female at birth, "put on clothes belonging to their brother and presented themselves as male" (Manion 17), and defied the gendered expectations of femininity in the mid-eighteenth century by taking on a male persona to secure "masculine" employment and a wife. A key aspect of Hamilton, the "female

husband," is that his wife was unable to discern Hamilton would not be able to impregnate her until two months of marriage and intimacy due to the lack of male sex organs (22). Mary Prince, Hamilton's wife, explains in court that Hamilton had "entered her Body several times without raising suspicion" (22). The anxiety of "female husbands" included the concern over their ability to reproduce intimate stimulation akin to that which defines manhood and that does not contribute to reproduction expectations of the time. The story of Hamilton's life was initially circulated in 1747, but the article was recirculated two years later with extreme exaggeration. The exaggeration of the story highlights the anxiety that patriarchal Romantic society holds towards "women" who could replicate traits that are thought to be exclusive to masculinity at the time. Media reports discussed Hamilton's "14 Wives" (28). The major offence was that Hamilton "bedded and lived as a man and wife for a quarter of a year" (28) successfully. The anxiety of a female-sexed person performing the actions exclusive to the male gender is to be further understood by the notions of Butler, who notes that "There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender[, and] that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its result" (Butler 34). Anxieties over attributes thought to be gender exclusive give cause for a close analysis of Butler's theories on gender performativity, which will be under consideration in the theoretical portion of this introduction. This initial case of the "female husband" establishes new diction to describe sexual identity.

The development of communities open to transgressive sexual desire in eighteenth-century Britain is significant to analyse. Molly houses were "British public houses or taverns where homosexuals could meet and consort in the 18th century" (Myers n.p.). Molly houses were known to be run "for pleasure [rather] than profit," and these buildings were recognized as a "very well organised molly subculture" (Aldrich n.p.). Inclusions of molly houses in literature

are considered, by some critics, to feature "house rituals of mock births as a coded 'description of the use of dildos and possibly fisting'" (Kavanaugh 14). Mollys themselves became known for their "own distinctive conventions of speech, dress, and gesture" and formed a "distinctive social entity within a host culture whose intensified legal reprisals bespoke not so much increased hostility as, simply, increased recognizability" (McKeon 306-307). As highlighted by McKeon and Kavanaugh, members of the molly subculture develop their own identity and language within their community. Reiterating the sociological effect of molly houses, evidence suggests that for "eighteenth-century males there were two kinds of bodies (male and female) but three kinds of gender (masculine, feminine, and sodomite)—that the molly came to represent a third, hybrid gender role, one that combined male and female characteristics" (McKeon 308). Effeminacy develops as a third-gender structure, showcasing the malleability of gender constructs. Molly houses were for all members of society seeking to engage in sodomy, and "recent research into sodomy trials and the social composition of the molly clubs has corrected a longstanding misapprehension that early modern sodomy was largely an affair of the nobility and gentry" (McKeon 309). This key finding, that the populace at the time considered molly houses to largely comprise of upper-status individuals, was "widely reflected in the views of contemporaries themselves" (McKeon 309), meaning people of the eighteenth century themselves assumed that molly houses were populated primarily by aristocratic people. Molly houses developed as a supportive culture for those who wished to engage in sodomy which included people of all classes and statuses. Elfenbein's statement that sexuality did not have definitive terminology does not capture the reality of how people of the eighteenth century were, in fact, developing terms and creating community spaces for diverse sexualities.

Regulations of transgressive relationships depended on secrecy and trust because of how the relationships were legally restricted during the time. Sedgwick suggests that "the regulation of male homosexuality proceeded through the selectivity of terrorism rather than through genocide […] because the number of men involved were simply too great, and because the persecutions tend themselves to solidify the homosexual culture they were aimed at eradicating" (Sedgwick 84). Sedgwick argues that the sheer amount of homosexual activity, as well as the difficulty to police what exactly defines homosexual behaviour at the time, meant that creating an environment of hostility in society requires that "shows of power be unpredictable and in an unstable relation to the 'crime' that is ostensibly being regulated" (88). The regulation of homosexual society of Romantic-era England was possible only through fearmongering and the people of England holding each other accountable for their transgressive relationships and the visibility of emerging homosexual identity. The system of managing homosexuality through accusations and word-of-mouth allows for the manipulation of the truth to persecute innocent people. If an individual is a rival with another, they could simply accuse them of sodomy, as the activity was known at the time, and have them persecuted. Policing transgressive relationship benefits those in power because "[n]ot only [… would] homosexual men be unable to ascertain whether they are to be the objects of 'random' homophobic violence, but no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual [… , which means] a relatively small exertion of physical or legal compulsion potentially rules great reaches of behaviour and filtration" (89). The methods of control over transgressive relationships were drastic, leading many members of society who were either queer themselves or accused of being queer into exile. Anachronistically queer society existed and—though there were ways to connect in the communities despite interpersonal and governmental policing—Sedgwick clearly illustrates the

need for the secretive nature of transgressive relationships during the Romantic era. With this context of how transgressive sexual relationships existed in secret within Romantic-era society, it is reasonable to conclude that any transgressive sex intended to be depicted in literature of the time would be similarly secretive and layered into the subtextual allusions to avoid any public outcry, publication banning, or governmental action. It is within this understanding that a close analysis of gothic literature offers an outlet for homosocial, homoerotic, and homosexual bodies and actions to be represented in the eighteenth century.

**3) Relieving Homoerotic Tension: Girard's Theory of Mimetic Triangle**

In addition to uncovering the diction that describes transgressive relationships during the eighteenth century, there is value in recognizing the implicit references to homoerotic feelings found in how social dynamics were written into the literature of the time. This thesis intends to merge multiple theoretical and historical pieces to understand more about how sexuality was considered in the Romantic era: Girardian desire, a theory interested in the asymmetrical gender structures of love triangles and how this relates to transgressive sexual desire. *La petite mort*, a means of communicating sexual climax through a connection with the soul and death. The concept of the sublime, which is a term popularized in the Romantic era to encapsulate the heightened emotional state of rapture. Each of these three concepts are applicable to the writings of Walpole, Godwin, and Godwin Jr., meaning the study of their works and the language utilised to discuss sexuality requires defining to properly grasp.

Sex on its own was not easily included in literature which resulted in the need for cryptic and subtextual hints towards the acts. For example, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749) by John Cleland "had been a best seller but an illicit one" (Sabor 561) from its release. Though Cleland's text was "entirely free from vulgar terminology, it contains more explicit descriptions

of a broad range of sexual practices than any previous work in English" which resulted in "Government action against the novel [that] began in November 1749, when a warrant was issued for the arrest of the author, the printer, and the publishers" (561). Clearly, any authors like Cleland who wanted to go one step beyond and write about transgressive sexual desire would have to subtly write this into their literature. If strong emotions between people of the same gender exists in literature of the Romantic era, looking at historic ways in which sex was written about—such as *la petite mort*—will prove useful to understand how far these relationships extend. *La petite mort* is a concept closely related to the scientific discoveries about the soul that were popular during the Romantic period, giving credence to an analysis on the topic—especially because it closely resembles Romantic ideologies of the sublime. The novels of Walpole, Godwin, and Godwin Jr. include intense friendships and rivalries between men. These relationships will be found to evolve into explorations of homosocial and homoerotic desire by using the theoretical allusions and innuendos.

One way that Romantic-era writing emotionally binds two characters of the same sex is through love triangles. René Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (1961) speaks to mimetic desire, otherwise known as the erotic triangle that Sedgwick and Janicka summarise, or triangulation as Markley states. Sedgewick summarizes Girard's notion of mimetic desire such that "in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved" (Sedgwick 21). Providing more context to Girard's queer analysis of mimetic triangles, Girard notes that in some situations of mimetic triangles "a gradual transferring to the mediator of an erotic value [… is] characterized by a noticeably increased preponderance of the mediator and a gradual obliteration of the object" to the extent that certain texts "clearly show the beginning of an erotic deviation towards the fascinating rival"

(47). Girard, who focuses primarily on male-male-female love triangles, draws attention to the development of desire of a person or object as being dependent on rivalry. Complex relationships of desire originate from Girard's "*vaniteux*—[or] vain person—[who] cannot draw his desires from his own resources [, so …] he must borrow them from others" (Girard 6). To define the concept further, "a *vaniteux* will desire any object so long as he is convinced that it is already desired by another person whom he admires" (7). Therefore, when a *vaniteux*—also known by Girard as the subject—witnesses a rival of his—known as the mediator—have desire for something or someone else—known as the object—then the *vaniteux* subject will develop the same emotions for that object. The asymmetrical composition of erotic triangles, in that two members will traditionally be of the same gender by virtue of historic gender binaries, invites an examination of the homosocial desires present. The bond between the subject and the mediator in an erotic triangle is said to have been "even stronger, more heavily determinant of actions and choices, than anything in the bond between either of the lovers and the loved" (Sedgwick 21). Desire, in Girardian terms, is not an emotion innately present in humans but one that is learnt through mirroring the behaviours of others. Rivalry causes mimicry, which means that anything the mediator, or rival, wishes will become the primary desire of the subject. The inclination to surpass the rival by obtaining the shared object of desire is the only reason why an interest in the third party develops at all. The object is not what creates desire. The desire instead stems from the relationship between the two rivals, who are typically of the same gender. Ultimately, Girardian desire considers how transgressive sexual desire can develop through bonds of rivalry.

Additionally, Janicka quotes a key translation of Girard who elaborates on mimetic desire as a literary feature:

> Homosexuality, in literary works, is often the eroticizing of mimetic rivalry. The desire bearing on the object of rivalry—an object that need not even be sexual—is displaced towards the rival. Since the rival need not necessarily be of the same sex—the object itself being not necessarily sexual—this eroticizing of rivalry can also take the form of heterosexuality. (Girard qtd in Janicka 56)

Intense desire is the main feature of the subject, or *vaniteux*, of mimetic desire. Despite the connection between the mediator and the object not necessarily being that of love, or even more than a friendship, it is the sheer magnitude of desire that the subject holds in their rivalry with the mediator that creates an obsessive and, at times, erotic connection. Importantly, Girard treats "the erotic triangle as symmetrical—in the sense that its structure would be relatively unaffected by the power difference that would be introduced by a change in the gender of one of the participants" (Sedgwick 21). Girardian mimetic desire does not concern itself with the gender of the participants but instead with the emotions humans develop because Girard, after all, is "concerned with the category of 'human' and the universal human desire" (Janicka 46). Both Sedgwick and Janicka showcase how Girard considers the constructs of desire and eroticism in literature from within and before the Romantic era to include the pattern of the erotic triangle that, due to the asymmetrical genders typically highlighted in this pattern, provides an opportunity for transgressive sexual desire to develop no matter the gender.

Janika stresses that Girardian mimetic desire closely relates to Butler's theory about gender performativity because a pre-existing society is the requirement for either desire or gender-traits to be present in an individual. Butler proposes the theory of gender performativity that normative behaviours of the female and male gender have "produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a

binary relation to one another" (48). Gender performativity depends on the stereotypes or ideologies of binary genders to be present in society and, therefore, for people to adopt the traits of that role as they interact with the world. Butler focuses on how "whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex" (Butler 8). Janika importantly connects Girard's theory and Butler's because both models depend on mimicry or imitation. The love of the object from a subject of mimetic desire is only possible through a mediator, and the replication of gender roles requires an original model to consider.

### 4) Subtextual Sex: *Pneuma*, Sex, Death, and Orgasm's Interconnectedness Throughout Antiquity

With the understanding of how the Girardian triangle can be used to discover homoerotic emotions, analysing how sexual acts themselves were discussed in the eighteenth-century is integral to understanding the period. Sex in general was written covertly into literature of the time. It would be simple to suppose that since many texts from the Romantic era do not outright include sexual acts that there was no interest in the topic. However, writers could not include sexual intercourse in their literature explicitly in the Romantic era. Extending much before the Romantic era, there was a "prohibition on explicit references to sex [that would] actually [have] allowed novelists to paint more complex erotic landscapes serving these otherwise discordant and unconscious needs" (Bowring 112). As a result of the prohibition on references to sex, it is difficult to know when an author is omitting the actual sexual intimacy of actions because they intend to be subtle or because of the societal structures of literature. However, because explicit sex is such a rare occurrence in eighteenth-century literature, intense analysis of literature for potential mechanisms to express sexual desire is required.

However, the prohibition of talking about sex in literature does not limit the engagement authors have with it, as alternative means to integrate sex into their texts are apparent. If sex is a topic prohibited in literature of the time, it is important to consider the variety of techniques historically used to subtly include intimacy in written works. One such way is the interconnectedness of death and sexual climax through the concept of *la petite mort*. Phil Shining delineates information on the discussions of sexual experiences in the text *Exploring Sexuality and Spirituality: An Introduction to an Interdisciplinary Field* (2020). Shining focuses on the term *la petite mort*, or "the little death," to denote orgasm, which "alludes to a loss of the vital energy of a body: the inevitable loss of nutrients for a body that accompanies the loss of sexual fluids" (362). Historically, therefore, climaxing during sex displays similar attributes to near-death experiences. This thesis considers how, when death occurs intimately between two characters, such as murders of passion, or dying in another's arms, "the little death" serves as a euphemism of a sexual encounter or desire between those involved—especially when prefaced with intense desire and emotions brought about by sublime transport. Two main reasons for this interconnectedness of sex and death are the similarities in emotions related to as well as the large cultural significance placed on semen. The concept of the little death connects the act of sex to the active state of the soul in the bursting of visceral fluid from the body, meaning that authors throughout antiquity could use death as a reference to sexual acts. Shining focuses on Michel Foucault's connections of sex to the body, mind, and spirit, where Foucault highlights "the upturned eyes rolling backwards, like 'the eye of mystics and spiritualists' [that] mark the zone of 'the mute and exorbitated horror of sacrifice' of the self, and 'the void into which it pours or loses itself'" (Shining 321). The very diction utilised to describe sex is heavily connected to uncontrollable action and a near-death experience. Considering death is the ultimate severance

between the body and that soul, it is an appropriate mechanism to equate to the loss of the vital fluid of semen. Death, and its similar properties to orgasm, provided an outlet for those authors who desire to include sexual acts between characters in their literary works.

The historic background for *la petite mort* connects to the understanding of semen and the soul from the philosophical perspectives of antiquity which remains relevant to the eighteenth century despite the advancing scientific understanding of reproduction. Aristotle, translated by Bos, notes that "'it is clear both that semen possesses Soul, and that it is Soul, *potentially*'" (Aristotle 379). This statement from Aristotle is of consideration because "'Semen […] possesses soul inasmuch as it contains this soul plus its instrumental body'" (Bos 382). Researchers Abraham Bos and Jennifer Hellwarth, who translate Aristotle's work, identify the historic reverence of semen due to its physical visibility in the process of creating life. Aristotle highlights the movement of the soul from "the heart [… , and that] the other parts [of the body] possess life because they are *connected* [emphasis in original] with it" (Bos 382). Aristotle's considerations align with the later developed perspectives of Cartesian Dualism that is the belief that the body and mind are separate. Aristotle defines the connection of semen and soul to be *pneuma. Pneuma* is the substance that "connects the non-human, the 'astral' (or *aether*) element of the stars, with the human, [… which] is drawn into the body through respiration" (Hellwarth 55). Significantly, Aristotle specifies that pneuma is "already present in semen and is an analogue of the astral element, which is responsible for the fertility and the life-generating power of semen" (55). Semen, therefore, was historically understood to be a fluid with cosmic power because of its connection to the understanding of how the universe and life function. The Romantic era's advancing ideas and research about reproduction demystify the cosmic properties of semen, but they do not remove the relevance of Aristotle's influence regarding semen and its

connection to the soul. Sha highlights that authors during the Romantic period still reviewed Aristotle's works, given that "[e]ven though more popular medical writings on sexuality such as Aristotle's *Masterpiece* ostensibly instructed readers on how to achieve fertility, Godwin and Wollstonecraft studied [texts intended to help achieve fertility like Aristotle's] to avoid pregnancy" (Sha 24). Semen and the soul closely connect to create explanations for the way life is possible, and the exposure that Romantic-era authors had to these concepts due to the popularity of Aristotle's works provides them an optional route to include sexual activity in their literature. Sex and the soul, therefore, intertwine through the philosophical understandings of scholars in antiquity.

The historic perspective that ejaculation is a vital fluid known for providing life extends throughout antiquity spanning from ancient Greece to Romantic era England. As a result of semen's spiritual and material importance, people throughout antiquity frowned upon the act of wasting semen in the acts of fornication, masturbation, or sodomy. Sha considers the anxieties around seminal waste throughout history as due to the considerations of semen as a divine fluid. Science, however, was able to disprove the importance of semen, which allows revolutionaries of the eighteenth century to reconsider the state of sex. Scientist Lazzaro Spallanzani sought to test the theory of pneuma, or seminal aura, by conducting experiments that included "clothing frogs in taffeta shorts" (Sha 29) and exposing them to semen so that the potential divine aura of semen could attempt to impregnate the frog. Spallanzani's experimental findings were that "there must be physical contact between semen and [the] egg in order for reproduction to occur," so he "showed in 1780 that there was no such thing as seminal aura" (Sha 29). Furthermore, Spallanzani found out in other experiments "how little semen was actually needed for reproductive 'efficacy' [which] meant that sexual pleasure was enormously wasteful" (Sha 30).

Spallanzani's scientific findings dispel the mystery of semen and advance Romantic-era separation of pleasure and reproduction by highlighting how the act of ejaculation itself is excessive and unproductive. Furthermore, Spallanzani theorises that "all life was performed in the ovary—and thereby undermined one key biological basis for male superiority" (Sha 30) that was the major belief up until these discoveries. Life's origin shifting from semen to the ovaries was a threat to the patriarchal society that built itself up on the supremacy of man through biology. Scientific discovery provides Romantic revolutionaries the power to undermine the structures of gender and class which have been oppressing humans for centuries and enable the philosophical ideas in the Romantic era to develop a more nuanced appreciation of pleasure as separated from reproduction and to consider the heightened emotions experienced as a connection with the soul. This analysis of Sha is integral to understanding gothic literature because in Sha's *Perverse Romanticism* he establishes a clear background to how sexual pleasure itself becomes transgressive and unproductive to society. Considering gothic literature "helped shape thinking about sexual matters—theories of sexuality as it were" (Haggerty 3) it did so alongside the developing scientific understandings of how sex functioned.

Sha analyses Romantic revolutionaries who break down the meaning of sex to better understand means of human liberation by disconnecting the historical understandings of sex and reproduction. The definition of the "perversification" of sex is, for Sha, "the ways in which the seemingly natural and normative connection between pleasure and function was undermined, an undermining that allowed sex to be thought of as a form of purposiveness" (Sha 22). Science allows sexual reproduction and sexual pleasure to be separate, and "Once pleasure is no longer enslaved to reproduction, sexual liberation becomes possible because desire can now be its own

end" (29). Sha poses questions that invite new readings of Romantic texts considering the bold ideologies of polemical writers like Godwin:

> Was pleasure necessary for reproduction, and, if not, what might sexual intimacy have to teach us about human equality, genuine intersubjectivity, and freedom? And was sexual desire a biological imperative? […] the rationalist Godwin's insistence [was] that [… sexual pleasure] was not [necessary for reproduction]. (24)

Godwin himself separates sexual pleasure and sexual reproduction. By liberating sexual pleasure from reproduction, Godwin continues his campaign against the inequality of love experienced under the imbalanced power dynamics in society. Though Godwin's arguments against love may seem to contrast his interest in intimacy, it is love that is perverted by those in power that he focuses on most notably. Continuing the historic review of sexuality in the Romantic era, Sha highlights that "by the end of the eighteenth century sex was thought to take place in the head, not the genitals, meaning that sexuality could now become central to psychology" (21). In this way, sexuality becomes a means to understand the functions of humanity and is not as simple as just the means to reproduce. By separating reproduction from pleasure, Sha suggests that "science in the Romantic period struggles to come to grips with the fact that perversion is within heterosexual pleasure, that it refuses to remain external to mainstream sex" (23). Sex with the purpose of reproduction is also perverse—just like fornication, masturbation, or sodomy—because any sexual gratification is unnecessary for the act of reproduction. The perverse nature of sexual pleasure replicates Foucault's theories and analysis in that any pleasure derived from sexual acts, even those to reproduce, are considered transgressive.

Sex and sexuality are truly a feature of Romantic writing when considering the emphasis placed on the sublime. Edmund Burke defines the sublime as a powerful and passionate emotion:

> Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (Burke 36)

Burke, who is a political figure that Godwin simultaneously respected and reproached, writes in explicit detail his opinions on the sublime and its functionality. The Burkean sublime is an immense feeling caused by a source of power much greater than an observer who becomes overwhelmed. The sublime is something that characters within a text can experience from a specific instance or that the audience can experience when interacting with a text. Significantly, "the sublime became a central category of [… eighteenth]- and [… nineteenth-century] literary criticism and philosophy […] and of Romantic poetry" (Hornblower n.p.). Godwin, and Godwin Jr. use the sublime—established as a gothic trope in Walpole's initiation of the gothic genre—to associate moments of intense terror to a heightened sense of awe and an elevated spiritual experience. The soul and sexual discourse is interconnected through the notions of *la petite mort* where moments of death—that also feature an elevated state of awe and terror in the act of dying—are connected to instances of sexual terror. This thesis uniquely examines if sublime transport and *la petite mort* interconnect in the gothic to write transgressive sexual acts and desire into gothic literature.

Burke's sublime transport connects to *la petite mort* through the similarity of their effects, creating a basis for hidden sexual encounters in literature. The connection of *la petite mort* and the sublime is not originally a point of Sha's. Sha's insights on the sublime showcase a multitude of similarities that are uniquely focused on in this thesis. Expanding further on the sublime, Burke utilises the concepts of the sublime and beauty to offer a patriarchal defence for

class structures as they exist. Burke notes that "beauty is a social quality; for […] women and men [… provide] a sense of joy in beholding them" (66-67). Significantly, Burke highlights that both men and women can be sources of beauty, noting that Burke uses the sublime to support his political position but, by having too many conflicting statements, he creates unintentional connections worth exploring. When analysing works of the sublime, it is noteworthy that "beauty, and the passion caused by beauty, […] call[ed] love, is different from desire, though desire may sometimes operate along with it," since desire which is defined as "an energy of the mind, that hurries us on to the possession of certain objects" (162). Lust, or sexual desire, is an emotional urge that controls the person experiencing the feeling. The diction to describe desire connects to the function of the sublime that "begins with the appearance of an overwhelming power, that stops the subject in his/her tracks" and that, "[r]ather than bringing the experience to a catastrophic end, deflation is the prelude to transport [… , and] hurries us on by an irresistible force" (Otto 29). This definition of Burke's sublime explains how uncontrollable and compelling the experience is, which closely matches the diction used to describe lust and desire. The sublime and lust interconnect through the sheer power which that emotion has over the person experiencing it. The desire to possess the object of lust or to be in shock by the might of the sublime connect and overlap. Moments of the sublime, which simultaneously overwhelm and excite a human, additionally reflect the attributes of *la petite mort*. The little death represents the overwhelming emotions of sex that replicate the experience of death. Sex and the sublime are explained in such similar ways by Romantic scholars, including through an analysis of Burke's theories, that the two concepts interconnect. Sex and the sublime, therefore, directly connect to the little death, meaning moments of the sublime in Romantic literature are worth reviewing for their sexual connotations.

Burke specifies that love occurs in men only for women because beauty is the attribute of women. However, Burke's simplification of love being attributed to the female form contradicts itself when considering the emergence of effeminate chivalry. Burke's gendered approach to love and desire highlights how he "tries to cultivate manly chivalry and to direct this manly chivalry toward sympathy for royalty further suggests that perversity could be a real potential problem should custom lose its hold over gender" (Sha 169). Burke attempts to not only define love and desire but also to use these emotions to foster sympathy for those aristocratic and upper-class members of society that identify with chivalric behaviour. However, Burke's attempts to masculinize himself fall short considering that "Mary Wollstonecraft recognized [… that] the turn toward chivalric manhood is simultaneously a turn to sentimentalized foppery, a turn that unmans the man even in the name of manhood" (Sha 169). As a quick definition, the term "fop" is associated with the "sexually ambiguous" (McKeon 307) status of effeminate men who "combined male and female characteristics" (308) in their mannerisms, behaviours, and dress. Burke utilises chivalry to create a patriarchal and classist comment on why aristocratic men are superior. However, the sentiment backfires on Burke because his definition of aristocracy that is intended to evoke masculinity instead effeminizes men. The effeminate male is a characteristic of aristocratic male characters found in Romantic literature, which is a common theme throughout the gothic texts analysed in this thesis, and presents the foppery predicted by Wollstonecraft. Burke's ideal aristocratic man is defined by chivalry, yet his conception of chivalry ultimately connects feminine traits to his ideal male which therefore effeminizes man allowing them to be beautiful, meaning these chivalric men are eligible to be objects of male love. Through Burke's interpretations of the chivalric, which connects men to feminine traits, he unknowingly promotes that homoerotic desire can result from the emotion of love.

Defining the understanding of how effeminacy was considered during the eighteenth-century is integral to this consideration of chivalry. McKeon highlights how the concept of effeminacy shifts throughout the century:

> In the seventeenth century, "effeminate" referred to two distinct kinds of sexual overindulgence both of which were marked by male ingratiation with the female: it referred to men who *are like* women (in the sense of sodomitical transvestism), and to men who *like* women (in the sense of being sexually obsessed with them). By the middle of the eighteenth century, an adult effeminate male was likely to be taken only in the former sense, as an exclusive sodomite or molly. (McKeon 308)

Breaking down this analysis, McKeon highlights that effeminacy initially could either be understood at the time as wanting to be like a woman or excessively liking women, but eventually only focuses on men acting like women. Effeminacy shifted from a sexually charged term to an understanding of the fundamental behaviours and actions, attributed by gender stereotypes, of a person. Kavanagh corroborates this definition of the effeminate by stating that "to be effeminate is to display nonnormative gender behaviour" (Kavanagh 22). Though "effeminacy is not always tied to sexual desire" (Kavanagh 22), effeminacy can help "trace the contours of social normalcy at that time. The history of effeminacy is inversely the history of gender normativity" (22). The effeminate is not always attributed to sexual desire, and it is also the antithesis of societally enforced gender normativity. Furthermore, McKeon highlights that "effeminacy is interwoven with the Enlightenment's development of modern Western ideas of liberty and freedom" (13). Effeminacy serves an important role in the development of a society that is accepting of diverse sexuality. Effeminacy, therefore, is similar to transgressive sexual

behaviour because it serves as the antithesis to enforced behaviour at the time and, therefore, is rooted in revolutionary behaviour.

Death, *pneuma*, and the sublime interconnect in this analysis of sex and sexuality during the Romantic era. Therefore, it is important to provide a brief scientific background on how the Romantics' understanding of the soul develops in literary and scholarly groups. Matters of moral physiology, the study of human thought and the body, were actively evolving during and before the Romantic era. George S. Rousseau's "Nerves, Spirits, and Fibres: Towards Defining the Origins of Sensibility" (1976) highlights the importance of the study of the soul to the development of the period: "It is not true that Romanticism, understood in this way, could have occurred at any time [… . First,] a revolution in knowledge about man, set in motion by certain paradigmatic works, had to occur[, …] and then the diverse cults of sensibility, religious, social, moral, literary, and even fashion[…], had to play themselves out" (157). In this paper, Rousseau highlights that the development of thought in the Romantic era is dependent on the findings of impactful philosophers in the centuries before the Romantics and analyses those instances of philosophical development. Those philosophers are the precise reason why the Romantic era's writers interact with the human soul within the body, the location of the soul, and its purpose in the way they do. A key finding that Rousseau showcases is that the scientist Thomas Willis "was the first scientist clearly and loudly to posit that the seat of the soul is strictly limited to the brain, nowhere else" (144), which greatly developed the understanding of "nerves, and their subsidiaries, fibres and animal spirits" (145), which is of great consideration in the Romantic era. Walpole, Godwin, Godwin Jr., and other eighteenth-century authors would have these questions regarding the soul's purpose and its location in the body as prime inspirations for the gothic elements in their work. Given that sex and sexuality are found in the gothic tropes employed by

Walpole, Godwin, and Godwin Jr., and gothicism often discusses supernatural events relating to the soul, an understanding how the soul was scientifically considered and discussed provides context that aids in this thesis' analysis of the many ways the soul is brought up in Romantic literature—from allusions to *la petite mort* and sublime transport, to the very basis of how politics and literature speak about the soul more literally. These considerations of the soul's placement in the body are of great importance when considering that this thesis includes a thorough discussion of Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion* which features the movement of a soul from a male body into a female body.

This thesis examines gothic literature—gothic sexual terror—that evokes strong emotions through a sexual framework. This analysis focuses on how the sublime and *la petite mort* interconnect due to their similar state of being defined as emotion defined by ecstasy and climax. In gothic literature, it is the case that these instances of intense emotionality can seem unconnected to sexual tension. This thesis finds it necessary to acknowledge and examine instances of sexual terror, the sublime, and *la petite mort* to determine if there is a connection. In this analysis, mimetic triangles and effeminate aristocracy will be analysed to more closely understand language used to describe transgressive sexual desire. Furthermore, in this analysis, the primary structure of sexual desire that will be analysed is that which occurs between men. Chapter One of this thesis will focus on the emergence of "perverse" sexual relationships. This definition of "perverse" sexual relationships is that which has been defined by Sha to be those relationships that are unproductive in that their main purpose is to include sexual activity without the intention to create successful offspring. "Perverse" relationships overlap with transgressive sexual desire and are established as an integral theme to the gothic genre in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Walpole's emergence of key characteristics of queer gothic literature

includes the effeminate aristocrat, the use of mimetic desire, the gothic double, and sublime transport. The precedent set by Walpole's establishment of the gothic genre is a model used by those following the tropes and expectations of this style of literature. The sheer popularity and impact of the first gothic literary piece on English literature is immense. *The Castle of Otranto*'s transgressive themes and topics caused ideological ripples in English society which creates space for other writers and consider including queer desires and relationships in their own gothic literature. Chapter Two focuses on Godwin's *Caleb Williams* to establish that the queer gothic tropes of Walpole's literature are solidified within Godwin's text. Godwin intends to illustrate a strong case against the dangers of aristocratic men and does so by showcasing how irresistible their charm is to both men and women alike. *Caleb Williams* is a text rife with Girardian triangles, sometimes with all members in the triangle being men, to emphasise the sheer abundance of male-to-male desire in society. Godwin, along with other gothic writers, cements the literary tropes of the queer gothic that are established by Walpole, ensuring that the genre includes transgressive sexual desire. Finally, the third chapter of this thesis provides a unique perspective on Godwin Jr.'s underappreciated novel *Transfusion*. Godwin Jr.'s protagonist is in a mimetic triangle with a male character whose attraction becomes so unbearable he transitions his own soul into the body of his sister. Furthermore, in these states of mixed male-female bodies, traditionally gendered rights of women are defended. Godwin Jr.'s novel warrants further study and analysis to consider the extent to which he progresses the ideologies and opinions of his father and the father of gothicism. This thesis considers the genre of the gothic and that Godwin Jr.'s text uniquely provides a pro-trans perspective that is only possible through the gothic being intrinsically connected to transgressive sexual desire.

## Chapter One

### Originating the Gothic Genre as Queer: Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*

An inquiry into the development of queer writing as a topic first requires a consideration of the origin of its emergence. Transgressive sexual relationships—ranging from those featuring incest, intense friendship, rivalry, or romances—are included in various works of literature of the eighteenth century, and especially within the genre of the gothic novel. Reviewing how the gothic genre held the capacity for transgressive desire, therefore, requires close examination. Horace Walpole's text *The Castle of Otranto* is the widely read archetypal text necessary to understand how the gothic genre functions to incorporate transgressive sexual topics and themes such as incest and homoeroticism in the eighteenth century:

> Walpole is the pioneer of gothic drama because he is willing to look at these primal scenes of bourgeois ideology and expose them for what they are. If that also says something about his sexuality, a concept only beginning to be understood in the later eighteenth century, it is because he insisted on his position outside the normativity that he would attack. (Haggerty 89)

Here, Haggerty establishes that Walpole not only intends to dismantle societal structuring through the gothic genre but also that his sexuality, which some argue was non-normative, reflects the same counter cultural messaging found in his literature. Given "the aristocratic family subjugates its members to the unjust tyranny of patriarchal power and the rule of primogeniture" (McKeon 297) as the normative, any form of opposition to primogeniture and aristocratic tyranny subverts the societal structures of sexuality at the time. Transgressive sexual desire such as homoeroticism, incest, and perverse heterosexual relationships is highlighted in gothic literature through Walpole's established gothic tropes of effeminate chivalry, the erotic triangle, the gothic uncanny double, and instances of the sublime.

**1) Gothicism as Queer Literature: Walpole as the Originator of Gothicism**

Critics reviewing literature of the early eighteenth-century era consider authors such as William Beckford, Horace Walpole, and Matthew Lewis anachronistically as "queer" writers. Of note, Beckford and Walpole hint particularly towards anxieties about their own queer biographies in their literature (Fincher 231). The literary critic Max Fincher provides a queer reading of Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Fincher not only reflects on the queer aspects of Walpole's text, but he also explains the impact Walpole has on future authors and the gothic genre. Historically, "Walpole's affections for his cousin Henry Seymour Conway had been exposed in a highly public (and vicious) exchange of pamphlets just before the writing of [*The Castle of Otranto*]" (Reeve 46). Reeve highlights how Walpole's sexual identity was publicly questioned and was the cause of Walpole's infamy, given the specific diction of "vicious" publications against him. Though the sexual preferences of Walpole are near impossible to determine due to a lack of evidence, the writings of Walpole and the articles about him do suggest that he was associated with transgressive sexuality and that this association is counter cultural.

The way Walpole includes transgressive sexuality in his text sets the precedent to dismantle normativity within gothic literature as established in the introduction of this thesis. Jolene Zigarovich, in their chapter "Queer Gothic: Romantic Origins and Victorian Innovations," notes how important the gothic genre is for its ability to challenge normalized relationship formations:

> As sexuality and gender were seen in more binary terms, literature often reinforced heteronormativity and cisnormativity. While reinforcing these norms, Gothic literature also dramatised the blatant transgression of desire and challenged social boundaries and regulations. This exploration of tabooed desire was employed by writers in part to

> reaffirm the power of the normative, but also to carve out spaces for potential non-normative power in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gothic. (Zigarovich 38)

Writers in the Romantic era using the gothic form intended to dismantle normalized and oppressive structures that determine what is sexually transgressive and were beginning to learn different mechanisms to dismantle tyrannical societal structures. Of significance to Zigarovich's revelations is that Romantic authors saw sex and gender in more binary terms. Because of the inability to separate sexuality and gender, the effeminate male or the masculine female began to represent their own separate gender categories that exist outside the gender binary and counter to its premise. The contextual information of how sexuality and gender were not as separated as they are in modern 2SLGBTQ+ discourse is a key consideration when reflecting on male codes of chivalry made effeminate or the masculinization of women.

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* sets the precedent for the tropes and themes of the gothic genre. Tropes that critics widely consider Walpole to have established typically consider the extremes of architecture, characters, and language:

> The aesthetics of the sublime described by Edmund Burke, the typical Gothic setting in an imposing and often dilapidated building, the oppression or imprisonment of the heroine, the (explained) supernatural, the brooding villain, and the overall excessiveness of language, the plot, and the characters. (Faber 13)

Of specific pertinence to this thesis are the topics and themes that emerge in Walpole's text that then reappear across the work of future gothic writers: the oppressive tyrant, erotic love triangles that foster homoerotic intimacies, the gothic uncanny double, and the effeminate chivalric male. These details will be examined in *The Castle of Otranto* to best reflect on how future gothic

authors adopt tropes and topics to similarly include transgressive sexual relationships in their literature.

### 2) Developing the Genre: *The Castle of Otranto* as the Queer Gothic Archetype

*The Castle of Otranto* features transgressive sexual desire as a fundamental aspect of gothic literature to undermine societal structures. Fincher considers how gothic "suffering emanates from between the claims of being truthful to one's parents and the taboo of a hidden sexual desire or attachment surfacing" (235) that perfectly blends transgressive sexual desire and the fear of identification which defines queer identities. Transgressive sexual desire, though, is represented in *The Castle of Otranto* in more ways than just homoeroticism and incest. Significantly, heterosexual relationships can also be transgressive, or perverse, when they subvert standards of procreation. For example, "Matilda's transgressive desire for Theodore as a supposed peasant may function as an analogic key for the predicament of the homoerotic subject in the aristocratic eighteenth[-]century family, especially one as prestigious as the Walpole family" (Fincher 235). Matilda, the biological daughter of the text's tyrannical Manfred, falls in love with a figure undesirable to her family's social status. The implications of Matilda and Theodore's union is transgressive because the social status of any offspring of Theodore's does not match the ideals of the upper class. Comparing Matilda's low-class relationship to a homosexual relationship confirms the similarly transgressive state of both these relationships considering "[in] the case of men, gendered readings of the gothic therefore take note of how male-male relationships (which may be culturally homosocial rather than physically homosexual) provide an alternative to the reproductive imperative of social identification based on lineage and inheritance" (Hughes 168). Transgressive sexual desire subverts power structures of the time by undermining the means of extending lineage and aristocratic power. In *The Castle*

*of Otranto* characters question the notion that "blood is noble" by asking "what is blood" and "what is nobility," because humans are "all reptiles, miserable, sinful creatures," and "it is piety alone that can distinguish us from the dust whence we sprung, and whither we must return" (Walpole 111). Merit through supposed birthright is a main point of contention in Walpole's text that invites readers to consider society's power structures. Gothicism clearly displays how sexual desire that does not further the societal ideal of "successful" offspring is perceived as terrifying to the corrupt aristocratic hegemony.

Sexual desire that undermines societal standards intended to manage and preserve aristocratic lineage is the feature of the gothic. It is important, though, to read the subtextual evidence of the literature to see what the intended message of transgressional sexuality would be. A major twist of *Otranto* is that "Theodore [… is] the true Prince of Otranto" (Walpole 162). Therefore, this previously transgressive relationship between Theodore and Matilda would have ultimately been a hidden success for the lineage of nobility in Otranto: Matilda's family is living in the castle while Theodore is the actual inheritor of the Otranto family lineage. By making Manfred's sexual desire transgressive due to his actual lack of aristocratic power and by subverting Theodore's previously transgressive sexual desire into normative desire, Walpole offers a unique consideration on the socially defined status of transgressive sexual desire. Matilda and Theodore's transgressive relationship, in a way, restores the lineage of the castle by returning the true prince to the palace. Similarly, Manfred's desperate attempts to solidify lineage through marriage and birthrights highlights how flawed the aristocratic considerations of primogeniture and selective reproduction are. Traditional structures of marriage, in *The Castle of Otranto*, are a failed subject considering Manfred's ease of discarding Hippolita to replace her with Isabella. All it takes for Manfred to move on from Hippolita is for him to exclaim that

"Hippolita is no longer [Manfred's] wife" when he imposes himself on Isabella because for "too long has she cursed [… him] by her unfruitfulness [because his] fate depends on having sons" (Walpole 80). Manfred undermines the sanctity of marriage by showcasing the ease by which he will replace his wife with a new woman. Furthermore, he blames the birth of a daughter on Hippolita as if she is the reason he has an effeminate son and a daughter. *The Castle of Otranto* invests considerable effort in undermining aristocratic ideals of marriage and relationships. Walpole establishes the gothic as a genre fundamentally involved in undermining English society's idealized sexual and marital structure.

Manfred, the tyrant of the text, establishes archetypal attributes and character traits that reflect in future gothic characters such as Godwin's Falkland. Like Falkland, "The circumstances of Manfred's fortune had given an asperity to his temper, which was naturally human[, …] and his virtues were always ready to operate, when his passions did not obscure his reason" (Walpole 87). The overfed passions of a man who has access to wealth and power supports the genre's theme that those in power oppress and dominate those in the lower classes. Transitions between a reason of virtue and a passionate temper creates two personalities that are present throughout the text such that the narrator notes how the "transition of his soul was to exquisite villainy" (93). Editor Frederick S. Frank highlights that "Manfred, the first Gothic villain, is a divided being whose personality is a compound of good and evil [… , and the] contradictory selves at war within him sets the pattern for Gothic villains throughout the tradition" (93). Frank continues to note that "the Gothic villain beginning with Manfred is never totally evil and remorseless and is capable of virtuous feelings," and that "[l]ater Gothic villains often exhibit a mixture of the inhuman, the superhuman, and the pitiable human in their makeups" (111). Manfred, for example, spares "the life of [… Jerome's] son" (Walpole 112) when Jerome makes an extensive

and desperate plea. The transgressive sexual desires of Manfred of incest and homoeroticism represent the evil personality trait that is a key aspect of *The Castle of Otranto*, which establishes taboo sexual desire as a gothic trope that extends to future gothic villains. However, the potential for virtue and reason create a good side to the character, which opens the path to consider some of the emotions behind the character to be redeemable.

Accompanying Manfred's unconventional sexual desires associated with his personality changes, another gothic trope that is established by Walpole is the uncanny double. The uncanny double, highlighted by Fincher, is defined more closely by Hélène Cixous in *Fiction and Its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's Das Unheimliche (The 'Uncanny')* (1976) where "the double feeds on the offspring cast off by the self through critical solicitation. An incorporation whose phantasm gives rise, in its turn, to the metaphor of a disquieting consummation: the double thus also absorbs the unrealized eventualities of our destiny which the imagination refuses to let go" (Cixous 539). Uncanny doubles, according to this definition, represent the repressed feelings of the self through other characters. The double acts on the unrealized desires of the original which propels the text towards achieving the goal of the original. Fincher argues that "Theodore functions as an uncanny double for Manfred's past, but he also works against Manfred along class and gender paradigms, and in the latter respect may symbolize the disrupting presence of the homoerotic Other" (238). To add context to this connection, Theodore and Manfred are both identified with the title Prince of Otranto and both have transgressive relationships with Isabella and Matilda. Theodore similarly has impulses related to those he adores that he finds difficult to control, considering "Theodore, under pretence of expressing his joy at being freed from his apprehensions of the combat being fatal to Frederic, could not resist the impulse of following Matilda" (Walpole 132). Though the development of Theodore's relationship with Matilda is

much tamer than Manfred's pursuit of Isabella, he too showcases the impulsive characteristics present in the tyrannical Manfred. The gothic double enacts the unrealized desires of the original. Theodore's intense desire for Matilda after death results in his reluctant marriage to Isabella as the Prince of Otranto. Interestingly, the final lines of *The Castle of Otranto* leave ambivalence to the union of Isabella and Theodore:

> Frederic offered his daughter to the new Prince, which Hippolita's tenderness for Isabella concurred to promote. But Theodore's grief was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it was not until after frequent discourses with Isabella of his dear Matilda, that he was persuaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could for ever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul. (Walpole 165)

Given Theodore's union to Isabella requires persuasion due to the immense grief he feels for Matilda, marriage to unite noble status is again showcased as a flawed structure of society. The potential for Theodore to repeat the actions of Manfred in the future, due to his ambivalence with his current wife, is now of consideration. Theodore's desires intertwine closely with the actions of Manfred, which illustrates the potential terror that all humans possess. Projecting underlying desires onto a different character's actions is a consistent trope of the gothic novel that, in *The Castle of Otranto,* challenges heteronormativity. The gothic double provides readers a glance into the complicated psyche of tyrannical characters that is initially established in *The Castle of Otranto* and, ultimately, becomes a method for identifying subtextual reference to transgressive topics such as sexuality in gothic literature.

The effeminate soul of aristocratic men is highlighted throughout *The Castle of Otranto*. Fincher reflects on the effeminate state of Manfred's son that undermined the masculine potency of Manfred's lineage:

> He is 'a homely youth, sickly and of no promising disposition, yet he was the darling of his father' (15). The narrator implies by 'yet' that the reverse ought to be true. Manfred should be disappointed by his deficient virility because it borders on effeminacy, denoting physical weakness, but also perhaps the possibility of homoerotic tendencies. (Fincher 237)

Conrad is a young man whose inability to be productive with his body in a patriarchal society makes him effeminate and undesirable. Conrad—an effeminate son—coupled with Matilda means that all of Manfred's lineage exude feminine traits. Manfred considers Conrad so heavily failed as an offspring that he remarks that his "foolish fondness of that boy blinded the eyes of [his] prudence—but it is better as it is" that he had died a horrible death because "Conrad was not worthy of [… Isabella's] beauty" (Walpole 79). Manfred hopes "in a few years, to have reason to rejoice at the death of Conrad" (79) because Manfred imagines he will marry Isabella and have successful offspring. Separate from Manfred's lineage, Theodore's effeminate traits are present as he is considered to be "indulg[ing …] the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul" (165), which is a quote that was previously highlighted for its purpose of devaluing the merit of marriage. Fincher highlights that the specific diction of this phrase regarding Theodore's soul suggests "a femininity [… because] his sensitivity to the gloom of the forest […] induces melancholy [, which] anticipates [Ann] Radcliffe's heroines" (Fincher 241). The intense diction of "indulging" in a feminine emotion that takes "possession" of his soul connotes that this femininity overwhelms Theodore's body that offers the opportunity for this femininity to be in

excess and therefore veering on the effeminate. With the consideration that Theodore's character veers on effeminate, "Sir Walter Scott's Introduction to the 1811 Edition of *The Castle of Otranto*" highlights that "The Castle of Otranto is remarkable not only for the wild interest of the story, but as the first modern attempt to found a tale of amusing fiction upon the basis of the ancient romances of chivalry" (Frank 328). The basic structure of amusement is on toying with the image of the chivalric which, as highlighted by Wollstonecraft, has the tendency to be effeminate. Sir Walter Scott, in his introduction to the 1811 version of *The Castle of Otranto*, states that Walpole "had nourished the ambitious desire of composing a tale of chivalry, which was to be in the style of *The Castle of Otranto,* with plenty of [b]order characters and supernatural incident[s]" (328). Chivalry is written into *The Castle of Otranto* as a trope for future authors to include when they seek to dismantle masculinity and class structures. All male figures of *The Castle of Otranto* who are considered related to the noble lineage, whether they are faking or really connected to the Otranto line, are effeminate. In Walpole's text, different aristocratic men in the text are connected in varying degrees to transgressive sexual desire or effeminacy.

Burke's sublime in *The Castle of Otranto* establishes a pattern of heightened emotional state associated with sublime transport that will resurface in the writings of Godwin and Godwin Jr.. The "Burkean sublime" is defined by those feelings that are "derived from curiosity, pleasure, and pain [considering …] 'the roots of human activity' were 'passions' of these three elements, where 'curiosity stimulated the mind […] while pain and pleasure […] corresponded respectfully to self-preservation and society'" (Roth 56). During moments that evoke the sublime, Manfred's behaviour builds up an emotional climactic event which serves as a model for how later Romantic writers use erotic triangles to explore sexuality. If *The Castle of Otranto*

is the archetypal text for gothicism, and transgressive sexual relationships are available to those with tyrannical power, then the power to force situations of societally unconventional unions becomes a trope of the gothic genre. For example, when Manfred's future daughter-in-law Isabella is unable to marry Manfred's son Conrad, due to Conrad's sudden death the morning of his and Isabella's wedding, Manfred rationalizes that if he "cannot give … [Isabella his] son, [he will] offer [… Isabella to him]self" (Walpole 80). The conversation about the new union between Isabella and Manfred occurs almost immediately after the announcement of Conrad's death, and her initial response is of extreme shock: "Heavens! […] what do I hear? You! my Lord! You! My father-in-law! the father of Conrad! the husband of the virtuous and tender Hippolita" (80). The emphasis on questions to Manfred highlight the horror she has in the reality of this painful moment for her that he derives so much pleasure from. When Manfred is demanding Isabella be returned to him after her escape from his prison, Manfred demands that he is "her parent […] and demand[s] her" (103). Including and focusing on the transgressive sexual desires of Manfred in such heightened moments of the sublime overlaps sexual terror with heightened emotions. Manfred's insecurity with his unsuccessful masculinity through his effeminate son is noted by Fincher to be a main cause for his forceful approach to Isabella. Ultimately, Manfred maintains no genealogical line by the end of the text due to both of his children dying, and the importance of his lineage is undermined considering his status as Prince of Otranto is challenged and lost. In terms of marital technicalities, the union of Isabella and Manfred is legally sound in that she never actually became Manfred's daughter-in-law. However, the union becomes appalling given the ambivalence Manfred displays by hastily expressing his love for Isabella and forgetting about his mourning wife, all in the wake of his son's death.

Walpole establishes the tropes of the tyrant whose desperate attempts, in the form of madness, to secure his patrilineal inheritance expose the fragility of aristocratic masculinity.

Manfred murders his daughter in an uncontrollable fit of passion similar to that from when he attempts to secure his lineage with Isabella. When Manfred hears the voice of his daughter, Matilda, saying that "Manfred will never permit our union," Manfred mistakes it for Isabella, which is when Manfred "the tyrant, drawing his dagger, [… is found] plunging it over her shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke" (Walpole 78). The conflation of Matilda, his daughter, and Isabella, his almost-daughter-in-law, further solidifies the transgressive state of Manfred's sexual desire. In a passionate rage, with the intention of killing Isabella over jealousy in a love-triangle Manfred has created with Theodore, Manfred murders his daughter Matilda with a knife. Given his intentions to impregnate Isabella were unsuccessful, his closest means to satisfy his passions is to impale her with a knife—a phallic object—to release his excessive emotions. Manfred is in an uncontrollable state when murdering his daughter Matilda, especially considering Manfred is described as someone "whose spirits were inflamed […] from [… Isabella] urging his passion" (Walpole 156). It is only after having murdered Matilda in lieu of Isabella that Manfred is described as "awakening as from a trance" (Walpole 156). The emotions Manfred experiences overwhelm his ability to act rationally and reflects those of *la petite mort* and sublime transport when considering the lack of control he has over the erotic emotions he experiences that represent the sexual terror of the gothic. The focus on such an intimate death that relieves the emotional tension in gothic novels is also a topic worth revisiting in future gothic texts. If Manfred did not see the proposed perversity of engaging intimately with his daughter-in-law, he is now forced to consider the ramifications of the senseless emotions of passion misdirected to his own daughter. Strong emotions reflecting the sublime transport during

scenes of murder in *The Castle of Otranto* provide key insights into the mechanisms used to describe the release of sexual tension in gothic literature.

Manfred, who is presented to the audience as a powerful and commanding tyrant, is undermined in his efforts to secure the fair Isabella not only for his son—through his son's untimely death—but also for himself due to the keen defence of Theodore, who protects Isabella and usurps Manfred's role as ruler. There are also hints of the erotic triangle in the text which later authors would explore in more depth. Manfred, who searches for the escaped Isabella in the caves below his castle with the intense desire to bed her, is "astonished" when "instead of Isabella, the light of the torches discovered to him the young peasant whom he thought confined under the fatal helmet" (Walpole 85). Manfred is harbouring intense sexual emotions when he discovers a male figure: "Theodore is substituted into Isabella's position, so that the gaze of Manfred does not meet the object he anticipates [… .] The reversal of gender is portrayed as terror because it invokes the possibility of homoerotic attraction that cannot be articulated but only registered as 'astonishment'" (Fincher 239). Manfred's lust is misplaced, which masks the homoerotic anxiety Manfred holds over Theodore. This misplaced lust recalls the notions of Girardian mimetic desire, where the rivalry between two people who fight over the same person surpasses the emotions felt for the object of their desire. Furthermore, Theodore, whom Manfred blames for the death of his son, is imprisoned by Manfred under the fallen knight's enormous helmet. Fincher notes that "Manfred's son Conrad is destroyed by a masculine symbol, a military helmet" (237), which is the very object Manfred also found fitting to house Theodore, another effeminized character, who serves as a mimetic rival of Manfred. Effeminate male characters in *The Castle of Otranto* are consistently smothered by large masculine objects and, in one instance, at the direction of Manfred. This choice of prison for Theodore nods to the homoerotic anxieties

of Manfred. All men associated with aristocratic power in the text—between Conrad who is originally considered the heir to the throne, Manfred the false prince of Otranto, and Theodore the true prince of Otranto—are associated with some form of effeminacy and homoeroticism in varying degrees. The romanticization of chivalric stories that *The Castle of Otranto* depicts, as noted by the editor of the text, is developed through the effeminization of its characters associated with aristocracy.

Walpole is a key figure to consider as a precursor to Godwin's text in particular because of the way gothicism is connected to homosocial and, in some cases homosexual, topics. The insights of Fincher are integral to this reflection on Walpole's significant influence on future gothic writers. Fincher concludes that "Walpole's novel contains within it the seeds for later gothic fiction by both men and women, especially in its focus on a paranoid, misogynistic male tyrant and concealed identities that are reversed and exposed" (242). The greater significance of reading *The Castle of Otranto* is that "Walpole provides other writers, whose sexuality was more clearly visible, like Beckford and [Lord] Byron, an appropriate literary form in which to work out both private and cultural fears connected to homoerotic desire" (Fincher 242). The popularity of *The Castle of Otranto* and the establishment of gothic tropes and themes provides a space for transgressive sexual desire to be discussed by Romantic writers who could express their observations and interactions with diverse sexualities in a way their society would understand. Homoeroticism, the effeminate male, the erotic triangle, the sublime, and the uncanny double are but some of the gothic tropes that Walpole crafts for future authors to use in their texts.

## Chapter Two:
## Establishing Queer Gothicism: Godwin's *Caleb Williams*

In *Caleb Williams*, Godwin does not denounce the homosocial emotions depicted in his text, nor does he use homosexuality as a cause for persecution against aristocratic circles. Rather, Godwin's depictions of homosexuality caution readers to avoid falling for the irresistible charms of aristocracy. Homosexuality becomes a pertinent topic because if the individuals in power come from high-status families, and wealth is inherited based on gender and birth, then a majority of aristocrats at the time would be men whose status and privilege would allow them to do as they please, including evading laws. Though limitations on transgressive sexual desire were highlighted by Foucault to be specifically targeting the upper classes, the aristocratic class is showcased in *Caleb Williams* to have the means and power to evade the same persecution lower classes receive. Transgressive sexual desire, such as homoeroticism, is highlighted in Godwin's text as a display of how men of high-status use charisma to manipulate lower-status men. Ultimately, Godwin's use of homoerotic and homosocial relationships to expose aristocratic tyranny will be analysed in this chapter for how Godwin takes issue with the upper classes who are untouchable exploiters of all people in lower classes. *Caleb Williams,* after all, is a text Godwin creates to showcase—politically, structurally, and ideologically—things as they are at the time, as the subtitle "Things as They Are" suggests. Godwin's text *Caleb Williams* provides a glimpse into the ideologies that eighteenth-century authors begin considering regarding sexuality and the political landscape of the time through the utilization of gothic tropes that are established by Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto*.

Godwin's inclusion of sexual tension between men in his novel points out to readers what they should take away from the text as a whole: men are not immune from becoming infatuated by other men, and that the upper class has the advantage of being able to access transgressive

sexual desire without persecution. Caleb introduces his own narrative as a method to seem truthful but instead offers the possibility that he is not telling the full truth: "My story will, at least, appear to have that consistency which is seldom attendant but upon truth" (Godwin 59). Caleb does not specify that he is providing the exact truth; he instead leaves room for interpretation that he is altering the story in his favour by noting that his narrative will only appear to follow the truth for consistency. Truth and identity are integral to *Caleb Williams*, and "identification means dissolution" because "Caleb can bring an end not only to Falkland's position or even his life but also to the entire system of heteronormative culture, of which he has pretended to be a part" (Haggerty 69). Falkland's façade of fitting into heteronormative culture also protects his identity as a murderer, which is the secret that Caleb uses to hold power over him. The truth about Falkland's murder of Tyrrel is equated to the experience of someone being accused of transgressive sexual acts or desire. Key identifying traits of Walpole's establishment of the gothic genre are present in Godwin's *Caleb Williams* and are of merit to analyse, including the erotic triangle, the effeminate male aristocrat, sublime transport, and the gothic double. By examining the use of these literary techniques, this thesis proves how Godwin solidifies not only the tropes of the gothic genre but also Walpole's queer topics written into the subtext of eighteenth-century literature. It is the inclusion of transgressive sexual desire that allows for a close analysis of the homoeroticism in Godwin's text.

For the purpose of this analysis, erotic triangles will be analysed separately between Volume One and Volume Two of the text. This is because the relationships developed in Volume Two between Caleb and Falkland are the "real" relationships developing that Caleb—the narrator of the text—can recount as first-hand stories. Volume One, on the other hand, is primarily composed of second- or third-hand stories of relationships developed that hold the

potential to be fake or superimposed events from Caleb's own relationship with Falkland. Some erotic triangles from Volume One of the novel include the following relationships: Lady Lucretia, Falkland, and Count Malvesi; Tyrrel, Falkland, and Mr. Clare; and Tyrrel, Falkland, and Emily. In the first volume, Lady Lucretia, Emily, and Mr. Clare showcase emotions of admiration towards Falkland as opposed to the rivals of Count Malvesi and Tyrrel who initially only desire the attention of the objects of Lady Lucretia, Emily, and Mr. Clare. The rivals Malvesi and Tyrrel are deeply jealous of Falkland because of the affection he receives from those admirers, which leads to an intense rivalry between Falkland and Malvesi, as well as Falkland and Tyrrel. In Volume Two, an analysis of the relationships between Falkland and Caleb, as well as Falkland, Caleb, and Forester will solidify the Girardian patterns established in Volume One. These individual Girardian triangles demonstrate instances of sublime transport and highlight effeminate chivalric honour. Furthermore, considering that Volume One is highlighted to be a frame narrative written in Caleb's voice through Collins' storytelling, it becomes entirely possible for Caleb to project his hidden emotions and secret desires through the superimposition of Caleb's thoughts onto the characters of Collins' stories. Caleb, the narrator of the text, illustrates his unwritten desires of transgressive male relationships through his recounting of the stories of Lucretia, Emily, and Clare with Falkland in Volume One. These undertones can then be seen to reappear in Volume Two. Overall, a close analysis of Girardian triangles from within Volume One and Volume Two warrants examination to best understand the way homoerotic and homosocial relationships are written into Godwin's literature.

A consideration of biography is integral to understand his perspectives on homosocial and homoerotic relations. Burke, an opponent of and object of admiration for Godwin, is fixated on the deservedness of lineage from forefathers to their heirs as birthright. Homoeroticism or

homosexuality are directly opposed to the notion of passing on nobility and wealth through a bloodline. Burke's public connection, true or not, to "sodomitical" sympathy provides Godwin the perfect catalyst to include eroticized relationships between men in his text seeking to dismantle aristocratic hegemony. As for Godwin, Gold notes that there are no outright claims that "Godwin had any special interest in the exclusive sexual attraction of a man to another man" (145). Gold instead highlights that any person, regardless of gender, is under the influence and charm of aristocratic rulers in Godwin's polemical texts:

> biological sexuality does not assume any independent significance in [… Godwin's] work [… because] Godwin's philosophical essays argue that 'government' designates its chosen classes the proper objects of various sorts of love and then instils the emotions which confirm and perpetuate the unequal relations of superior and inferior, protector and protected, venerated and owned. (145)

Breaking down this statement, Gold notes that those in power instil emotions as a mechanism of control over the lower classes. In *Caleb Williams* it does not matter who is loving whom. However, it is a dangerous matter that the love developed from lower classes for upper classes can be exploited for political gain and class dominance. *Caleb Williams* showcases aristocratic lords manipulating the emotions and lives of those around them for their personal gain. Unequal power dynamics established in a relationship between two men represents the unequal power dynamics in the eighteenth-century English political system. The text *Caleb Williams* cleverly utilises sexual innuendos, Girardian triangulation, and parallelled characters to include transgressive relationships that dismantle the aristocratic hegemony as it was known in the late eighteenth century.

This chapter aims to highlight the sheer abundance of homoerotic relationships showcased in *Caleb Williams,* coupled with the realities of who can evade the law and who cannot. Aristocratic men like Falkland manipulate and infatuate other men with ease and without repercussion. However, when working-class Caleb learns about the patterns of manipulation and tries his own hand at charming Falkland, he is met with the hand of the law. Aristocratic men of the Romantic era are not only seducing the populace into adoring them—including both men and women—but are also above the law themselves and able to decide who should be prosecuted for what crime. Falkland is equivalently exempt from criminal discipline of murder or, as argued in this chapter, transgressive relationships in his god-like state. When Caleb attempts to live a similar life to Falkland by purposefully engaging in homoerotic or homosocial scenarios, he is framed for crimes he has not committed and forced into imprisonment and exile for Volume Three. Caleb is framed for false illicit activity whereas Falkland—who has actively committed crimes—lives freely. The aristocrat who acts however he likes, loves whomever he wants, and commits crimes at any time is to be feared. Those like Caleb, who seek to partake in the same lifestyles as elite members of society, are wrongly persecuted.

**1) From Walpole to Godwin: A Simultaneously Polemical and Homoerotic Biography**

The inspiration that Romantic authors draw from Walpole's origins of the gothic genre, through the genre's interaction with atypical sexual topics and its featuring of a tyrannical abuser, leads into Godwin's *Things as They Are; or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*. *Caleb Williams* was intended to "carry [Godwin's] political beliefs to a wider audience of readers—this time with 'a book of fictitious adventures'" (Handwerk 28). This note from the editor of *Caleb Williams* highlights that the text is rife with references to the political opinions of Godwin with hopes of engaging the reader's sense of reason. Caleb's employment under Falkland is to

"survey […] the plans of different authors and conjectural speculations upon hints they afforded, tending either to the detection of the errors, or the carrying forward of their discoveries" (Godwin 62). Similarly, the reader is expected to read between the lines of Godwin's writing to understand the pertinence of his political opinions.

Monika Fludernik considers if Godwin inserted his own homoerotic connection to a political rival as a method of dismantling class structure in *Caleb Williams.* Godwin draws attention to the charismatic language of his rival, Burke, who hides the true tyranny of his political opinions. Godwin's text suggests that aristocratic politicians can not only sway people in any way they want, but they can also do so from the safety of their aristocratic privilege. Fludernik contextualizes that there were "rumors about Edmund Burke's homosexuality" (858) because he was sympathetic towards men who were accused of sodomy being hastily put to death in the judicial system. Additionally, Fludernik notes that "Falkland is a close counterpart of Edmund Burke [because …] Godwin's infatuation with Burke […] was uncannily similar to Caleb's adoration of Falkland" (858-9). The allegations of Burke's sexuality were so well circulated at the time that Burke felt it necessary to "seek legal redress against the *Annual Register* for libelous allegations of sodomist sympathies" (Fludernik 859). Overall, not only were Burke and Godwin rivals, but critics consider there to be a relationship of homosocial connection between the two writers that, though likely only hypothetical, serves as an initial basis to consider homoeroticism in *Caleb Williams.*

For context on Burke's ideologies, Burke speaks to the state of man in England:

> Men […] have a right to the fruits of their industry and to the means of making their industry fruitful. They have a right to the acquisitions of their parents, to the nourishment and improvement of their offspring, to instruction in life, and to consolation in death.

> Whatever each man can separately do, without trespassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself; and he has a right to a fair portion of all which society, with all its combinations of skill and force, can do in his favor. (Burke, *Reflections* 50)

Burke appeals to the rights of man in a positive manner by highlighting that men who work with the "combinations of skill and forces" have a right to "a fair portion," that "the nourishment and improvement of their offspring" is guaranteed, and that he has "rights to the acquisitions of their parents" (50). From these statements, it would seem that those who can produce will succeed because they will receive what has been allotted to them in life. Burke's statement, however, enables the aristocratic class of Romantic-era England to the endless advantage of their lineage. Burke's words create a disparity between classes which fosters a false sense of hope in the idea that those with hard work and merit could, too, obtain the same luxuries afforded to those of aristocratic lineage, those who inherit wealth with little to no effort. Burke's stance on the ways of late eighteenth-century England provides context for the ideologies that Godwin seeks to dismantle. The aristocratic ideals Burke presents to his English audience, when coupled with the rumours of Burke's sympathy for sodomites, mirror the ideologies and depiction of Falkland in *Caleb Williams*. The similarities between Burke and Falkland serve as a key point of connection for Fludernik's comparison of Falkland and Caleb as uncanny representations of Burke and Godwin respectively. Regardless of their political disagreements, Fludernik provides the contextual reasoning for Godwin to develop the charismatic tyrant character of Falkland whose aristocratically sympathetic political stances become ideas for the hard-working Caleb to invalidate. Godwin uses *Caleb Williams* to draw attention to the irresistible charm of the aristocratic class that seduces those less fortunate into agreeing with and supporting those who

operate without the same restrictions of the lower classes, all while providing a basis of homosocial interaction worthy of exploration.

In writing Falkland with reference to Burke, Godwin exposes how privileged members of society can not only claim that they act benevolently but can also exploit inheritance laws and their exposure to higher education. The key terminology of "industry" (Burke, *Revolutions* 50), mentioned in Burke's political opinions, is utilised to describe a trait found favourable in Caleb when Collins "observed the particulars of [… Caleb's] progress with approbation, and made a favourable report to his master of [… Caleb's] industry and genius" (Godwin 60). When combined with the encouragement of Caleb to remove his connection to the possessions of his parents, this point highlights the class Caleb originates from is at the whim of people such as Falkland, and that the only individuals who are allowed to gain industry are those of the ruling class—who gain the industry of those people in classes below them. Alex Gold Jr. notes in "It's Only Love: The Politics of Passion in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*" (1977) how Godwin "argues that social equality is the natural condition of enlightened humanity" (137). Society would be in its greatest position if all humans had equal access and freedoms. Gold also notes that "In *Thoughts on Man*, Godwin identifies love as the inevitable antagonist of 'equity' and 'independence'" because love "cannot exist in its purest form and with a genuine ardour, where the parties are, and are felt by each other to be, on an equality" (Godwin qtd. by Gold 137). Godwin's ideology on these power imbalances is represented by Falkland, who considers Caleb as a being of industry. Falkland believes that it is his right to own Caleb and exploit the young man for profit because Caleb has been enticed into a state of adoration and dependence. This thesis is in agreement with Gold's statement that *Caleb Williams* "chronicles the effects of love as tragedies of political life" (137), this love being that which Caleb feels for Falkland. Overall,

the issues Godwin has with Romantic-era England, which reflect his rebuttal to Burke, are presented through the relationship of Caleb and Falkland, and understanding this reflected relationship is important to determine how readers of the time would have consumed this literature and been exposed to their homosocial relationship.

The connection between Godwin and Burke is known biographically, and the homosocial relationship between Falkland and Caleb has also been commented on by critics who have closely examined *Caleb Williams* as a text that highlights homoerotic scenes—thus providing strong foundation for analysing sexuality in Godwin's text. In John Rodden's "Godwin's *Caleb Williams*: 'A Half-Told and Mangled Tale'" (2009), he notes that "Caleb's narration of causally disconnected events and his deep-seated ambivalence toward his master-surrogate father Lord Falkland become understandable when viewed as a fundamentally narcissistic personality unconsciously engaged in a homosexual struggle with his omnipotent father" (120). Rodden reflects on the narcissistic personality traits of Caleb, who presents himself in the best possible image in comparison to his oppressor Falkland, and who utilises the framing narratives and the advantage of being the only voice of the text to muddle the truth about his innocence. Of Rodden's key points, he explains that "Caleb as narrator attributes or surmises thoughts and behaviour which he could not have learned even at a narrative distance of several years," and that "Collins's story [is] filtered through Caleb" (129) because "it contains [… Caleb's] most deeply repressed homosexual guilt feelings" (132). The insights of Rodden are psychoanalytical and rely largely on the use of Collins, who is Falkland's steward and closest companion before Caleb, to present Caleb as innocent throughout the portion of the text connected to Caleb, all while presenting the tale as it truly takes place through the actions of other characters. Gold agrees with Rodden's analysis and extrapolates further on the implications of Caleb's narration

that can provide evidence for suppressed queer emotions. Gold states that there are echoes from Volume One and two between the characters of Emily and Caleb, and that "psychological coherence of the relation between [Caleb and Emily] are reflected on as these verbal echoes and the structurally implied cause shows how accurately Godwin uses a rather daring emotional 'doubling'" (Gold 142). Gold's analysis contributes to the understanding that Caleb's narration provides opportunities to scrutinize the information that is revealed or withheld to discover subtextual messages. Gothic doubling, which is established in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, is a popular topic for critics who analyse Caleb's intentions and desires. Because the gothic double holds the potential to expose the true intentions of characters, this trope will prove important to revisit when thinking about homoerotic relationships in *Caleb Williams*. Rodden, a critic who considers the homosexual desires of Caleb, takes the perspective of anachronistically applying Freudian psychological ideologies to best analyse the actions of Caleb in Godwin's text, and lends credence to the investigation of hidden homosexual emotion between Caleb and Falkland through Walpole's established gothic trope of the double.

Rodden's keen examination of Caleb's unreliable narration—though he never explicitly uses that terminology—is integral to a consideration of the context of *Caleb Williams*. Godwin is keenly aware that the general population had their fate decided for them by the rich and powerful, which is something he was passionately against in his anarchistic writings. Recall that *Caleb Williams* was created as a text meant to summarise Godwin's political beliefs against the systems of power that oppress the greater populace, which Caleb represents. This begs the question: why would Caleb's guilt and personal issues of narcissism be the focus of a text meant to showcase the wrongs of the people Falkland represents? I argue, along with other critics, that the audience is meant to sympathize with and relate to the guilt that Caleb feels over

simultaneously admiring and admonishing the aristocratic Falkland. Likewise, readers are left aware of their own potential to fall for the irresistible gothic tyrant whose characteristics evoke sublime transport, which, as defined in the introduction of this thesis using definitions from Longinus and Burke, is an overwhelming force that evokes curiosity which emits both pleasure and pain. The aristocratic tyrant of Burke imposes guilt, with a charming disposition, onto the susceptible general populace of the Romantic era, which is weakened in their reason due to their attraction.

Caleb's status as a victim of oppressive aristocratic policies and ideals is made evident by the unreliable narration, which paints a nuanced picture of Caleb's situation and exploitation. Caleb immediately highlights in the text that his "fame, as well as [his] happiness, has become [Falkland's] victim" (Godwin 59). Caleb recognizes that he has "been a mark for the vigilance of tyranny" (Godwin 59) which has caused his life to be substantially altered. Rodden considers Caleb's self-proclamation as "victim" to be a mechanism for hiding his narcissistic tendency and overcoming his paternal figure by viewing "himself as a victim like" other oppressed characters in the text including "Emily and the Hawkinses" (Godwin 133). Rodden's view of Caleb as narcissistic is understandable, considering the text begins by likening Caleb's experience to those victims of Falkland who have been killed and imprisoned. However, Caleb's unorthodox actual victimhood is evident through his unreliable narration. Caleb arrives at the position of victimhood because he "attracted the favourable notice of Mr. Collins" due to—as Caleb notes—his own keen "industry and genius" (Godwin 60). These descriptions provided by Caleb are notably favourable to his image not because of narcissism, but because they obscure his homoerotic emotions which were manipulated and taken advantage of by Falkland. The truth

behind Caleb's victimhood becomes clear by the striking similarities with the victimization found in Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*.

Only months after Caleb has interested Falkland's steward, he is orphaned and ordered to go to Falkland's "mansion-house the morning after [… his] father's funeral" (61). Within a very short window of time, Caleb transcends from the lowly status of an orphan to an employee on the estate of Falkland due to his agreeable nature. Recalling *The Castle of Otranto*, it is in the wake of immense tragedy that aristocratic lords like Manfred seek to manipulate those like Isabella who are in a state of emotional shock. Manfred rushes into a proposal of marriage to Isabella and imprisons her in an attempt to fulfil his sexual needs and desires to maintain his lineage. With this method of tyrannical control in mind, Godwin presents Caleb as simultaneously elevated in a prestigious position of employment by Falkland and supposedly saved from the traumatic experience of being orphaned, all through the seemingly good-hearted actions of this aristocratic lord during a moment of extreme vulnerability. Caleb recounts having felt "highly flattered" by Falkland's notice, leading to Caleb's eagerness to "dispos[e] of the little property [his] father had left" him as he now has a "golden vision" (60) set on his new position with Falkland. The calculated behaviours of Falkland and Mr. Collins—who is the loyal companion of Falkland that knows his likes and dislikes the best—abduct the emotionally raw Caleb and force him into an enchanting lifestyle where he must depend on Falkland's continual approval. Markley highlights how impactful Falkland's manipulative tactics are on Caleb:

> Homoerotic language points to the fact that as the powerless entity in a conventional master-servant relationship, Caleb's own manhood is subjected to that of Falkland, a man whose notions of what it is to be a man, and more particularly a gentleman, derive from Medieval conventions of chivalry and honour. The fact that Godwin could so easily slip

> these two male characters into a plot line typically characterized by the aggression of a man towards a woman suggests a compelling parallel between the utter powerlessness of the lower classes and that of women. (Markley, "Gentleness" 16)

The political structure of aristocracy and its conventions of chivalry are intertwined with the effeminization of men in the text. The intention for this overlap is clearly to illustrate the unstoppable power of the ruling class at the time. Caleb, the representation of the innocent populace, is to be sympathized with due to the irresistible and manipulative charm of the aristocratic class.

The manipulation that the aristocratic class exerts over Caleb is characterized by the exploitation of vulnerable groups of people who can be attracted into servitude and adoration, thereby portraying Godwin's concern over the inequality that exists in love. Ultimately, those who can be made susceptible to the effects of the sublime tyrannical overlord are sought out in their moment of utmost vulnerability. Though Manfred is unsuccessful in his attempts to enact his sexually transgressive desire of incest with Isabella, Falkland provides an updated aristocratic method of luring the victim in through flattery and charm before the torture and punishment. Manfred, who commanded and demanded Isabella, starkly contrasts Falkland, who grooms and develops Caleb from a young age into an ideal and susceptible partner. Caleb is drawn in by Falkland's charm. He is a youth in a highly susceptible position, is given an immense amount of power and authority he has never had before, and is placed in a position where he must please his master, according to the story he narrates. Notably, other servants "saw but little of their master [, and …] None of them, except [… Caleb] and Mr. Collins, from the antiquity of his service and the respectableness of his character, approached Mr. Falkland, but at stated seasons and for a very short interval" (Godwin 63). Caleb, after a brief period of Falkland's employment, quickly

acquires a place of honour amongst Falkland's staff to the calibre of the esteemed Collins. Though Rodden would consider this story to reflect Caleb's narcissistic desire for his audience to view him favourably, Caleb is also describing how he came to be flattered, infatuated into adoration, and put in a position that is ideal for Falkland to exploit. Only three months into his employment, Caleb transcends from being a stranger to knowing one of Falkland's most well-kept secrets—the murder of Tyrrel. Considering Caleb defines his "spring of action which, perhaps more than any other, characterized the whole train of [his] life, [as being his] curiosity" (62), and that his mannerisms were heavily scrutinized in his adoption to Falkland's house, it would be a difficult argument to state that Falkland was not aware of Caleb's curious nature. Therefore, it is plausible that Falkland expects Caleb to discover his secret and to fall further into his control, at a point in time where Caleb has already become enamoured by Falkland. As noted by Haggarty, "Caleb's 'act of insanity' [of wanting to expose Falkland's secret] is made to feel like an act of personal, physical violation because the secret that Falkland hides can only be personal and physical" (113). Caleb's curiosity will be analysed at great length to understand if there is merit to comparing his curiosity to sexual tension. It will be found that when Falkland wants to exert power over others and incite homoerotic or transgressive desire, he accesses this power freely due to his stature in society. Despite learning about how Falkland manipulates situations to incite intense desire for him, when Caleb attracts intense interest from Falkland through the same technique, Caleb is persecuted and imprisoned. Though both male characters seek to attain the same relationships, Falkland can freely access any relationship he desires, while Caleb is limited by his class.

With a strong understanding of the critical and historical background of Godwin, there are a few key subjects that point towards the importance of exploring the queer implications of

his text. Godwin's desire to dismantle the adoration for the upper class, which is maintained by the polemical writings of Burke, provides him just cause to write a book like *Caleb Williams* that reflects his political and personal beliefs. A key feature of the text is the clear parallels between the first and second volumes. Their similarities are a topic highlighted by multiple critics. Overall, reading *Caleb Williams* with the context of pre-established queer gothic literary tropes assists in understanding the extent to which relationships are discussed in the text and grasp the language of sexuality in the Romantic era.

**2) Chivalric Emasculation Enabling Burkean Homoeroticism: Falkland, Lucretia, and Malvesi**

A quick reference to Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793), published before *Caleb Williams*, offers insight into why chivalry is used to expose the ugly reality of aristocratic society:

> There was once indeed a gallant kind of virtue that, by irresistibly seizing the senses, seemed to communicate extensively, to young men of birth, the mixed and equivocal accomplishments of chivalry[.] But, since the subjects of moral emulation have been turned from personal prowess to the energies of intellect, and especially since the field of that emulation has been more widely opened to the species, the lists have been almost uniformly occupied by those whose narrow circumstances have goaded them to ambition, or whose undebauched habits and situation in life have rescued them from the poison of flattery and effeminate indulgence. (Godwin, *Political Justice* 8)

Godwin, in this complicated quotation, highlights the shift in how chivalry is practiced in English society. Chivalry, before Godwin's time, had focused on men's personal power and heroic deeds based on codes of conduct intended to emphasize bravery and traditional ideologies of masculinity. However, the shift in society towards intelligence as a powerful structure allowed any man of noble status or education to declare themselves chivalric without actually needing to

follow any codes of honour or be a hero. Godwin's interpretation on the ease of access to chivalric status is related to the ease of accessing this traditionally revered status in society without the typical tribulations that accompany the title. Effeminacy and seeking flattery have become the main characteristics of those who claim the title of "chivalric," which is opposite to the original intention. *Political Justice* was written and publicized before *Caleb Williams*. The potential of *Caleb Williams* to be a fictionalization of Godwin's polemical text adds merit to the analysis of Godwin's earlier text. Though Godwin does not explain if he values the original form of chivalry, he does highlight how the term has developed into a manipulative mechanism to elevate status. The very principles the chivalric manhood, once held exclusively by those who behaved honourably, became distorted and widely accessible to those who generally had status in society to deem themselves chivalric.

The bravery and ambition that once defined chivalry is highlighted by Godwin to now be accessible to those weaker and cowardly members of society that have access to noble status and who use chivalry to flatter themselves. Godwin also addresses debauchery, or sexual pleasure, as related to the downfall of chivalry, and as an example of the lack of honour by those who pretend to be chivalric. Without needing gallant behaviour and codes of conduct to guide their actions, the self-defined chivalric aristocrats are accepting flattery and focused on performing chivalry instead of acting honourably. The honour that once defined a man as proper and distinguished has been exaggerated to the point that the concept of chivalry is only used for show and decoration which, at the time, was associated with effeminacy. Godwin's literature connects men who access chivalry to the dainty and sentimental characteristics of femininity. Therefore, chivalric aristocrats hold the unique capacity for men to embody female gendered traits in a

similar manner to the way that female husbands had the unique ability to access male gendered traits.

The Girardian triangle of Malvesi, Falkland, and Lucretia is the first case of mimetic desire in *Caleb Williams* that showcases how chivalric aristocracy evokes effeminate masculinity. Malvesi declares Lucretia as an object of desire by saying "he was stung even to madness by the idea of being deprived of the object dearest to his heart" (Godwin 70). Not only does Malvesi, the mediator of the mimetic desire, declare Lucretia as the object of his desire, which is the wording Girard uses to describe the person who connects the subject and the mediator, but he is driven to madness from the jealousy produced when observing Falkland's closeness to Lucretia. Falkland, the subject, consistently does not reciprocate emotions for women who direct their interest at him, considering Falkland's "feelings were not those of a lover" (Godwin 71) for Lady Lucretia when the two are spending long periods of time together. Falkland is the subject of the mimetic desire because his actions point towards intentionally aggravating Malvesi, the mediator. It is clear in Collins' story that Malvesi was anxious about Lucretia's constant and many "admirers whose addresses were a source of gratification to his mistress" (Godwin 69). Malvesi was known to have a "perpetual uneasiness to him[self]" (Godwin 69) when considering the attention Lucretia received from her many suitors. Falkland knows about how his friend Malvesi feels about Lucretia's suitors because it is emphasized in Collins' recounting of this entanglement. Despite this fact, Falkland becomes extremely close to Lucretia to the point that "Mr. Falkland [was] established almost as an inmate of the Pisani palace" (Godwin 70) regardless of his supposed disinterest in Lucretia. Falkland spends a considerable amount of time with Lucretia because she saw him as an opportunity to become more "acquainted with the English language" (Godwin 70), and "this proposal [of an academic

connection …] led to a more frequent intercourse" (Godwin 70) of conversation between Lucretia and Falkland. The actions Falkland takes in becoming close to Lucretia reflects the same relationship described by her other suitors and establishes the first instance of Girardian desire in *Caleb Williams*.

Collins claims that Falkland maintains a professional relationship with Lucretia with no ulterior intentions despite her objective appearance of being "tall, of a dignified form, and uncommonly beautiful" (Godwin 69). Falkland's apparent disinterest in Lucretia is not believed by Malvesi, however, leading to his heightened emotional state towards Falkland. Significantly, this confusion of Malvesi does highlight the compulsion to assume heterosexuality at the time. Collins recollects how Malvesi "was jealous of the English cavalier" (Godwin 69) because Malvesi "was […] secretly conscious that the qualifications of the Englishman were superior to his own [… and he] believed that the match was in every respect such as to flatter the ambition of Mr. Falkland" (Godwin 70). Malvesi, who is described as obsessively jealous of Falkland, reflects on the qualities of Falkland that make him a perfect match for his object of desire. Furthermore, saying the union between Falkland and Lady Lucretia would serve to flatter Falkland's goals is very specifically worded to mean there is some ulterior gain Falkland has from this union. Arguably, a union between Falkland and a woman would always be insincere because it only serves the greater purpose of inciting the interest of that woman's male love interest. The love triangle between Malvesi, Falkland, and Lucretia is described using diction to connote that the establishment of mimetic desire is intentional by Falkland and is fully realized by the mediator Malvesi—who is manipulated into flattering Falkland as superior.

Despite Falkland's claimed disinterest in the love triangle, by becoming intimately acquainted with Lucretia, Falkland evokes Malvesi's intense emotions. When considering this

evocation within the context of mimetic desire, Falkland is intentionally inciting the emotions of Malvesi to be projected onto himself. Malvesi, upon considering the prospects of losing his object of desire to a man he considers better than himself, is influenced to act irrationally in the presence of Falkland. Malvesi "traversed the room with perturbed steps, and even foamed with anguish and fury" (Godwin 71) when he reflects on Falkland's actions and "would not listen to a word that tended to check the impetuosity of his thoughts" (Godwin 71), leading Malvesi to challenge Falkland to a duel over Lucretia. Malvesi acts with impulsive behaviours accompanied by uncontrollable visceral secretion, by foaming from the mouth, when challenging Falkland, which recalls the helpless, awe-struck, and sensual nature of those experiencing sublime transport. Only after Malvesi's spirit was broken and he begged for Falkland's forgiveness did Falkland admit to his own improper behaviour with Lucretia:

> Though your suspicion was groundless, it was not absurd. We have been trifling too much in the face of danger. I ought not, under the present weakness of our nature and forms of society, to have been so assiduous in my attendance upon this enchanting woman. It would have been little wonder, if, having so many opportunities, and playing the preceptor with her as I have done, I had been entangled before I was aware, and harboured a wish which I might not afterwards have had courage to subdue. I owed you an atonement for this imprudence. (Godwin 72-73)

Falkland acknowledges not only the closeness he had developed with Lucretia but also her beauty and the weakness of the human spirit that could have caused him to form a strong relationship with her. Falkland does not connote anything about the weakness of women but, instead, the weakness of men like Malvesi and himself, who are aristocratic. In this instance, Falkland nods to the failures attributed to the culture of aristocratic men in society of that time.

Falkland is not only aware of Malvesi's jealousy over Lucretia's suitors but also admits to his perseverance and interest in spending time with Lucretia despite this knowledge. When reviewing this scene within the scope of mimetic desire, Falkland has set up the very situation to cause Malvesi's emotions to become uncontrollably heightened towards him. With Falkland's admission of guilt in causing Malvesi's heightened emotional state, the audience now knows Falkland has been manipulating Malvesi's emotions to incite an obsession with him.

Falkland's closeness with Lucretia fosters the intense jealousy of Malvesi that develops to the point of chivalric duels, which is essentially a threat of murder. Malvesi challenges Falkland to a duel in the heat of his emotions, which provides Falkland the position of authority he seeks to have over other men. The story about this Girardian triangle told by Collins concludes very favourably for Falkland. Falkland establishes himself as the superior aristocrat, thus satisfying his superiority complex, by stirring intense emotions of inferiority, envy, and desire from a man of nobility. Falkland claims his actions are chivalric when stating to Malvesi he would honour a duel if others were aware of it: "the laws of honour are in the utmost degree rigid[, …] and there was reason to fear that, however anxious I were to be your friend, I might be obliged to be your murderer" (Godwin 73). Falkland's reason for potentially being Malvesi's murderer is that "if the challenge [of a duel] had been public, […] though desirous to have avoided the combat, it would not have been in [… his] power" (Godwin 73). Falkland feels the need to explain to Malvesi that he only upholds chivalry, or how society would expect an honourable aristocratic man to respond, in a public setting. The softness of his temper only exists in private. Falkland's honour and chivalry are performative, reflecting the very traits of noble birth that Godwin dismantles in *Political Justice*. Godwin highlights how chivalry no longer stands for bravery but instead represents those who lack courage and indulge in effeminate

actions and flattery. These qualities can be directly observed in Falkland's dealings with Malvesi and Lucretia. Falkland's understanding of following the codes of honour connected to chivalric behaviour are perverted. Falkland's honour only exists for the public, and his only care for honour is that others see him to be honourable.

Falkland's understanding of what chivalry means provides insight into Godwin's criticism of aristocratic birthright and culture. Falkland's opinions on chivalry were instilled in him from "the favourite authors of his early years [who] were the heroic poets of Italy" that "imbibed the love of chivalry and romance" (Godwin 67) in him. Falkland's opinion on what composed of the acts of chivalry were entirely devised by picking and choosing the features he preferred from honourable heroes, given "he conceived that there was in the manners depicted by these celebrated poets something to imitate, as well as something to avoid" (67). The mention of Italian poets as a source of his ideologies of chivalry recalls the notion that any identity other than that of English could be conflated with sodomical behaviours. Falkland's chivalric actions are founded by the idea that "that nothing was so well calculated to make men delicate, gallant, and humane, as a temper perpetually alive to the sentiments of birth and honour" (Godwin 67). Falkland describes those properly, in his opinion, practicing chivalry as fragile, fashionable, and associated to the human temperaments that, when imbalanced, represent emotional extremes. The human tempers being lively indicates an imbalance of an individual's emotional state, as expressed by Malvesi when he is "drunk with choler" (Godwin 72) during a fit of rage induced by Falkland. Chivalry is a code of conduct meant to inwardly improve those practicing it, yet Falkland's embodiment of chivalry is one that is effeminate and seeks flattery from other men, as is seen from the homosocial emotions experienced between Malvesi and Falkland.

Additional to his perversion of chivalry, Falkland only admits to his own faults when he has succeeded in his manipulation of his rivals. Falkland seems to have made Malvesi admire him to a greater degree than he admires Lucretia when Malvesi "threw himself upon his knees" and "stammered out his" apologies, stating "he could never pardon himself for the sacrilege he had committed against [… Lucretia] and the god-like Englishman" (Godwin 72). Falkland evokes intense emotions of awe in Malvesi, replicating the qualities of sublime transport. By pursuing an intentionally close relationship with Lucretia, Falkland forces Malvesi to beg him for mercy and elevate himself to a divine status. The threat of murder combined with the awe-inspiring manipulation by Falkland establishes a pattern of interconnecting threats of murder with sublime transport, which recalls the sexual innuendos of *la petite mort.* Falkland not only recognizes the patterns of Malvesi's uneasiness when Lucretia is being courted, but he then replicates them to stir Malvesi's emotions to a point of sublime transport and potential death. Falkland's actions create a Girardian triangle where the relationship between the subject and the mediator is stronger than that of either man with the female object. In this situation, the inclusion of visceral sublime transport in Malvesi represents the transfer of his physical desire to Falkland from Lucretia. Altogether, chivalry, the root of Falkland's honour system, justifies Falkland's actions to contrive this complicated intense emotional interaction with Malvesi and Lucretia. Therefore, the development of erotic relationships within the Girardian triangle is intensified by the way Falkland perverts the concept of chivalric honour through effeminate aristocratic men and how he excites sublime transport. Falkland evokes subtextual erotic action through blood-boiling, near-death situations and sublime transport between men, which initiates the consideration of a homoerotic and homosocial reading of Godwin's text. The chivalric ideas that are being perverted in Godwin's time are a key point of anxiety for him. He includes homoerotic

undertones that subvert traditional aristocratic ideals of birthright to develop his theories of the danger of obsessing over those who hold power in society. Though Godwin may not exactly support earlier forms of chivalry, it is the fact that the aristocratic classes can use the power associated with chivalric deeds to manipulate others that Godwin intends to undermine.

**3) Erotic Sublime Transport and the Relief of Homoerotic Sexual Tension: Clare, Falkland, and Tyrrel**

Though mimetic desire typically manifests with asymmetrical gender composition, *Caleb Williams* features a few all-male Girardian triangles. Within Volume One, an all-male Girardian triangle manifests between Mr. Clare, Falkland, and Tyrrel. The Clare-Falkland-Tyrrel Girardian triangle follows the pattern that Falkland, the subject, develops a relationship with Clare, the object of Tyrrel's desire, to intensify his rivalry with Tyrrel, who is the mediator of the mimetic desire. Through the mimetic object of Clare, the intense rivalry between Tyrrel and Falkland is deepened. From Collins' story, the reader learns that "from the moment of Mr. Falkland's arrival in the neighbourhood, Mr. Clare distinguished [… Falkland] in the most flattering manner" because "to so penetrating a genius there was no need for long experience and patient observation to discover the merits and defects of any character that presented itself" (Godwin 83). The diction utilised to describe Clare's judgement of character is twofold: not only does this statement establish that Clare figuratively develops a deep understanding of character quickly, but the word "penetrating" connotes a physical connection to that examination of character. The word "penetrating" evokes phallic imagery. Though this terminology is not explicitly erotic in this scene, a penetrative genius is identifiably male and connects Clare's evaluation of other men to a phallocentric masculine gaze. Tyrrel, falling within the mimetic pattern, becomes obsessively jealous of Clare and Falkland's immediate interconnectedness considering that "to Mr. Tyrrel's diseased imagination, every distinction bestowed upon [… Falkland] seemed to be

expressly intended as an insult to him" (Godwin 83). Falkland and Clare quickly develop an intimate bond, and Tyrrel witnesses every minor event between the two as, with his obsession-developed imagination, contrived with the intention of upsetting him. The Girardian triangle establishes the rivalry between Falkland and Tyrrel, leading to his perverted perception of his neighbour Falkland. Furthermore, the verbiage used to describe the connection between Falkland and Clare leaves subtextual clues to the homosocial undertone to these relationships.

The relationship between Clare, Tyrrel, and Falkland showcases a favoured representation of Falkland's character, once again, during the development of the Girardian triangle and provides evocative descriptions of sublime transport. The first real altercation between Falkland and Tyrrel over Clare is during Clare's reading of Falkland's poetry. Falkland's poem, "An Ode to the Genius of Chivalry," intends to teach the public Falkland's conception of chivalry and is read to a local audience by Clare. The effect of Clare's spoken language is evident on the audience because "pictures conjured up by the creative fancy of the poet were placed full to view, at one time overwhelming the soul with superstitious awe, and at another transporting it with luxuriant beauty" (Godwin 85). Clare's reading evokes sublime transport in the audience, heightening them to a sense of climactic awe and elevated emotion. Notably, Tyrrel is not excluded from the general audience's heightened response to the poetry—although his responses will differ from the rest. After the reading, the audience of the poem in *Caleb Williams* is in an uncontrolled state of awe, which recalls the connotations towards climax that are evident in both sublime transport and *la petite mort*: "Their sensations were of a sort to which they were little accustomed. One spoke, and another followed by a sort of uncontrollable impulse; and the rude and broken manner of their commendations rendered them the more singular and remarkable" (Godwin 85). As expected in literature of the Romantic era, sexual

tension is not explicitly written out but is instead integrated into the subtext of literary devices such as sublime transport. The fact that Clare's reading so intimately captures the intention of Falkland's words showcases an intense and physical interaction between their two geniuses.

Clare's intimate reading of Falkland's words not only evokes sublime transport to all that hear it but also incites Tyrrel's extreme envy. Of all members present, Tyrrel showcases the most violent response to the poem given he "seemed ready to burst with gall and indignation" (Godwin 85). The diction of viscerally bursting in response to sublime transport, combined with Tyrrel's subsequent irrational behaviour, adds the connotation of sexual innuendo to the reading of Falkland's words by Clare. Tyrrel's desire to engage with Falkland's content is irresistible because of Falkland's intimate connection to Clare, who is Tyrrel's object of desire. Even though Tyrrel "appeared to wish to withdraw himself, […] there seemed to be some unknown power that, as it were by enchantment, retained him in his place, and made him consent to drink to the dregs the bitter potion which envy had prepared for him" (Godwin 84). This unexplainable power is the very desire that Falkland has been seeding in Tyrrel through his intimate interactions with Clare. Within the framework of mimetic desire, the diction used to describe the power Falkland has over Tyrrel includes mystical terminology such as "enchantment" and an "unknown power," and the removal of consent to engage with Falkland's actions. Tyrrel's discomfort of experiencing this intense emotion in a group setting alludes to the intimacy of the feeling he is experiencing. Whereas others present in this scene are overwhelmed in awe and praise of Falkland, Tyrrel is instead overpowered by a burst of uncomfortable and jealous emotions he wants to handle in a private manner. Altogether, though everyone is moved to awe in this scenario, only Tyrrel is moved to sexually charged awe directed at Falkland. Overall, within the framework of mimetic desire that eroticizes jealousy between the subject and the

mediator, the emotional control Falkland holds over Tyrrel is clearly described in this moment of sublime transport, highlighting the mimetic connection between these two rivals.

Those present at Clare's reading of Falkland's work had their souls overwhelmed with sublime awe. However, Falkland's poem on its own would not have been able to evoke the same emotion. Falkland's writing—without Clare's reading—is described as "impetuous, and […] solemn" (Godwin 85). Tyrrel's feeling of envy towards Falkland represents the difference in how chivalry was engaged with by the brutish versus the new and intellectual nobility. By questioning Falkland's writing, Tyrrel questions Falkland's verse that offers an interpretation of chivalry. Tyrrel, in his anger, raises an impulsive point about Falkland's poem: "do you think he would write poetry if he could do any thing better?" (Godwin 85). Falkland's poem represents the notions of chivalry that he embodies. Falkland's opinions on chivalry are well received by those around them with flattery and praise despite Tyrrel's clear distaste. Tyrrel's anger towards Falkland's portrayal of chivalry is exacerbated by Falkland's enchantment of Tyrrel's mimetic object of Clare. Clare enhancing Falkland's plain poem through his speech that excites and discomforts Tyrrel is represented in the same way that Malvesi becomes jealous over Falkland and Lucretia's closeness. The merging of intellects is made akin to the closeness of lovers, meaning the combination of Falkland's writing and Clare's voice is interpreted as a homoerotic public display of affection. The importance of Tyrrel's dismantling of Falkland's writing highlights the undeserving adoration of aristocratic men like Falkland in English society of the time from Godwin's perspective.

Tyrrel's climactic response to Falkland's poetry results in Falkland extending a peace offering. However, this olive branch reveals Falkland's perverted chivalric ideals, which brings

into question the reality of his intentions. As if inspired by his previous conflict with Malvesi, Falkland expresses to Tyrrel the need for them to even their differences:

> We are upon the brink of a whirlpool which, if once it get[s] hold of us, will render all further deliberation impotent. An unfortunate jealousy seems to have insinuated itself between us, which I would willingly remove; and I come to ask your assistance. We are both of us nice of temper; we are both apt to kindle, and warm of resentment. Precaution in this stage can be dishonourable to neither; the time may come when we shall wish we had employed it, and find it too late. […] A strife between persons with our peculiarities and our weaknesses, includes consequences that I shudder to think of. I fear, sir, that it is pregnant with death at least to one of us, and with misfortune and remorse to the survivor. (Godwin 87-8)

Falkland's wording in this speech to Tyrrel is familiar from Falkland's encounters with Malvesi. Falkland addresses the jealousy that has arisen in this Girardian triangle with Clare, and he is requesting his male rival to calm down before it is too late. Despite no clear challenge or duel being established by Tyrrel officially, Falkland hints that murder is a solution to this conflict if Tyrrel cannot bow to Falkland like Malvesi had done previously. This speech of Falkland only serves to insult Tyrrel with Falkland's perverted concept of honour and nobility. By saying standing down at this point is the only time to do so with honour, Falkland has called Tyrrel jealous, weak, and threatened his death, all while claiming that Falkland is acting within the expectations of chivalric action. Falkland specifically worries about the "brink of a whirlpool which […] will render all further deliberation impotent" (Godwin 87). Analysing this diction includes sexual innuendo that the uncontrollable emotions that would make them powerless would similarly result in the termination of their ongoing sexual tension. Furthermore, the

diction of "pregnant with death" when referring to the strife between the two men recalls Kavanaugh's finding that that when molly houses were written into literature in the early eighteenth century, mock births served as coded language for sexual penetration (88). This reference conflating pregnancy and death could similarly be connoting the sexual nature of this issue between the two of them. Falkland acknowledges that both Tyrrel and himself have "peculiarities" and "weaknesses" which, when considering the sexual tension in this scene and the result of "shuddering," holds the potential to refer to their desire for transgressive sexual intercourse. Falkland's threats were not something Tyrrel was prepared to respond to, and Falkland's attempt to catch him off guard succeeds in heightening the emotions in the rivalry between the two over Clare even further while alluding to the sexual tension between the two.

Effeminate aristocracy is a feature of this mimetic triangle, given the repetition of Falkland's perverted sense of chivalry that he uses to bring his rivals to a heightened emotional state of sublime transport. Caleb, who is narrating and synthesizing Collins' story, boldly states that Falkland's "interview was prompted by the noblest sentiments; but it unquestionably served to widen the breach it was intended to heal" (Godwin 90). Falkland has utilised the same strategies of mimetic desire to cause men, such as Malvesi, to obsess over him. Tyrrel, however, wishes to instead ignore the ways of Falkland and reflects the sentiments of old chivalry in comparison to new nobility: "is a new artifice of the fellow, to prove his imagined superiority. We knew well enough that he had the gift of the gab. To be sure, if the world were to be governed by words, he would be in the right box" (Godwin 90). Tyrrel mimics the words of Godwin in *Political Inquiry* that birthright and knowledge enable anyone to declare themselves as chivalric simply because of their ability to attain enough education to dupe the masses with words.

By gaining the adoration of Clare, and by aggravating Tyrrel with his hollow words, Falkland has succeeded in becoming a point of obsession for Tyrrel. Tyrrel, in awe of his powerlessness to Falkland's control over him, exclaims the true feelings Falkland evokes in him:

> "This Falkland haunts me like a demon. I cannot wake but I think of him. I cannot sleep but I see him. He poisons all my pleasures. I should be glad to see him torn with tenter-hooks, and to grind his heart-strings with my teeth. I shall know no joy till I see him ruined. There may be some things right about him; but he is my perpetual torment. The thought of him hangs like a dead weight upon my heart, and I have a right to shake it off. Does he think I will feel all that I endure for nothing?" (Godwin 90)

Tyrrel has become obsessed to the point that he is constantly thinking of Falkland. Awake or asleep, Tyrrel is forever thinking about Falkland causing him to imagine extremely intimate scenarios between the two of them, such as consuming Falkland's vital organs while tearing him apart. Tyrrel's intense verbiage from sublime transport culminates into a tension satiated by images of physical violence and, by examining the graphic mutilation of Falkland with *la petite mort,* sexual gratification.

The diction utilised by Tyrrel during his fit of sublime transport consistently evokes sexual innuendo. During Tyrrel's fit of rage that culminates to a climactic moment, Tyrrel emphasizes that he "shall know no joy till [he…] see[s Falkland] ruined" (Godwin 90). The ruination of an individual can be in relation to their chastity, which is a valid definition for the term in *Caleb Williams* because it is utilised during a scene involving rape in the text, when Emily realizes she is about to be raped by Grimes outside of wedlock: "Mr. Grimes, think what you are about! You cannot be base enough to ruin a poor creature who has put herself under your protection!" (Godwin 127). Given "ruin" is, in *Caleb Wiliams,* a valid term for forcing the sex on

someone, the connotation of Tyrrel's obsession with Falkland extends to his obsessive imagination including the image of his rival during nonconsensual sexual intimacy. Finally, the thought of Falkland being connected to dead weight that hangs on Tyrrel's heart draws in *la petite mort* to this moment of sublime transport. To be dead weight is to be a heavy, unconscious mass. If sexual release and death are interconnected through *la petite mort*, then Tyrrel is imagining Falkland's post-climactic body weighing on his own. The conclusion Tyrrel draws from these intense interactions with Falkland is that he "avoided his encounter; he forbore to treat him with random hostility; he seemed to lie in wait for his victim, and to collect his venom for a mortal assault" (Godwin 90). Collecting his venom for an assault includes diction and symbolism that further evokes sexual innuendo. Snakes, as elongated creatures known to inject venom into their prey, are connected to phallic imagery. Tyrrel prepares himself for a physical encounter with Falkland as a predator and their prey using unmistakably phallocentric diction, which hints towards the sexual tension between the two. Tyrrel, whose brute physicality represents the traditional sense of chivalry, is dominated by Falkland's effeminacy—as defined by Godwin—that represents new aristocratic chivalry. Ultimately, sublime transport—or the evocation of extreme emotions of awe that transcends those who experience it beyond their physical body—is heavily connected to sexual innuendo and *la petite mort*. The interconnectedness of these three concepts is prevalent when reviewing the consistent patterns between Girardian triangles developed in *Caleb Williams*. Sublime transport and *la petite mort* are tools used to discuss sexual tension between characters and Godwin establishes them as gothic tropes to provide outlets for the taboo topic of sex and homoeroticism in literature of the time.

**4) Sexual Acts Hidden through the Gothic Double: Falkland, Tyrrel, Emily/Caleb**

The relationship between Tyrrel, Emily, and Falkland falls into the same pattern as the Girardian triangle between Malvesi, Lucretia and Falkland. However, the purpose of Emily's mimetic triangle shows how Caleb's frame narrative of Volume One is a projection of his own desires through gothic doubling. To begin, an in-depth analysis of Emily, Tyrrel, and Falkland is required. Tyrrel perceives Falkland as a suitor to Emily—who is Tyrrel's object of platonic desire and adoration as a younger adopted sibling—and his rivalry with Falkland is heightened to the utmost degree over her affection. Despite Emily and Tyrrel's closeness, Tyrrel's obsession with Falkland causes both Tyrrel and Emily's death. The formation of Emily's desire for Falkland is prefaced by Collins' detailed examination of her unlucky situation: "A circumstance occurred about this time which gave peculiar strength to the acrimony of Mr. Tyrrel, and ultimately brought to its close the felicity that Miss Melville, in spite of the frowns of fortune, had hitherto enjoyed" (Godwin 101). Breaking down this quotation, Emily's happiness is forced to a stop because of Tyrrel's bitterness growing from the circumstances of her entanglement with Falkland. Emily's obsession with Falkland extends so far that she "was transported when [… Falkland] was present [, as] he was the perpetual subject of her reveries and her dreams; but his image excited no sentiment in her mind beyond that of the immediate pleasure that she took in his idea" (Godwin 102). The diction of "transported" references directly to the sublime transport she experiences. Her existence is entirely encompassed by the thought of Falkland who evokes a sense of awe in her regularly. However, it is made clear that Emily only likes the idea of Falkland, not his physical presence that is the reality of his character. This particular note on her adoration of Falkland reflects Godwin's concern with how aristocracy is concerned with how the populace imagines them, not how they are in actuality. Overall, the object-subject connection of

Emily's interest in Falkland points towards the establishment of mimetic desire all while recalling the similar themes of effeminate aristocratic foppery.

Falkland's influence to entice Emily is more directly stated than in the other two mimetic triangles of Volume One. The superficial enchantment Falkland imposes on Emily is planted in her mind due to his subtle enticements. Falkland influences and encourages the adoration of Emily through underhanded tactics:

> The notice Mr. Falkland bestowed on her in return, appeared sufficiently encouraging to a mind so full of prepossession as that of Emily. There was a particular complacency in his looks when directed towards her. He had said in a company, of which one of the persons present repeated his remarks to Miss Melville, that she appeared to him amiable and interesting; that he felt for her unprovided and destitute situation; and that he should have been glad to be more particular in his attention to her, had he not been apprehensive of doing her a prejudice in the suspicious mind of Mr. Tyrrel. (Godwin 102)

Falkland, in this Girardian triangle, recognizes the admiration Emily bestows upon him and plays into her "deluded imagination" (102). When Falkland looks at Emily, his emotions are complacent. His smug reaction to her gawking emphasizes domineering response to her adoration. He leaves rumours for her to trail where he notes his secret favouring of her, his pitying of her connection to Tyrrel, and Emily is thus solidified as the object of mimetic desire. By responding so directly to the adoration of Emily and enabling her desire, the mimetic triangle is established where the subject has formally acknowledged the desired object of the mediator and fosters the jealousy to heighten the relationship between the mediator and the subject. Once again, the Girardian triangle guides the interpretation of events, where Falkland manipulates

Tyrrel's emotions to direct towards Falkland rather than towards Emily, satisfying his desire for Tyrrel's homosocial attention.

This final Girardian triangle of Volume One culminates in the highest form of climax, where Falkland this time is brought to murder Tyrrel because he publicly challenges Falkland. Recall the interaction Falkland had with Malvesi. A duel would only be required if the interaction between them was public. After being beaten senseless by Tyrrel in a public setting, Falkland is described to be in a state where "Horror, detestation, revenge, inexpressible longings to shake off the evil, and a persuasion that in this case all effort was powerless, filled his soul even to bursting" (Godwin 165). In this moment of sublime transport, given the reference to his powerlessness and bursting soul, Tyrrel is announced as dead by murder, which—with context from Falkland's confession to Caleb post-fire scene—was Falkland's doing:

> Insulted, disgraced, polluted in the face of hundreds, I was capable of any act of desperation. I watched my opportunity, followed Mr. Tyrrel from the rooms, seized a sharp-pointed knife that fell in my way, came behind him, and stabbed him to the heart. My gigantic oppressor rolled at my feet. (Godwin 214)

Despite Falkland's initial declaration of murder as the most noble response to a duel, Falkland's inspiration for murdering Tyrrel is not noble, and the fight is the furthest thing from a chivalric duel. Falkland acts in violence against Tyrrel not in honour of a damsel or any noble cause but instead because he feels he had been publicly shamed for being beaten up by Tyrrel in front of others. Additionally, by choosing to stab Tyrrel in the back instead of instigating an honourable duel, not only does the intimate death by knifing to the back insinuate sexual intercourse—particularly sodomy—but it also does not provide Tyrrel with the honour of fighting back. The sublime transport Falkland is experiencing before this scene that "filled his soul even to

bursting" (165) recalls the connection between soul and reproductive substances highlighted by Sha. The soul is brought to a point of bursting right before stabbing recalls Aristotle's *pneuma* that seminal fluid is interconnected to the soul and therefore implicates a sexual act. The tension between Falkland and Tyrrel's feud builds even after both objects of shared mimetic desire are dead. Falkland, with his perverted sense of chivalric codes and his sexual tension for Tyrrel, are at the forefront of his final interaction with the latter.

Falkland is presented as harbouring intense emotions towards Tyrrel that hold the potential for a homosexual interpretation. However, the details of Volume One are relayed by Caleb, as told in a story by Collins, as emanating—at times—from Falkland's or other civilians' perspectives or rumours. It is important, at this point in this thesis, to move away from the heavy focus of Girardian desire and to instead focus on the in-depth analysis of Caleb, whose desires and actions are revealed in the gothic double of Emily. Emily serves the purpose of demonstrating Caleb's intense desires for Falkland that he is unable to articulate personally. Caleb's interpretations and emotions are first-hand and the only perspective he truly can represent, so the fact that there are hints that his narrative is hidden within Volume One requires a detailed examination of Emily's character. The number of times that information is synthesized by a different member involved in the first volume brings extreme doubt to the miniscule details that Caleb provides. Some examples of emotions described in detail that would be difficult to know without being present include Emily's intimate thoughts about Falkland, the truth about Falkland and Lucretia's closeness, or the emotions present in the room when Clare reads Falkland's poem.

The intense detail provided by Caleb's writing about inner emotions provides credence to the act of gothic doubling. Gothic doubling, as defined earlier in this thesis, can be enacted in

multiple ways—however, for the purpose of this analysis, the double reveals the true intentions and desired actions of the original. The characters of Emily and Caleb have very similar backgrounds, including being orphaned and meeting Falkland at a young age, giving initial cause to consider Emily a double of Caleb. Emily's thoughts, written by Caleb, but told to Caleb by Collins, are described as being that when she first saw Falkland: "she was exactly seventeen [… and,] at this age […] she was particularly susceptible of the charms of beauty, grace, and moral excellence" (Godwin 101). Similar to Emily, "Mr. Falkland visited [… Caleb's] estate [… when he] was then eighteen years of age" (Godwin 60), which would have been the first time Caleb laid eyes on Falkland when he, too, was in a very susceptible state. The close connection between Caleb and Emily requires further examination to determine just how intertwined the two characters are.

Caleb's narration tends to favor the descriptions of men over women. For example, Caleb consistently provides flattering descriptions of Falkland, which is in opposition to how Caleb describes women throughout the text as either being repulsive or unnoteworthy. Caleb categorizes those things he finds beautiful in men such as the mechanisms of extreme genius, refined taste, and romanticized frailty that are the gems of aristocracy. Caleb poetically describes the men he meets in extreme physical and mental details. For example, when Caleb was young and impressionable, Caleb describes Falkland by focusing on his "small stature," his "extreme delicacy of form and appearance," his "countenance [which] seemed to be in an inconceivable degree pregnant with meaning," and his "eye [that was] full of animation" (Godwin 60). The features that Caleb highlights are not—on their own—flattering, yet Caleb presents them in an extremely elegant and romantic way. The believed physical and mental attributes of men are highly regarded, which would parallel how female characters are typically sentimentalized for

their appearance. For example, when Emily is described in the text, the repulsive nature of her appearance is highlighted. Emily is someone who was "far from being entitled to the appellation of a beauty," her "person was petite and trivial," her "complexion savoured of the brunette; and her face was marked with the small-pox" (Godwin 99). Caleb uses extreme diction to describe Emily's appearance as compared to Falkland, despite never having seen the woman himself. Beautiful women, like Lady Lucretia, are not described in detail and, instead, their appearances are glossed over as simply conventionally beautiful. Caleb's fixation on the male appearance is one of the many queer aspects of the text that he narrates.

Caleb frequently includes specific detail from Emily's perspective which, in reality, is very close to his own when he met Falkland. Caleb includes the information that "she considered [Falkland] as the ravishing condescension of a superior nature; for, if she did not recollect with sufficient assiduity his gifts of fortune, she was, on the other hand, filled with reverence for his unrivalled accomplishments" (Godwin 102). This quotation developed from the perspective of Emily is puzzling because it presents information about the opinions that Emily held of Falkland's character despite the narrator, Caleb, having no knowledge of the inner machinations of her mind. For Caleb to have known her opinions, he would have had to have the information synthesized to him from Falkland or Collins. Collins would only know the story as an observer, so this is a detail unknown to Collins and, therefore, likely an inclusion of Caleb's own experience of having met Falkland. Caleb also neglects to include that he, too, is emotionally susceptible when recruited by Falkland. Caleb provides an insight into the truths he is hiding about his own character through the story of Emily. Emily's story is a projection of Caleb's true experiences and, therefore, a form of gothic doubling. Emily's actions and emotions as described

in Volume One reflect so closely those of Caleb that she appears as an integral character to review to understand his true hidden desires and actions.

In “Godwin’s *Caleb Williams*: “A Half-Told and Mangled Tale” (2009), John Rodden highlights the suspicious nature of all the stories told by Caleb. Rodden questions the reality of Volume One, that Caleb so specifically claims is told by Collins:

> Caleb knows unconsciously that he has manipulated content if not form. He must have Collins report and accept full responsibility for Volume One because it contains his most deeply repressed homosexual guilt feelings. But it indeed is the volume most disguised and distorted by secondary revision. Caleb takes Collins’s telling of events and in his composition constructs a series of remarkable unconscious identifications which confirm his latent homosexuality. (Rodden 133)

Rodden’s claim arises from the sheer absurdity of the contents of Volume One: the details Caleb provides from third parties, the convenient story plots, and the number of repeated events from Volume One into his own experiences with Falkland in volumes Two and Three. Rodden claims that Caleb’s homosexual desires are hidden in the details of Volume One, providing further credence to analysing these volumes in tandem with each other. When considering Emily’s story as a gothic double to showcase the true events of Caleb’s life from his perspective, a homoerotic encounter between Falkland and Caleb is explicitly written into *Caleb Williams*. Rodden notes the similarity of Caleb and Emily who both “experience [… their] most intense encounter with Falkland in a fire” (Rodden 133). Both fire scenes occur in the sixth chapter of the volume they reside in, as if Godwin wished to highlight the interconnectedness of these scenes and characters through bibliographic hints. This thesis considers that the interconnectedness between Emily and Caleb sheds light on the sensual interactions occurring between Falkland and Caleb. Caleb

projects his sense of extreme vulnerability into Collins' story of Emily to provide more context for the sexual innuendos Godwin has left for his audience.

Blending the two stories from parts one and two provides the full perspective of Caleb's experiences with Falkland. Beginning with the story of Caleb and Falkland, Falkland initially walks in on Caleb in a compromised position. Falkland's greatest secret is under threat in an intimate scene with Caleb:

> I was in the act of lifting up the lid [of the trunk], when Mr. Falkland entered, wild, breathless, distracted in his looks! […] At the moment of his appearance the lid dropped down from my hand. He no sooner saw me than his eyes emitted sparks of rage. He ran with eagerness to a brace of loaded pistols which hung in the room, and, seizing one, presented it to my head. I saw his design, and sprang to avoid it; but, with the same rapidity with which he had formed his resolution, he changed it, and instantly went to the window, and flung the pistol into the court below. He bade me begone with his usual irresistible energy and, overcome as I was already by the horror of the detection, I eagerly complied. (Godwin 210)

Caleb has opened the trunk whose contents include the incriminating evidence of Falkland's implications in murder. Interestingly, the close-ranged loaded pistol holds the potential to be considered as a phallic object. Like a knife, the pistol represents virility, power, and similarly connotes penetration from a phallic-shaped instrument that—when pointed directly at Caleb—implies death. In this exchange, Caleb is overpowered by the verbiage and actions of Falkland and is left speechless. The state of awe in response to Falkland's action showcases sublime transport which is combined with the threat of death from an object that holds potential phallic imagery in a scene evoking *la petite mort*. The intimate details concerning Caleb and Falkland

are key to consider when comparing the interactions of Emily and Falkland in the fire scene of Volume One:

> awaked from her sleep […] and, becoming sensible of her danger, she had that instant wrapped a loose gown round her. Such is the almost irresistible result of feminine habits; but, having done this, she examined the surrounding objects with the wildness of despair. Mr. Falkland entered the chamber. She flew into his arms with the rapidity of lightning. She embraced and clung to him, with an impulse that did not wait to consult the dictates of her understanding. Her emotions were indescribable. In a few short moments she had lived an age in love. In two minutes Mr. Falkland was again in the street with his lovely, half-naked burthen in his arms. Having restored her to her affectionate protector, snatched from the immediate grasp of death, from which, if he had not, none would have delivered her, he returned to his former task. (Godwin 105)

The diction and phraseology closely connect Emily's encounter to Caleb's. Emily's body, which serves as a projection of Caleb's body, is the compromised entity in this scene. Partially naked, Emily embraces Falkland and is enamoured by his actions in the private and heated encounter. Emily leaves this encounter harbouring intense emotions of love for Falkland, whom she sees as her saviour. Rodden parallels the two scenes for in their intimacy, the actions involved, and the characters present.

Between the two separate fire scenes, repetition of diction is a key highlight of the gothic doubling, and sexual innuendos are present. The repeated words of "irresistible," "wildness" or "wild," "rapidity," "entered," and "undescribable" or "indescribable" (Godwin 105, 210) not only further parallel the two, but also paint a picture on their own: consider the rapidity of the encounters, the irresistible energy of Falkland, the wildness of the situation as a whole, Falkland

entering into an intimate situation where a vulnerable person is compromised, and the indescribable, sublime transport both Emily and Caleb respectively experience from their encounter with Falkland. If the two scenes are blurred together, the combination of the embrace, a man's pistol pointed at a youth, the emotions of love, and the near-death experience are all sexual innuendos that heighten the intensity of the fire scene. Gothic doubling is evident from the repeated diction and actions of Caleb and Emily. Through gothic doubling, as highlighted by Rodden, homosexual intentions and desires of Caleb for Falkland can be extrapolated.

The writings of Godwin post-publication of the text provide key insights into the interconnectedness of Emily and Caleb. Significantly, when Emily approaches death she is in a delirious state, wherein she pronounces Falkland as her husband: "She asked, where they had hid her Falkland, her lord, her life, her husband! and demanded that they should restore to her his mangled corpse, that she might embrace him with her dying arms, breathe her last upon his lips, and be buried in the same grave" (Godwin 154). The diction of Emily as Falkland's wife, and her intense sensual desires for him in her last parting thoughts, is particularly interesting when reviewing Godwin's own reflections of writing this narrative:

> Falkland was my Bluebeard, who had perpetrated atrocious crimes, which, if discovered, he might expect to have all the world roused to revenge against him. Caleb Williams was the wife who, in spite of warning, persisted in his attempts to discover the forbidden secret and, when he had succeeded, struggled as fruitlessly to escape the consequences, as the wife of Bluebeard in washing the key of the ensanguined chamber, who, as often as she cleared the stain of blood from the one side, found it showing itself with frightful distinctness on the other. (Godwin 449)

The only character in *Caleb Williams* to consider Falkland their husband is Emily. However, Caleb takes on that role of Falkland's curious and unfortunate wife from the perspective of the author of this narrative. After the fire scene, both Emily and Caleb hit a point in their relationship with their oppressors where their fates are sealed. For Emily, her fate is sealed because of her inability to stop obsessing over Falkland, considering Emily had "never seen so much of Mr. Falkland upon any former occasion; and the spectacle of such humanity, delicacy, firmness, and justice in the form of man, as he crowded into this small space, was altogether new to her, and in the highest degree fascinating" (Godwin 105). Caleb's fate is also sealed post-fire scene because Falkland exposes the entire truth of his altercation with Tyrrel and, as a result, also exposes more of himself to Caleb than ever before. Caleb claims that despite "the shock […] that [… his] suspicions were true, [… he] still discovered new cause of admiration for [… his] master" (Godwin 216). These two characters, after having been exposed to the full capacity of Falkland, maintain their awe-struck state at the magnanimity of his character. Emily, therefore, is the perfect gothic double for Caleb who—by society's standards—could not officially take the status of wife as officially as Godwin writes him in to be the wife to Falkland's Bluebeard persona. Altogether, the doubling of Caleb's personality and actions onto Emily's character is integral to the consideration of how transgressive sexual interests are written into Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.

**5) Solidifying the Queer Gothic while Dismantling Aristocracy: Caleb & Falkland**

Caleb replicates the patterns of Falkland from Collins' various recounting of Falkland's stories by evoking strong emotional responses out of his object of admiration and mediator Falkland. Falkland, post murder of Tyrrel, has a decidedly split personality. Caleb initially introduces Falkland as "compassionate and considerate for others," but he then notes that "his

disposition was extremely unequal" because he possessed a "distemper which afflicted him with incessant gloom" (Godwin 63). With these dueling personalities—like Walpole's Manfred as the archetypal gothic tyrant whose mood swings waver from evil to good—Caleb can be seen to exist in a mimetic triangle with both emotional states of Falkland. By Caleb making the object of his desire the kinder personality of Falkland, he makes a rival out of Falkland's evil persona.

Caleb's mimetic triangle relationship with Falkland is examined in one of his many attempts to expose the reality of Falkland's murder, wherein Caleb relates the history of Alexander the Great and Clitus to tantalize Falkland. Caleb baits Falkland into a heightened emotion by posing the questions: "how came Alexander of Macedon to be surnamed the Great?" (Godwin 183). When Falkland wonders how Caleb could question Alexander's greatness, Caleb responds by noting people "differ about the merits of Alexander," critics say Alexander "deserves only to be called the Great Cut-throat," and learned people attest "he and all other conquerors ought to be classed with Jonathan Wild" (Godwin 183). In response to these accusations, Falkland is taken aback and claims that "Alexander [is] a model of honour, generosity, and disinterestedness,—a man who, for the cultivated liberality of his mind, and the unparalleled grandeur of his projects, must stand alone the spectacle and admiration of all ages of the world" (Godwin 184). Falkland clearly sees himself in likeness with Alexander when Caleb highlights the murderous nature of Alexander. This likeness with Alexander, interestingly, is in spite of Falkland basing his chivalric ideals off Italian poetry, and not Grecian. Falkland, despite not being a figure who would personally know Alexander, defends him as a fellow conqueror or ruler and begins to utilise language that would best describe himself, such as that Alexander was "much misunderstood," that he intended to "civilize mankind," that Alexander "formed to himself a sublime image of excellence, and his only ambition was to realise it in his own story"

(Godwin 184). Much like Alexander, Falkland finds himself a representation of honour and generosity, he claims to be misunderstood when his rivals and adversaries are hostile to him, and he believes that he is just in all things he does—even including his murder of Tyrrel. Falkland finds excuses for Alexander's murders that further incriminate his ideologies: "The death of a hundred thousand men is at first sight very shocking; but what in reality are a hundred thousand such men, more than a hundred thousand sheep?" (Godwin 184). Murder, when it has a cause and purpose, is explained away by Falkland as a normal act of a conqueror. Furthermore, the likeness of lower-class men to sheep showcases the expendability that Falkland attributes to those he sees as beneath him, which serves as a mark of his class distinction. Falkland's judgement is skewed, as showcased clearly through his discussion with Caleb about Alexander the Great, and perverted to be in alignment with whomever is in power and of authority.

Falkland's sympathy for Alexander has multifaceted implications considering the historically homosexual background of Alexander the Great. Quintus Curtius Rufus, a historian from the first century, wrote *Histories of Alexander the Great,* which existed in the historical canon for the popular interpretations of Alexander the Great's life. Editor J. E. Quintus and other contributors reflect on the works of Rufus and agree on the historic reality that "the Macedonia of the age of Philip and Alexander accepted bisexualism as the norm [… a]nd in the Macedonian model, status mattered more than age [… ,] meaning Alexander's relationship with [the man] Hephaestion would have seemed reasonably natural to a Macedonian" (Quintus et al. 96). To historians reviewing the same classic texts that Godwin would have access to, homosexuality is plainly and unproblematically connected to the figure of Alexander the Great.

Caleb excites Falkland so intensely with the figure of Alexander the Great that their exposition reaches a point of sublime transport. Caleb excites Falkland's evil persona: "You will

not pretend to justify the excesses of [Alexander's] ungovernable passion. It is impossible, sure, that a word can be said for a man whom a momentary provocation can hurry into the commission of murders" (Godwin 186). Caleb, here, is clearly nodding to the unruly passions of Falkland that led to his murder of Tyrrel, and Falkland's emotional response is intense and heated:

> The instant I had uttered these words, I felt what it was that I had done. There was a magnetical sympathy between me and my patron, so that their effect was not sooner produced upon him, than my own mind reproached me with the inhumanity of the allusion. Our confusion was mutual. The blood forsook at once the transparent complexion of Mr. Falkland, and then rushed back again with rapidity and fierceness. I dared not utter a word, lest I should commit a new error, worse than that into which I had just fallen. After a short, but severe, struggle to continue the conversation, Mr. Falkland began with trepidation, but afterwards became calmer. (Godwin 186)

Falkland and Caleb take a moment of silence to calm the intense emotions that Caleb caused by toying with the topic of Falkland's secret. Caleb highlights the multitude of emotions the two interconnectedly feel—as if drawn together like magnets—including an intense sympathy for the other and a mutually confused state. Falkland has a sudden rush of blood to the head, as his complexion flushes in his flustered state as he experiences a multitude of emotions. However, given that Caleb's narration highlights Falkland's trepidation, it seems that Caleb in this moment has secured the upper hand he desired in this conversation. Despite Caleb deliberately baiting Falkland with this topic of conversation, he feels intense sympathy towards his master for the intense emotions he has caused him. The confusing nature of Caleb's actions highlights how Caleb simultaneously wants to expose Falkland's secret while gaining his affection.

Falkland's polarized gothic double, or evil side, exhibits clear signs of sublime transport because of Caleb's inciting remarks, indicating that Caleb has learned to mirror Falkland's tactics of manipulation through mimetic desire. Caleb refers to Clitus, the man murdered for standing up to Alexander, by asking, "Clitus […] was a man of very coarse and provoking manners, was he not?" (Godwin 187). Caleb parallels not only Alexander to Falkland but Tyrrel to Clitus. His intention, with this question, was to discern Falkland's opinions on Tyrrel and if he was deserving of death. Falkland's reaction falls closely in line with the intensity of sublime transport and *la petite mort*:

> Mr. Falkland felt the full force of this appeal. He gave me a penetrating look, as if he would see my very soul. His eyes were then in an instant withdrawn. I could perceive him seized with a convulsive shuddering which, though strongly counteracted, and therefore scarcely visible, had I know not what of terrible in it. He left his employment, strode about the room in anger, his visage gradually assumed an expression as of supernatural barbarity, he quitted the apartment abruptly, and flung the door with a violence that seemed to shake the house. (Godwin 187)

Falkland falls to the habits of his evil persona when entering a fit of rage towards Caleb. The diction of Falkland's look penetrating Caleb's soul evokes sexual innuendo for a multitude of reasons, including the diction of penetrating as phallic, the sexual release and the soul—especially when considering the interconnectedness of the soul to semen in Sha's *Perverse Romanticism*—, all while considering the context that this eruption of sublime transport culminates at the end of a reference of Falkland being compared to a historically gay figure. Seizing, convulsing, shuddering, a look of barbarity, shaking the house, and exiting in a flurry are all similarly connected to *la petite mort* as it reflects the uncontrollable emotions related to

climaxing. The sublime transport Caleb can foster within Falkland while discussing figures from antiquity classically known for homosexual relations heightens the reality that the two foster homoerotic, or even homosexual, emotions for each other. Caleb has learned from Falkland's manipulation through mimetic desire how to replicate the aristocrat's tactics in order to learn more of Falkland's secrets and to use them to redirect desire to himself.

Caleb and Falkland have a multitude of exchanges in moments of heightened emotion that are worth reviewing for the intense verbiage related to sublime transport and *la petite mort*. When Falkland finally reveals the truth about his murdering of Tyrrel to Caleb, Falkland immediately expresses his anxiety that Caleb will leave his service over learning Falkland is a murderer: "You want to leave me, do you? Who told you that I wished to part with you? But you cannot bear to live with such a miserable wretch as I am! You are not disposed to put up with the caprices of a man so dissatisfied and unjust!" (Godwin 196). Falkland, at this time, shows anxiety over losing the acquaintance of Caleb. Caleb, counter to what Falkland is expecting, passionately responds to his oppressor with a submissive declaration offering his own life:

> Do with me any thing you will. Kill me if you please […] I could die to serve you! I love you more than I can express. I worship you as a being of a superior nature. I am foolish, raw, inexperience,—worse than any of these;—but never did a thought of disloyalty to your service enter into my heart. (196)

Caleb expresses his full emotions of adoration, which have been fostered for the aristocratic lord, in extreme detail. Caleb intertwines the concepts of love and death, given he puts his own life at the mercy of Falkland in this scene of heightened emotions. Caleb experiences "astonishment" and "rapture" for having "become of so much importance to the happiness of one of the most enlightened and accomplished men in England" that made him feel he should "never prove

unworthy of so generous a protector" (Godwin 197). Moments after having the reality of Falkland's crime revealed to him, Caleb doubles-down as a faithful servant of the corrupt aristocratic Falkland. The clear image of how dangerous the charismatic attraction of the aristocratic class can have on normal people is highlighted in this scene of heightened emotion by emphasizing the sexual implications of their bond.

Caleb also establishes his own mimetic triangle between himself, Falkland, and Forester, Falkland's half-brother, after Falkland's revelation of murder. For example, when reflecting on his relationship with Forester, Caleb notes that Forester was "wholly incapable of that sweet and liquid eloquence of the soul [of talking], which would perhaps have stood the fairest chance of seducing Mr. Falkland for a moment to forget his anguish" (Godwin 220-1), thereby demonstrating his knowledge of Falkland's emotions and motivations. Godwin seems to allude to sexual intimacy between Forester and Caleb through the key diction he uses to define their relationship. When describing the way Forester speaks, Caleb highlights that Forester did not have the ability to "seduce" Falkland, as is needed to converse with him and alleviate the strain in the relationship between the two brothers. The specific verbiage of "seduce" brings to light that Caleb believes that, when he himself is speaking to Falkland, his language is seductive to Falkland's sensibilities. Given Falkland and Forester are struggling to relate to each other, Caleb highlights why Forester not only turns to him as a source of entertainment but also how they develop an intimate relationship:

> In this situation [… Forester] cast his eyes upon me. It was his principle to do every thing that his thoughts suggested, without caring for the forms of the world. He saw no reason why a peasant, with certain advantages of education and opportunity, might not be as eligible a companion as a lord; at the same time that he was deeply impressed with the

> venerableness of old institutions. Reduced as he was to a kind of last resort, he found me better qualified for his purpose than any other of Mr. Falkland's household. (Godwin 221-2)

Forester, from Caleb's perspective, sees Caleb as someone who could equally entertain him as can a lord. Caleb considers that Forester, though knowledgeable about how the world is constructed from a class-conscious perspective, could see Caleb as an intelligent person whose opinions were worth considering. Forester, then, despite not initially wishing to connect with Caleb, finds merit in such a lowly person to converse with.

Though Caleb believes he is of equal power to Falkland to manipulate him into a Girardian triangle, he is proven to be as weak and dependent on Falkland, his master, as ever. Caleb learns about how he can further bait Falkland into a raged fit of passion towards him when Caleb realises "it was not agreeable to [… Falkland] that there should be much intercourse between" Caleb and Forester (Godwin 222). With Forester as a new point of connection to Falkland, Caleb immediately fosters a close relationship with Falkland's brother, given "[t]he first overtures of intimacy between [… Caleb] and Mr. Forester probably gave birth to sentiments of jealousy in the mind of [Falkland]" (233). Significantly, Caleb uses the particular diction of "intimacy" and "intercourse" to describe his budding relationship with Forester, further nodding to the potentiality of a sexual nature to their connection. Caleb witnesses Falkland manipulating others into adoration, and Caleb desires to access the affection Falkland receives by manipulating Falkland himself into loving him. The mechanism required to seduce men into relationships is established by Falkland, though it is not a form of receiving affection that is accessible to all members of society as Caleb quickly learns.

Caleb is able to realize the powerful position he has been put in through his close, and possibly sensual, relationship with Forester. Caleb realizes the true reality of his situation when he sees that he "was what Mr. Forester wanted" (Godwin 222). With this exclamation, Caleb has become the subject of mimetic desire, with Forester as the object, and Falkland as the mediator. This unique situation poses Falkland as the jealous mediator of mimetic desire, wherein Caleb is intentionally creating a situation in which Falkland will develop intense emotions towards him. While "every day rendered [… Forester and Caleb's] intercourse more intimate and cordial" (222), Falkland's emotions reach a heightened state towards Caleb. During this time, Falkland provides a "warning," just as he did for Tyrrel, that Caleb "little suspect[s] the extent of [… Falkland's] power" (225). Falkland overemphasises the powerlessness of Caleb in this mimetic triangle. However, Falkland's inability to resist the jealousy Caleb is inciting in him exposes the true strength of Caleb's actions. Falkland, though, reminds Caleb of his sublime power by comparing Caleb's inability to escape Falkland's wrath with escaping from "the power of the omnipresent God" (225). Falkland, knowing his own true strength, recalls the imagery of the sublime by connecting himself to a god-like figure. Overall, Caleb tests his freedom by freely utilising the charismatic techniques of the aristocratic class to gain sway over and manipulate those around him. However, Falkland warns Caleb that only members of the aristocratic class can act with such freedom.

Though Falkland believes he stops the relationship developing between Forester and Caleb, a supposedly happenstantial incidence reacquainting them incurs the wrath of Falkland. Caleb, after "Mr. Forester had left [… the estate for] about three weeks" (Godwin 227), claims he accidentally found himself at Forester's house. Forester wonders why Caleb has been so

upset, and—though Caleb considers exposing Falkland's secret—Caleb realizes the reality of his situation as submissive to the wants and desires of Falkland:

> I entertained the deepest reverence for my patron; I admired his abilities, and considered him as formed for the benefit of his species. I should in my own opinion be the vilest of miscreants, if I uttered a whisper to his disadvantage. But this did not avail: I was not fit for him; perhaps I was not good enough for him; at all events, I must be perpetually miserable so long as I continued to live with him. (Godwin 228-229)

Caleb, in his attempt to not expose his master's murder, decides to provide a tale of unrequited admiration. Though Caleb shows nothing but respect for Falkland, Falkland—in this candid reflection—does not see Caleb the same way. Caleb's statement to Forester, intended to cover his tracks for wanting to leave Falkland for his crimes, reveal a deeper anxiety that his admiration for Falkland is unrequited. The unequal adoration higher-class members of society attain, despite no difference in true merit, is a key highlight of homoerotic, and potentially homosexual, relationships featured in *Caleb Williams*.

Caleb showcases endless adoration and respect for Falkland, even after all the tribulations his master had placed him under. In the final trial to save his life, Caleb comments that he "loved" Falkland because "[f]rom the first moment … [he] saw him, … [he] conceived the most ardent admiration" (Godwin 428). Even after all the torture he has endured, Caleb in the end regrets not having instead opened his "heart to Mr. Falkland" earlier before his trial because he feels confident that, when talking to Falkland privately, Falkland "could not have resisted [… Caleb's] reasonable demand" (431). Caleb consistently provides Falkland with a fair and just representation, even after the endless tortures he endures during Volume Three. Recalling Falkland's chivalric code of needing to act when publicly challenged, Caleb reflects on the

impact his words potentially hold over Falkland. Caleb is so intimately connected to his master by the end of the novel that he knows the multitude of ways to enchant and persuade him. Caleb's and Falkland's characters are intimately woven and, no matter the situation Falkland could find himself in with Caleb, Caleb consistently showcases sympathy for his master. Ultimately, the relationship between Caleb and Falkland is riddled with complications and contradictions to showcase the extreme ease with which aristocratic lords can manipulate the good opinions of the common man. When the common man, Caleb, attempts to replicate the power dynamics that aristocrats have access to, they are met with imprisonment and oppression. Caleb's reflections, at the end of the text, include the key phrase that Falkland "imbibedst the poison of chivalry with [… his] earliest youth," resulting in the "base and low-minded envy" that "operated with this poison to hurry thee into madness" (434). Falkland's perverted conception of chivalry is determined by Caleb as influencing the powerful men in his life into an intense rivalry that resulted in emotions of love. These emotions of adoration are the most difficult to destroy, which is evident from Caleb's undying dedication to maintain Falkland's secret. Also, this ability to incite male-male intimacy is most easily accessed by aristocratic figures and is met with persecution when Caleb, who is of lower class, attempts to replicate the relationship patterns. Caleb establishes the mimetic triangle, considering that Forester develops a detestation of Falkland, and Falkland becomes interested in Caleb. However, Caleb does not have the social status to maintain this relationship and is accused of crimes and imprisoned when his ploys are revealed. In total, the inability for Caleb to access homosocial relationships in the same way as Falkland reflects the accessibility of transgressive sexual desire to only those of high status.

Ultimately, chivalry enables the effeminization of men, which—as a result of the gender dynamics of the Romantic era—allows for male-to-male relationships. These male-to-male

relationships develop through the intentional manipulation of men, like Falkland and eventually Caleb, who create mimetic triangles with two other parties. However, instigating desire from another man is proven in the text to only be accessible to people of high social status. Altogether, Godwin develops relationships within *Caleb Williams* to, as close as he can, write in male-male relationships. This chapter analysed how aristocracy was understood during the time and how powerful aristocratic lords are in their ability to persuade and evoke sentiments of adoration from others in them. The inclusion of male homoeroticism that hints towards the possibility of a homosexual relationships in *Caleb Williams* is highly important to consider as twenty-first century readers because of the sheer abundance of representation combined with the important messages intended to dismantle powers of structures that limit access of certain relationships to the masses.

## Chapter Three:
## Innovating Queer Gothicism: Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion*

Godwin leaves a significant mark on the Romantic era with the solidification of the literary devices of mimetic desire, sublime transport (or *la petite mort)*, and effeminate aristocracy in gothic literature. Serving as a repetition of Godwin's established tropes, Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion* innovates on the inclusion of mimetic desire as a mechanism to include diverse sexuality in gothic literature. Though Godwin and Godwin Jr. are not the only gothic writers who engage with transgressive sexual desire, Godwin Jr.'s direct influence from Godwin's texts and the publication assistance by his father means the two author's works can be analysed in conjunction with each other. The unique quality of these authors' connections offers interesting opportunities for cross-examination. By examining Godwin Jr.'s *The Orphans of Unwalden, or, the Soul's Transfusion* closely, many of the recognizable features of Godwin's literature exist to incorporate transgressive sexual desire, including effeminate nobility, mimetic desire, the gothic double, and sublime transport. However, Godwin Jr. takes these tropes from Godwin one step further and incorporates the movement of the soul from a male to a female body as an attempt to satisfy the tension of mimetic desire. Furthermore, in scenes where gender is blurred, progressive language connoting the importance of gender equality is used, providing a means to consider Godwin Jr. as an advocate for the progressive teachings of those in his immediate circle. This interesting extrapolation of Godwin Jr. highlights how new ideas about gender and sexual desire are developed in the Romantic era and particularly in gothic literature.

With Godwin Jr.'s progressive ideologies in mind, such as his consideration that the soul can be transferred between genders, are there sources from his biographical life that could help point to where these ideas and sympathies emerged? Interestingly, Mary Shelley, the daughter of Godwin and the half-sister of Godwin Jr., is theorized by Betty T. Bennett to have been in a

close friendship and possible secret relationship with a transgender man who went by the names David Lindsay, Walter Sholto Douglas, and Mary Diana Dods. Notably, Dods "fooled man, woman, and child as well as official government records and historical, biographical, and literary works for […] 157 years" (Bennett 21) because of how well he passed in text and in appearance. Furthermore, critic Markley considers that "some scholars have speculated on the homoerotic aspects of Mary Shelley's own intense relationship with female friends, particularly her close friendship with Jane Williams in the years immediately following the deaths of P.B. Shelley and Jane's husband Edward Williams in 1822" (Markley 119). The main reason that a romantic relationship between Shelley and Jane was speculated is due to the "language of Mary Shelley's letters to Jane […] and the words she chose to describe her feelings about Jane to other correspondents" which were typically "affectionate and expressive of deep love by today's standards" (Markley 119). Bennett raises valid considerations on Shelley's personal engagement with transgressive desire. Though this thesis does not analyse the literature of Mary Shelley herself, her closeness to Godwin and Godwin Jr. coupled with the reality of her engagement with those bending gender roles or engaging in transgressive sexual relationships adds context to Godwin Jr.'s exposure to transgender topics.

The interconnected themes of the desire for female empowerment in personal life and written literature between Shelley's life and Godwin Jr.'s literature highlights the potentiality for Shelley's relationships to have influenced her half-brother's writing. Notably, Bennett highlights that "Mary Shelley privately declared, 'Most women I believe wish they had been men—so [why] do not I […] change my sex [, … though] I do not think that my talents would be greater'" (246). With this concept in mind, Godwin Jr. reiterates this fact in his text *Transfusion* when quoting William Shakespeare's Cressida, who states, "'And yet, good faith, I wish'd myself a

man;/ Or that we women had men's privilege,/ Of speaking first'" (Godwin Jr. 19). Godwin Jr. sympathizes and agrees with his half-sister by quoting this line from Cressida in his literature during a defining moment for his text's female protagonist. Bennett and Markley bring to light valid considerations and questions regarding Shelley and her friend group that creates the grounds for consideration about her half-brother. It is therefore worth considering if Godwin Jr.'s knowledge of his half-sister's ideologies and personal activities aided in his sympathies for transgender people. An in-depth analysis of Godwin Jr.'s work will prove fruitful to develop a new perspective on the intertwining perspectives of the gothic, the soul, and homoeroticism.

**1) Critical and Biographical Background: A New Consideration for Godwin Jr.**

Critic Simon Clewes considers the trans implications of *Transfusion* and the potentially queer implications of including soul transfusion into literature of the Romantic era. The revolutionary ideas of Godwin Jr. are described by Clewes as potentially offering a new lens for queer literary review of the Romantic era:

> By granting Albert the ability to transfuse into any other person—either male *or* female—Godwin Jr. essentially opened up a queer space that could potentially have used the embodied experience of gender to similarly question these restrictive boundaries of sexual identity in interrogating what it really meant to inhabit a female or male body. (16; emphasis in original)

The potentiality for any given soul to inhabit a male or female gendered body in *Transfusion* showcases how gender constructs are at the forefront of discussions in Godwin Jr.'s text. The very concept of moving a soul into any body initiates key conversations about gender, identity, and the human soul.

Despite the seemingly progressive notion of moving a soul from a male body to a female body, Clewes argues that Godwin Jr. is not making a progressive point about queer relationships at all. Clewes' main point is that "prior to the transfusion taking place, Albert is described as 'healthy,' 'energetic' and 'true.' After, the entity rapidly becomes 'sickly,' 'diseased' and 'strange'" (17). Clewes concludes that "Albert's transgressive desire and his disregard of biological boundaries [… brings] no successful rematerialisation or reproduction, but only destruction and death" (19). Godwin Jr., according to Clewes, does not celebrate "the femininity of his male protagonists—as well as their passionate desire for other men," or to use the "soul's transfusion as a way through which to expose political manipulations of the body and, in turn, idealised masculinity" (15). With Clewes' opinions alone, the seemingly progressive text is not entirely as forward thinking and innovative as is that of Godwin's, whose literature abundantly includes intense relationships of homosocial and homoerotic qualities between men. However, this chapter argues the opposite of Clewes' interpretations. By looking at the repeated patterns of relationships throughout the text that closely resemble those of Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, carefully considering the intentions and values of the character Albert, and reviewing the language of Madeline when she is performing traditionally masculine gender traits, an argument can be made that *Transfusion* represents a positive queer reading contrary to Clewes' statement.

To begin, Clewes focuses on the failures that arise with the merging of Madeline and Albert because of the physical state of Madeline's body. However, the description of Madeline's body as weak and diseased is not exclusive to when Albert's soul is transitioned into her body. Instances where male and female gendered traits are blurred in *Transfusion* are worth reviewing to note any significant or novel considerations of gender and sexuality in the nineteenth century. For example, in times of intense jealousy over another woman, Madeline's body would grow

weak as if diseased. When De Mara is seen by Madeline to be consorting with Lady Basault, Madeline becomes jealous of Basault. Madeline's emotions are described as "fast-gathering phantasmata that pressed upon her brain and hurried her to the verge of madness" (Godwin Jr. 192). Mimetic desire is apparent when it is highlighted that "this was an opportunity not to be slighted by the Count," who was "only waiting for a fit object on which to invest" his time in "his plot against Madeline" (Godwin Jr. 178). De Mara is careful that however "attentive he was to Mademoiselle Basault […] he took care to have always sufficient regard to Madeline, to be able to note the affect that his address to the other had upon her" (Godwin Jr. 178). De Mara carefully forces the circumstances of the Girardian triangle onto Madeline to foster her desire for him. Though this scenario unnaturally reflects mimetic triangles, Madeline develops heightened emotions towards Basault as her desperation to impress De Mara grows. Though De Mara does heighten Madeline's emotions towards himself by introducing Basault to Madeline, Madeline's intense emotions towards Basault exceed any expressions towards De Mara, given that at a later time "the introduction of Mademoiselle Basault had lighted the torch of war through […Madeline's] whole frame, and fearfully did it blaze a thousand beacons from her flashing eye" (Godwin Jr. 190). Madeline's anger towards Basault includes descriptive imagery that reveals the hot and passionate fury of emotions that the woman evokes in Madeline. De Mara purposely sets this situation up, where Madeline sees Basault as a threat to her connection with De Mara, to heighten her emotions towards him. Though this situation does increase Madeline's interest in De Mara, it also features her heightened emotions towards a woman. Patterns used to include male homoerotic relationships are made visible in scenes where genders blur within the character of Madeline.

Like Clewes considers, this merging of genders does appear to confirm the ideology that merged genders are weakened. Madeline turns to hatred in this moment of weakness because "when hatred supersedes love, the step to revenge is easy" (192). Significantly, these feelings of hatred are "ready to be aroused at the bidding of our baser share of Adam's portion; but the Devil once aroused, he strides on with rapid pace, and at a far more easy price than the first outwork cost, takes possession of all that remains" (193). Though the narrator stays gender neutral when discussing Adam, it is "the particle" (193) of the devil "born of sin" that is associated with masculine pronouns that tempt Madeline's passion: "His flag is up,—his beacon is a-blaze—and the whole heart crouches to his sovereignty" (193). Reiterating the gender neutrality of Adam, the narrator stresses that "[i]t was not her bad nature that had brought her to this; but it was her temper that had stirred up the more secret recesses of her soul, where so much of that human portion of mischief that fell to her share had hitherto lain dormant" (193). Furthermore, the intense desire Madeline holds for Lady Basault in this moment builds as sublime transport, where her "diseased mind" is said to harbour a "feverish anxiety":

> [her] cheek glared with a hectic colour [, …] her brow (of old so fine, so marble-like, so dazzling) was cast into wrinkles, in each of which sat ghastly phantoms blabbing the struggle that was rife within [, …] her eye, sanguinary and blood-shot, had something in its character unearthly and appalling. (Godwin Jr. 194)

These uncontrollable emotions, spurred at De Mara consorting with Basault, not only remind readers of the sublime transport of *Caleb Williams* in a female-female-male triangle, but are specifically connected to the masculine attributes of sin and temptation from the devil, all in a scene where her jealousy and heightened emotions recall the connotations of sublime transport. Madeline's intense emotions are attributed to qualities of men, prior to any transition of souls,

because of the tempting influence of the masculine devil in the form of original sin that exists in all of Adam's descendants. In this moment of intense jealousy and sublime transport for someone of the same sex, Madeline embodies masculine traits that are associated with her unrelenting jealousy of Lady Basault. Madeline's body merging with intense masculine traits while a mimetic triangle develops between Madeline and a female rival parallels the effeminate traits of men developed in male rivalries. Overall, the tactical temptation of De Mara does seem to confirm Clewes' opinion that merged gender traits are viewed as flawed and diseased.

However, Madeline exhibits a similar rage which causes Henry Seaton/Manvers to abandon the two orphans in Unwalden at the beginning of the text. Seaton explains that he leaves Unwalden because "the scene which [… had] taken place between […Seaton] and Madeline" reminded him of "the first buddings of [her] father's violent temperament—a sacrifice of the sense of what is right at the shrine of passion and impulse" (Godwin Jr. 35). This rage in Madeline, which has been associated with original sin that is considered masculine through association with the devil, is a negative trait that Madeline possesses. However, in this scene with Seaton, Madeline is misunderstood as being in a fit of rage when she is, in fact, standing up for her rights as a woman:

> I am, and ever will be, my own free agent. I know no bound but that of inclination, and all else must be fruitless of management. I would rather fly to earth's confines than submit,—ay, rather than hear the words that convey the thought of it [… .] It is for me to be heard, or never shall we understand each other. For your protection I thank you, for your advice I am grateful—but commands, threats, and the favour of another cause contrary to mine must ever make me lament the day that first brought my mother's brother to Unwalden. […] it is as fixed in my mind as the unalterable fiats of eternity

> [that] I can know a counsellor and a friend, good uncle; but no master. (Godwin Jr. 22-23)

Seaton reacts poorly to these words of Madeline, connecting them to her father's rage, when it is explained that "she had done more than vindicate her just rights, and establish on an equitable basis the relative position between her uncle and herself" (Godwin Jr. 23). This conversation occurs after Seaton was pushing the idea of Wahrend as a lover to Madeline, though he is to her only a close friend, and her response is to express her interest in making her own choices as a woman. Echoing the words of Wollstonecraft by including the verbiage of the vindication of female rights, this scene highlights that these traits mimic her masculine father. This example of masculinity being embodied by Madeline, though it may weaken her body from the strength of the emotions, is when she is standing up for new concepts of what is right and just in the world for women. The strength associated with the combination of gender traits expresses the true potential of gender equality in English society, especially considering the clear reference to Wollstonecraft's polemical texts arguing for the vindication of women's rights. As a result, the merging of masculine and feminine traits in one body—though described as physically weakened by Clewes—represents emotional and moral strength that serves to defy patriarchal bodies of power.

It is important to see the clear similarities that exist between Godwin Jr.'s and his father's novel to learn more about how homoeroticism and mimetic desire is characteristic of the gothic novel. Patterns of Girardian triangles, just as in *Caleb Williams*, are repeated throughout the son's text, establishing a key placement of homoerotic desire. To begin an analysis of these patterns, a close analysis of Madeline and Albert's interconnected state is important to consider. Critic Beatrice Turner provides key insights into the incestuous relationship of Albert and

Madeline in the article "'[We] had not the ties of blood unite us': Family Genius and Family Blood in William Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion*" (2017). Turner's interest in *Transfusion* is the comparison between ties based on nature versus nurture. In making this comparison, Turner highlights that "Seaton closely observes Madeline and her brother together in order to ascertain her feelings for her suitor Wahrend by comparison, since 'love is consanguinity's command and happiness'" (Turner 471). Turner notes that this is one of the "many mistaken or misguided attempts in the novel to substitute social or romantic bonds for biological ones" (Turner 471), which begins to blur the lines between family, friends, and lovers. The blood ties enhancing the closeness of Madeline and Albert contend with the love ties that men in her life attempt to formulate. Though concepts of intense love between siblings on their own do not indicate incestuous behaviours, these selections of text nod to the importance of reviewing the bonds formed in *Transfusion*.

With Turner's observations in mind, a close examination of how Madeline and Albert are obsessed with each other to the point that they are extensions of the same body is integral to understanding why merging bodies would be a goal of Albert's. Albert, at the beginning of the text, is deaf and parentless. Albert is entirely dependent on Madeline to guide, interact, and care for him. When she is initially introduced, it is apparent that Madeline's "whole mind seemed fraught with affection towards her brother" (Godwin Jr. 18):

> if he only walked across the room, her eye chased him uneasily; she was ever ready to watch and care for his smallest desires; and her hours seemed never so happily spent as when she was endeavouring by explanations and tuition to make up the deficiency which nature had imposed on him. (Godwin Jr. 18)

Her entire focus in life is Albert, ensuring he is safe, comfortable, and accommodated. The care Madeline has for Albert, or their strong connectedness, is what leads to the desire to be one. However, as Turner notes, "both siblings are seduced by […] the prospect of a safe and reversible combination of two selves, a complete form of sexual union without […] sex, and without reproduction: sympathetic, rather than genetic, unity" (477). Though the merging of bodies is not inherently incestuous, the reality of the scenario is contrary to the intention. Turner concludes that *Transfusion* "appears to sanction the transformation of brotherly adoration into innocent romantic love: Albert seeks his sister's forgiveness for the 'unsharing dream of [his] youthful blood' and hopes that through his discovery they 'will be one, single and indissoluble'" (477-8). As a result of this relationality, "Albert's love for his sister drives him to ignore the incest taboo" (479-80), which is a key feature of *Transfusion* that permits mimetic triangles to develop with relationships between the two siblings. Madeline and Albert are blurred together from the beginning of the text when their mother continuously mistakes Albert on his own as both Albert and Madeline. Agnes repeatedly remarks "why not your hand, dear Madeline" (Godwin Jr. 3) when she is near death because she assumes that Madeline is in the room with her when only Albert is. When Agnes is about to die, she yet again exclaims "Madeline! Albert!" (Godwin Jr. 8), when the only sibling who is present is Albert. Just as with De Mara, Albert mistakenly has the love of others for Madeline thrust onto him, meaning the lines are blurred between the identities of Madeline and Albert. The blurred identity of Madeline and Albert, along with the obsession of merging their bodies, initiates the possibility of their existences serving as gothic doubles. Recalling Walpole's origins of gothicism, familial relationships and incest were key factors in the creation of the genre, so the inclusion in Godwin Jr.'s text only reaffirms the connection.

**2) Mimetic Desire and Powerful Representation of Trans Bodies: Why Godwin Jr.'s Literature is Worthy of Contemporary Analysis**

The Count De Mara in *Transfusion* represents effeminate chivalry that, between Walpole and Godwin's texts, has been established in this thesis as a mechanism to highlight aristocratic characters in gothic texts. The Count represents a perverted sense of aristocratic ideas in that he holds a title of nobility yet always thinks of himself first. When De Mara is first introduced, it is clear that it was "not for [his party's] pleasure, but for his pleasure has he brought" (Godwin Jr. 48) them to the inn. The very first descriptions of him includes that he was one of six "sparkling gallants," him with the "loudest laugh" (Godwin Jr. 46). De Mara holds the "true aristocratic accent" and, in his actions he is described to have the "magic of [...a] syren tongue" due to the "soothing, excusing, palliating, [and] beseeching" (Godwin Jr. 86) speeches he consistently makes. When describing the countenance of De Mara, it is of note that he possesses the traits of "Courteousness, amiability, watchfulness, address, and personal beauty, as far as beauty is compatible with genuine manliness" (Godwin Jr. 100). Even though these words of praise intend to flatter De Mara, a need to explain that beauty can be compatible with "genuine" manhood highlights how his personage anxiously veers away from representing masculinity. However, it is reiterated that De Mara is known for the "lines of beauty [...] which usually had possession of his face" (119), meaning his feminine appearance is known and confirmed by multiple accounts in *Transfusion*. Further descriptions of De Mara highlight the graceful and delicate nature of his being:

> Look in the handsome face of Count de Mara! observe his gay but unaffected air of elegance; mark his well-formed features, tutored (but so cunningly as to seem nature-taught) to a bland and heart-winning smile; listen to his words that fall with sunny softness on the pleased and willing ear of his mistress! (181)

De Mara overwhelmingly presents as elegant, attractive, and soft with his words. The combination of these descriptions paints a similar image to other aristocratic lords of gothic literature whose excessive feminine traits consider them effeminate.

De Mara's aristocratic effeminacy is paired with a mimetic triangle between Madeline and Albert—the orphans from Unwalden—which causes him to be entangled an intense rivalry with her brother Albert. De Mara becomes smitten with Madeline. However, as quickly as he falls in love with Madeline, he too recognizes that her deaf brother Albert is a key factor in her life and worthy of equal praise. De Mara gawks at Madeline's figure and speech, but "it was impossible to listen to the sweet flow of eloquence with which she bedecked her brother's character, without believing that he must be every thing worthy of being loved" (Godwin Jr. 59). De Mara acknowledges that Albert is a key factor in Madeline's life as De Mara begins his manipulative and deceit-ridden courtship with the woman of his dreams. Within this mimetic triangle, "Albert could not regard without envy the engrossing quality of De Mara's attentions to Madeline" (Godwin Jr. 104). From this specific wording, the phraseology notes that Albert is envious of the attention De Mara devotes to Madeline. Albert is clearly discontented with the "forwardness of [… De Mara's] manners at the inn, which, from the very first moment of their becoming acquainted, has impressed him with the feeling that there was an assumption of superiority on the part of [De Mara …] which was not compatible with a happy issue to the intimacy that had succeeded" (Godwin Jr. 104) between Albert and Madeline. The intensity of De Mara's language gives rise to the beginning of Albert's rivalry with De Mara over Madeline. A strong mimetic triangle is established between De Mara, Madeline, and Albert that gives rise to the development of sexual tension between Albert and De Mara.

In this mimetic triangle, different types of love have different significances. For example, love is described in detail within *Transfusion* as if to uncover the falseness of De Mara's adoration:

> There are two sorts of love. One—pure, exquisite, and lovely; founded on affection for a single and invaluable object, and resting its whole hope on that object's happiness: the other is single and insidious, built only on self-gratification and the desire of indulging at all hazards an unsharing principle. But both the one and the other—good and the bad—summon ardour to their aid. (Godwin Jr. 76)

The selfish desire of De Mara to have Madeline at any cost is the catalyst for the unfortunate demise of many characters in the text. Furthermore, De Mara's self-love recalls Godwin and Walpole's aristocratic tyrants whose selfish desires result in their enraged and prideful passions. De Mara's need to have Madeline's love at any cost results in crime, deceit, and murder, much like in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*.

De Mara believes that the best course of action to secure the love of Madeline is to remove Albert from the picture. As a result, Albert and the Count De Mara have multiple altercations throughout *Transfusion*. The Count immediately understands the implications of Albert's presence in Madeline's life given "Albert's continual presence at all his interviews with Madeline" was a detriment to his plan to seduce her because De Mara was aware the "brother must be watching every one of his motions as regarded the sister, and scanning his intentions towards her with the most jealous survey" (Godwin Jr. 111). To circumvent the gaze of Albert, De Mara employs multiple strategies to remove Albert from the picture, some more effective than others. To begin, he attempts to construct an outing that forces Albert to stay at home to tend to Albert's sick friend Deboos while Madeline and De Mara go out to the theatre.

Significantly, Deboos is introduced to Albert by De Mara in the attempt to distract Albert away from Madeline. Albert takes the bait and showcases extreme interest in his friendship with her. Significantly, Deboos' appearance was "far beyond what [… was considered] as definitely applicable to feminine human nature" (69), so Albert's interest in her establishes his desire for masculine traits in his close friends. However, when Madeline insists that she stay home to tend to Deboos and that De Mara instead spend the evening out alone with Albert, De Mara's lust for Madeline is redirected into rage towards Albert:

> The Count was awakened out of the delicious reverie he had been enjoying at the idea of spending a whole evening with Madeline alone, to find the very person, whom of all others he most dreaded and detested, foisted upon him instead: nor did he know how to demur to his arrangement of his mistress, without throwing himself open to suspicion on the one hand or the other. (Godwin Jr. 114)

Within this passage, the Count is forced to shift his appetite to spend an evening alone with the object of mimetic desire, Madeline, to the mediator of his lust, Albert. Additionally, the diction of Albert having been "foisted upon him" eloquently highlights the forcefulness of which Albert's image is imposed over Madeline's during this state of heightened anticipation, building towards sublime transport. De Mara's hunger for Madeline is unknowingly intertwined with his hatred for Albert. When intending to sequester Madeline for himself, De Mara instead showcases extreme homoerotic anxiety at the prospect of being alone with his male rival Albert.

Upon De Mara's refusal of Albert, Madeline exhibits a rage on behalf of her brother, which is calmed by Albert, who is entranced into the trappings of the mimetic triangle. De Mara refuses to go out to the theatre with Albert, resulting in Madeline exclaiming that "Albert is as myself: he, for whom the boy is no companion, can be no friend of mine" (Godwin Jr. 116).

Madeline expresses that she and Albert are like one whole body, and Madeline serves as the mouthpiece of Albert to those in his life around him. These two function so closely that Madeline suggests any desire or friendship De Mara holds for Madeline is expected also to be held for Albert. Despite De Mara's slight on Albert's character, and Madeline's removal of the Count from her life, Albert insists that she forgive the latter: "when Albert took cognisance of all the consequences that would attend this change [of De Mara leaving Madeline's life, …] he had not failed to perceive the growing pleasure that his sister had taken in the society of De Mara" (Godwin Jr. 118). Therefore, Albert takes action to reinstate De Mara's position in Madeline's life. Albert considers the closeness of Madeline and De Mara and—despite not being a fan of the noble—Albert "felt, from his own experience, how difficult and how painful it was to be separated from an associate, who, on the score of kindness, attention, and the desire to please, claimed affinity to those feelings in another's breast" (Godwin Jr. 118). Though Albert claims that he is thinking of Madeline when wanting to make up with the Count, he showcases his latent desire to keep De Mara in his close circle of friendship. The emotions that Albert develops for De Mara reflect Madeline's desires for the Count, nodding to the intrinsic connection the two have that closely reflects the gothic double. This is because, just as Madeline serves as the mouthpiece for Albert's thoughts, Madeline too serves as the point of action for Albert's desires in consideration with gothic doubling. The homoerotic desires that Albert fosters for De Mara consistently manifest in his envy of De Mara's attention and in his sorrow over the loss of his attention. The pure character of Albert is caught in the aristocratic allure of false chivalry portrayed by De Mara.

The visage of the false and effeminate aristocrat begins to break when the truth of his behaviour is visible. De Mara's image as a charming aristocrat, created to ensure he gets his way, begins cracking when he does not get his evening alone with Madeline:

> When [Albert] first cast his eyes on De Mara, there was an involuntary shudder at the change which had taken place in his countenance: the first lines of beauty, which usually had possession of his face, were distorted, or rather they had evaporated in the boiling of the passions that had there set up his abode; while his features had taken on themselves an expression of ghastliness, as if they had been made haggard by a series of painful exertions. (Godwin Jr. 119)

De Mara's face, normally described as beautiful, is broken down into being—in reality—a repulsive visage. Significantly, when looking back to the Burkean definition of beauty, beauty is a feature that both man and woman can hold and that can evoke lust. However, the beauty present on De Mara's face, by this description, fades and seems to unveil a disturbing truth to his fake personality. De Mara has exploded in a passionate burst of energy that has left his soul exposed. The composition of De Mara recalls the effects of sublime transport. Though he was in frustrated awe to the response from Madeline and at the sudden appearance of Albert, he had to "employ the power of a thousand minds to suppress the thoughts that flowed thick and fast into his brain" (Godwin Jr. 119) to maintain his composure and outward appearance. These emotions that De Mara experiences and barely grabs control over reflect the same uncontrollable fit of rage that causes Falkland to murder Tyrrel in *Caleb Williams* and Manfred in *The Castle of Otranto*. De Mara not only loosens his grip on his aristocratic beauty due to his moment of extreme rage but also showcases similar emotions to tyrants of Godwin's literature, reflecting the impact of Godwin's writing in Godwin Jr.'s text.

This scene of the culmination of sublime transport supports the queer analysis of *Transfusion,* though the unique inclusion of soul-transfusion, a main feature of the text, makes the novel most relevant to sexuality studies of Romantic-era literature. The final attribute that Godwin Jr.'s text exhibits that is entirely unique to Godwin Jr.'s text up until this point is the physical movement of souls to satisfy the completion of mimetic desire. In an effort to pry Albert away from Madeline, De Mara has it arranged that Albert's hearing is to be restored. Without the dependence on Madeline as a translator, Albert turns to studying the inner machinations of the mind. In his scientific studies, he mysteriously discovers the method for soul transfusion. Albert, who is in a mimetic triangle with Madeline and De Mara, wishes to meld his mind with Madeline, which, under the understanding of mimetic desire, satisfies the homoerotic emotions that he has for De Mara. Of interest, however, is that this desire of Albert to merge his soul into Madeline's body furthers the notion that Madeline is the gothic double of Albert because her body—which was Albert's mouthpiece—would eventually become his vessel so he could act out his true desires. The gothic double, which in other texts is a spiritual connection between two characters, is actualized in *Transfusion* to the point of a physical movement of a soul from the original to the double. Albert moves his soul into Madeline's dying body. In this action, Madeline's soul passes on, Albert's assumes control until the body expires, and Albert's body is left lifeless. As a result of the act of Albert transfusing his soul into his sister's body, Clewes highlights that for "a few, fantastical moments, Albert experiences first-hand being the object of De Mara's love" (20). Clewes concludes that "Godwin Jr. depicts here a deadly usurpation by a homoerotic passion of what would have been a loving encounter between a man and a woman" and that—instead of Madeline and De Mara being united in one last loving embrace—"Albert receives that which he desired at the start of *Transfusion*—attention and affection from De Mara"

(20). De Mara wishes to project his heightened emotions onto Madeline. However, Albert once again finds a way to get in between their climactic union and be the one to receive De Mara's homoerotic affection.

Though Clewes considers these facts about trans realities as a means to confirm that *Transfusions* disapproves of trans bodies, this thesis closely considers other mechanisms present in the text to consider if a pro-transgender reading is possible. When the soul transfusion does take place, the Count once again finds himself thrusting his lust for Madeline onto Albert. This time, Albert's soul resides within Madeline's body, so De Mara is unable to discern the difference between Madeline and Albert. When Albert, as Madeline, stumbles into the room De Mara is in, De Mara looks at her and states, "she was true—was his," and he "worshipped the true and loving creature whom he now believed to stand before him" (Godwin Jr. 415). Albert, from within Madeline's body, can now terminate Madeline's participation in the mimetic triangle by using her body to end De Mara's admiration of her. Albert recounts the lies of De Mara with this vessel, and "all listened awe-struck and eager" (416). Sublime transport is evoked in all who witness the dismantling of De Mara's character as Albert exposes the reality that "De Mara is a murderer" (416) of Wahrend, a circumstance that will be discussed in closer detail later in this chapter. Albert fully possesses the body of Madeline, his object of desire, and receives the praise and kind words of De Mara, his rival, and he therefore fulfils both desires that have heightened from the mimetic triangle as well as the gothic doubling. Altogether, Godwin Jr. provides Romantic-era audiences with a unique perspective on homoerotic desires written into literature where gendered relationships extend beyond physical boundaries.

The actual merging of female and male occurs in *Transfusion* when Albert moves his soul into the body of his sister. Significantly, not much is explained about the transfusion itself.

Albert's body is lost to this scientifically unexplained transfusion, and his sister's soul dies shortly after his soul inhabits her weakened body. However, the knowledge that Romantic audiences would have regarding transgender people was both limiting yet reflective of typical understandings of sodomitical practices:

> British political commentators labelled sodomitical practices (sometimes extending even to overt presentations of femininity in men) as inherently damaging, even deadly, with their associated non-procreative sexual practices posited as directly threatening to the family unit. In one particularly intriguing case, we can see how the death of Eliza/Lavinia Edwards in 1833—who was discovered, posthumously, to be trans—saw her described as "diseased," "unnatural" and an "extraordinary man-monster" in the popular press. (Clewes 18)

The public reception to transgender people largely follows the same persecution of other groups who engage in transgressive identities or sexual desires. The words to describe Eliza, a trans person, villainize the physical and mental qualities that marginalize her. As Clewes echoes Foucault, it is the fact that transgender and other queer identities do not contribute to expected procreative efforts that these groups become marginalized.

Albert's dedication to inhabiting Madeline's body to experience De Mara's affection considers the shared qualities of the female body to the transitioned man that "sexual difference is the partitioning of bodies into penetrator and penetrated, and ideological ordering premised on the denial of universal penetrability" (Heaney 9). Emma Heaney, in *Feminism against Cisness,* (2024) considers how "Men, both cis and trans, can be penetrated and can even invite penetration" (7). However, it is the ability for cis and trans men to deny association with penetrability that uniquely places them in a position of power. Sexual power is defined by who

holds the potentiality for penetration and who masks their ability to be penetrated. Albert, who has desperately desired the attention Madeline has received from De Mara throughout the text, appears to desire the clearly submissive position of Madeline's female and penetrative body that De Mara desires. This interesting trans theory of Heaney provides a unique interpretation on how the desire to be penetrated is so closely associated with femininity that men must perform femininity to have it for themselves.

Clewes' argument regarding the "weak" trans state of Albert/Madeline's body can be challenged in consideration of how the two orphans in one body actually produce the strongest act of the text by standing up to the deceptive De Mara, showcasing the strength of blurred genders beyond what is physically possible in a male or female body alone. By putting his own soul into the body of Madeline, Albert is not only able to satisfy his homoerotic urge to experience the love of De Mara—as highlighted by Clewes—but he is also able to shut down the advances of De Mara onto Madeline using her powerful voice. Albert, in Madeline's body, exclaims, "Wahrend was murdered [… and] died by no fair wound" from De Mara, and that De Mara is no longer allowed to speak the "honoured name" of Madeline (Godwin Jr. 416). Albert transitioning into Madeline's body showcases their combined strengths because of how their additive traits improve their impact on influencing others. First, the source of the scolding from Madeline is key to cause an impact on De Mara, meaning the words of Madeline and Albert combined have more impact on De Mara than when they are alone in Albert or Madeline's bodies. Second, Albert finally experiences the love he desired for the duration of the whole text, as explained by Clewes. Though the merged body of Albert and Madeline may be described as physically weak, the actions of Albert's transition into Madeline's body presents significant strength. Therefore, when considering earlier examples of mixed gendered actions—such as

Madeline's masculine behaviour—the text ultimately does not frown on queer bodies but instead provides a new space for them to be exemplified. Though society at the time may have viewed people that blurred gender lines as physically weak, Godwin Jr. offers a new consideration and opinion of Romantic-era's trans people within the context of the scientific knowledge of the time.

**3) Patterns and Repetition: Mimetic Triangles, Homoerotic Duels, and Sexual Murder**

Two other mimetic triangles of note throughout the text are those of Wahrend-De Mara-Madeline/Albert and Warner-Seaton-Agnes. The analysis of these two mimetic triangles is important to this thesis because they emphasize the structure of mimetic triangles while reaffirming the influence of Godwin's *Caleb Williams.* Clearly, an abundance of mimetic triangles in a novel is a feature important to Romantic-era gothic literature, and they highlight homosocial and homoerotic bonds to audiences.

To begin, the initial mimetic triangle between Warner, Seaton, and Agnes—though occurring before the main plot of the text and only being described later on by a key member in it—is important to establish mimetic triangles as a pattern throughout the remainder of the text. The love triangle is complicated and important to note as a precursor to future mimetic triangles. Seaton provides the audience his perspective on their love triangle in that Agnes is deceitfully stolen from him by the moneyed and power-hungry Warner. When Seaton meets Warner, Seaton exclaims that he "thought it impossible not to be captivated with his style and manner" and that he "found him replete with information, and a fund of never-ending gaiety and description" (Godwin Jr. 27). Together, the two formed a close friendship, which causes Warner to be led astray by "the first glare of the splendours that await its first visit to the more luxurious haunts of men" (28). Seaton makes it clear that "Warner had frequently heard [… him extol] Agnes […]

with all the enthusiasm of a young heart deeply involved in a single feeling" (28). However, as soon as Agnes was introduced to Warner, Warner deceives Seaton to leave, lies to Agnes that it was intentional, and "in despair of heart at [Seaton's] supposed neglect and infidelity, [Agnes] gave her hand to" Warner (Godwin Jr. 29-30). The result of this deception "caused a relapse" in Seaton, for "the intenseness with which this thought [of revenge] took possession of [his] soul was too much for the strength of [his] intellect, and the result was a violent attack of the brain fever" (30). With this short and quick story, the trio perfectly reflects the stylization of the mimetic triangle—a subject, Warner, finds a mediator, Seaton, and uses the object, Agnes, to heighten the jealousy between the two. Following the traditional pattern of mimetic triangles, Warner uses Seaton's object of desire to mediate intense emotions towards him to spark a rivalry whose emotions outweigh the original love Seaton had for Agnes. The mimetic triangle between these three characters importantly establishes the pattern of mimetic triangles in *Transfusions.*

The relationship between Warner, Seaton, and Agnes becomes a framework to consider the later relationship dynamic in the text of Wahrend, De Mara, and Madeline. When Albert is temporarily removed from the mimetic triangle between himself, Madeline, and De Mara,—due to his distance from Madeline when he gains his sense of hearing, and Madeline's seduction by De Mara—Wahrend returns into Madeline's life and creates a love triangle with her and De Mara. As a brief reminder, Wahrend was the potential lover of Madeline from Unwalden. Madeline's initial refusal to be wed to Wahrend is what led to her tapping into her soul's hidden temper and the subsequent disappearance of Seaton due to her resemblance to her father. Of particular note, Seaton's sympathy for Wahrend is important to these patterns as he reflects the same role in Madeline's mimetic triangle as Seaton did in Agnes' mimetic triangle. In this same vein, De Mara's closeness with Warner represents how he is meant to be paralleled to this

character. Despite this initial disinterest in Wahrend, Seaton eventually returns to become an adversary and—because of his attempts to intervene in De Mara's plans—is eventually murdered by De Mara. The return of Wahrend to intervene with De Mara's plots to steal Madeline closely reflects the relationship pattern of the orphans' parents. Recall how Seaton, the honest lover, was originally connected to Agnes who is deceived by Warner and stolen away. The result of Agnes and Warner's union is the orphaning of Madeline and Albert. Madeline's connection to De Mara closely resembles that of Agnes and Warner, and Wahrend's intervention is closely compared to that of Seaton.

De Mara and Wahrend develop a strong rivalry over Madeline that leads to a swordfight that reveals key insights into the true emotionality they hold for each other while feminizing and dismantling aristocratic ideals of nobility. Leading up to their fateful duel, Wahrend and De Mara are compared in a way to highlight the false nature of nobility. Wahrend is described as "a son of nature, freedom, and the mountains, he had learned better things" that required him a great deal of effort to remove "the glorious armour that truth had lent to" his virtuous mind and to instead "establish in its place the gew-gaw panoply that the world calls honour" (Godwin Jr. 333). In order to fight for Madeline, Wahrend stoops to the level of De Mara's virtues as a "nobleman," whose showy—yet, with consideration to the diction "gew-gaw," worthless—values of honour are all that he knows. This analysis of Wahrend is contrasted by De Mara who is "a gentleman, a nobleman, and a knight" who had "learned bravery by rote, as schoolboys learn Latin, and had found talent enough to be perfect in the part" (333). De Mara does not know what true chivalry is, though he is prepared to die for Madeline, as it is something society has told him to do. De Mara believes he is just in defending Madeline from Wahrend, because "Madeline had made him her confidant [and …] had complained to him of the wrongs she had

received" (334) from Wahrend. However, the true intentions and ideals of Madeline are a continual point of confusion considering Albert himself believes the opposite and that Madeline "had expressed hatred for De Mara—she had expressed regard for Wahrend" (345) not long after this duel. These varying depictions of what would be characterized as true chivalric or noble behaviour not only recalls Godwin's attempts to expose modern aristocracy for its failures, but also provides clear points of sympathy for the audience reading this text.

The duel between Wahrend and De Mara, as expected in a gothic novel, is rife with homoerotic imagery. Leading up to the duel, the narrator offers a close comparison of their individual stance as they anticipate the combat. De Mara's reaction to being offered a duel by Wahrend is interesting considering "he had had such affairs on his hands before; and though he had never yet been so absolutely fortunate as to kill his man, he had always come out of these encounters with amazing éclat" (Godwin Jr. 334). Killing someone in combat is something that is considered a favourable outcome. Death is a desired result of De Mara's duels and, though the situation to murder someone had not come up before, his status from the duels always remained favourable in that he be deemed a winner in some capacity. Furthermore, De Mara considers that "[t]he words of Wahrend" were significant enough to have "penetrated deeper into his soul than would have been supposed by the manner in which he had received them when uttered" (334), as he has been building up his rivalry with Wahrend over Madeline for a while. Recalling the use of the word "penetrated" in reference to the soul in Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, the rivalry between Wahrend and De Mara, and the duel itself, is coded with homoerotic diction. To De Mara, the concept of a duel to the death—especially with Wahrend—is something that excites him. The reference to diction in Godwin's homoerotic *Caleb Williams* refers to the sexual tension built throughout the scene.

Wahrend reciprocates the intention of wishing to kill De Mara, especially considering he is the instigator of the duel. Wahrend's psyche leading into the duel is of note, considering he sees that there is no other option to move forward:

> Wahrend was a brave man,—a man brave in the best sort of bravery,—courageous, without rashness—determined, without audacity. Such a man as this may be impelled to the feeling that he is called on to face another, sword to sword, and life for life. Such a man may forget common sense […,] but, at all events, he does not undertake the affair with the hot-headed absurdity of one of those weak [beings …] who hopes to gain the applause of the lowest rabble, at the expense of his character with the wiser, to better, and the more judicious portion of mankind. (Godwin Jr. 325)

Wahrend is described in detail to be the true definition of bravery. He is not some false and surface-level representation of chivalry as is reflected by the performative and effeminate De Mara. Furthermore, the narrator highlights how Wahrend—though brave—may have gone in too deep into this situation, given "[i]t might be that Wahrend had some misgivings as to the course in which he was engaged; but, even if so, he was too far involved to retract" (325). At the time of this thought, Wahrend could have retreated from the fight, but some force outside of his typical actions made him initiate the duel. The intense desire to murder De Mara, rooted through his mimetic connection to him through Madeline, has fostered the development of this homoerotic encounter.

The mutuality of Wahrend and De Mara's duel is made blatantly clear to the audience, nodding to the mutuality of their desire to murder the other. As De Mara and Wahrend wait in silence for their weapons, "the soul of either was not inactive" as "their thoughts were thoughts of blood, though they tried to belie them by the steadiness of their looks" (Godwin Jr. 334). The

two wait in anticipation and excitement at the thought of killing the other: "the breath of the late kind-hearted Wahrend thickened as he lashed his imagination into fit service for the coming scene, while the wily Count gave away cunning for ferocity,—forgot his prided civilization,—and, in spirit, howled to his own soul like a savage" (Godwin Jr. 334). Warner, who is present for the duel and watching with extreme joy, recommends they finish the duel quickly with guns. However, both parties refuse, as they have relished in the idea of combat with an intimate weapon like a sword. De Mara exclaims that a sword is "a weapon [… he has] always been happy in handling" (336), and Wahrend explains he is "descended from William Tell; and it would be shame indeed, if [… he] were not willing to handle a weapon, which […] that honoured patriot esteemed as his most potent friend" (336). The two are adamant on the long, drawn-out combat, with extreme physical exertion and intimacy. Overall, the tension leading up and during to the fight showcases the homoerotic tension between the two.

A close analysis of the duel shows it as a representation of homoeroticism. As the duel begins, "it almost appeared as if each was master of the intention of the other, before it was put in execution, and had prepared a countermove to resist the fatal purpose that winged each passage of the weapon" (Godwin Jr. 337). The two are not only equally invested in seeing the other's death in an intimate matter, but also in matching the other for the majority of the duel. Physically, these two men are equal, but it is only through the unique advantages of aristocracy that De Mara is able to overcome Wahrend. Eventually Wahrend's "fire in his eye, and the fierce pressure of a giant's strength in his motions" that accompanied "each move with desperate but well-regulated lunges" (338) indicate he is the clear winner of the match. However, Warner interferes with the match to allow De Mara to win. De Mara, who was about to die in battle, calls Warner a "villain" and the "devil in disguise of man" (341) for interrupting in his death,

indicating the pleasure he would have derived from dying at the hand of Wahrend. De Mara's anger with Warner recalls Caleb's sentiment that he would be happy to die at the hand of his rival Falkland. The bond between Wahrend and De Mara had reached a heightened capacity through this battle where they were prepared to die honourably by the other's hand.

The in-depth analysis of the duel between Wahrend and De Mara reveals many interesting points about Godwin Jr.'s text. Godwin Jr.'s inclusion of intimate murder has sexual connotations on its own. Within these extreme details of the combat, De Mara's previously established effeminate traits are featured in a duel that highlights how performatively he engages with chivalric manhood. The blurring of the intentions of the two men from acts of bravery to the desire to murder highlights the intense emotions that have been developing between the two through the object of Madeline. Despite Wahrend knowing to some extent that the duel with De Mara is wrong, he continues to pursue the fight and—without external influences—would have been satisfied by murdering his adversary. The two desire all the same intimate conditions of the fight, and know the other so well that the combat itself is evenly matched until De Mara begins becoming fatigued. The diction of how well matched they are seems to indicate they are continuing in the intimate combat for the sake of being intertwined so passionately with the other for a prolonged period of time. De Mara, contrary to the typical behaviour of his character, is upset at not dying from the encounter due to the external influence of Warner. Despite typically representing a false ideal of nobility, in this one instance he was ready to die from the passionate might of his rival. Overall, the fight between the two exudes homoerotic desire and lust. The duel between Wahrend and De Mara yet again represents a mimetic triangle where the object of Madeline heightens the emotional interest between two male characters. Homoerotic and

homosocial bonds are not only included in this literature but seem to be a key trait of Romantic gothic texts, as established by the clear repetition between authors.

Overall, an in-depth analysis of Godwin Jr.'s text is of merit considering the lack of attention it receives in scholarly circles. Godwin Jr. takes one step further in the consideration of gender and sexuality by depicting a transition of a male's consciousness and soul into a female body. The intriguing ideas raised in Godwin Jr.'s text are worth further consideration and examination in academic circles, considering Godwin Jr. makes the point that—even though the transfusion itself was short lived—a soul's property can be viewed to exist within a female or a male body. Ultimately, William Godwin Jr.'s novel is revolutionary in its considerations and inclusions of homoerotic relationships and gender ideology through the movement and manipulation of human souls. While Walpole and Godwin explore homosocial and homoerotic references through their use of Gothic elements, Godwin Jr.'s key innovation considered in this thesis is the desire to satisfy homoeroticism found in other Gothic texts through Albert's soul transition into Madeline's body.

## Conclusion

The coded transgressive sexual desire of Romantic-era authors is additive to the queer gothic tropes initiated by Walpole, such as the homoerotic action and homosocial bonds that are abundantly included in the literature of Godwin and Godwin Jr.'s texts. Key shifts and developments during the Romantic era include the separation of sexual activity and reproduction, the shifting understanding of how the soul functions in relation to orgasm and sexual activity, and the growing movement for those with transgressive desires to be represented in society.

Walpole's literature is of significant note because he not only initiated the gothic genre but was also himself of a high-class status and associated with a transgressive sexual identity. Walpole's reclusion, which enabled him to avoid persecution for purportedly engaging in sodomy, is referred by many to have been a great inspiration for the terror experienced in *The Castle of Otranto*. Walpole establishes the gothic tropes of the effeminate aristocrat, mimetic desire, the gothic double, and sublime transport as innuendos for sexual interactions which explore sexual tension in unique ways within literature. Walpole's anxieties about his persecution from society, and his own issues with his aristocratic boundaries, create the image of the gothic tyrant whose actions form a Girardian triangle with key protagonists with male-male homosexual tensions. These key characteristics of Walpole's literature become signpost characteristics of the Romantic-era gothic literature to follow.

Godwin's *Caleb Williams* closely follows the structure of Walpole's literature considering that all the key tropes originated by Walpole are established and expanded upon in Godwin's text. Godwin himself would have had experience with homosocial accusations in society because of his rivalry with Burke, which is considered to have been homosocial in nature by critics. Godwin's desire to dismantle the power struggle between the aristocratic and working classes of society provides him the fuel to write *Caleb Williams.* What better way to establish

how enthralling the presence of the ruling class is than by normalizing homoerotic desire and using that tension to expose the irresistibility of aristocratic charm? The abundance of homoerotic and homosocial relationships with intense sexual tension in the novel, veering on homosexuality as some critics argue, normalizes the inclusion of male-male relationships in literature. Godwin is highlighting the unfair access that the ruling class has to their personal passions and desired relationships while they can escape persecution and legal consequences. The average human pretends they have access to freedom, yet they will never possess those freedoms that wealth offers.

Godwin Jr. expands on his father's ideologies and is worthy of further academic consideration. The same gothic tropes that beget queer inclusion in society emerge again in Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion*. Godwin Jr. innovates the narrative of queer gothicism through the depiction of a trans body in his literature. Though critics have considered this body to have been depicted with a negative approach, trans bodies throughout the text exemplify the key moments of possessing a powerful and meaningful voice. This thesis highlights the importance of what Godwin Jr. writes about queer bodies and recognizes that this literature requires further research and development to explore the full potentiality of the text. The establishment of the gothic genre by Walpole initiates the discourse for transgressive relationship structures to be abundantly included in literature and for the exploration of trans identities during a time of strict gender binaries. Though much has changed in how society considers sexuality and gender throughout time, reflecting on the historical moments of queer representation in media is a key facet for continuing the development and conversation in society as it is known today.

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