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Godwin, Fénelon, and the Disappearing Teacher

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Abstract

The connection between Godwin and Fénelon has traditionally been restricted to the famous and controversial moment in the first edition of *Political Justice* (1793) in which Godwin presents an example of the interdependence of rationality and ethical action. This paper argues, however, that Fénelon, and particularly his political and educational treatise *Telemachus* (1699), plays a significant role in a number of Godwin's subsequent fictional works. Employing *Telemachus* to explore the theories of education presented by Godwin in the various editions of *Political Justice* and *The Enquirer* (1797), this paper explores the manner in which Godwin's version of the Enlightenment transcendence of pedagogical power comes up against its limits. Reading this issue in relation to Godwin's argument, in 'Of Choice in Reading', that literature remains outside of socio-ethical corruption, three of Godwin's major novels are shown to demonstrate that *Telemachus*

provides the chance for meta-textual moments in which the appeal to reason (the reader's rational capacity or 'private judgement') is at once reflected upon and produced. Reading educational theories and problems into Godwin's major fiction in this fashion helps to clarify aspects of the Godwinian (or 'Jacobin') novel.

Given that Godwin famously chose to save the life of François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, Archbishop of Cambrai, rather than the life of a chambermaid, in the first edition of *Political Justice*, and given that in subsequent editions Godwin went on saving Fénelon's life (in favour of a substitute valet), even after the public fallout of that first rescue, where else does Fénelon feature, other than in *Thoughts Occasioned by the Perusal of Dr Parr's Spital Sermon*, in Godwin's oeuvre?[1] The answer is that we can find Fénelon if we look for him in Godwin's novels. Finding him there raises questions about the relationship between Godwin's philosophy of education and his fiction.

I.

The irresolvable contradictions within the subject of education are a constant theme and subject of enquiry within Godwin's work. Either teaching is a necessary evil (inevitably implicated in a hierarchical despotism); or teaching can be reformed, made reasonable (extricated from power and an imposition on private judgement). That is the issue for a philosopher of education, and Godwin is a philosopher of education. If our answer is the latter, then teaching as a formal institution and practice can and should transcend itself,

[1] See *Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*. Vol. 2. *Political Writings II*. Ed. Mark Philp. (London: William Pickering, 1993) 163-213.

do away with itself, disappear. We might look at one of the great final moments of *Political Justice*, Book VIII, Chapter VI, in which Godwin imagines a fully rational society:

> No creature in human form will be expected to learn anything, but because he desires it and has some conception of its utility and value; every man, in proportion to his capacity, will be ready to furnish such general hints and comprehensive views, as will suffice for the guidance and encouragement of him who studies from a principle of desire.[2]

This vision of education or instruction in a reformed society (and I have only quoted a small portion) resolves many of the problems that dog anyone who would present a philosophy of education. It resolves what appears to be the inextricable link between education and power. It resolves the accompanying problem of what I call in-forming, that is the notion that in educating we mould, shape, impress, in-form the mind of the student.[3] In *The Enquirer*, Godwin puts this last issue perfectly when he states that 'When a child is born, one of the earliest purposes of his institutor ought to be, to awaken his mind, to breathe a soul into the as yet, unformed mass.'[4] In the 1796 and 1798 versions of *Political Justice* Godwin asserts: 'Make men wise, and by that very operation

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[2] *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (1793). *Political and Philosophical Writings*. Vol. 3. Ed. Mark Philp. (London: William Pickering, 1993) 455. Hereafter cited parenthetically as PJ III, with page number.

[3] See my 'On Information and the Chance of Teaching.' *Formless: Ways in and out of Form*. Ed. Pat Crowley and Paul Hegarty. (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005) 27-37.

[4] William Godwin, *The Enquirer. Reflections on Education, Manners, and Literature. Political and Philosophical Writings* Vol. 5. *Educational and Literary Writings*. Ed. Pamela Clemit. (London: William Pickering, 1993), 83.

you make them free.'[5] Here we have a great example of the problem of in-forming, since in making, moulding, shaping a man you are not liberating but enslaving them. Inform can mean 'without shape,' but it can also mean 'mis-shapen,' something monstrous. How do you inform without obliterating, repressing, enslaving private judgement? How do you inform without in-forming? The passage above demonstrates that the answer comes in the disappearance of the teacher, the preceptor. So in such a society Godwin also imagines a resolution of the problem of whether education should be public or private. In this scenario it is really neither, since the distinctions of public (institutional) and private (domestic, filial) have considerably softened, dissolved even. In any case, if children simply learn what they need and what they desire to learn, then as Godwin imagines it, they can take 'hints' and 'comprehensive views' from who ever they wish. The child is in need of instruction and finds numerous appropriate and willing teachers; which is to say it finds numerous friends. To think about education in Godwin and his circle is to think long and hard about that over-determined word *friend*, a word which means many things, one of the most important being a teacher, a guide, a mentor.

But how can one be a friend before the child has become an adult? How can one be a friend to a human being who is powerless? In a situation, that is, in which the teacher is all-powerful? Pedagogy is the great problem within any philosophy of education. It seems to necessitate a postponement of equality and thus of friendship and by so doing it threatens the very possibility for equality and friendship. A friend, *the* friend, is a mentor and an equal. On the apparent basis of commonsense it would appear that we can only gain rational, equal (and thus true) friendships when we become adults, reasonable

[5] *Political and Philosophical Writings* Vol. 4. *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, Variants*. Ed. Mark Philp. (London: William Pickering, 1993) 128. Hereafter cited parenthetically as PJ IV, with page number.

subjects with informed judgement. Yet we precisely need a friend, *the* friend, when we are children. There is a kind of terrible postponement or deferral involved in the notion of pedagogy and indeed in the notion of childhood, a deferral which threatens the very foundations of a rational, equal society. Pedagogy mirrors our political institutions, so that, for example, in Locke's account we must go through the pedagogical stage of monarchical control and power before we can arrive at the stage of adult equality.[6] Pedagogy has within it the great question of political theory: how do we institute, found, a new state? How do you found, institute enlightenment and equality? How do you *make* someone free? In Book VII of *Political Justice*, in the chapter 'Of Law,' Godwin writes:

> As long as a man is held in the trammels of obedience, and habituated to look to some foreign guidance for the direction of his conduct, his understanding and the vigour of his mind will sleep. Do I desire to raise him to the energy of which he is capable? I must teach him to feel himself, to bow to no authority, to examine the principles he entertains, and render to his mind the reason of his conduct. (PJ III, 415-6)

How do you teach someone to be independent of thought? How do you teach someone to bow to no authority? How do you render reason to someone when the principle of reason, at least in Godwin's hands, argues that reason renders itself, that reason, that is, comes from the individual's private judgement?[7] As Godwin writes in Book II of *Political*

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[6] John Locke. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. *The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke*. Ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) 109.

[7] The Enlightenment tenet that reason can be rendered can be traced back to the philosophy of Leibniz. For an interesting discussion of this Leibnizian 'principle of reason' readers should consult Jacques Derrida's

Justice: 'To a rational being there can be but one rule of conduct, justice, and one mode of ascertaining that rule, the exercise of his understanding' (PJ III, 72). He adds in the 1798 version: 'the conviction of man's individual understanding is the only legitimate principle, imposing on him the duty of adopting any species of conduct' (PJ IV, 86). How do you teach someone that they must think, reason for themselves?

The great chapter on education in *Political Justice* is obviously Book I Chapter IV, in the revised and expanded later editions. Godwin writes: 'education never can be equal. The inequality of external circumstances in two beings whose situations most nearly resemble is so great, as to baffle all power of calculation. In this present state of mankind this is eminently the case' (PJ IV, 22). Education is unequal and its effects incalculable; *in the present state of mankind*. He then goes on: 'It is impossible to believe that the same moral train would not make nearly the same man' (22). Education *can* be equal and *can* be calculable. For now, as he states in *The Enquirer*: 'All education is despotism. It is perhaps impossible for the young to be conducted without introducing in many cases the tyranny of implicit obedience. Go there; do that; read; write; rise; lie down; will perhaps for ever be the language addressed to youth by age' (*Enquirer*, 107). Education, it would seem, partakes of that division so important to the Jacobin literature of post-revolutionary England: 'things as they are,' and 'things as they should be' or 'could be.' But it would also appear that it is extraordinarily difficult to move from the first to the second state. Teaching appears to be a necessary evil. Power, hierarchy, the

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'The Principle of Reason: The University in the Eyes of its Pupils.' Trans. Catherine Porter and Edward P. Morris. *Diacritics* 13.3 (1983) 3-21. The same essay is now reprinted in Jacques Derrida. *Eyes of the University*, *Right to Philosophy 2*. Trans. Jan Plug and Others. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 129-155.

irrational command, in-forming, haunt the prospect of rational, enlightened pedagogy, or informing.

It is in *The Enquirer* that we see Godwin really grappling with the duality or fold in the idea and practice of teaching. If we take that issue as our focus, we find in fact that Part One of *The Enquirer* has more of an overall shape and logic than has previously been noted. I cannot here go into the manner in which the essays which comprise the first volume of *The Enquirer* rehearse and deepen the problematic of education, already encountered in the first edition of *Political Justice*. I will simply say that the tension between the need for instruction (or pedagogy) and the Enlightenment ideal of the disappearance of the teacher functions as a structural problem, an aporia even, throughout the essays. I would also suggest that the apparently irresolvable fold within pedagogy – the tension between reason and power, equality and hierarchy, friendship and deceit – is in some senses resolved for Godwin in his move, in Essay XV, to literature. Godwin has already declared, in Essay V, that 'Literature, taken in all its bearings, forms the grand line of demarcation between the human and the animal kingdoms' (95). Now, at this stage of *On Educations, Manners and Literature*, we see literature emerging as a potential cure for the impossible problems education has raised. Literature, this essay will inform us, is incapable of in-forming.

The essay, 'Of Choice in Reading,' starts with the issue of friendship: 'It is essentially hostile to all mystery,' he writes (136). It moves on to make an argument which has huge implications in the Romantic period, a period (as we know) in which the phenomenon of a mass 'reading public' made the issue of reading itself highly

controversial, highly political.[8] The argument in a nutshell is this: books do not corrupt their readers: 'Every thing depends upon the spirit in which they are read' (141). Making a distinction between a book's apparent moral and its tendency, Godwin places the emphasis on the latter: 'It appears not unlikely that, in some cases, a work may be fairly susceptible of no moral inference, or none but a bad one, and yet may have a tendency in a high degree salutary and advantageous . . . . A bad moral to a work, is a very equivocal proof of a bad tendency' (139-40). He admits of the difficulty of ascertaining the tendency; the difficulty being caused by the fact that the tendency is and yet is not in the work (i.e. it is partly, even largely, in the reader). But what is crucial, is that in this vision of literature and its reception we get a resolution of the problem posed by pedagogy. We should be careful here: literature does not resolve the problem of pedagogy; it resolves in itself the aporia – between reason and power, equality and hierarchy, friendship and deceit – posed by pedagogy. Literature, that is to say, is a space in which this aporia does not apply, is suspended if you will. Obviously there are numerous bad, inaccurate, immoral readers, and there will be so as long as society remains in its corrupt and despotic state. But books, literature, in themselves cannot in-form us, they cannot mis-shape and corrupt us. Maybe there is a space in which education can transcend, unfold the haunting of reason by power, of equality by hierarchy, of friendship by deceit, and maybe this space is the space of books, and especially of literature. Godwin's novel readers can find the basic point of his essay on reading in the following passage from *Cloudesley*:

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[8] For discussions of Godwin's own readership see Pamela Clemit. *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993) pp.8-9. For a discussion of the politics of reading within the context of debates around education in the period, see Alan Richardson. *Literature, Education and Romanticism: Readings as a Social Practice, 1780-1832*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University .Press, 1994).

> It is common to recommend great cautiousness as to the books that shall be put into the hands of young persons. Nothing can be so senseless and futile as this. In almost all cases he that shall be corrupted by the details of what he reads, must bring a corrupt heart to the perusal. The old, and those who are used to the ways of vice, find guilt and provocatives of guilt in every page. The young pass them by, unconscious of their existence. In this, the noblest of all senses, it may be said in the language of holy writ, 'To the pure all things are pure.'[9]

Literature here, as in 'Of Choice in Reading,' is presented as a medium, a mode of communication, in which the fold or aporia within education is suspended. That is to say, Godwin wishes to present a vision of literature in which reason is perfectly, transparently rendered. It could be argued that what Godwin is arguing is quite clear and forms part of his gradualist account of reform and perfectibility. However, on a wider level, it seems possible to read Godwin's distinction between the moral (he goes on to talk about the moral tendency) and the intellectual tendency as a version of what we have been calling in-forming and informing: the first, a process of educational malformation, the second the process in which, through the scene of teaching, reason comes to render itself. Such a perspective might help us begin to see the relation between Godwin's work on education and his practice as a novelist. Does the Godwinian novel found and form itself on a literary resolution of the aporias, the folds and the duplicities of the educational scene? and if the answer to that question is affirmative, at least in terms of intention, then how does that resolution work? It is perhaps time we moved to a consideration of Fénelon, an

[9] *Collected Novels and Memoirs of William Godwin.* Vol. 7. *Cloudesley*. Ed. Maurice Hindle. (London: William Pickering, 1992) 221. Godwin cites the same Biblical passage in 'Of Choice in Reading.' (*The Enquirer*, 143).

author who in the last year of the seventeenth century produced a text, *Telemachus*, which is at one and the same time a philosophical and fictional work of and on education.

II.

Telemachus (1699) was a hugely popular text in the eighteenth century. Written to instruct his tutee, the Duke of Burgundy, eldest grandson of Louis XIV and thus heir to the French throne, it deals with Telemachus's adventures in the period between Books V and XV of *The Odyssey*. Telemachus tries to find his father and return to Ithaca as Ulysses himself is struggling to get home. It was read as a political critique of Louis XIV and got Fénelon banned from Versailles and effectively from Paris. The Duke of Burgundy died in 1712 and so never came to the throne and never was able to realize the political ideals represented in Fénelon's text and his teaching. For Patrick Riley, editor of the Cambridge translation, as for many before him, including Rousseau, the real hero of the text is not Telemachus, it is Mentor, his teacher. Mentor is in fact Minerva (Athene) in disguise, although this is not revealed to Telemachus until the very last pages of the text, immediately after Telemachus has met but not known his father in disguise, and just before Minerva, now revealed, ascends into the air and Telemachus himself returns to Book XV of *The Odyssey*.

We might wonder what Godwin sees in Fénelon's text, since it appears, through the character of Mentor/Minerva, to simply replicate the kinds of duplicitous, doubled teacher-student scenarios Godwin attacked in Rousseau and critiqued in general. In what sense is Mentor/Minerva not just another teacher who dominates, controls and manipulates in the false guise of the friend? Why should Godwin prefer Fénelon's

Mentor to Rousseau's equally fictional Preceptor? Surely both Rousseau and Fénelon confirm the double structure of teaching Godwin wishes to transcend?

Patrick Riley states that proof of the heroic status of Mentor in the novel comes in its ending, since whilst Mentor is 'resolved into pure Wisdom, the nominal hero barely reaches Ithaca.'[10] In fact, Riley only gets this half right, since clearly the hero of this text is, firstly of course, the Duke of Burgundy, but ultimately every reader. Moreover, Mentor does not resolve into 'pure Wisdom' so much as back into the text which he/she has so dominated. As Minerva ascends into the heavens, Mentor is not left like a discarded pile of clothes, but spreads back into the text, ready for its next reading. The novel at its close, that is to say, produces a metacommentary on its status as a novel of education by staging the disappearance of the teacher in the face of the pupil-reader's imperative to respond, realise, make meaningful, complete. Mentor, I would suggest, *is* the novel; or, rather, the novel is a mentor. And the reader, first the Duke of Burgundy, and then every reader, is the hero, the Telemachus-figure, charged with the task of responding to the text by fulfilling their destiny in making a better, more equitable and democratic society. That is at least what I am suggesting a Godwinian reading of the text would argue. Fénelon's *Telemachus*, from a Godwinian perspective, is a text which stages the disappearance of the teacher and thus demonstrates the mentor-like qualities of literature, its ability to transcend or unfold the problems of teaching by placing the primary role on the reader's active, meaning-making response. Literature, we might say, is written on the premise of a reason which can render itself and thus can render the true tendency of the literary text.

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[10] Francois Fénelon. *Telemachus, Son of Ulysses*. Ed. Patrick Riley. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) xxi.

A significant question posed by the Godwinian novel concerns how political allegory relates to a hermeneutic which privileges the reader's freedom to read. Most readers agree that the move away from the didactic political novel involved a move to a novel form which seeks to enlist or even render the rational faculties of the reader.[11] According to Tilottama Rajan, Godwin's essay on reading wishes to combat a relativism opened up by the prospect of a historicized theory of reading. That is, if one recognizes that the true meaning of a text might lie in its tendency rather than its intended moral, then one has to begin to allow for the fact, as Godwin does on a practical level, that the tendency and thus meaning of a text might alter over time. Godwin, Rajan argues, attempts to reduce the historicizing relativism of textual meaning through a 'divinatory hermeneutics, which imposes a teleological direction on the history of reception, consistent with his own notions of perfectibility.'[12] Rajan's example is *St Leon*, a novel which she claims is consciously self-historicizing, allowing within itself for the recognition that, as she puts it: 'if reading is to remain a productive activity, it must be historical and critical rather than prophetic' (194). For Rajan this self-consciously historicized mode of Romantic textuality is described in terms of a heuristic, as opposed to a divinatory, hermeneutics. The word heuristic is of course perfectly suited to my concerns: '*heuristic* 1. Serving to find out; *spec*. applied to a system of education under which the pupil is trained to find out things for himself.' (OED)

The question Godwin's critics, especially Rajan, raise is not whether Godwin's novels are heuristic (in the sense of educational); they clearly are. The question, rather,

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[11] Marilyn Butler and Mark Philp. 'Introduction.' *Collected Novels and Memoirs*. Vol. 1. *Autobiography, Autobiographical Fragments and Reflections, Godwin/Shelley Correspondence, Memoirs*. Ed. Mark Philp (London: William Pickering, 1992) 43-4. See also Clemit. *The Godwinian Novel*, 42.

[12] Tilottama Rajan. *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice*. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990) 169.

concerns whether the heuristic dimension of such novels can or cannot calculate their consequences, their effects. The question is one about reason and its ability to render itself, an idea which so far I have been describing in a Godwinian, necessitarian sense in which reason is involved in a singular reproduction; a reproduction, or replication, or even rebirth, unique each time. I have also been describing such a concept as a problem, a question, concerning the possibility of in-forming. On Rajan's philosophically-informed reading there can be no guarantee that the Godwinian novel, as a space or scene of instruction, will not in-form rather than inform. That is to say, there is no guarantee for Godwin as novelist that his historically contingent novels will not eventually be read in ways he himself would view as malformed, in-formed, or even monstrous. Even if we allow for the principle of reason, and understand that principle in terms of the idea of reason's ability to render itself, the recognition of the historical contingency of the contents of reason – reason's forms and presentations – would suggest that a heuristic hermeneutics, a vision of education as able to instruct beyond power and mastery, could not possibly calculate the results of its future readings.

What a focus on *Telemachus*, as an intertext in the Godwinian novel, allows us to do is to demonstrate that such questions about reading and reason, about tendency and calculability, are at least partly played out in metanarrative scenes of instruction, or what Rajan calls *scenes of reading*. What these metanarrative moments tend to do is to present us with moments of Godwinian sincerity, a face-to-face rendition of reason usually unavailable in the normal course of social existence. They give us (inter)textualized moments of sincerity (and thus, in Godwin's terms, of reason conveyed and received) and

thus suggest an on-going commitment to the idea of the novel form as a friend, a mentor, eye to eye amidst the ruins.

Three of the six major novels have significant intertextual references to *Telemachus* within them: ***St. Leon***, ***Fleetwood*** and ***Cloudesley***.[13] Each one of them employs *Telemachus* as part of a metacommentary, a metanarrative reflection on its reading, its tendency. I will take these examples in reverse order.

Cloudesely has scattered allusions to *Telemachus* and to the Mentor/Minerva figure. Two allusions to the origin of Minerva, springing out of the head of Jove, are applied, respectively, to Julian and to Frederigo. These allusions intertextually mark the novel's theme of the possibility of innate nobility (*Cloudesley*, 150, 208). But the main section in which *Telemachus* allusions accumulate is at the end of the narrative, as Meadows recounts his journey to Italy in search of Julian. The novel at this stage is full of doubles, disguised identities. Julian is ignorant of the fact that he is the real heir to the Alton and Danvers estates. He has been raised by Cloudesley as his son. Richard, Lord Danvers, his father's brother, is an impostor, a usurper of his noble name. Meadows is to travel to Italy, save Julian from St Elmo, master bandit, who is really Frederigo, Count Camaldoli, and restore him to his former position, with Meadows now acting as the false father to the false son. Lord Danvers warns Meadows that 'You will need the subtlety of Ulysses to guard your secret' (252). In other words, Meadows is to act like Ulysses at the end of *Telemachus* and the end of *The Odyssey*, returning to his homeland in disguise to restore order and the son to his rightful position as heir; only this is a foreign kingdom and the son is to remain secretly usurped. Meadows's reaction to Lord Danvers's

[13] A reference to Mentor can also be found in *Italian Letters*. *Collected Novels and Memoirs*. Vol. 2. *Damon and Delia, Italian Letters, Imogen*. Ed. Pamela Clemit. (London: William Pickering, 1992) 81.

narrative, in which he confesses his usurpation of his nephew's true name, produces an important metanarrative moment. Meadows writes:

> I cheerfully promised to lord Danvers every thing he required. I felt deeply interested in the story he had so unreservedly detailed to me. And, learning it as I did from the lips of a man, bearing an ancient title, and commanding ample possessions, a man highly educated, of a cultivated mind, who had figured honourably in the field, and who stood in the presence of princes, it struck me very differently from what it would have done, if I had met with it in a book, and read it as a memoir of incidents that had passed in a former generation. There was much that was commanding in the presence of lord Danvers, and impressive in his voice and his gestures. He had told me, as I firmly believed, the whole truth, without the reserve of a single particle, and had spoken of his misgivings and compunctions in a manner which, in spite of myself, made his feelings mine. There is something which can scarcely be resisted in the whole effect of a man, who tells you all, and speaks to you as ingenuously as he is bound to speak in the presence of his Creator. When he thus surrenders himself into your hands, it is scarcely possible that you should not give him in return your sympathy and your aid. (252)

A figure in a book, here, tells the reader of this book that true sympathy and belief is generated best in person – face to face – and not in books; and thus, in that strange way we often see in such metanarrative moments, he raises this book beyond the mere status

of a book. It seems that it is Meadows's role in the novel to stage such moments. He has already earlier broken into Lord Danvers's narrative to give an extended commentary on the integrity and ethical greatness of Cloudesley, and to remark on how his parental and teacherly care and love of Julian was greater than Julian would ever know. Cloudesley was Mentor to Julian as Telemachus. This is already clear. And this is the role, the mentor-role, Lord Danvers charges Meadows with adopting. After his extended metanarrative commentary on the sincerity of Lord Danvers, as he sails towards Italy and Julian's home, Meadows teaches himself Italian: 'The first book I applied myself to, independently of the Dialogues annexed to the Grammar, was the Adventures of Telemachus, which had been published thirty or forty years before, and the translation of which into Italian is the easiest book that can be put into the hands of a learner' (255). Meadows is going to have to learn how to take Coudesley's place. Despite closing the novel as narrator, and despite having the opening six chapters dedicated to his own story, it is not Meadows but Cloudesley who is the hero of this novel. It is Cloudesley, out of his love for Julian, who has learnt to be Mentor, reforming himself from a misanthropist to a man who can transcend consanguinity and adopt a noble, benevolent, ethically pure disguise. And Meadows is going to have to learn how to do this too: so he reads Fénelon's *Telemachus.* We finish the novel with Meadows accompanying Julian home to his rightful position and name: 'It was his [Julian's] desire, that the same person whom his uncle had chosen to be his preserver and saviour, should accompany him and be his Mentor in his life to come' (284). But the crucial role Meadows plays is to narrate Cloudesley's story, his transcendent teaching, his role as Mentor, and then to gift that narrative to the reader.

Fleetwood employs *Telemachus* in similar, metatextual ways. The Telemachus intertexts centre first around Fleetwood's mentors (Ruffigny and Macneil) and then, in the third volume, Fleetwood's inability to take on the role of mentor himself. Fleetwood's youth is marked by the absence of a mentor, both on a private and then a public educational sphere. He states, having left Oxford: 'I was young and unguarded; I had no Mentor to set my follies before me in their true light; I had passed the Rubicon of vice, and therefore was deficient in the salutary checks of reflection.'[14] The figure of Mentor, as this passage explains, is a reflector, a mirror to the self; a teacher who does not in-form, but rather gives back to the pupil an image of his real self. As Deloraine puts it, quoting Shakespeare and referring to his perfect relationship with Emilia: 'The eye sees not itself, but by reflection from some other thing.'[15] But Mentor is also, as we have seen from the example of Cloudesley, a teacher who becomes the true, authentic father through a transcendence of consanguinity. This is precisely the story that Ruffingy gifts to Fleetwood. Fleetwood's grandfather was Mentor to Ruffigny as Ruffigny is now Mentor (mirror, father-figure), or trying to be, to Fleetwood. To inform the pupil of his imperative to render reason, to reflect, it would appear that the mentor (friend, teacher) must be a mirror. It seems appropriate, in that context, to note that the metanarrative scenes of instruction provided by Telemachus as intertext are themselves mirrors (reflective surfaces) for the novels in which they appear. The whole narrative of Ruffigny is a metanarrative in this sense, since it serves as a commentary throughout on the teaching Ruffigny, in presenting the narrative of his own life, is attempting to gift to

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[14] *Collected Novels and Memoirs*. Vol. 5. *Fleetwood: or, The New Man of Feeling*. Ed. Pamela Clemit (London: William Pickering, 1992) 52.
[15] *Collected Novels and Memoirs*. Vol. 8. *Deloraine*. Ed. Maurice Hindle. (London: William Pickering, 1992) 19.

Fleetwood. A teaching which does not in-form but encourages the pupil to reflect, think for himself, read. The narrative of Ruffigny, which includes the narratives of his father and grandfather, is a text Ruffigny gives Fleetwood to read in order that he might see himself.

Fleetwood's response is to repeat the adventures of Telemachus. Unable to initially accept the lessons supplied by his mentor he starts to become ensnared by 'the bewitching Mrs Comorin' (130), who stands as the nymph Eucharis to Fleetwood's Telemachus: 'I was like Telemachus in the island of Calypso, so inflamed by the wiles of the God of Love, so enamoured with the graces and witchcraft of my Eucharis, that all remonstrances were vain' (132). However, Ruffigny's face saves the day, since his face is a text: 'the countenance of the venerable Swiss was a book where I could trace the history of my ancestors . . . . From this period I became an altered man' (136). Ruffigny is Mentor and thus he is a book Fleetwood can, indeed *must* read. And the lesson is clear: Fleetwood must go home and fulfil his familial destiny: 'In me the race of the Fleetwoods shall survive; I will become heir to the integrity and personal honour of the virtuous Ruffigny' (137). But one of the indisputable things we learn about Fleetwood is that he in fact is not a very good reader. He is someone who would not necessarily see the moral in transparent fables such as that of Alnaschar in the *Arabian Nights* or La Fontaine's story of the milkmaid.[16] He is someone, like those fictional characters, who cannot take his chances. And so, twenty years later, he is gifted another mentor, Macneil, who presents to

[16] As Clemit explains: 'Alnaschar was the dreamer who invested all his money in a basket of glassware, which he intended to sell and buy other wares, until he was rich enough to marry the vizier's daughter; still daydreaming about how he might quarrel with her, he kicked out and broke all his glassware' ('The Tale of the Barber's Fifth Brother'). *Fleetwood*, 105. Godwin wrongly attributes the story of the milkmaid to Aesop. Clemit gives the following account: 'It parallels the story of Alnaschar: the milkmaid planned to sell the milk and buy other produce until she made enough money to buy a cow and calf; then, imagining how the calf would skip, she gave a skip herself, and let fall the pail of milk which she was carrying on her head' ('La Laitière et le Pot au Lait'). *Fleetwood*, 108.

him an imaginary novel in which Fleetwood is the hero; a *Robinson Crusoe* story in which the character standing for Fleetwood takes the chance, stranded on an island, of friendship with the only other survivor, 'the most gross, perverse, and stupid of the crew' (163). But Fleetwood is a man who even presented with a novel presumably entitled 'Fleetwood' cannot read it properly, cannot take the chance of it and learn the lesson of human sympathy and sincerity it so transparently transmits. He even takes the advice of Macneil, 'my deceased Mentor' (220) and marries his youngest daughter and gathers his relations around him (Kenrick and Gifford). But as we know he does not read that advice accurately.

I am not at all suggesting that the scattered allusions and echoes of Fénelon's text allow for anything like an adequate reading of the novel as a whole. Is Macneil's advice, to marry a young woman and then mould her, actually such good advice to Fleetwood, or any man in his mid-40s? What I am saying is that these intertextual lexia contribute to our sense of how the novel stages metanarrative commentaries on its own reception. In this sense at least, paying attention to the intertexts and their function within the novel it is not implausible to describe *Fleetwood* as an anti-*Telemachus*, a text in which the questing hero fails the pedagogical process of enlightenment; fails it twice over in fact. Fleetwood becomes in Volume III a man who should be Mentor to others, in particular Mary. Fleetwood is an anti-Telemachus, and eventually an anti-Mentor, save, that is, for his narrative voice which can, of course, reflect on his errors and his guilt and his previous failure to learn and to read accurately.

As we know from Godwin the notion of an anti-*Telemachus* might work on the level of plot, but it is a concept we need to look at again on the level of the intellectual

tendency of a text such as *Fleetwood*. Given that texts, on the basis of the argument presented in 'Of Choice in Reading,' do not in themselves in-form, corrupt, mis-shape their readers, then an anti-*Telemachus* (a text in which Telemachus does not learn, or does not learn in the presence of his Mentor) can have just as ethically and rationally an enlightening effect on its readers as can *Telemachus, Son of Ulysses*. Such thoughts seem to be taking us closer to what we know about the Godwinian novel and its presentation of 'things as they are.' The idea of an anti-*Telemachus*, on the level of plot, is also potentially highly useful in our reading of *St. Leon*.[17]

The intertexts again settle around two main sections. First the section that moves us from St Leon's inability to benefit from Damville's mentorship (74) through to the stranger's gifting of the philosopher's stone and elixir vitæ; the second, concerning the novel's close. A rather specific allusion to Fénelon's text occurs in the first of these sections. On lamenting his inability to live up to the benefits bestowed upon him by Damville and to act as an adequate husband to Marguerite and father to their children, St Leon states: 'I could act that which had involved us in this dire reverse [i.e. act the gambler]; but I could not encounter the consequences of my act.' He goes on: 'I carried an arrow in my heart, which the kindness of my wife and children proved inadequate to extract, and the ranklings of which time itself had not the power to assuage. The wound was not mortal; but, like the wound of Philoctetes, poisoned with the blood of the Lernean hydra, I dragged it about with me from year to year, and it rendered my existence a galling burden hardly to be supported' (75). As Pamela Clemit notes, Philoctetes had been 'the arm-bearer and friend of Hercules' but on his way to the Trojan

[17] *Collected Novels and Memoirs*. Vol. 4. *St Leon: A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*. Ed. Pamela Clemit. (London: William Pickering, 1992).

War had been 'bitten in the foot by a serpent; his cries of pain and the stench of his wound, which would not heal, caused Ulysses to abandon him on the island of Lemnos.' Philoctetes inherited the arrows of Hercules which 'had been dipped in the blood of the Hydra.' (75) It is in *Telemachus* that we get a fuller account of Philoctetes' trials. Philoctetes tells Telemachus how Hercules had betrayed his wife Deianeira and had died by the shirt of Nessus. We learn of how Hercules had sworn Philoctetes to secrecy over his death and his burial place. We also learn how he had given his arrows to Philoctetes, but how: 'these arrows he had given me to raise me above the heroes, proved an inexhaustible source of woe.' (Riley, 202) He drops by mistake one of the arrows on his foot and is left by Ulysses and his followers to rage in agony for years on Lemnos.[18] Neoptolemus (son of Achilles) tries to get the arrows from him, since he knows that it has been prophesied that Troy will be taken only if the arrows of Hercules are used in the siege.[19] Ulysses returns and tries to get the arrows from his sworn enemy. Philoctetes resists until a vision of Hercules persuades him otherwise. Philoctetes joins Ulysses in the siege of Troy and is partly cured of his wound.

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[18] . The main tradition of the myth, in Homer's *Iliad* and in Sophocles's *Philoctetes*, gives a different cause for Philoctetes's wound, a snake-bite. Another version claims that Philoctetes had accidentally stepped on the ashes of the funeral pyre of Heracles. We have then, in the myth, a wound created by natural causes, by irony (dropping the arrows) and by profanation. It is less than surprising and yet still potentially significant that both Fénelon and Godwin should choose so decisively the more modern path of irony. Certainly, the fact that the myth focuses on the consequences of secrets, but also on the consequences of wounds (the wounding of the honourable and the truthful), gives it a significance which speaks directly to Godwinian fiction and, indeed, modern fiction in general.

[19] Neoptolemus's role is crucial, since it is his recognition of the humanity of Philoctetes's situation that paves the way for the latter's insight, via the intercession of the voice of Hercules, that he must find a cure by re-entering the political scene, embodied in the Greek war against Troy. In Seamus Heaney's modern translation of Sophocles's drama, Neoptolemus is given the quintessentially Godwinian line, addressed to the politically pragmatic Odysseus: 'Since when did the use of reason rule out truth?' Seamus Heaney. *The Cure at Troy: A Version of Sophocles's 'Philoctetes'*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1990) 66. *St Leon* fully merits a reading which would explore its embedded intertextual encounter, via Fénelon, with the political and aesthetic and psychological ramifications of the myth of Philoctetes. Such a reading might begin by returning to Edmund Wilson's influential study of Sophocles' play in the last chapter of his *The Wound and the Bow: Seven Studies in Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press, 1941) 272-95.

There are two reasons I am labouring this intertext. First, it gives us the theme of an incurable wound that causes a character's, Philoctetes's, total, social alienation and that is, eventually, because of a reversal of character (i.e. in Philoctetes), partly cured. As part of the story of that wound there is a secret (of Hercules's death and burial place) which is revealed during the narrative concerning the wound. The second reason this *Telemachus* intertext might require our extended analysis is that it returns in the text, as St Leon himself is given the secrets of the stranger, the secrets which will create an apparently incurable wound within St Leon. Just as he is about to give his secret to St Leon and then to die, the stranger says to him: 'After my death I have but one injunction to leave with you — the injunction of Hercules to Philocletes — that no inducement may move you to betray to mortal man the place in which you shall have deposited my ashes. Bury them in a spot which I will describe to you . . . and that once done, speak of me and, if possible, think of me no more' (133-4). At the moment that St Leon is narrating this pivotal scene – the scene in which he receives the secret that will ruin him and all around him; the scene in which he receives his apparently incurable wound – St Leon is revealing the secret – to whom?

> Senseless paper! be thou at least my confidant! To thee I may impart what my soul spurns the task to suppress. The human mind insatiably thirsts for a confidant and a friend. It is no matter that these pages shall never be surveyed by other eyes than mine. They afford at least the semblance of communication and the unburdening of the mind . . . . (137)

Are we presented here with the semblance or 'simulacrum' of a narrative turning into a true (authentic) narrative communication? A secret that was kept and is now revealed? A narrative of error turning into a text of enlightenment? An incurable wound that is partly healed? Answers to all these questions depend upon how we read the ending of the novel. What happens when we introduce *Telemachus* into what is already a hugely complicated scenario of doublings and reversals: Charles, the son, acting as friend and parental figure to St Leon, now Henry D'Aubigny, formerly the detested Chatillon. St Leon, disguised, seeking to act as parental helper to his son and only serving to bring catastrophe on him in alienating him from Pandora. St Leon returned to the guise of Chatillon secretly assisting his son for thirty years as the son persists in viewing him as his mortal enemy. An anti-*Telemachus*? A tale of secrets perpetuated or of wounds partly cured? What happens if we read into these scenarios a covert allusion to the end of *Telemachus*?

In Fénelon's conclusion, Book XXIV, Telemachus meets Ulysses disguised as a Phyrgian sailor. Much is made in this meeting of the inexplicable attraction and sympathy Telemachus feels for this stranger, who has adopted the disguise of Cleomenes: 'Then did a secret impression of sorrow invade the heart of Telemachus, who grieved he knew not why.'[20] Telemachus is informed that Cleomenes is a wanderer because of the words of an oracle given before his birth which prophesied that he would become the leader of the country he settles in, but that if he remains in his homeland the Phyrgians 'would feel the wrath of the gods in a cruel pestilence' (294). Thus Cleomenes, revered by all who meet him, and yet unwelcome to settle in any land he visits, must wander the earth, friendless,

[20] Tobias Smollett. (Trans.) *The Adventures of Telemachus, the Son of Ulysses*. Ed. O. M. Brack, Jnr. (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1997) 296. I have chosen Smollett's translation for most of the quotations in this essay since it is the one with which Godwin's readers would have been most familiar.

cursed by the alienating wound of the oracle. The whole episode, when it is finally explained by Mentor, is meant to reaffirm the need for Telemachus to have patience (298). But this climactic scene also confirms the necessity and the educationally beneficial nature of the pedagogical mask: there have been secrets, disguises and allegorical fables about wandering sailors for a reason. As Mentor exposes the identity of Telemachus's father in the departed Phyrgian sailor, and just before Mentor discloses her own identity as Minerva, he (she) reconfirms the necessity for the double structure of teaching. Mentor declares in a last grand statement, reminding the reader as he does of the Duke of Burgundy, for whom this classic text has been written:

> Son of Ulysses, hear me once more, and for the last time. I never took so much pains to instruct any mortal as you. I have led you, as it were, by the hand through shipwrecks, unknown lands, bloody wars, and all the disasters that the heart of man can encounter. I have shewn you by facts, of which you was a witness, the consequences of the true and false maxims adopted in government: and your errors have been no less serviceable to you than your misfortunes. For, who is the man that can pretend to rule a people wisely, who has never suffered, nor ever profited by the sufferings which his errors have occasioned? Like your father, you have filled both sea and land with your disastrous adventures. Go, you are now worthy of having him for your model . . . . (299)

Fénelon's text ends with a scene of instruction which stands in itself as a metacommentary on the text as a whole. Mentor's speech, and his transfiguration into

Minerva, turn education (the adventures which are completed and narrativized) into an allegory which now, finally, at the proper time, is unfolded. Allegory (and *Telemachus* is one of the eighteenth-century's great political allegories) becomes here the double structure of teaching, a double structure of fiction which is unfolded in and by the pupil.

The double structure of allegory seems to confirm the necessity for the double structure of teaching. We need, it would appear from Fénelon's text, the double structure of friend and master, mentor and female divinity, father and stranger, before the full moment of the pupil's reflection unfolds that structure, that allegory, into the singleness of a post-pupilic identity and agency. We seem to be back with our question concerning why Godwin preferred Fénelon's text over Rousseau's *Émile*. A more sustained analysis of the ending of *St Leon*, so obviously in part inspired by the conclusion of Telemachus, might help us to answer that question.

Charles, who has years previously broken with his paternal family and taken the maternal name of Damville, feels, like Telemachus confronting the Phrygian wanderer, an inexplicable attraction and sympathy for the man he has rescued from Bethlem Gabor's dungeon and who he knows as Henry D'Aubiny: 'He felt, he said, a powerful sympathy in my tale; there was something in my countenance that irresistibly won his kindness' (352). Henry is apparently ten years his junior and Charles's attraction extends to the point of an elder brother's pedagogical concern: 'Suffer me, my dear friend, to represent your better genius,' he says to his father, 'and act an elder brother's part. You shall find me no ignorant Mentor, and no ungentle one' (353). St Leon, for his part, like Ulysses before him, knows his son immediately: 'But I knew him; I knew him in a moment. My soul, with the rapidity of lightning, told me who he was. Not all the arts in

the world could have hid him from me; not all the tales that delusion ever framed could have baffled me' (349). However, it is here, after Godwin's reiteration of the topic of 'natural sympathy' between son and disguised father, that *St Leon's* narrative account of this scenario begins to swerve away from its intertext. Mentor praises Ulysses's secrecy about his true identity to Telemachus.[21] It is part of the text's confirmation of the double structure of instruction and fiction that Ulysses's necessary subterfuge, even towards his own son, be deemed heroic and 'sagacious.' St Leon's disguise, however, is a curse, a tragic alienation which leads eventually to a destruction of friendship and familial feeling, as it has done time and time again in St Leon's lengthy narrative history. St Leon states:

> I was cheated, as I have once before remarked, with the form of a man, but had nothing of the substance . . . . I had the use of words; I could address my fellow-beings; I could enter into dialogue with them. I could discourse of every indifferent thing that the universe contained; I could talk of every thing but my own feelings. This, and not the dungeon of Bethlem Gabor, is the true solitude. (374)

St Leon does not, like its intertext, confirm or celebrate the double scene of teaching. St Leon's double disguise (he is, as Charles finds out, Chatillon disguised as D'Aubingy) causes an irredeemable rupture between father and son, whilst also allowing for the father, eventually, to assist the son in gaining his proper destiny in marriage and career. St Leon's lack of identity in his social and familial relations is an incurable wound and a cure; he finds a true friend in his son but is unable to experience true (natural)

[21] See Smollett, 296-7.

friendship with him (361-2). The novel ends with the union of Charles and Pandora and St Leon proudly going over his son's accomplishments, so that he can end with the idea that 'this busy and anxious world of ours yet contains something in its stores that is worth living for' (383). And yet, St Leon is debarred from this 'worth,' and if he acts as a mentor to his son at the conclusion of the novel he does so as an anti-Mentor, a teacher and friend who cannot finally reveal himself. Reason is rendered in the son, at the end of *St Leon*, but this occurs in a context in which truth (which for Godwin always includes and relies upon confidence, frankness, sincerity) is missing. An irreversibly doubled, unenlightened scene of instruction renders reason at the end of *St Leon*. Which seems to make the novel an anti-*Telemachus*. And yet, as we have seen, *Telemachus*, for all Godwin's obvious esteem for it as a text, relies on a double structure of instruction Godwin would eschew from the moment instruction begins. *Telemachus* gives us a final moment of self-revelation on the part of the teacher, which is perhaps why Godwin values it so highly, but it does so in confirmation of the necessity of the whole text's allegorical and pedagogical duplicity, its fictional and educational double dealing.

This tension between a *Telemachus* and an anti-*Telemachus* narrative structure would need further examination; for now I would say that the double structure of teaching makes it difficult to determine whether such an opposition is in any way tenable. Literature, fiction, as we have seen, partake themselves of the same, or equivalent double structure as the Enlightenment pedagogy of Locke, Fénelon and Rousseau. Literaure can never say what it wants to say without or outside of the double structure of allegory. All literature can do is to suspend such tensions, such duplicities, in the sense of raising them to the view of the pupil, of our pupils.

Thinking about what all this might mean for an understanding of a Godwinian novel such as *St Leon* might return us to Book I Chapter IV of the revised *Political Justice.* This is the chapter in which Godwin critiques the double structure of teaching: 'Preceptors are apt to pique themselves,' he writes, 'upon disclosing part and concealing part of the truth.' He goes on: 'But children are not inclined to consider him entirely as their friend, whom they detect in an attempt to impose upon them.' Godwin adds: 'The success of an attempt to mislead can never be complete:'

> We continually communicate in spite of ourselves the materials of just reasoning; reason is the genuine exercise, and truth the native element of an intellectual nature; it is no wonder therefore that, with a crude and abortive plan to govern his efforts, the preceptor is perpetually baffled, and the pupil, who has been thus stored with systematic delusions, and half-discovered, clandestine truths, should come out any thing rather than that which his instructor intended him. (PJ IV, 25)

But what are we to do as teachers, since, as Godwin goes on to state, it is difficult to see where a rational teacher unstained by the irrationalities of political government might come from. Even if we can imagine such a wholly rational teacher his pupil would be torn between his instruction and the powerful force of an irrational society from which he cannot escape: 'From earliest infancy therefore there will be two principles contending for empire, the peculiar and elevated system of the preceptor, and the grovelling views of the great mass of mankind' (PJ IV, 26). When this imagined child reaches puberty all hell will break out and the infection of the world become almost impossible to resist. All we

can hope for, says Godwin, finishing his chapter, 'is that he should return at last to sobriety and truth, with a mind hackneyed and relaxed by repeated errors, and a moral constitution in which the seeds of debility have been widely and irretrievably sown' (PJ IV, 27).[22]

Book I Chapter IV of the revised *Political Justice*, Godwin argues, is part of a necessary preparing of the ground before the way can be 'sufficiently cleared for political melioration' (PJ IV, 28). Yet, in itself, the chapter ends with the plotline of a Godwinian novel. A young man is given an enlightenment education, an education in which the double structure of traditional pedagogy is rejected in favour of reason sincerely and directly conveyed. Yet the world is what it is and we end with our hero torn between the two contending influences; suspended to the view of our pupils, as it were, between reason and the power of ideology, truth and error, true morality and moral degeneracy. Replacing the issue of power and moral corruption with the problem of literature's and education's apparently ineradicable double structure, *St Leon*, at its close, produces a similar suspension, a deferral of tensions which for now are irresolvable but which the novel, in the name of what can come, holds up to our view. We might have to countenance the idea that Godwin did not and could not know what he would be saying by the end of *St Leon*. And we might also have to countenance the idea that he knew that he did not, and could not know, what he would be saying.

[22] I have employed the 1793, 1796 and 1798 versions of *Political Justice* in this essay, although it must be remarked that greater attention to the textual changes between editions than I have the opportunity of presenting in this essay is undoubtedly required. Here, for example, that last phrase in the 1796 text is changed in the 1798 text to read: 'in which the seeds of degeneracy have been deeply and extensively sown' (PJ IV, 27).