



Romanticism on the Net

“Albert’s soul looked forth from the organs of Madeline”: Anticipating Transness in William Godwin Jr.’s *Transfusion* (1835)

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Abstract

This article examines William Godwin Jr.’s only novel *Transfusion* (1835) as an anticipation of transness. Building on existing scholarship that argues Godwin Jr. as attempting to remedy his position as an outsider to the Godwin-Shelley circle through presenting biological, familial ties as inviolable, this article extends the conversation to how the fixity of blood ties also informs his presentation of the fixity of biological sex. Albert’s transfusion of his soul into the body of his sister Madeline proves fatal: employing trans theory, primarily Judith Butler’s *Bodies That Matter*, I argue the author affirms fixed sexual boundaries by presenting a female/male fusion as being inherently destructive, diseased, and ultimately unlivable. I then document how this contrasts with Godwin Jr.’s half-sister Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley’s interrogation and destabilisation of sexual boundaries in *Frankenstein* (1818) through analysing Victor’s creation—and destruction—of the Female Creature. While Godwin Jr.’s entity dies directly as a result of an intrinsic and unavoidable “failing mechanism” within the body itself, the Female Creature’s extrinsic and avoidable death comes about because of Victor’s fear that she may “refuse to comply” with the narrowly defined, deterministic role he designates for her as being only a romantic partner for the Creature.

Biographical Note

Simon Clewes is a third-year PhD student at the University of Birmingham. Their research looks at queerness and transness in the writing of William Godwin, his circle, and beyond, including Mary Wollstonecraft, Joanna Baillie, William Godwin Jr., Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Percy Shelley, and Edward Bulwer-Lytton.

1. William Godwin Jr. did not live long enough to see the publication of his only novel.

Transfusion; or, the Orphans of Unwalden (1835) was published three years after his

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untimely death from cholera aged 29, having been edited and prefaced with a memoir by his father.¹

2. Despite praise from Godwin Sr. of the novel's "conception" as "extraordinary" ("Memoir" 145), *Transfusion*—published during that "shadowy stretch of time sandwiched between two far more colourful periods" (Cronin 1)—arrived to little fanfare, is yet to be republished, and remains significantly under-researched.² This article will serve to help remedy this: I look at the novel's portrayal of the gendered body, arguing that Godwin Jr.'s conception of the "soul's transfusion" (30; vol. 3) represents a pre-Victorian vision of transness. The purposes of this article are therefore twofold: to study the novel's portrayal of the transgendered body and its relation to selfhood and identity, and to resuscitate interest in the neglected work—and its neglected author—more generally.
3. Following surgery to cure his inborn deafness, Albert, the novel's protagonist, discovers the soul's transfusion when meditating on the sublimity of music during a concert. Such ability allows him to "change his own mind with that of any other" (32; vol. 3). After becoming increasingly jealous of his sister Madeline's romance with the Count de Mara, he decides to transfuse his soul into her body. Disaster ensues: Madeline's soul escapes to "another world" (289), Albert is trapped, and the entity survives for just minutes. His desire to see life through his sister's eyes—and experience first-hand the love of De Mara—sees his transfusion becoming transgendered, and, ultimately, proving fatally transgressive.

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4. While we might read this within the context of eighteenth-century theories of sympathetic transport, my reading of the novel will focus specifically on how the author portrays the embodiment of gender. Employing Judith Butler's seminal *Bodies That Matter* (1993), in conjunction with more recent trans scholarship on gender and the body, I argue that the Albert/Madeline entity's transgendered status is directly linked to its death. Godwin Jr. presents and affirms a female/male fusion as being, quite literally, what Butler details as the "unlivable" (*Bodies* 188). I document the contrasts here between the affirmation of fixed sexual boundaries in *Transfusion*, and Godwin Jr.'s half-sister Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's interrogation of such boundaries in *Frankenstein* (1818). Both authors depict manmade beings whose human creators experiment with—and push the limits of—biology. While both Albert and Victor fatally fail to cross such boundaries successfully, given the eventual death of their creations, I will focus my analysis specifically upon the *inherent* unlivability of the transgendered Albert/Madeline entity, as opposed to the *avoidable* death of the Female Creature. While the entity's death comes as a result of an intrinsic and unavoidable "failing mechanism" (Godwin Jr. 291; vol. 3) within the body itself, the Female Creature's extrinsic and avoidable death comes only as a result of Victor's fear that she may "refuse to comply" (Shelley 41; vol. 3) with the narrowly defined, deterministic role he designates for her as being only a romantic partner for the Creature.

5. In her 2017 article "Family Genius and Family Blood," Beatrice Turner argues that Godwin Jr.'s unusual, and contrasting, presentation of the supremacy of blood and the fixity of biological, familial ties in *Transfusion Transfusion* to have been a result of

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Godwin's son's difficult place as an outsider from the Godwin-Shelley circle. Turner reads the novel's "insistence on the inviolable priority of biological family ties" (461) as the son attempting to claim his own place within the writing family, warning of the dangers if one dares cross or disregard the boundaries defined by blood. This article extends the conversation to how the son's presentation of the supremacy of blood and biology informs his presentation of the fixity of sex: I document how Godwin Jr.'s promotion of biological ties directly informs his promotion of fixed sexual boundaries and, in turn, binary gender, opening up and inviting wider questions with regard to Romantic femininity and masculinity, the embodied experience, and how *Transfusion* can enhance and develop our understanding across these areas.

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6. Given the relative obscurity of *Transfusion*, a little background on both novel and author will perhaps be beneficial to familiarise the reader. Godwin Jr., born in 1803 as the only son of William Godwin Sr. and his second wife Mary Jane Clairmont, began his writing career as a political reporter for the *Morning Chronicle* and *The Mirror of Parliament*, as well as having several literary essays and a short story published in *The Examiner* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*; he only discovered his talent for writing fiction shortly before his death.

7. *Transfusion* follows the story of orphans Albert and his older sister Madeline as they search for their estranged uncle following the passing of their mother. Early on in their

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quest, while spending the night at a crowded inn, they encounter the handsome and enchanting Count de Mara. This man takes an instant romantic liking to Madeline, much to the increasing jealousy of Albert, whom the Count treats with an indifference that borders, at times, on a seemingly unfounded dislike (the surgery that cures his deafness is organised by De Mara, who cruelly wishes it to prove fatal to the young man). Albert then repeatedly attempts, but never succeeds, to “obliterate” this dislike the Count harbours for him; De Mara, by contrast, can feel only a “disgust at his presence” and at his “very existence” (267, 274; vol. 1). Through a series of complicated twists and turns across three volumes, the novel then centres primarily upon the increasingly passionate relationship between De Mara and Madeline, and the increasingly turbulent one of De Mara and Albert. This culminates in the fatal moment where Albert transfuses into his sister’s body after becoming overwhelmingly frustrated with, and envious of, being excluded from experiencing the Count’s attention in the way Madeline is able.

8. Despite being referred to as “the soul’s transfusion,” this actual act of transfusion that Albert undertakes has not so much a spiritual basis but instead runs closer to research into the blood that was undergoing a resurgence of interest at the time in which Godwin Jr. was writing. The concept of transfusing blood from one being to another first arose from the experiments on circulation carried out by the physician William Harvey in the early seventeenth century, where the primary aim of transfusing was to cure recipients of ailments through balancing deficiencies (Greenwalt 551). Throughout the century, successful experiments in the transfusion of blood between animals were performed, but subsequent efforts by physicians to transfuse animal blood into humans in England and

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France had unreliable, even fatal, results (553). The deaths of human participants saw the Paris Faculty of Medicine ban transfusions into humans for the best part of a century. However, towards the end of the eighteenth century, medical interest in the practice began to revive and, in 1825, the English obstetrician James Blundell performed the first successful human-human transfusion for the treatment of a postpartum haemorrhage by taking two ounces of blood from the patient's husband (Welck et al. 196). From 1825 to 1830, he performed ten documented transfusions. A further four of these similarly proved beneficial to his patients, including three other cases of postpartum haemorrhages and one case of post-amputation hypervolemia (ibid).

9. Between 1825 and 1827, accounts of Blundell's successes were published in two of the newspapers Godwin Jr. was writing for. The *Morning Chronicle* documented the obstetrician's first successful case in 1825, describing how "six ounces of blood" taken from the husband of the patient were "very cautiously injected, and produced an immediate beneficial effect" ("Case of Transfusion of Blood" 4). *The Examiner* reported a "successful case of transfusion of blood into the veins" in 1826; a year later, they describe another "operation of transfusion" having been "performed with a common bone syringe" ("Newspaper Chat" 9, 11-2). While these anonymous reports cannot allow us to say for certain that Godwin Jr. knew specifically of Blundell's work, the way in which the young author portrays the act of transfusion between Albert and Madeline suggests that he at least took some inspiration from the pioneering medical practices that were occurring at the time in which he was writing *Transfusion*. Albert describes his ability as one that grants him the knowledge of how to "pour that which is in one man's brain into

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another's" (32; vol. 3) where the soul is depicted, like blood, as having a material, liquid-like quality. Godwin Jr.'s portrayal of a material soul speaks, furthermore, to the changing conception of transfusion documented in Ann Louise Kibbie's *Transfusion* (2019), with the move away from the figurative/sympathetic understanding of the eighteenth century, to the blood/body-based transfusion emerging in the early nineteenth. Kibbie, furthermore, pinpoints William Godwin Sr.'s *St. Leon* (1799) as the first text to employ "distinctly anatomical imagery to describe the ideal sympathetic communion," in which there is a "fusion of literal internal systems and metaphor, of actual and imaginary."³

10. In Godwin Jr.'s climatic conclusion, however, this act of transfusion clearly does not emulate the medical success of Blundell, or the sympathetic ideal of Godwin Sr.: rather, it is depicted as a disaster that leads to the death of both its human participants. Blundell's mother and child survive; Albert and Madeline die. The brother's desire to transfuse into his sister is shown, ultimately, to be fatal. By attempting to switch bodies with his sister, he tragically crosses a biological boundary: he steps out of his assigned role as the doting sibling of Madeline, and instead attempts to be Madeline herself. Albert's brotherly love, where initially he tries to offer "thanks" to De Mara for heightening "the enjoyment of a person he loved so entirely [Madeline]," becomes far outweighed by the inescapable and increasingly consuming "envy" he feels at "the engrossing quality of De Mara's attention to Madeline," wishing instead to have a share of such attention directed towards himself (235-36; vol. 1). Albert's all-consuming desire to live as Madeline, to exist within her body and experience her passionate connection to

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De Mara for himself, sees his fierce envy transform fatally into action. The brother justifies his decision to transfuse by affirming: “there was some strange unaccountable principle stirring within her, and that to ascertain it was beyond his power without resorting to the great arcanum that belonged to him” (288; vol. 3). In order to realise his desires—the “betraying secret,” he describes, that “tempt[s] him on” (291)—he feels the need to transgress the boundaries placed upon his male body and transfuse into that of a female body, despite the inevitable risks posed by this to both himself and his beloved sister.

11. The young man’s wish to attach himself to De Mara means he actively sacrifices his brotherly tie to Madeline: he willingly risks the life of the latter, so he may have the chance to experience the love of the former. As Albert transitions from being the loving brother of Madeline to being Madeline herself, he transgresses, in this one act, boundaries of both sex and family: it is not just his male spirit in her female body, but the spirit of the brother inside the body of the sister. As Judith Butler argues in *Bodies That Matter*, the promotion of biological familial ties crucially underpins the construction of fixed categories of sex. They outline how a “historically conditioned” conception of the “patriarchal family” has led to the idealisation of male-female, procreative sexuality, binary genders (female/feminine, male/masculine), and, in turn, the demonisation of desires or genders that deviate from this (Butler, *Bodies* 200, 201). In *Transfusion*, it is not so much familial, sibling love (the desire to be together with his sister) that acts as the primary factor driving Albert’s transfusion: rather, his desire to become Madeline appears to be fuelled by his wish to experience De Mara’s masculine attention for himself. In

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showing Albert as destructively transgressing established boundaries not only of biological family, but also of biological sex, in attempting to realise his passions for De Mara, Godwin Jr. intensifies the damning portrayal of the young man's transgression. Instead of using the soul's transfusion as a space in which to imagine a reorganisation of traditional kinship relations, and, in turn, of sex, gender, and desire, the reproductive failure of the transfusion instead lends support to ideologies that affirm a solely biological conception of the family, and of sex.

12. The way in which Godwin Jr. narrates the actual act of transfusion between the siblings leaves the reader in little doubt as to his moral stance upon the matter. He foregrounds the depiction of this scene by describing it as something "never intended for man's knowledge to span" (287; vol. 3). The idea that, by transfusing into the body of his sister, Albert has the ability to operate outside of the biological limits imposed upon his body, is presented by the author as something both unquestionably taboo and something that should be completely off limits to human knowledge. "Never was it the purport of this chronicle," it is further affirmed, "to tell by what unearthly means the Soul's Transfusion might be accomplished" (ibid). Godwin Jr.'s description of the ensuing events focuses primarily on the gendered biology of Albert and Madeline, and how the former's transfusion into the latter's body has violated sacred notions of what it means to be female/feminine and male/masculine:

The soul of Albert had entered the sickly dissolving organs of his poor sister. The healthy masculine spirit shrunk from a habitation so strange, so shattered, so unfit,—

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but it must obey—and the form of the dying girl rose upright [...] Albert’s soul looked forth from the organs of Madeline—but, alas! It was no longer the spirit that lately ruled his own body: energetic, true, entire in itself—it felt too sensitively the influence of the diseased frame in which it had been forced to take refuge. (289-90)

There is a marked hesitancy here to allow the reader inside the mind of the entity in how Godwin Jr. resists explicitly describing the affects of Albert’s transition. The brother’s soul looked forth from the sister’s organs, we are told, but before this sensation is elucidated there is a sudden break in the syntax (“—but, alas!”) where focus is shifted back onto recalling the pre-transgendered “healthy masculine” and “energetic, true, entire” Albert.

13. In his Introduction to the collection *Affect and Literature* (2020), Alex Houen argues that “affective identification” is “fused and transformed with language, cognition, bodily feeling and the imagination,” where “language both informs and helps form” the narrator’s affect (16, 17). In *Transfusion*, Albert’s affect post-transfusion lies solely in the negative: the amalgamation of the female and the male, the feminine and the masculine, is presented as gruesome, diseased, and dying; it is an “unlivable” entity, to re-quote Butler, that manages to survive for only a few minutes before death inevitably ensues. The reader is in no way encouraged to identify or sympathise with the entity, but rather to look, longingly, back at Albert before his made his fatal decision. This act of transfusion is, as such, a taboo that is in no way aligned with any sensations of transgressive thrill or

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pleasure: Albert's fleeting, unsatisfying experience of living in Madeline's body is, by contrast, decidedly gloomy and joyless.

14. The ideas proposed by Butler in *Bodies That Matter*, as well as those originally introduced in their 1990 work *Gender Trouble*, can help us to analyse the way in which Godwin Jr. presents this dramatic scene to the reader. Given the anticipatory nature of the author's presentation of a kind of transness, studying the text through a Butlerian perspective greatly assists in illuminating Godwin's Jr.'s ideas by giving us the language and a lens through which to analyse the act of the soul's transfusion. Susan Stryker has highlighted Butler's work on the body in the early 1990s as pioneering in trans studies ("[De]Subjugated Knowledge" 5), with *Bodies That Matter* remaining influential across trans, queer and literary fields (Garner 2014; Chess 2016; Hammer 2020; Ripley 2021). In the 1993 work, Butler argues for a distinction to be made between the materiality of the body (as in, female/male) and what they term as the gendered roles (as in, feminine/masculine) a particular body is expected to perform. Their study disrupts and rearticulates the patriarchal notion of an intrinsic link between the female body and femininity, and the male body and masculinity. In *Transfusion*, these two are inextricably linked: when Albert tries to leave his male body in order to realise his desire for De Mara, his "masculine spirit" (289; vol. 3) is shown to be unable to survive within a female body. The spirit of Albert is not something that can be removed from his own body and transfused into that of his sister's: when it is no longer being housed within its male vessel, its existence is shown to be impossible. Godwin Jr. presents the materiality of body as liveable and viable only when it conforms to patriarchal ideologies of gender: the

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female/male, feminine/masculine entity is described as having “lost its directing power” (ibid) when fatally separated from its “former firmness” (290). This is a narrative that presents the undoing of the binary, patriarchal link between biological sex and normative gender as inherently dangerous and destructive.

15. Butler, on the other hand, describes categories of sex—the idea that bodies are exclusively female and male, and innately feminine and masculine—as a construction. The body, they affirm, is not simply female or male with corresponding feminine or masculine traits, but rather is a space on which regulatory forces work to “demarcate, circulate [and] differentiate” the bodies they control (*Bodies* 1). As such, the body does not represent simple fact or static condition, but rather categories of sex, the female and the male, are constructs that “require and institute the production of discrete and asymmetrical oppositions between ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’, where these are understood as expressive attributes of ‘male’ and ‘female’” (*Gender* 23). In looking at how such thinking operates within patriarchal regimes, Butler goes on to write that “certain kinds of ‘identities’ cannot ‘exist’—that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex.” Because these identities “fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities” (*Gender* 24). The transgendered Madeline/Albert entity is shown, quite literally, to be both a failure, an impossibility and, ultimately, something that cannot exist in the world the author creates.

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16. By contrast, trans readings of *Frankenstein*, particularly that of Susan Stryker's, argue the Creature's existence as inherently representative of the experience of being trans—and how, furthermore, his ability to exist despite the hostility surrounding him can be read as “the establishment of subjects in new modes, regulated by different codes of intelligibility” (“My Words” 249). Unlike in his half-sister Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's world, where the Creature represents a body existing, albeit not well, outside of the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility, in Godwin Jr.'s world, such an existence proves totally unlivable. The body in *Transfusion* is not portrayed or revealed as an idealised construct, but instead it is affirmed as an unchangeable and essential entity that cannot—and will not—be transgressed. By contrast, Shelley presents the fixity of sexual boundaries as potentially problematic in their restrictiveness: this is perhaps portrayed most clearly in Victor's creation—and subsequent destruction—of the Female Creature.
17. While both the Albert/Madeline entity and the Female Creature suffer sudden and dramatic deaths, there are contrasts in how these are presented by brother and sister. Godwin Jr. portrays the death of the entity in a way that lends support to fixed sexual boundaries; Shelley portrays the death of the Female Creature in a manner that suggests their limitations. “I was now about to form another being, of whose dispositions I was alike ignorant,” Victor details to the reader as he nears completion on his second creation (41; vol. 3). Later that ill-fated evening, he has a fatal realisation: as he spies the “grin[ning]” (43) Creature eagerly watching him from the shadows, he fears that the female counterpart “might refuse to comply with a compact made *before* her creation” (41, emphasis mine). The scientist is due to give birth to a being that already has fixed,

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deterministic notions of her gender and sexuality imposed upon her. Victor's anxiety stems from the possibility that this gender and sexuality determination might not strictly be adhered to by this new creation: his admission of his own complete "ignorance" as to how her sexuality may actually develop—with the "compact" here referring to her creation specifically, and only, as a romantic partner for the Creature—sees him dramatically rethink his endeavour. "She, who in all probability was to become a thinking and reasoning animal," the scientist tells us further, might, in reality, "hate" and "quit" her male counterpart (ibid).

18. In a subsequent overwhelming fit of cowardice, he then destroys her, removing any possibility of noncompliance with the restrictive and deterministic role he had carved out for her existence. Her death comes about because of an (imagined) possible transgression—a deep fear takes hold in her creator's mind of the possibility that she "may turn with disgust" from the very object she is intended to fall in love with, and she is ruthlessly destroyed (41). As a result, the Female Creature is cruelly denied any chance at life: Shelley portrays her death as avoidable, born out only of her creator's fear and narrow mindedness. She is a "developmental failure," to put this into Butlerian terms, because of the failure only of Victor; she is a "logical impossibility," because of his inability to imagine her existing outside a patriarchal order which legitimises only that of male-female, procreative sexuality. As such, Shelley, in contrast to her half-brother, imagines the possibility of genders and sexualities that are not assigned at birth.

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19. Godwin Jr.'s portrayal of the death of the Madeline/Albert entity confirms a transgression from the patriarchal order as representing that which Butler details as the "unlivable" zone of "uninhabitability" (*Bodies* 3). While the Female Creature is destroyed before she has a chance at life, the Madeline/Albert entity dies after its being born through Albert's transfusion. In *Frankenstein*, therefore, the death comes about because of Victor's panic about what the body will become after it comes into being; in *Transfusion*, the death comes about because of an inherent fault within the body itself. Godwin Jr.'s decision to immediately 'kill off' this entity just moments after its birth—to depict such a transgression as innately and unquestionably unlivable—lends heavy support to those patriarchal ideologies that so forcibly separated the female and male; he removes any possibility that such a transgression could ever have any hope of success. The materiality of the body is thus certainly not presented as thinkable away from this imperative in *Transfusion*, and the body in question that dares to subvert idealised constructs of female and male certainly does not pass the test to quality for life.

20. Had he perhaps shared the radical outlook of his and Shelley's father, a writer who repeatedly celebrated the femininity of his male protagonists—as well as their passionate desires for other men—Godwin Jr. could potentially have used the concept of the soul's transfusion as a way through which to expose political manipulations of the body and, in turn, idealised masculinity. Godwin Sr.'s major fiction destabilised ideologies of what it meant to be male, bringing to his readers a series of protagonists—from Caleb Williams in 1794, Reginald de St. Leon (1799), Casimir Fleetwood (1805), Charles Mandeville (1817) and through to Julian Cloudesley in 1830—who accept and embrace their failure

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to perform the roles of man, son, husband, father and so forth.⁴ Tim Fulford's *Romanticism and Masculinity* (1999) argues, furthermore, that the destabilisation of traditional concepts of masculinity, such as that promoted within Burke's gendered discourse, to be a defining aspect of male Romanticism. Through their affectionate presentations of softer, feminised and more liberated versions, Fulford writes that these Romantics strived to forge an alternative discourse to the language of power and traditional, restrictive masculinity (15, 17). 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.

21. As Butler affirms early on in *Bodies That Matter*, the very fact that the body is “materialized” in “the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative” means that this allows space for it to subsequently undergo what she terms a “rematerialization” (2, 1). In *Transfusion*, we essentially witness an attempt as such a rematerialisation of the body: Albert's soul housed within Madeline's body is a fusion that actively crosses the material boundaries that have been imposed upon the female and male categories of sex. However, instead of allowing this boundary-questioning entity to play out as something that rematerialises sex as liveable outside of this idealisation, Godwin Jr. does the opposite—it becomes, instantly, a toxic combination in which the materiality of the body is shown to be unthinkable away from these regulatory norms. The young author portrays

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the transgendered body as the dangerously unfamiliar, where the entity can only look back to the comforting familiarity of its pre-transfusion self.

22. Since Butler's influential work on the materialisation of the body in the early 1990s, trans scholarship has continued to contest the notion of the transgendered body as being something other, or a marked deviation from, the supposedly original, non-transgendered body. This modified vs. original, unnatural vs. natural way of conceptualising the transgendered body has been contested by "the concept of becoming" where all bodies are considered as something constructed (Garner 31). The notion of the trans body as "that which is marked, that which is becoming (strange or other), always situated in opposition to the original body" (ibid) is challenged by the argument that "all bodies mark and are marked" regardless of whether they "undergo explicit, visible and transformational procedures" (Sullivan 561).

23. The process of the soul's transfusion thus has the potential to disrupt the notion of an intrinsic, exclusive connection between masculinity and the male body. Godwin Jr.'s presentation of Albert's pre-transfusion body, against that of the body of the transgendered entity, suggests, however, quite the opposite. Prior to the soul's transfusion taking place, Albert is described "healthy," "energetic" and "true"; after, the entity rapidly becomes "sickly," "diseased" and "strange" (289-90; vol. 3). The transgendered body is presented as a modification, marked clearly by its contrast to the "true" original body. Albert's "masculine soul" becomes, at once, an "exiled spirit" crucially separated from its "rightful mansion" (292). Godwin Jr. does not reimagine categories of sex, but

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clings steadfastly to a conception that posits traditional manliness as intrinsic to an original male body. However, while the author may strongly affirm the male body/masculine soul as “rightful,” and the female body/masculine soul as “strange,” Albert’s death arguably also negates traditional manliness—or at least the ability to go back to the normative male body once it has been seen as constructed.

24. At the time in which Godwin Jr. was writing, acts or behaviours that similarly threatened to destabilise this purportedly intrinsic link between masculinity and the male body came under numerous attacks. In attempting to reinforce patriarchal ideologies, 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.⁵ 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 (“Adjourned Inquest”; “Queen-Square”). This positioning of non-procreative sexuality and non-normative gender as diseased and damaging can certainly be observed in Godwin Jr.’s narration: while he may portray a type of ‘procreative’ attachment between Albert and De Mara (given that the entity is born as a direct result of the former’s desire for the latter) its transgendered offspring proves only to be a “failing mechanism” plagued, fatally, by “fevered blood” and a “disturbed brain”; it cries out for some “cordial medicine” or some “human help” to relieve the gruesome, inborn symptoms, but no cure or care for its “new-found” condition is offered (291-92; vol. 3). A traumatic birth, an

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illness-ridden, incurable few moments of life, and an inescapable, rapid death: Godwin Jr. shows Albert's transgressive desire and his disregarding of biological boundaries as bringing no successful rematerialisation or reproduction, but only destruction and death. There is little imaginative space in *Transfusion* whereby the entity has any hope of survival: in the novel, biological sex, like biological family, is regulated, limited, and imposed boundaries of viability are unquestionably reinforced.

25. While the entity then dies just minutes after the transfusion takes place, Godwin Jr. allows enough time within the final gasps of life to solidify his portrayal of Albert's—or, should we now say, the entity's—desires as inherently and violently destructive. When the former realises its grim predicament, it rushes immediately to De Mara's apartments in order to enjoy a last encounter with this man. By this point, the entity is “tottering and feeble,” with its “eyes alone speaking life and energy” (306; vol. 3). The body may be Madeline's, but the soul, as represented through the entity's eyes, is Albert's. Godwin Jr. then portrays what would be a loving embrace between De Mara and Madeline, but that this moment between two lovers has become infected, and diseased, by Albert's fatal act.

26. Here, De Mara is presented as the innocent victim, wishing, in this moment, simply to possess love of (what he believes to be) his cherished Madeline; the entity, by contrast, is presented as the disruptive, deceitful menace that has destroyed any chance of this reunion of lovers taking place. We are told, as the entity enters the Count's apartments, that “despite her altered looks, joy danced upon De Mara's heart”:

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She was true—was his. He knew what woman’s clinging fondness is! He knew the sex’s fidelity—its firm adherence to the loved object in danger and misery—here there was a friend [...] he worshiped the true and loving creature he now believed to stand before him. Gladness lighted up his eyes. (306; vol.3)

Despite the claims that he knows her to be “true,” De Mara fails to notice that the being standing in front of him is not the Madeline he believes it to be. For a few, fantastical moments, Albert experiences first-hand being the object of De Mara’s love. It is, however, a dark, twisted encounter: following the fatal act, the young orphan’s pre-transfusion desires manifest as a bleak enjoyment of what he knows will be his final few moments of life. As a “bitter smile curl[s]” on the entity’s lips, De Mara “strove to take her wan lifeless hand”; the “masked Albert,” however, whose “own wretched destiny stung him with despair,” finds no true comfort in this embrace—the entity snatches its hand away, before “the soul flees the ungenial dungeon it had so madly sought” (311-12; vol.3). 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: the entity dies, and, with it, any hope of love, or life. As this climatic scene concludes, Albert receives that which he so desired at the start of *Transfusion*—attention and affection from De Mara. However, it is only by transitioning into a female body that he felt able to attempt the realisation of such a desire. As this scene plays out, Godwin Jr. presents the crossing of fixed gender and familial boundaries—along with male-male desire—as disastrous, diseased and, ultimately, fatal.

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27. Godwin Jr.'s *Transfusion* is a fascinating fusion: it is unconventional, and anticipatory, yet also unquestionably traditional in its fixed treatment of sexual categories, masculinity and non-procreative desire. Future work on the novel would benefit from looking further at how these areas help inform wider questions of Romantic masculinity, embodiment and otherness, particularly with more detail on to how the son's work contrasts with the treatment of gender and desire in the novels of Godwin Sr., Shelley, and the Godwin-Shelley circle more widely.

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¹ In 1835 Godwin Sr. records briefly in his diary that he dedicated four days to editing *Transfusion* between January and May, but there is no more detail on this. See *William Godwin's Diary*, ed. David O'Shaughnessy, Mark Philp, and Victoria Myers.

² A number of Godwin-Shelley specialists have tended to treat the work of Godwin Jr. with indifference. G.H. Ford, for instance, described his career as "desultory" and *Transfusion* as "mediocre" (69) and Miranda Seymour described the son as "lacking genius" (423-424). Beatrice Turner documented in 2017 how Godwin Jr. and *Transfusion* "currently appear only as footnotes or foils to his half-sister's and father's brilliance" (458).

³ This refers to the following passage in *St. Leon*: "our hearts, which grew together, suffer amputation; the arteries are closed; the blood is no longer mutually transfused and confounded" (154). Kibbie pays particular attention to this change in chapter one of *Transfusion*, "Transfusing Souls: The Dead End of Sympathy," pp. 29-61. She documents its early, figurative uses across spiritual, philosophical, and erotic eighteenth-century texts, and traces how this developed into a fusion of actual and imaginary physiology into the nineteenth.

⁴ My research on Godwin Sr. as part of my PhD thesis explores how we can trace the prefiguring of queer theory within the author's radical, post-revolutionary fiction. Focussing on the relationship between the personal and the political, and the intimate and the public, I explore the queerness of the Godwinian novel and the queer influence Godwin had on his writing circle, and beyond. I define and explore such queerness as the alternative modes of desire/gender/kinship that challenge the bind of procreative sexuality, gender binaries, and traditional forms of family, uncovering how Godwin's revisionist challenges to patriarchal governmental regimes can be read as a challenge to the dominant heteronormative order.

⁵ Examples of this tendency can be located in articles across the early nineteenth century. In 1810, for instance, the *Morning Post* described sodomitical practices as "an unnatural crime" that "human nature shuddered at" ("Old Bailey"); a year later, an article in the *Hull Packet* similarly described these as "horrid and humiliating to human nature" and as "sully[ing] the lustre of a family" ("Atrocious Conspiracy"); the *Morning Chronicle* refers to "the many parents whose children have been torn from them to minister to the unnatural vices of these monsters" in 1822 ("Letter"). John Brown's *The Historical Gallery of Criminal Portraits* (1823) similarly labels non-procreative sexual practices as "unnatural" and "attaching [...] shame and grief" to the family (599, 608; vol. 1.).