

Caleb Williams (1794)

Things As They Are

# William Godwin (1756-1836)

- Married to Mary Wollstonecraft—their daughter was Mary Shelley, author of *Frankenstein* (NA: 981-83)
- Wrote during the “Revolutionary Decade”: FR 1789-----turn of the century
- Reputation fades by the turn of the century
- Protestant Dissenter—free from orthodox thinking. Becomes skeptic and then atheist. (See Chronology—Penguin)
- Radical writer: challenges ideas/institutions of Crown, Constitution, and Church

# William Godwin: Works

- *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Modern Morals and Happiness* (1793)
- Manifesto of rational anarchy
- Man acts according to reason—through reason (benevolence/justice), self-government (not laws and institutions) is possible
- “Man is perfectible, or in other words susceptible of perpetual improvement.”
- Aim: “Dissolution of political gov’t, that brute engine, which has been the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind” [see Hindle, Intro, xv (bottom)-xxi (top)]

# William Godwin: Works

- *Caleb Williams* (1794)
- Entertainment: adventure/detective story
- Gothic tale
- Fancy and philosophy: rational debate and political treatise
- Romance (Romantic novel)/ Addresses the “spirit of the age”—age of revolution
- Jacobin Novel (NA 25-27)

# CW: Bkgrd & Sources

- French Revolution & Reaction—see NA, 5-6 (bottom), historical and political context. Also, timeline, pg 1
- Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Man*, pg 196-7
- The Gothic: physical/horror elements, but CW goes beyond these: socio-political and revolutionary focus (See Gothic PPT slides)
- *Frankenstein*: the relationship between Victor and the creature (Falkland & Caleb) and the emphasis on the “psychological complexity of the relationship” (Hindle, Intro, xxiv)

# Caleb Williams and Gothic

- Supernatural
- Darkness/Secrecy
- Law
- Women/Sexuality
- Villains/Tyrants
- Nationalism
- Exploration of human subconscious/unconscious mind

# English Revolution

## English Civil Wars

- First civil war—1642-1646
- Second civil war—1647-1649
- Commonwealth and Protectorate (1649-1660)

Charles II (1660)

James II (1685)

- William of Orange and Mary—1689
  - Glorious (Bloodless) Revolution