

Gothic Stirrings on the Georgian Stage, 1740-1780.

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A dissertation submitted for the degree of MA by Dissertation

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Date of Submission November 2017

Summary

This dissertation explores the role of theatre in the development of the Gothic genre between 1740-1780. The study centres around five plays, which are John Home's *Douglas* [1756], Hall Hartson's *The Countess of Salisbury* [1765], Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772], John Jackson's *Eldred* [1773], and Paul Hiffernan's *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775].

Chapter 1 explores how the Gothic emerged from anxieties caused by the threat of war and invasion. I explore how eighteenth-century struggles with heritage, national identity, and the concept of 'authenticity' contributed to the creation of early Gothic works. I also consider how Graveyard poetry was written in reaction to concerns about religion. The chapter closes with an exploration of Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* in relation to these identified anxieties.

Chapter 2 reflects upon the intersection of the Gothic with the school of sentimentalism. I consider how David Hume's philosophical theory of morality inspired the Gothic experience of feeling, and how 'gothic' dramatists juggled sentimental scenes with aims of edification. I then explore how the sentimental form was combined with the vogueish interest in topography to form the trope of sublime nature.

Chapter 3 addresses the connection between the rise of the Gothic and philosophical debates on suicide and melancholia. I explore how discussions of suicide are presented dramatically throughout the five selected plays, and consider how the atmosphere of melancholia comes to permeate the Gothic genre.

Chapter 4 considers how sentimental portrayals of women were used to address the issue of national identity. I explore the metaphorical use of the female figure in the conceptualisation of national identity, observing the birth of the Gothic heroine from this reoccurring trope. Chapter 4 closes with an examination of the highly allegorical content of John Home's *Douglas*, which locates Gothic origins in crises of national identity and conflict.

Introduction

Questions of origin haunt the Gothic, in both works of the genre and in the criticism that tries to make sense of it. Many critics have grappled with attempts to contain and define the Gothic, using Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* as the genre's site of emergence. As Robert Miles has noted in his *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*, 'The origins of the Gothic lie, not in Horace Walpole's mind, but in the aesthetic that preceded his novel.'¹ Miles draws attention to a crucial issue in the field of Gothic studies; the use of Walpole as point of origin for the Gothic genre, though convenient and rich in intrigue, is reductive and ill-fitting of such a heterogeneous form. More so, our consumption of any art form is vulnerable to corruption from pre-conceived ideas of form and origins. This concern is especially pertinent when regarding the formation of the highly complex and diverse Gothic genre. The pernicious impact of a concept of a fixed point of origin upon studies of Gothic works has been observed by Maggie Kilgour. In *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, Kilgour explains how 'One of the powerful images conjured up by the words 'gothic novel' is that of a shadowy form rising from a mysterious place....This iconography has haunted various critical representations of the rise of the genre.'² Anne Williams makes a similar observation in regards to Gothic fiction in her *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, where she claims that the Gothic 'has been shaped by its own powerful myth of origins.'³ Williams' notion of 'shaping' highlights the potential for ideas of genre to not only restrict but subconsciously inform our comprehension of Gothic fiction. Many recent studies have demonstrated a healthy awareness of this issue, with a renewed focus on questioning existing notions of origin and genre construction. In his *The History of Gothic Fiction*, Markman Ellis has noted that the Gothic form has 'a tone or mood that is, in its own way, quite experimental.'⁴ Coral Ann Howells has also observed the complex nature of the genre in her *Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction*. Howells notes that the 'Gothic developed as a hybridised genre.'⁵ Acknowledging the diverse nature of the Gothic allows for more extensive and revealing studies, unhindered by the constraints of generic assumptions.

As many scholars have noted, the concept of the Gothic genre is a relevantly recent construct.⁶ Renewed interest in the literature of terror in the early twentieth century led to what E. J.

1 Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy*. (Glasgow: Manchester University Press, 2002): 28.

2 Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1995): 3.

3 Anne Williams, *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 8.

4 Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction*. (Eastbourne: Edinburgh University Press, 2000): 8.

5 Coral Ann Howells, *Love, Mystery, and Misery: Feeling in Gothic Fiction*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013): preface: vi.

6 Studies crucial to early definitions of the genre include Edith Birkhead's *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance*. London: Constable, 1921., Eino Railo's *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism*. Gordon Press Publications, 1927., J. M. S. Tompkins' *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800*. London: Constable, 1932., and Montague Summers' *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel*. Fortune Press, 1938.

Clery has termed the 'almost entirely accidental' coinage of the phrase 'Gothic novel'.⁷ It is important to note that the term was applied retrospectively to certain works; works which were published at a time when the idea of a 'Gothic' genre did not exist. In his *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*, James Watt has observed how many readings of the Gothic rely upon the connotations of categorisation. It is this reliance that threatens to confine the critical study of the Gothic, and Watt comments that we must 'focus on the consequences of such acts of definition.'⁸ Categorisation can be a useful tool in academic study, but it can also simplify a genre by excluding certain works which lack supposed elements. Williams warns against the 'Dangers of Defining Gothic' in her study, observing how 'the desire to "draw the line" (or to trace one's line of descent) appears to be a very basic human impulse.'⁹ Whilst being aware of the lines that form genre boundaries, we must also break through them in order to challenge the suggestions that they make. Williams, Miles, and Watt have all located what Michael Gamer has described as the need to stop trying to define the Gothic 'as having a static identity, and instead try to understand the historical changes and generic transformations that led it to embody its various forms.'¹⁰ Part of the attempt to reassess the Gothic identity involves widening the critical gaze beyond the mythic origins of Walpole's novel. As Miles has stated, 'many of the motifs, figures, topoi and themes that characterize Gothic writing find a previous expression within the Gothic aesthetic.'¹¹ Miles' notion of a Gothic aesthetic is useful when considering those works that have been previously sidelined as 'not Gothic'. Gamer has agreed with Miles' concept of the Gothic as an aesthetic, or taste, 'which first pre-existed, and then coincided with, Gothic writing.'¹² Miles' distinction between Gothic aesthetic and Gothic writing leads us to the the conundrum of capitalisation. Scholars such as Miles, Williams, and Howells use the upper case 'G', whereas Gamer, Ellis, and Kilgour have chosen the lower case. The issue of capitalisation is at the crux of the complications of generic boundaries; should a certain work be considered as 'Gothic, a proper noun which distinctly fits into an identifiable canon, or 'gothic', an adverb? More so, at what level of intensity created by tone, motifs, themes, and atmosphere, does 'gothic' turn into 'Gothic'? This is a question too large for my study to tackle, but it is one that fuels it. I believe that seeking out and examining 'gothic' works will help to illuminate the origins of elements which are considered as key elements of 'Gothic' works. Essentially, by examining what is, possibly, 'not Gothic' we may gain

7 E. J. Clery, "The genesis of "Gothic" fiction." in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Ed. Jerrold E. Hogle. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 21.

8 James Watt, *Contesting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre and Cultural Conflict, 1764-1832*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 3.

9 Williams: 12.

10 Michael Gamer, *Romanticism and the Gothic: genre, Reception, and Canon Formation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 10.

11 Miles: 30.

12 Miles: 6.

not only a better understanding of what is 'Gothic', but also a more comprehensive concept of the genre's placement within the broader sphere of eighteenth-century culture.

In *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*, Margaret Atwood claims that 'all writing of the narrative kind, and perhaps all writing, is motivated, deep down, by a fear of and a fascination with mortality'.¹³ It is interesting to consider the formation of the Gothic genre alongside Atwood's theory that all writing is, 'above all, a reaction to the fear of death'.¹⁴ The Gothic emerged in correlation with the rise of the novel, and it was in this medium that the genre became most well known; to the extent that the word 'Gothic' is almost synonymous with that of 'novel'. It is through the Gothic novel that critical explorations of the genre's development have mainly been conducted. Walpole's status as instigator of Gothic, with *The Castle of Otranto*, has tended to eclipse any prior existence of the aesthetic in architecture, drama, poetry, and art. Examinations of novels such as Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* [1778], William Beckford's *Vathek* [1786], Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* [1794], and M.G. Lewis' *The Monk* [1796], have been used to track the development of the divergent Gothic genre. The Gothic novel then, has always garnered more attention, from both casual reader and critic. It is interesting to note that the emergence of the Gothic form, permeated with distractions of fear and death, coincides with the rise of the novel, which provided an increased hope at being materially immortalised through publication. The close link between novel and anxieties about mortality is, in Atwood's words, 'because of the nature of writing – its apparent permanence, and the fact that it survives its own performance – unlike, for instance, a dance recital'.¹⁵ Atwood's perception also applied to the Gothic play, which only survives in the ghost-like form of the published play text. Perhaps the relative permanence of paper is more Gothic in essence than the fleeting life of dramatic performance. It is possible that the form of the novel so encompasses the Gothic aspiration to fight against death, that it becomes *more* Gothic than the drama or ballad. The same observation could also be made of architecture. This is one possible reason that the Gothic novel has received considerably more critical attention than the Gothic drama. There are also more obvious reasons, such as the need to 'critically recreate' the performance of live theatre, and the comparative scarcity of accessible play texts, though this is becoming less of an obstacle due to the British Library's efforts in the digital reprinting of lesser studied works.

In *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley*, Bertrand Evans states that 'dramatists... participated as actively as novelists in the Gothic Revival. Gothic fiction has received elaborate attention; Gothic drama, virtually none'.¹⁶ Evans' study was the first major work of criticism to

13 Margaret Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002): 156.

14 Atwood: 157.

15 Atwood: 158.

16 Bertrand Evans, *Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947):2.

acknowledge the existence of a school of Gothic drama. Evans observes the influential role played by pre-1780's drama in the emergence of the Gothic genre, and designates Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* [1768] as the first 'Gothic' drama. With his play, much like his novel, Walpole employs the Gothic aesthetic with the intent to produce new, shocking entertainment; it is possibly this sense of purpose that raises a work from demonstrative of gothic aesthetic to a member of the Gothic canon. It is important to note that *The Mysterious Mother* was published privately and never performed. Though the impact of the privately read play-text can be considered, its lack of public performance is problematic when attempting to ascertain the role of theatre in the development of the Gothic genre. Howells states that 'Gothic fiction develops a new relationship between sentimental romance and theatrical performance, transforming the novel into spectacular entertainment'.¹⁷ If the significance of drama is to be explored in relation to the Gothic genre then we must examine its visual, aural and textual elements. Paul Ranger's *'Terror and Pity reign in every Breast': Gothic Drama in the London Patent Theatres, 1750-1820* is an immensely valuable study of Gothic plays. Ranger's study is particularly rich because it documents how these plays would have functioned in the playhouses of the eighteenth century. Ranger's considerations of set, costume, and the advancement of stage machinery, provide a well rounded understanding of what Gothic drama would have been like in performance. An awareness of early visual representations of gothic themes is vital when deciphering the influential force of theatre upon the Gothic form. Such a pan-optic approach is essential because, as Howells notes, 'Gothic techniques are essentially visual in their emphasis on dramatic gesture and action and in their pictorial effects, giving the reader an experience comparable to that of a spectator at the theatre'.¹⁸ Non-visual aspects of theatre also play a key role in the creation of distinctly 'Gothic' atmospheres. E.J. Clery states that in order to track 'the development of the emotion of fear as the mode of reception proper to fictions of the supernatural we need to look to critical writings on drama and changes in theatrical practice'.¹⁹

Bertrand Evans stated that the 'Study of Gothic drama may prove more fruitful than study of Gothic novels in tracing the stages of evolution which hitherto have not been revealed'.²⁰ I do not assume the exploration of drama to be more yielding than that of the novel, but I do believe that it will assist in creating a more broad-scoped comprehension of the Gothic form. I start my study with a consideration of what have been deemed by many critics to be the first 'Gothic' novel and play, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* [1764], and *The Mysterious Mother* [1768]. The bulk of my study centres around the exploration of five plays written and performed between 1756 and 1775. They are John Home's *Douglas* [1756], Hall Hartson's *The Countess of Salisbury* [1765],

17 Howells: preface: viii.

18 Howells: 16.

19 E. J. Clery, *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction 1762-1800*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 33.

20 Evans: 3.

Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772], John Jackson's *Eldred; Or, The British Freeholder* [1773], and Paul Hiffernan's *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775]. These plays were identified by Bertrand Evans as containing 'Gothic' elements, demonstrating what Miles has termed a 'gothic aesthetic', but lacking the quantity of these elements, or a distinct atmosphere to be classified as 'Gothic' works. All of these plays, apart from *Douglas*, have received little to no critical attention, yet each is worthy of study, either because of its content, popularity, or the eminence of its author in eighteenth-century society. These five plays achieved runs in the major London theatres of Drury Lane, Covent Garden and the Haymarket, and all were published, which furthered their potential to influence later writers of the Gothic.²¹ The most famous of the plays is *Douglas*, which achieved substantial runs in Edinburgh and London theatres, remaining in many company's repertoires into the nineteenth century. *The Countess of Salisbury* was performed in Dublin and in London at both the Haymarket and Drury Lane theatres. Evans claimed that the play was well received and was 'revived repeatedly in the next thirty years.'²² *The Grecian Daughter* was written by revered playwright Arthur Murphy, and withstood a lengthy run at Drury Lane with critical success. *The Heroine in the Cave* was Hiffernan's revision of a play started by the deceased Henry Jones, and both men were well known in mid-eighteenth century Britain. It is hard to gauge the success of the play. The Drury Lane calender suggests it only had a few performances, but an anonymous writer from the *Freemason's Magazine* in 1794 records that the play 'went off with considerable applause,' and that Hiffernan 'lived upon the profits of this tragedy for some time'.²³ Hiffernan, a friend of theatre manager David Garrick, also wrote *Dramatic Genius* [...], a treatise on play composition which received considerable subscriptions. John Jackson's *Eldred* was performed in Dublin in 1773, Edinburgh in 1773, and finally at the London Haymarket in 1775 where it was 'repeated with some success'.²⁴ Jackson was an actor, appearing in productions of *Douglas*, and later became stage manager of the Theatre Royal Edinburgh. Though not as successful as the other plays, I feel it is interesting to consider *Eldred* due to Jackson's connections with the theatre, and because he later wrote another 'gothic' play entitled *The British Heroine* [1778]. Though the Gothic becomes identified with female writers, these five dramas are all by male playwrights; it is interesting to observe how the female focus of the Gothic initially develops from the male imagination. One of the most crucial observations to make about this selection of plays is that they are all penned by Scottish or Irish dramatists. Despite its immense popularity it would later gain as a 'pulp' genre, the Gothic emerged from the margins of society. The Gothic has maintained this affinity with the

21 An initial indication of Success of performances taken from drury lane calander, covent garden.

22 Evans: 30.

23 *The Freemason's Magazine, Or General and Complete Library*. May 1794. London: 361

24 Philip H. Highfill, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660-1800: Volume 8: Hough to Keyes*. (United States of America: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982): 113.

minority, the outcast, and the 'other', and it would seem that these associations are reverberations of the genre's origins.

This selection of mid-eighteenth-century plays demonstrates the growing use, both textually and visually, of what Miles has termed the 'gothic aesthetic'. I employ a critical exploration of these plays to discern how the gothic aesthetic emerged from, and interacted with, the wider realm of mid-eighteenth-century life. My dissertation explores distinct tropes, which later become synonymous with the Gothic genre, observing their repeated use across the five plays. I explore these themes in relation to the cultural, political, social, and philosophical climate of the mid-eighteenth century in order to determine their source of inspiration. I observe the influence of graveyard poetry, such as Edward Young's *The Complaint; or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality* [1742-5], on the evolution of the Gothic. I also investigate the interaction between the Gothic and philosophical reflection by considering such texts as Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757], Ann Radcliffe's essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry" [1826], and David Hume's *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* [1751] and *Four Dissertations* [1757]. Tracing the anxieties these themes tapped into and expressed will help to build an understanding of where Gothic tropes came from and why they became popular. Angela Wright has drawn attention to the fact that the genre was just 'as interdisciplinary then as it is now today, the scientific, national and political concerns of the past, present and future are embodied in ideas of the 'Gothic'.²⁵ Such hybridised beginnings demand the use of an interdisciplinary approach in any study of the Gothic. One of the potential pitfalls of studying the Gothic lays in the 'genre's emphasis on the extremes of subjective experience'.²⁶ When deciphering Gothic fiction we are searching for shapes in the darkness, shapes which may not be there. Anne Williams notes that 'Most – perhaps *all* – Gothic conventions express some anxiety about "meaning".²⁷ The highly subjective nature of Gothic symbolism can be problematic for critical interpretations of specific works. In "Seeing Things: Gothic and the Madness of Interpretation", Scott Brewster asks 'Since critical interpretation involves readerly desires, can we recognise and diagnose 'textual' madness without implicating our own delusions and anxieties?'²⁸ Brewster's concerns are applicable to the study of the abstruse Gothic genre as a whole. I believe that conducting historicised and interdisciplinary studies of the Gothic can help to safeguard against the danger of subjective infiltrations.

Chapter 1 of my study explores how the gothic aesthetic emerged from anxieties sprung

25 Angela Wright, "Gothic Materials of the Eighteenth Century." *Gothic Studies*. Vol. 14, no.1 (2012): 5.

26 Fiona Price, "Myself creating what I saw": The Morality of the Spectator in Eighteenth-Century Gothic. *Gothic Studies*. Vol. 8, no. 2 (2006): 1.

27 Williams: 67.

28 Scott Brewster, "Seeing Things: Gothic and the Madness of Interpretation." in *A Companion to the Gothic*. Ed. David Punter. (Somerset: Blackwell Publishing, 2000):281.

from the threat of war and invasion. Angela Wright has stated that 'Conflict...is the crucible in which the Gothic is forged.'²⁹ I explore how eighteenth-century struggles with heritage, national identity, and the concept of 'authenticity' contributed to the creation of early Gothic works. I also consider how Graveyard poetry was written in reaction to concerns about religion, and how certain elements of the gothic aesthetic begin their rise to popularity in this form. The chapter closes with an exploration of Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* in relation to these identified anxieties. Chapter 2 reflects upon the intersection of the gothic aesthetic with the school of sentimentalism. I consider how David Hume's philosophical theory of morality inspired the Gothic experience of feeling, and how 'gothic' dramatists juggled sentimental scenes with aims of edification. I then explore how the sentimental form was combined with the vogueish interest in topography to create one of the most distinctive traits of the Gothic: female experience reflected in nature. Chapter 3 addresses the connection between the rise of the Gothic and philosophical debates on suicide and melancholia. I explore how discussions of suicide are presented dramatically throughout the five selected plays, and consider how the atmosphere of melancholia comes to permeate the Gothic genre. Finally, Chapter 4 considers how sentimental portrayals of women, coupled with a state of melancholia and loss, were used to address the larger issue of national identity. I explore the metaphorical use of the female figure in the conceptualisation of national identity, observing the birth of the Gothic heroine from this reoccurring trope. Chapter 4 closes with an examination of the highly allegorical content of John Home's *Douglas*, which locates Gothic origins in crises of national identity and conflict. My study is less interested in defining what is and is not 'Gothic', than breaking through generic and disciplinary boundaries in order to situate the Gothic in the wider sphere of eighteenth-century cultural consumption. I do, however, subscribe to Miles' notion of a 'gothic aesthetic' as pre-existing the production of Gothic writing, and I feel the use – or lack of – capitalisation to be highly useful in a study that seeks to explore works that exist on the margins of a genre. I have chosen to designate the five main plays in this study as 'gothic' in acknowledgement of their influence upon, but not integration with, later works of drama and literature in the 'Gothic' canon.

29 Wright: 4.

Chapter 1. Gothic in the Closet: Exorcising the "Other"

The genre that would retrospectively be labelled as 'Gothic' emerged from multiple crises of conflict in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The Gothic preoccupation with ancient settings, emotional experience, supernatural occurrences and melancholic musings did not come into being all at once. The period 1740-1780 sees the gradual development of a 'gothic aesthetic' across multiple disciplines, which included works of philosophy, history, politics, theatre, literature, poetry, and even medicine. Angela Wright has noted that one of the major catalysts for the development of the Gothic form was conflict.³⁰ The anxieties generated by the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, the Seven Years War [1754-63], and Britain's loss of its American colonies all contributed to the emergence of Gothic imaginings. Conflict continued to fuel the Gothic form, with the French revolution [1789-99] and Napoleonic Wars [1799-1815] shaping the development of the genre through its most popular period. Wright explains how the Gothic 'moved gradually from reclaiming an 'immemorial past' in the 1760's and 1770's to evoking clear and direct connotations of terror in the 1790's, particularly as the Reign of Terror commenced in Revolutionary France.'³¹ The 'gothic aesthetic' finds its origins in the conceptualisation of national identity, the attempt to re-imagine the roots of British heritage, and the significant shift in modes of religious practice in an attempt to escape the clutches of 'foreign' Catholicism. This chapter examines how the 'gothic aesthetic' was forged from a diverse amalgamation of conceits, which formed part of the conceptualisation of national identity, as fuelled by Franco-phobic sentiments. I consider how the renewed historical interest in the 'Goths', the patriotic idolisation of Shakespeare, and the fashion for forged 'authenticity' were evident in works such as Ann Radcliffe's "On the Supernatural in Poetry" [1826], and Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* [1764]. The second part of this chapter is concerned with the impact of anti-Catholic anxieties upon the evolution of the 'gothic aesthetic' This is examined firstly through the work of the graveyard poets, such as Edward Young's *The Complaint; or, Night-Thoughts* [1742-5], then through an exploration of the 'first' Gothic play, Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother* [1768].

The eighteenth century played host to a dilemma of national identity. Multiple altercations with France, as well as an atmosphere of ever-increasing anti-Catholicism, resulted in a highly xenophobic reaction to anything considered to have French, Spanish or Italian origins. As a result, attempts to connect with a national identity that was extremely English in nature began to emerge, particularly in the studies of history and aesthetics. The historical interest in reassessing an English

30 Angela Wright, "Gothic Materials of the Eighteenth Century." *Gothic Studies*. Vol. 14, no.1 (2012): 1-6.

31 Angela Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820: the Import of Terror*. (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2013): 15.

heritage began to expand the connotations of the term 'Gothic'. Little had been known about the Germanic tribe of the 'Goths' apart from a general view that they were primitive and barbaric. Anti-French sentiments had developed an uneasiness with the notion that 'English' values were a result of foreign corruption, most notably the French invasion of 1066, and an older source of civilised values was sought. A renewed interest in connecting with the roots of an English cultural past provided a reassessment of this image, as historians were able to place emphasis on the democratic nature of the Goths' society. The use of such sources as Tacitus's *Germania* (AD 98) helped to create a view of the Goths as 'brave, virtuous and, as demonstrated by their representative system of government and their invention of the jury system, possessing a strong belief in justice and liberty.'³² So, despite their violent involvement in bringing about the fall of the Roman-Empire, a new understanding was created whereby, 'rather than being seen as the despoilers of civilized values, the Goths were celebrated as the *source* of these values.'³³ The notion of an ancient democratic civilisation as a major part of English heritage was particularly appealing to the eighteenth-century society view that England was the pillar of liberty and justice in comparison to the oppressive, Catholic realms of France and Italy. The bestowal of the post of First Lord of the Treasury upon Sir Robert Walpole in 1721 evoked a growing perception of England as an increasingly democratic society, and stability was added to this conception with the location of democratic values as part of English heritage. A re-categorization of the term 'Goths' to encompass the Germanic tribes that had invaded and settled in fifth-century England allowed for an 'alternative, if mythical, construction of the Gothic past as the site of a true national, democratic and civilized heritage.'³⁴ The 'Goths' were an ideal image of English nature to hold up against the foreign invasion of Italian and French influence. Their supposedly barbaric, primitive and chaotic qualities provided an aesthetically suitable opposition to the ordered, polished and restrained qualities of the French and Italian inspired neoclassicism, which had been in vogue throughout the age of enlightenment. The notion of a seed of democracy being located deep within English heritage allowed for a reclamation of a purely English national identity as natively holding more truly civilised values, which encouraged the purging of any foreign corruption. These two strands coalesced to develop the understanding of the term 'Gothic' which gained socio-political use as a 'symbolic site of a culture's discursive struggle to define and claim possession of the civilized, and to abject, or throw off, what is seen as other to that civilized self.'³⁵ Gothic works are often noted for their paradoxical content, and it was the re-imagining of the 'Goths' in a historical context that made the feeling of contradiction intrinsic to the 'Gothic'; the Goths were seen to be both barbaric, violent and chaotic in

32 David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Singapore: Blackwell publishing, 2004): 4.

33 Ibid: 5.

34 Ibid: 4.

35 Ibid: 5.

their expansion, at the same time as being structured, reasonable and civilised in their social values.

The attempt to define an English national identity can be clearly seen in the literature and theatre of the mid to late eighteenth century. Few writers have ever been considered as epitomising English culture and values as much as William Shakespeare. The emergence of the 'gothic aesthetic' owed much to the works of Shakespeare, with their mixture of tragedy and comedy, which were popular as statements of anti-neoclassicism whilst also having a strong aura of national identity. Shakespeare's plays were hugely popular on the stage throughout the 1700s, featuring prominently in theatre companies' repertoires as a sure way to sell tickets. Many of the major actors of the period gained their fame through their portrayal of Shakespearian characters, such as Sarah Siddons' representation of Lady Macbeth. The plays were often altered by theatre managers, such as David Garrick, and in the early nineteenth-century bastardised and heavily parodied versions of the plays began to appear, such as John Poole's *Hamlet Travestie* [1810]. These alterations, far from being a disregard of style and substance, demonstrate the attempt to incorporate the 'English' style and aura of Shakespeare's works into Georgian society. In a process of metamorphosis, writers blended Shakespearean texts with popular entertainment and acting styles of the day. These reinventions allowed managers to flood the English stages with a very native type of entertainment, which greatly appealed to the nationalistically minded audiences of the time. Shakespearean influence can be noted in many original plays of the era, especially those retrospectively placed in the Gothic canon, and this inspiration was not limited to just style and content. In 1737 the Theatrical Licensing Act restricted the liberty of playwrights' expression with the requirement for all new plays to be approved by the Lord Chamberlain. In contrast, Shakespeare's plays were seen to represent an age of freedom and bold expression, freed from the restraints of 'foreign' neoclassicism and steeped in creativity. In the prologue to his Gothic play *The Mysterious Mother* [1768], Horace Walpole cites the concept of a nationalistic, Shakespearean liberty:

Had Shakespeare's magic dignified the stage,
If timid laws had schooled th'insipid age?
Had Hamlet's spectre trod the midnight round?
Or Banquo's issue been in vision crowned?
Free as your country, Britons, be your scene!
Be Nature now, and now Invention queen!
Be vice alone corrected and restrained.
Can crimes be punished by a bard enchained? (Prologue. 5-12).³⁶

Walpole's claims of 'timid laws' and 'bard enchained' are direct criticisms of both the censorship act and the Augustan drama it encouraged. For Walpole, a playwright could not examine and criticise

36 Horace Walpole, *The Mysterious Mother in Five Romantic Plays* (Reading: Oxford University Press, 2000): 4.

the worst of human behaviour if real life fears, worries, reactions, and actions were restricted from the stage. It is interesting to note the correlation between the censorship of the stage and the rise of the novel, which had no such restrictions, during this period, as writers searched for new ways to express themselves.

This section of Walpole's prologue also reveals the influence that the supernatural content within some of Shakespeare's plays had on the Gothic genre, with the mention of 'magic', 'Hamlet's spectre', and the vision of Banquo's ghost. With the liberty of Shakespeare's pen also came the freedom to explore the emotionally-wrought territory of the unknown. Walpole was not the only Gothic writer to openly acknowledge the works of the bard as a major source of inspiration for the genre. Ann Radcliffe, author of *A Sicilian Romance* [1790], *The Romance of the Forest* [1791], and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* [1794], examined the influential ties between Shakespeare's works and the Gothic plays of the late eighteenth century in her unfinished essay, "On the Supernatural in Poetry", which was published posthumously in 1826. The essay is presented in the vogueish form of a fictitious colloquy. As such, it gives the opinion that the debate over the presentation of the supernatural in works of fiction was common place. Radcliffe's essay is most famous for its distinguishing between terror and horror, about which she claims: 'Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them.'³⁷ For Radcliffe, creating an atmosphere of terror was the true achievement of the Gothic genre, whilst horror was held in disdain, and she held Shakespeare as a master of the first. A large portion of the unfinished essay is focused on Shakespeare's use of nature, particularly in *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, though it is also obvious that her points could also apply to *King Lear*, which was less popular during the Georgian period. Radcliffe notes that in Shakespeare's works 'the grand and beautiful, the gloomy and sublime of visible Nature, up-called not only corresponding feelings, but passions; which seemed to perceive a soul in everything; and thus, in the secret workings of its own characters'.³⁸ Here, Radcliffe's use of the words 'visible' and 'secret' show the specific connection to Gothic, in particular Gothic drama, and reveal another source of its paradoxical nature. Radcliffe observes how Shakespeare manipulated the 'attendant circumstances' of natural events, such as a storm, or the sun appearing from behind a cloud, to coincide with character's actions and feelings, which 'kept the elements and local scenery always in unison with them, heightening their effect.'³⁹ In Radcliffe's consideration, the connection of atmosphere with character is a highly effective way to connect with the audience on an emotional level, which was a main aim of the anti-Augustan writers: 'No master ever knew how to touch the accordant springs of sympathy by small circumstances like our own

37 Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *New Monthly Magazine*, v.16, no.1 (1826).

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

Shakespeare.⁴⁰ Not only does this comment bring up the link between the power of Shakespeare's plays to provoke emotional response and the sentimental aim of the Gothic writers, it also indicates the imitating of the bard as an English writer as nationalistic, with the proud statement 'our own'. Radcliffe's essay on the use of the supernatural in fiction suggests an aim to legitimise the literature of terror. By establishing connections with the works of Shakespeare Radcliffe gives the Gothic a sense of authority, as she establishes its position as a phase of continuation in the canon of 'English' literature. Radcliffe selects the appearance of the ghost in *Hamlet* as the ideal example of the creation of terror, 'with all its attendant incidents of time and place.'⁴¹ With this selection, it is not the use of nature to aid in the conveyance of a particular character's status or feelings which Radcliffe holds such adoration for; it is Shakespeare's creation of an atmosphere of suspended terror which allows for the production of a costumed actor to be received as a believable, and horrifying, ghost. Radcliffe praises the collection of circumstances leading up to the appearance of the ghost which 'excite forlorn, melancholy, and solemn feelings, and dispose us to welcome, with trembling curiosity, the awful being that draws near; and to indulge in that strange mixture of horror, pity, and indignation, produced by the tale it reveals.'⁴² Again, Radcliffe's wording is revelatory about an element of Gothic fiction and its various sources of influence. Her use of the word 'indulge' illuminates the concept that the terrifying elements of the Gothic were, in fact, highly enjoyable to its audience. This theory was laid out in detail by Edmund Burke in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, first published 1757. Burke's treatise of aesthetics has been widely acknowledged as an important factor in the development of the Gothic genre. Radcliffe's comment serves to prove that the art of producing a pleasurable intensity in moments of terror had been used by writers for centuries, with Burke's enquiry acting as an assessment of this seemingly conflictual reaction. In her analysis of the differences between terror and horror, Radcliffe observes that terror is created when an atmosphere is sustained which directly corresponds with that feeling, so that a dark, gloomy and dreary scene supports the object of terror. Horror, it is argued, is the sudden intervention of a terrific object into a scene which does not support it, and produces a less potent result: 'the effect, though sudden and strong, is also transient; it is the thrill of horror and surprise...rather than the deep and solemn feelings excited under more accordant circumstances, and left long upon the mind.'⁴³ In her summary of horror, Radcliffe is implying the works such as M. G. Lewis' *The Monk* [1796], which she considered vulgar and of producing a far less substantial affectivity. In another acknowledgement of the paradoxical nature of Gothic fiction, Radcliffe argues that, for true terror to take hold of an audience, elements of the

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

unknown must be made believable; the supernatural must seem to be naturally occurring in the created environment. Not all Gothic plays featured an element of the supernatural. The first ghost to appear on stage in a Gothic play was in James Boaden's *Fountainville Forest* [1794], an adaptation of Radcliffe's novel *The Romance of the Forest* [1791]. M.G. Lewis' *The Castle Spectre* [1797] was famous for its ghost, but it was his later play *The Captive* [1803] which provoked the strongest reaction. Set in a dark prison, featuring an incarcerated woman, an escaped madman, and an eerily silent gaoler, *The Captive* fully exploited the Gothic atmosphere. George Taylor explains how the one-act piece prompted spectators to recall 'the stories regularly found in feminist literature of wives whom husbands had registered insane in order to gain legal access to the jointures bestowed on them by their parents as a resource for their widowhood.'⁴⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft had claimed the motive for such plots was 'the desire of exhibiting the misery and oppression, peculiar to women, that arise out of the partial laws and customs of society.'⁴⁵ The source of terror in this play was too believable for its audience, and the play was brought to a close by Lewis, who later remarked:

When it was about half over a Man fell into convulsions in the Boxes; Presently after a Woman fainted away in the Pit; and when the curtain dropped, two or three more of the spectators went into hysterics, and there was such screaming and squalling, that really you could hardly hear the hissing...it really is not my wish (whatever others may think) to throw half of London into convulsions nightly, I immediately sent on a Performer to say, that I had withdrawn the Piece.⁴⁶

Such terror could exist in the closeted, contained form of the novel, but in the exposed arena of the playhouse it was dangerous. *The Captive* certainly pertained to Radcliffe's theory that terror is further grounded in reality and reason than horror. Horror, according to Radcliffe, is explosive and inconceivable, with a result that 'we experience a far less degree of interest, and that interest too of an inferior kind.'⁴⁷ Elements which produce horror are less believable and, therefore, produce an emotional reaction which is short-lived in the mind of the audience or reader. For a writer to create a lasting impression they must contrive a truly terrifying experience, which will continue to affect its viewers based on the probability and belief they place in the possibility of it actually occurring. Radcliffe was famous for the advocacy of reason in her Gothic works. She aimed to create an experience of terror before revealing her 'supernatural' events to have perfectly logical explanations. However, as Robert D. Hume has noted 'many readers find her explanations more distracting than

44 George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London Stage, 1789-1805*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 110.

45 Mary Wollstonecraft, *Maria; or, the Wrongs of Woman*. (London, 1798): 21.

46 Quoted in Ellen Malenas Ledoux, *Social Reform in Gothic Writing: Fantastic Forms of Change, 1764-1834*. (Basingstoke, England and New York: Plagrove Macmillan, 2013); 1.

47 Ibid.

the apparent events which occasion them.¹⁴⁸

The attempt to move away from the neoclassical style and its 'foreign' influences led to an enterprise of 'reclaiming' a national literary past. A sense of dissatisfaction with the literary present caused writers to look to the literary past for inspiration; they sought material that could be manipulated to create a native English text to please an increasingly nationalistic readership. This thirst for English works can be seen in the sharp rise in the concern with 'authenticity' throughout the eighteenth-century. Jack Lynch has noted 'the increasing frequency with which the word "authentic" appears in book and pamphlet titles' across the century. Lynch accounts for 7 mentions of the word in the 1720s, which increases to 105 in the 1760s, and is at 324 by the end of the 1700s. This data makes clear the rising demand for ancient texts brought to light for an eighteenth-century audience. So lucrative was this trend that writers began to create fiction set in the past and present it as an "ancient" text. The young poet Thomas Chatterton published poems purportedly written by the fifteenth-century, and completely fictitious, Thomas Rowley, in 1768. The poems were quickly suspected of being false but still gained adoration from their eighteenth-century readers, though much of the fame was achieved posthumously for the short-lived Chatterton. James Macpherson, a Scottish poet, claimed to have found old Gaelic texts written by a poet named Ossian, which he then translated into modern English and published in various volumes from 1760. The publication of the poems formed part of the Scottish aim to maintain a strong cultural identity in the wake of the Acts of Union [1706-7] and failure of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Macpherson received encouragement in his venture from fellow Scot John Home, playwright of *Douglas*, a significant play for the development of the Gothic genre. These issues will be examined in further detail in chapter 4. The poems were extremely successful and gained a lot of attention for Macpherson, which led to pleas for the ancient text to be shown. Macpherson never revealed the "original" manuscripts, though he persistently claimed that the poems were not of his own invention. His preface read: "The public may depend on the following fragments as genuine remains of ancient Scottish poetry." As Lynch has noted, 'only an intellectual climate charged with questions of authenticity could produce such a curious opening.'¹⁴⁹ Many readers were not convinced, and it became generally accepted that Macpherson had shamed the country with his forgery. The Ossian controversy highlights the fact that the Gothic developed on the margins of predominant society. Many of the writers who developed the 'gothic aesthetic' prior to Walpole were from non-English backgrounds, dealing with non-English concerns. Of the five plays prior to *The Castle of Otranto*, that I will study all were written by writers born or raised in marginalised countries which would

48 Robert D. Hume, "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revelation of the Gothic Novel," *PMLA* v.84, no. 2 (March 1969): 284.

49 Jack Lynch, "Horry, the Ruffian, and the Whelp: Three Fakers of the 1760s," *Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual* v.18 (2007).

assemble to form Great Britain: Hall Hartson, Arthur Murphy, and Paul Hiffernan were Irish, John Jackson spent the majority of his life in Scotland, nation of John Home. The Gothic emerged from nations attempting to distinguish their own identity amidst the suffocation from an encroaching England.

The third notorious forger of the century was the "Godfather of Gothic", Horace Walpole. When originally published in 1763, his *The Castle of Otranto* carried a double false identification of authorship: 'Translated by William Marshal, Gent. From the Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto'.⁵⁰ The preface continues to present a fictitious account of the discovery of the material 'in the library of an ancient catholic family' as well as an estimated source date of between 1095 and 1243, with printing in 1529. Walpole followed the same path of confusing origins in 1768 with *The Mysterious Mother*. In the prologue he claimed 'Such is our scene; from real life it rose; / Tremendous picture of domestic woes.' (Prologue. 30-31). In the postscript, Walpole goes into more detail about his inspiration for the play as he states: 'I had heard, when very young, that a gentlewoman, under uncommon agonies of mind, had waited on Archbishop Tillotson, and besought his counsel.'⁵¹ Walpole continues to communicate the plot as he learnt it through hearsay until making the surprising announcement that: 'a gentleman to whom I had communicated it, accidentally discovered the origin of the tradition on the novels of the queen of Navarre...to my great surprise I found a strange concurrence of circumstances between the story as there related, and as I had adopted it to my piece'.⁵² Walpole's false claims of ancient origins and fictitious authorships are often passed off as an eccentricity of his aristocratic character. But, as the cases of MacPherson and Chatterton show, Walpole's presentation of new "old" stories was part of a eighteenth-century trend for connecting with ancient, "authentic" texts from a non-neoclassical age.

Walpole's attempt differs greatly from those of Macpherson and Chatterton in two crucial areas. Firstly, Walpole did not reveal an English text. *The Castle of Otranto* was set in Italy and had a fake Italian author. Unlike Macpherson and Chatterton, Walpole was not attempting to connect with a xenophobic audience through the presentation of a work of English origin. Instead, he created a tale of incest, family curses, and incarceration in an Italian setting with an Italian source. Walpole extended the anti-Catholic sentiments of his novel to envelop the work itself. The irony being that a monstrous work which demonstrated the brutality and superstitious imagination of old Italy's Catholic writers was created by an eighteenth-century English aristocrat. The Gothic novel was born under the pretence that its horrifying contents reflected the grotesque past of a Catholic country whilst simultaneously attempting to claim its place as the very epitome of English liberty and creativity. The second way in which Walpole's falsification differs from those of Chatterton and

50 Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* ed. Michael Gamer (St Ives: Penguin Books, 2001): 1.

51 *The Mysterious Mother*, 65.

52 *Ibid*: 66.

Macpherson is in the use of history. The use of ancient settings for the two poets was of utmost importance, as they tried to represent an accurate and convincing setting of ancient England. They attempted to make their texts as much works of history as they were of poetry. Lynch states on *The Castle of Otranto*: 'the period setting feels almost (but not quite) disposable. No expert in twelfth-century Italian culture, then or now, has reason to object to anything in *The Castle of Otranto*, because *The Castle of Otranto* doesn't presume to tell us anything about that culture.'⁵³ The medieval settings used by Gothic writers were merely a backdrop against which eighteenth-century concerns could be played out. Robert D. Hume summarises that the 'historical element of the Gothic novel does little more than contribute to the freedom conferred by distance in time and space.'⁵⁴ Walpole's "ancient Italian" story followed in the trend for producing falsified historical narratives, but he broke free of the confines of historical accuracy and realised the liberating potential that a medieval setting could offer for the expression of controversial eighteenth-century concerns.

Walpole's first venture into the realm of Gothic style was with Strawberry Hill, his imposing Gothic mansion complete with turrets, winding staircases, and gloomy chambers. Just like *The Castle of Otranto*, Strawberry Hill was a fake monument of antiquity. The Gothic style had first emerged in architecture in the mid eighteenth century and favoured the ornate and convoluted appearance in opposition to the pure and simple design of classicism. Both Walpole's Strawberry Hill and William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey fell apart several times; in these cases the Gothic form was focused on extravagant, outward styling and severely lacking in solid substance. Visual influences were vital in the development of the Gothic, a genre obsessed with the relationship between the apparent and the hidden. Gothic architecture inspired early examples of the 'gothic aesthetic' in theatre – such as Hartson's *The Countess of Salisbury*, which contained scene instructions for 'A Gothic Castle'. It was the transformation of Fonthill Abbey's interior by Philippe de Louthembourg, Drury Lane's scene designer, which inspired Beckford to write his Gothic novel *Vathek* [1786].⁵⁵

With *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole wished to create a new form of entertainment out of two existing forms. In his "Preface to the Second Edition" of the novel Walpole states: 'It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability: in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been, copied with great success.'⁵⁶ The relatively new form of the novel was an appropriate choice for Walpole's venture, with his paradoxical blending of forms creating something akin to the oxymoronic "old new". The title page to the first edition, published 1764, called the novel 'A Story'.

53 "Horry, the Ruffian, and the Whelp: Three Fakers of the 1760s".

54 "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel": 283.

55 See Christopher Baugh, "Philippe de Louthembourg: Technology-Driven Entertainment and Spectacle in the Late Eighteenth Century." *Huntington Library Quarterly*. Vol. 70, no. 2 (2007): pp.257-259.

56 *The Castle of Otranto*: 9.

For the second edition, published 1765, Walpole simultaneously dropped the false claims of ancient origin and authorship and presented the work as 'A Gothic Story'.⁵⁷ It is possible that Walpole hoped the term 'Gothic' would gain more attention for the novel, and place him in the role of the creator of something 'original'. In *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820*, Angela Wright suggests that Walpole actually applied the label 'Gothic' to conceal his French sources of influence. Wright notes that 'The novel seeks to reassure its English readership of its patriotism by tempering its continental origins with a nationalistic discourse.'⁵⁸ With further editions and reprints being periodically produced until the end of the eighteenth century, as well as translation into French, Walpole's creation certainly proved popular. Charles Beecher Hogan notes how *The Castle of Otranto*, though presented as a prosaic novel, closely resembles the form of a play: 'its form is dramatic; so is its theme; so are its characters.'⁵⁹ Hogan observes how the five chapters of the novel are suited to the five acts of the dramatic tragedy and states that 'in all the speeches throughout this book....beats the genuine rhythm of theatre dialogue.'⁶⁰ Hogan bases his argument around a claim that the speeches in *The Castle of Otranto* were 'intended to be heard' rather than read, stating that 'the ear brought the entire story into an immediacy never fully achieved by the eye.'⁶¹ Hogan's observation picks up on the theatricality of the Gothic genre. The reliance upon the description of the visual nature of the setting and supernatural events naturally locates the style in the optical arena of the stage. The containment of such spectacle within a novel seems almost stifling at times. The acknowledgement of the theatrical suitability of the Gothic also reveals a key property of the genre: Gothic works are focused on immersing the reader in experience. Robert D. Hume believes that Walpole creates an experience of terror, as Radcliffe had described it, as the novel 'holds the reader's attention through a dread series of terrible possibilities'.⁶² It is discernible that Walpole's aim was to create a work to terrify his readers, which would leave a long lasting impression of fear in their minds, as he employs environment and atmosphere to bolster the plight of his characters. However, the sustainment of the feeling of terror is interrupted by the clumsy invasion of supernatural occurrences. These interruptions are ill-suited to the environment in which they enter and, as such, border on Radcliffe's description of the horrific. Matthew Wickman notes that horror 'designates cases wherein signs overwhelm their objects of representation, with a resulting effect of burlesque. In Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, for instance...the curse on the usurping antagonist's family is

57 Ibid: 3.

58 Angela Wright, *Britain, France and the Gothic, 1764-1820: the Import of Terror*. (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2013): 9.

59 Charles Beecher Hogan, "The 'Theatre of Geo. 3,'" in *Horace Walpole: Writer, Politician, and Connoisseur* ed. Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1967): 237.

60 Ibid: 238.

61 Ibid.

62 "Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel": 285.

hypostatized by a giant helmet that falls from the sky and crushes his heir'.⁶³ Walpole's intentions of providing a terrifying experience are undermined by the incongruous intrusions of his imagination. Hogan shares Wickman's view of the novel being more synonymous with the trappings of horror than terror: 'The gothic absurdities of *The Castle of Otranto* are appendages. They are not really inside the story, but are affixed, true gargoyles, on the outside of it....They startle everybody, even the reader, for the moment, but they are never a determining element in the real progress of the story.'⁶⁴ For some critics *The Castle of Otranto* was the literary version on Strawberry Hill; an ornate, imposing exterior, which greatly lacked the deep foundations of substance. However, it cannot be justly claimed that *The Castle of Otranto* lacks any significant content. Hume has noted how as 'early as Walpole (1764) there is a considerable amount of concern for *interior* mental processes.'⁶⁵ Walpole's tale of incestuous desire, tyrannical power and disrupted heritage is noticeably observational of the concerns of the eighteenth-century society. The novel focuses around the disastrous effects of a family curse which brings about the death of Manfred's only son. The untimely death of Conrad causes a crisis of inheritance, which leads to the incestuous advances of Manfred upon his son's bride-to-be. Walpole shows incest and unnatural behaviour to be a result of a disrupted line of heritage. Walpole further imbues this notion with the later revelation that Theodore, supposed peasant, is the true heir of Otranto. Theodore's legitimate right had been severed by Manfred's tyrannical actions many years ago, which had brought about the curse on the family. The second incident of disinheritance placates the first and restores order to the kingdom. Walpole is suggesting that the only way to restore authentic heritage is by removing the corruptive qualities of a non-native invasion. The narrative content of *The Castle of Otranto* mirrors its Gothic style. Walpole's message of domestic disruption is also applicable to the nationalistic Gothic style overthrowing the cursed aesthetic qualities of foreign neoclassicism to regain a true heritage of English influence. Walpole proudly states the patriotic intentions of the novel in his second preface as he admits 'The great master of nature, Shakespeare, was the model I copied', and later refers to the bard as 'the brightest genius this country...has produced.'⁶⁶

Early evidence of the 'gothic aesthetic' can be located in the initial wave of writings of the graveyard poets, 1721-1750. Graveyard poems were a product of a major change in the eighteenth-century practices of religious belief. Eric Parisot has observed that graveyard poetry arose from 'discernible shifts from collective to individual modes of religious experience, and from public to private forms of devotion.'⁶⁷ The graveyard poets were Christian writers, many having strong

63 Matthew Wickman, "Terror's Abduction of Experience: A Gothic History," *The Yale Journal of Criticism* v.18, no.1 (Spring 2005).

64 "The 'theatre of Geo. 3'": 239.

65 "Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel,": 283.

66 *The Castle of Otranto*: 10-13.

67 Eric Parisot, "Piety, Poetry, and the Funeral Sermon: Reading Graveyard Poetry in the Eighteenth Century," *English*

connections with the church, who wrote individual works and were grouped together in an act of retrospective categorisation. Anti-Catholic sentiments coupled with a 'reinterpretation of Protestantism from a Calvinistic to sentimental basis',⁶⁸ led to a call for a more private exploration of belief. Parisot observes that as 'public demonstrations of piety were viewed with growing scepticism, apparently subject to artful pretension designed to meet the approval of the public eye, private reading had evolved into genuine religious exercise.'⁶⁹ Public displays of religion were linked with the ceremonies of Catholicism and were viewed as corruptive and false. As the nation was looking to its past for true sources of English heritage, the people were encouraged to look to themselves in the quest for genuine devotion. Parisot has noted that the emergence of their meditations upon death, and man's connection to God, arose as a resulting effect of the decline of the funeral sermon. The funeral sermon had served an important function in religious society as a vehicle for the morality tale. Reflecting upon the death of a community member allowed for the consideration of what man could do better to ensure the purity of his soul before he too died. However, as a public act, the funeral sermon lost its popularity and effectiveness to an increasingly introspective religious society. With this decline of communal religious practice also came the risk of the church losing its ability to deliver the morality tale. The works of the graveyard poets can be seen as an attempt to replace the expiring funeral sermon with a form that would appeal to their contemporary society. The eighteenth century was the age in which the printed novel was captivating the public imagination. Graveyard poetry can be understood as the attempts of certain artistic church members to tap into these popular forms to continue spreading religious morality. The poetic form had been previously utilised as a medium for religious reflection by the metaphysical poets in the seventeenth century. George Herbert had explained the hopes of the religious poet when he stated 'A verse may finde him, who a sermon flies, / And turn delight into a sacrifice.' With a similar aim in mind, the graveyard poets attempted to blend aesthetics, passion and moral instruction to deliver poetry that was at once entertaining and edifying. Replacing public grieving rituals with private contemplation, the poems were designed for closet reading as an act of personal devotion, but one which still held a connection to the proclamations of the church. Graveyard poetry achieved its aim of edification through the interpretive response to poetry, which allowed for subjective assimilation of the morality tale. Parisot highlights the suitability of the poetic form to the popularity of secluded devotion with his claim that the reader's 'imaginative response, facilitates personal and spiritual experiences within the closet...it is the natural language of *private* religion.'⁷⁰ The individual poems of the graveyard movement all contain elements of the

Studies v.92, no.2 (2011): 174.

68 Ibid: 177.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid: 181.

personal and universal. Many of them contain a notion of the poet's own personal grieving but maintain a level of generality which allows for the reader to connect with the content of the poems. The theme of death was universal and uniting, as Edward Young highlights in *The Complaint; or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death and Immortality*: 'I mourn for millions: 'tis the common lot' (236). The poems were often focused around an "everyman" character, or unidentified narrator and allowed an exploration of man's morality through a reflection upon mortality. Punter and Byron have made an observation on why these expressions of grief were so effective in their delivery of a moral message: 'To learn wisdom, it is necessary to take a quicker and more frightening path, which is the path not of reason but of intense feeling; one can best – or perhaps only – learn the secrets of life...from prolonged and absorbed meditation on its extreme limit: death.'⁷¹

Graveyard poetry presents a journey to greater understanding of God and religious belief through self examination. This examination occurs through an experience of overwrought emotions, rather than a logical progression of theoretical discussion. Henry Jones disliked the melancholic themes of graveyard poetry, and his *The Relief; or, Day Thoughts: A Poem*, published in 1754, was a clear statement against the works of poets like Edward Young. Jones thought that death was not a suitable theme for such in-depth contemplation by the living: 'Why all this solemn Apparatus? Why? / Why all this Din, about a Worm's Concerns?' (1-2). Jones' poem indicates the elements employed by the graveyard poets that later became associated with the creation of Gothic fiction, such as: 'The awful temples, Tombs, and tolling Clocks; / The midnight Damps that drop from weeping Yews, / Beneath th' eclipsed Moon, (the Screech-Owl's Haunt) / Drenching the Locks of some night-watching Pilgrim, / Who sits, in dismal meditation wrapt, / And brainsick Horror, o'er yon Mould'ring Grave, / By Time defac'd' (15-21), and 'The Winds, that mournful yell, from ecchoing Vaults, / And broken Sepulchres' (35-36). Jones's disgruntled reply helps us to identify graveyard poetry as an influential source for the writers of Gothic fiction. The publication of his opposing view is proof that the graveyard poets had a substantial enough audience for Jones to worry about the corruptive force of their work. For Jones, the reflection upon mortality in such a fashion was blasphemous, as it demonstrated a lack of faith in the justice of God and the reward of Heaven. Instead, Jones calls for rationality, which he sees as an optimistic pursuit suitable for the religious man: 'Reason, rise: / And with thy Ray, invincible, drive far / These fancy-form'd, these monster-stalking Shades, / In Justice to thy Great Creator, rise, / To human Nature, and to injur'd Truth: / Thou attribute divine! Thou Ray of God! / Immortal Reason!' (334-346). However, Jones' concerns over the anti-religious connotations of emotional exploration seem to be a misguided reaction against the works of David Hume, rather than the Christian graveyard poets. Hume's enquiries into sentimentalism contained tones of atheism in their quest for empirical evidence.

71 *The Gothic*: 11.

Hume made little secret of his scepticism and made his opinion on the role of organised religion as a damaging influence upon true faith abundantly clear in his “Essay X: Of Superstition and Enthusiasm”, published in *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary* (1752). Hume's works promoting emotional experience became closely connected to the concept of atheism, and it is this connection which has prompted Jones' reactionary poem. Graveyard poetry was far removed from atheism. The poems revealed the battle between passion and reason, and sought to consolidate the conflict what was thought and what was felt. The poems may have relied on taking the reader on an emotional journey, but the end destination was always a place of reason and clarity.

Walpole's Gothic play *The Mysterious Mother* was privately circulated from 1768, but it was never performed. Walpole chose to set his play at the eve of the Reformation, providing his play with a strong link to the crisis of religious practice. Walpole's play touches on two major religious concerns of the era: The anti-Catholic sentiments of a nation increasingly hostile to French and Italian corruption, and the resultant shift from public to more private considerations of faith, as demonstrated by the graveyard poets. In *The Mysterious Mother* the genuine, private devotion of the Countess of Narbonne is representative of Protestant modes of faith, in comparison with the false, public religion of Catholic Friar Benedict. The conflict between the opposing religious practices of the Countess and Benedict runs throughout the play. The Countess refuses to give money to the church, observe rituals, or participate in confession. As Benedict notes: 'In her, devotion's real: / Our beads, our hymns, our saints amuse her not: / Nay, not confession, not repeating o'er / Her darling sins, has any charms for her.' (I.i. 153-157). The Catholic church is presented as evil, with its systems of holy faith revealed as earthly schemes to gain money and power. Benedict is the face of this evil, with his claim that 'A praying woman must become our spoil.' (I.i. 213). Walpole's portrayal of the catholic friar is in keeping with David Hume's views in “Essay X: Of Superstition and Enthusiasm”. Hume claimed that 'superstition is favourable to priestly power.'⁷² He continues to explain how superstition 'steals in gradually and insensibly: renders men tame and submissive; is acceptable to the magistrate, and seems inoffensive to the people: Till at last the priest, having firmly established his authority, becomes the tyrant and disturber of human society, by his endless contentions, persecutions, and religious wars.'⁷³ Hume views the religious extremes of superstition and enthusiasm as damaging to society and Walpole's Friar Benedict is guilty of both. In I:i, Benedict informs Friar Martin of how he will form superstition in the mind of the Countess to worm out her secret: 'I nurse her in new horrors; form her tenants / To fancy visions, phantoms; and report them.' (I.i. 215-216). Moments later, Benedict informs the Countess that he believes her son is dead. When she seeks the source of this knowledge he claims 'I never knew my Friday's dreams to be

72 David Hume, “Essay X: Of Superstition and Enthusiasm”

73 Ibid.

erroneous.' (I:i. 339). Benedict's prophetic claim, though part of a lie to trick the Countess, show the expression of a belief in the prophetic power of those favoured by God. Walpole draws another contrast with the Catholic church in the dialogue between rational Florian and superstitious Friar Martin. The debate between these characters in II:i demonstrates their opposing forms of understanding and highlights their struggle to co-exist. The debate comes to a crescendo over the appropriate interruption of a bolt of lightning, at which point Martin exclaims: 'Hear heav'n's own voice / Condemn impiety!' (II:i. 245-246). In return, Florian mocks the friar's superstitious, and self-righteous response: 'Father, art thou so read in languages / Thou canst interpret th'inarticulate / And quarrelling elements? What says the storm? / Pronounces it for me or thee?'(II:i. 251-254). At the start of Act III, the Countess echoes Hume's essay as she muses on the source of such self-absorbed superstition: 'We know the doom we merit; / And self-importance makes us think all nature / Busied to warn us when that doom approaches.' (III:i. 8-10). Walpole shows that Benedict recognises the falsified nature of the superstitious claims he creates: 'I cannot dupe, and therefore must destroy her.' (IV:i. 66-67). However, the friar is revealed to be a victim of his own plotting imagination. In IV:i, Benedict and Martin are shown to tremble at what they presume to be the displeased voice of God:

A deep toned voice is heard
 VOICE: Forbear!
 BENEDICT: Ha! Whence that sound?
 VOICE (again): Forbear!
 BENEDICT: Again!
 Comes it from heav'n or hell?
 VOICE (again): Forbear!
 MARTIN: Good Angels,
 Protect me! - Benedict thy unholy purpose – (IV:i. 83-85).

A funeral procession enters with friar's singing 'Forbear! Forbear! Forbear! / The pious are heav'n's care.' (IV:i. 86-87). Walpole utilises this comedic moment to demonstrate how the superstitious claims of religious men are highly corruptive to society; so contagious that they infect even their own creators.

The Countess is depicted as holding a private and genuine devotion, and the characters of Peter and Adeliza speak highly of her virtuous and charitable nature. The walled castle within which the Countess resides can be read as symbolic of her closed-off, internalised belief. Walpole's decision to name the gatekeeper of her castle Peter forges a biblical connection which suggests her form of religious practice has a closer connection to God, or at least the Countess believes it does. The solitary religious practice of the Countess is more strongly allied with Florian's enlightened rationality, though he does express concern at the extreme tendencies of her devotion: 'No more of

this. Time has abundant hours / For holy meditation. Nor have years / Traced such deep admonitions on your cheek, / As call for sudden preparation -' (V:i. 180-183). At times the Countess' inner devotion appears to border on atheism, as she declares of faith 'I have it not.' (I:i. 328). But her outburst to Benedict is not an expression of her lack of belief in God, but a doubt of her own worthiness to believe. The Countess' 'moping melancholies' (I:i. 73) and self-mortification reveal her devotion as damaging to the individual. The flaws of both social, Catholic practice and solitary devotion are brought to light through viewing their extremes. To the rationalist, neither the religious practice of the Countess, nor that of Benedict, are seen as suitable for a healthy existence.

The Countess' charitable nature seems to be an example of Hume's notion of sensibility. However, the Countess defies Hume's idea that man is naturally sympathetic with her explanation of her disinterested nature prior to her downfall: 'Ah! Happy me! / If sentiment, untutored by affliction, / Had taught my temperate blood to feel for others, / Ere pity, perching on my mangled bosom, / Like flies on wounded flesh, had made me shrink / More with compunction than with sympathy! / Alas! Must guilt then ground our very virtues!' (I:i. 279-285). Walpole suggests that people need to experience and acknowledge the existence of vice within themselves before they can obtain a true sense of sympathetic morality. This view correlates with the idea that the affectation of the audience in Gothic journeys of emotional experience was a highly effective form of self-reflection. The fight between reason and passion is highly focused within the character of the Countess. As the reader later discovers, this conflict is seated at the source of her sin. Losing control of her passions after the death of her husband, the Countess takes the irrational action of deceitfully sleeping with her own son, resulting in the conception of Adeliza. In Act V Walpole builds up a supportive atmosphere for this revelation; the Countess becomes the living embodiment of the battle between thought and emotion as she switches violently from moments of clarity to episodes of madness. Had the play been presented on the stage these representations of the imbalance between mind and body would have been effectively achieved through use of the visual.

Walpole employs the theme of incest to reflect the self-destructive nature of the Countess' secret-keeping, which is linked to her inner devotion. Literary accounts of incest are traditionally symbolic of reduction, self-destruction and individualism. The incestuous actions of the Countess destroy her family, including Edward's heritage and Adeliza's purity. The theme of war between reason and passion, 'this conflict of the soul' (IV:i. 252), is also mirrored in the self-destructive qualities of incestuous actions. Walpole's identification of Florian and Edwards as soldiers just returned from an external war, fought on foreign soil, provides a physical contrast with the symbolic connotations of the Countess' internalised battle as an act of "civil war". In V:i the Countess exclaims 'I have burst the bond / Of every tie' (V:i. 328-329), and act of incest is shown to be both a cause of and resulting in the breaking of conventional boundaries. The Countess' identity becomes

distorted and chaotic, as she cries: 'Lo! Where this monster stands! They mother! Mistress! / The mother of they daughter, sister, wife! / The pillar of accumulated horrors!' (V:i. 321-323). The only inheritance Edward and Adeliza gain from the Countess is a repetition of her incestuous crime. Walpole demonstrates that, as much as man fights against the "monstrous" acts of false, showy religion, he must also be conscious of battling the unseen monsters that lurk within. The Countess' insistence on privacy and inner faith in order to protect her secret are the causes of the second incestuous crime. She insists upon the silence of her story even in her last moments of life, as she begs Edward to 'conceal our shame – quick frame some legend' (V:i. 386). This refusal to allow communal expression of guilt in favour of privacy draws an interesting parallel with the decline of the funeral sermon and a rise in the internalised religious study of closet poetry. The incestuous results of the Countess' secret-keeping suggest a concern over the self-consuming nature of an internalised interpretation of faith. A system of religious practice which lacks a public element can prevent corruption from without but it cannot protect against corruption from within; a corruption that arises from an imbalance of reason and emotion. The Countess' persistent refusal to reveal the tale of sin prevents the release of Edward and Adeliza from the incestuous curse. In the absorption of graveyard poetry the moral is processed internally by a solitary reader. There is no communal experience of a shared understanding of morality. An internalised religion, much like the Countess' 'untold story' (I:i. 161), cannot be socially didactic. With the act of subjective interpretation there is no way to ensure that the same moral code is applied to every man.

Walpole's play is a melting-pot of theological, ecclesiological and philosophical standpoints all vying for superiority, but none are shown to be any more preferable than the others. Whilst there is a generalised message that emotion and reason need to be kept in balance, the play noticeably lacks a moral. The play ends with a bleak outlook, containing no trace of optimism, as Edward and Florian head to war seeking death and Adeliza is banished to the abbey to hide herself from the world. Robert D. Hume has observed that the Gothic text often lacks the edifying effect of a moral, and that, where later Romantic writers imagined answers to the questions they posed the Gothic 'can find only unresolvable moral and emotional ambiguity.'⁷⁴ In a curious reflection of the inability of the isolated religious man to learn from observing others, Walpole's play is experienced in the closet rather than in the theatre. It is difficult to determine whether this was intentional or not. Walpole stated that he was eager for the play to be performed and some group readings did take place, yet he purposely chose to write material which he knew could never be staged. Walpole presents his moral-less drama, in which the lack of publicly revealing a secret leads to tragedy, in the form of a privatised closet play. The notion of a closet drama is highly paradoxical in itself, as the playwright asks the reader to envisage the public theatrical space within the seclusion of their own mind; a

74 "Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel," 290.

communal learning experience is transformed into a private undertaking. Walpole highlights the relationship between public and private experience and the roles of audience and reader. However, just as with the conflicting theories within his play, Walpole does not provide an answer as to which is the superior form.

It is evident that the 'gothic aesthetic' emerged from various conflicts which encouraged the re-imagining of national identity as removed from foreign influence. The 'gothic aesthetic' is permeated with a sense of escape, reclamation, and even rebirth. The Gothic genre epitomises its own origins as a French inspired form, which denies its roots by masking them. The theatricality of these origins, with an emphasis on pretence, concealment and revelation, continues to shape the Gothic on stage and in the novel. Popular Gothic themes of masquerades, uncovered portraits, the complex identity of the hero-villain, and the creation of life all stem from the initial impetus of the conceptualisation of a new national identity. I will continue to examine the link between national identity and the Gothic in Chapter 4. The next chapter is concerned with how the popular form of sentimentalism intersected with the voguish interest in topography to form one of the Gothic genre's most repeated themes: the emotional distress of the virtuous female as connected with, and reflected in, nature.

Chapter 2. Gothic on Stage: The Experience of Emotion

The aim of eighteenth-century Gothic writers to create an emotional experience, rather than a disconnected observation, was a result of the movement of sensibility. Northrop Frye has noted the restrictive generalisation that the sentimental author's preoccupation with emotions was a knee-jerk reaction to the stereotyped stoicism of Augustan literature. The rise of sentimentality happened gradually across the eighteenth century and was rooted in a concern with morality. Philosopher David Hume began his enquiries into the source of man's conception of morality in "Book 3" of *A Treatise of Human Nature*, published 1740. In 1751 he developed his theories fully in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Hume's enquiry is evidence of eighteenth-century society's 'lack of faith in the adequacy of reason and religious faith to make comprehensible the paradoxes of human existence.'⁷⁵ Hume rejects the notion that a concept of morality can be made on reason alone, and claims that morality is a direct result of emotional reaction: 'The final sentence, it is probable, which pronounces characters and actions amiable or odious, praise-worthy or blameable; that which stamps on them the mark of honour or infamy, approbation or censure; that which renders morality an active principle, and constitutes virtue our happiness, and vice our misery...depends on some internal sense or feeling, which nature has made universal in the whole species.'⁷⁶ Sentimentalism functions on the idea that sympathy allows man to form moralistic judgements based on a primitive instinct of right and wrong. In the sentimental mind, man has a closer connection with nature based on these feelings, and this association is explored in the Gothic genre. The rejection of reason-based morality led to an increased demand for empirical evidence, as the need for the physical and visual experience replaced the logical and theoretical. The influence of this movement on the emergence of the Gothic form is obvious. The Gothic text is concerned with providing an emotional experience for its audience, through which they are able to connect with the various behaviours and actions of the characters and come to a moral understanding through feeling. The Gothic sought the universal in an era where pure rationality divided and categorised. In the mixed class theatres of the eighteenth century, it was Gothic drama that had the opportunity to explore the coalescent qualities of the universality of emotional response. Matthew Wickman notes that 'terror's shocking characteristics accommodate an image of collective experience uniting us across our differences.'⁷⁷ In 1756 Edmund Burke published *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, examined man's emotional reactions and the stimuli that

75 Robert D. Hume, "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel." *PMLA*, vol. 82, no. 2 (1969): 289.

76 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. (St Ives: Penguin, 1985): 502.

77 Matthew Wickman, "Terror's Abduction of Experience: A Gothic History." *The Yale Journal of Criticism*. Vol. 18, no. 1 (2005): 179.

caused them. In particular, Burke's enquiry focused on emotions linked with melancholy, fear and terror and the text was highly influential to the writers who employed the Gothic aesthetic. Both Hume and Burke's enquiries revealed the complexity of man's morality and emotions, and it is obvious to see that they were highly influenced by the works of the graveyard poets. This chapter will examine the school of sentimentalism, and how it comes to form a crucial part of the 'gothic aesthetic'. I will also consider how sentimentalism intersected with the fashionable interest in nature to form the correlation of female emotion with landscape, which becomes a typical indicator of the Gothic romance.

One of the key elements in the shaping of what would eventually become classified as the 'Gothic' form is the tone of sentimentality. A growing interest in sentimentality is evident throughout the eighteenth century in philosophical and literary works, which seem to influence and inform each other. In addition to Hume, the interest in feeling was made popular by the works of the Earl of Shaftesbury with his *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* [1711], and Adam Smith in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* [1759]. At the same time, the sentimental novel emerged as a popular form, with Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or, Virtue Rewarded* [1740] and *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* [1748], Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* [1759-1767], and Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* [1771] being famous examples. It would be reductive to consider sentimentalism as purely a knee-jerk reaction against the analytical tone of the enlightenment era, and Stanley T. Williams has stated that the origins of the school of sentimentalism are 'problematical'.⁷⁸ Though the idealisation of virtue and exploration of the emotional state of man, that lay at the heart of sentimentality, have always been evident in works of art, Williams notes that it is at the turn of the eighteenth century that the intense focus on emotion and the exploration of truth and virtue through feeling first becomes evident in the theatre. Williams convincingly identifies the sentimental tone in the works of Cibber and Farquhar as influencing the more obviously sentimental plays of Richard Steele in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Continued interest in the notion of sensibility can be seen to develop in these early years as sentimental essays began to appear in publications such as *The Spectator* and *The Rambler*, and works such as Lord Shaftesbury's *Inquiry Concerning Virtue and Merit* [1711] 'urged men to cultivate the heart.'⁷⁹

As George Lillo's sentimental tragedy *The London Merchant* caused tears to flow in the 1730's the dominance of the Augustan drama was challenged. Since the Restoration period Augustan dramas filled the stage with political commentary and satirical attacks on contemporary scandals and vices of the age. These plays, such as Joseph Addison's *Cato, a Tragedy* [1713], carried a moralistic attitude as playwrights sought to lambaste what they saw as unacceptable

78 Stanley T. Williams, "The English Sentimental Drama from Steele to Cumberland." *The Sewanee Review*. Vol. 33, no. 4 (1925): 414.

79 Williams: 416.

behaviour. Such blatant criticism of contemporary socio-political affairs was brought to a halt in 1737 with the introduction of the Licensing Act. With any new play having to be approved by the Lord Chamberlain, the theatre could no longer be used as a political forum. The sentimental drama, with its focus on the emotional journey of its characters, was less affected by the Licensing Act. Sentimental play, particularly after 1737, can be seen to deliver moralistic material encouraging Christian values of virtue, honesty and kindness. The message of these plays tends to be universal and at its core sits the sentimentalist's belief that man is essentially good at heart. The political playwright of the Augustan drama had created a direct connection to his audience through his forthright tackling of contemporary issues. The playwright adopting the sentimental form maintained this sense of relevance with the use of the domestic setting. Throughout the early half of the eighteenth century playwrights, such as George Lillo, were increasingly using the mercantile, homely setting of the middle classes to deliver tales of threatened virtue and goodness to their increasingly bourgeoisie audience. Alternatively, the neoclassical form, with its roots in Greek, Roman and French drama, delivered lessons of morality in the traditionally aristocratic vein, with courtly settings hosting an ensemble of kings, queens and noble personages. The neoclassical drama, with its sense of order, restraint, and decorum, placed an emphasis on man's responsibility within and the impact of his behaviour upon society. In contrast, the sentimental play tended to focus on the impact of issues of morality upon the individual.

The effects caused by the Licensing Act were vital to the evolution of Georgian theatre and particularly for the development of the Gothic drama. The restrictions created by the Lord Chamberlain's right to censor effectively stifled the playwright's creativity; the potential of the theatre as political forum or sounding house is nullified and the focus of the playwright must be shifted onto different aspects of his craft – for example, a play like John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* would not have passed the censor's scrutiny. It is unsurprising that sentimentalism rapidly flooded the theatres in comic and tragic form. The emphasis on the physicality of feeling and exploration of man's many emotional states was naturally suited to the visual medium of the theatre, which found expression through costume, set, voice and gesture. David Hume had stated that man could find truth through the instinctual act of feeling right and wrong, and it is the search for truth through the exploration of personal emotion which forms the structure of graveyard poems in the mid-eighteenth century. Writers intensified and externalised emotional journey through the use of setting, with components forming place, time and atmosphere simultaneously bolstering and symbolising the protagonist's state of mind. It is this specific aspect of the concurrent visual presentation and representation of sentimentality that Gothic works, on page and stage, adopted. The 'gothic aesthetic' emerges from the theatrical power of combining sentimentality with powerful visual symbols. Spectacular and sentimental aspects of the Gothic develops because of the resulting

effects of the Licensing Act; without the option of scathing contemporary satire to draw attention to their works, playwrights required a new way to attract an audience.

In 1757 a highly controversial play took to the stage at Covent Garden theatre. Reverend John Home's *Douglas* had been performed in 1756 in Edinburgh to audiences divided by responses of delight and outrage; Home was heralded as the Scottish Shakespeare at the same time as being ejected from the church. The cause of this controversy will be examined in chapter 3. Premiering almost ten years before the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Home's *Douglas* has not fallen into the retrospectively created category of 'Gothic dramas', but it contains many of the elements which would later become synonymous with the form. Ultimately a tragedy of loss, *Douglas* tells the pitiful tale of Lady Randolph, the 'monument of woe' (I.i), who has spent seven years grieving over the deaths of her husband and son. She has reluctantly entered a loveless marriage with Lord Randolph, and is pursued by the villainous Glenalvon. The main plot of the play is concerned with the arrival of a stranger. After a discussion with the stranger's father Lady Randolph uncovers the shocking truth that the brave young stranger is, in fact, her son the young Douglas, who was found close to death and raised by peasants. Lady Randolph shares her discovery with young Douglas but their secret meetings as mother and son are explained to Lord Randolph as sexual liaisons by the meddling Glenalvon. Lord Randolph attacks Douglas in a fit of jealousy, with Glenalvon seeking the opportunity to kill his Lord and claim Lady Randolph, and her wealth, as his own. Glenalvon is killed in the scuffle, with Douglas fatally wounded. Upon the death of her son Lady Randolph flees the stage to commit suicide and Lord Randolph heads to war wishing for death. The play was an allegory of the Scottish nation following the failure of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, which I will explore in chapter 4. Home's focus is on provoking an emotional response from his audience. He informed both his Edinburgh and London audiences of this aim in their respective prologues. At Edinburgh theatre-goers were asked to 'Listen attentive to the various tale, / Mark if the author's kindred feelings fail; / Sway'd by alternate hopes, alternate fears, / He waits the test of your congenial tears.' At the start of the London production actor Mr. Sparks announced: 'This night a Douglas your protection claims; / A wife! a mother! Pity's softest names: / The story of her woes indulgent hear, / And grant your suppliant all she begs, a tear.' In Edinburgh it is Home who awaits the tears of the audience as confirmation of his success, but for the London production this yearning for verification has been transformed into a claim that the Lady Randolph needs sympathy. The prologue suggests the rather bizarre notion that a fictional character is aware of her audience and requires their tears. It is not merely a case of the character's sad tale deserving the sympathetic tears of those who observe it; the prologue proposes that the audience enter into a two way contract with the character in which she will share her story with them in exchange for their tears. Furthermore, these lines suggest that the reason the audience have come to the theatre is to

experience an emotional reaction; Home advocates the purpose of theatre as the shared experience of emotion. With this alteration Home intensely engages the sentimental form and plunges his audience into a realm of emotional experience before the first scene begins.

Home's play explores several themes which also appear in the philosophical works of his close friend David Hume. In the year after *Douglas* premiered, Hume published his *Of Tragedy* [1757]. Hume emphasises the paradoxical nature of tragic plays as sources of entertainment, and suggests the suitability of the tragic form to sentimentalism: 'The more they are touched and affected, the more they are delighted with the spectacle'.⁸⁰ With *Douglas* Home demonstrates a belief that his audience will be greatly entertained by the feeling of emotion, and he assaults his audience with scenes of extreme emotion throughout the play. Such constant attempts to affect his audience indicate that Home believed in the concept that, as Hume would explain, '[t]hey are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted'.⁸¹ The tragic formula of *Douglas* reflects Hume's opinions on the genre, so it is unsurprising that Hume wrote a glowing dedication to his friend's work shortly after its Edinburgh debut: 'I have the ambition to be the first who shall in public express his admiration of your noble tragedy of Douglas; one of the most interesting and pathetic pieces, that was ever exhibited on any theatre'.⁸² Though *Douglas* is a play written in the vein of sensibility it does not conform to the standard model of sentimental tragedy featured in the Georgian theatre. One of the key characteristics of the sentimental play was its use of the domestic, middle class setting. In *Douglas* the characters are of noble blood with a grand castle courtyard as their setting and the use of aristocratic characters becomes commonplace throughout the Gothic genre. The influential force of the visual 'Gothic' style had its roots in architecture, therefore the Gothic form was heavily determined by a sense of place. The imposing structures of medieval castles and abbeys needed to be populated with suitable characters. Therefore, Gothic works are filled with tales of counts and countesses, nuns, friars, lords and ladies. The selection of characters of a higher status also undoubtedly fed the hyperbolic mood of the Gothic genre, where nature, emotion, and action are inflated to a feverish pitch. Home's play is one of the first examples of what was to become a key characteristic of the Gothic genre; the combination of traditional, noble characters from the neoclassical form with the newly evolving style of sentimentalism.

In 1765 as Walpole labels *The Castle of Otranto* a 'Gothic story' Hall Hartson produced his play *The Countess of Salisbury* set in a 'Gothic castle'. Like *Douglas*, the play revolves around the titular female character, who has been held captive in her own castle by Lord Raymond, whilst mourning the death of her husband. Also similar to *Douglas* is the inclusion of the despicable counsellor, who in Hartson's play has the name Grey. Two strangers, Alwin and Leroches, appear at

80 David Hume, *Four Dissertations*. (Bristol, UK: Thoemmes Press, 1995, orig. 1757): 185.

81 Hume: 186.

82 Hume: iv-v.

the castle as the only survivors of the shipwreck in which the Lord of Salisbury perished. The Countess converses privately with Alwin and he reveals that he is actually her husband in disguise. He exclaims his plan of revenge on Lord Raymond for seizing his wife and lands. In a plot device which echoes Glendalvon's role in *Douglas*, Gray views the meeting of the Countess and Alwin and shares his concerns about a developing love affair with Lord Raymond. The Countess is threatened with the harm of her young son unless she marries Lord Raymond, and in a fit of rage Lord Salisbury reveals his true identity. Salisbury is imprisoned and Gray tries to convince Lord Raymond to have him murdered. Acts IV and V revolve around a knight, Morton, who warns Lord Salisbury that there will be an assassination attempt. The following scene reveals Morton to be the hired assassin as he informs Grey that he has carried out the murder, but Morton has actually double-crossed Grey, sparing Salisbury's life and freeing him from his dungeon. In the ensuing duel Salisbury refuses to kill the defeated Lord Raymond, who stabs himself. Meanwhile, in the rather chaotic final scene, it is revealed that Grey had kidnapped the Countess from the castle but his evil plan was thwarted by Leroches, who defeats Grey and reunites the noble couple.

Despite the parallels with Home's plot, *The Countess of Salisbury* is richer in action and lacks the intense focus on emotional experience. Like Home, Hartson fills his dialogue with emotive language which reverberates with the excessive tone of sensibility. As in Home's prologue, there is a metatheatrical tone to the sensibility within *The Countess of Salisbury*. Lord Salisbury states: 'our late mishaps / recall'd, shall be th' amusing narrative, / And story of our future ev'ning, oft / Rehears'd.' (V.i). This sense of self-awareness is an underlying presence in the Gothic. The Gothic is a genre permeated with the subjective role of symbolic interpretation; as such, it maintains persistent acknowledgement of the relationship between play and audience, or novel and reader. It is in their endings that these two plays display their most obvious differences. Home's play, being a tragedy, follows Lady Randolph's despair through to her act of self-murder. Though Hartson labelled his work 'a tragedy', both Lord and Lady Salisbury are saved from harm and virtue is shown to triumph. The closing lines of the play reveal Hartson's aim for the play to serve an edifying purpose, as Lord Salisbury informs the audience: 'Our son too – he shall hang upon / The sounds, and lift his hand in praise / To Heav'n! taught by his mother's bright example; / that, to be truly good, is to be bless'd.' (V.i). Hartson provides his audience with the comforting, if rather simplistic, claim that good behaviour will lead to good fortune. In *The Countess of Salisbury* the importance of morality within society is highlighted, and virtuous behaviour is encouraged through the idea that the good man, or woman, will be rewarded with fortuity.

Like Hartson, playwright John Jackson also mixed sentimentality with edification in his *Eldred; or, the British Freeholder* [1773]. The sentimental strand of the play centres around Edwena's despair over her secret marriage to Elidure, who has joined the fight against an impending

invasion. Edwena is romantically pursued by the villainous Brennus, who is planning to betray the country by siding with the enemy. Meanwhile, the moralising strand of the play is concerned with the attempts of Edwena's aristocratic father, Locrine, to usurp land and property from the working class Eldred, who is Elidure's father. Eldred is wrongfully imprisoned by Locrine and Brennus, but Elidure returns to free his father and uncover Brennus' treason. As in *The Countess of Salisbury* and *Douglas*, *Eldred* consists of highly emotive scenes focused on female distress. Like *Douglas*, the play contains distinct allegorical material in its portrayal of usurped property; tyrannical landlords and the impact of the Inclosure Act [1773] were concerning matters for Jackson's contemporary society.

Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772] and Paul Hiffernan's *The Heroine of the Cave* [1774] also demonstrate highly sentimental plots. Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* follows Euphrasia's attempts to free her father, Evander, from imprisonment and restore him to his rightful place as king. The play features the tyrannical Dionysius, who has overthrown Evander and now rages war in Syracuse as he tries to claim the city as his own. In a scene that epitomizes the sentimental form, two guards describe seeing Euphrasia visits her imprisoned father and revives him by making him suckle milk from her breast. The guards aid Evander's escape and he is hidden in the city temple. Phocion, Euphrasia's husband, who had fled with their son, returns in disguise to help his wife save the city and restore Evander's title. Dionysius plots to break the truce called between the warring factions by murdering Timoleon's army as they rest, but his plan is thwarted by the cunning Phocion, who has informed Timoleon of his plan. Dionysius's troops are defeated and he seeks to kill Euphrasia as revenge. In an unusual display of female violence Euphrasia defends herself by murdering Dionysius and order is restored to Syracuse.

The Heroine of the Cave was Hiffernan's completion of a play by the then deceased Henry Jones, which had originally been entitled *The Cave of Idra*. The play opens with the villainous Seyfert reflecting upon his love for Constantia and plotting the murder of her husband Alberti so that he may claim her as his bride. Seyfert fools Alberti into duelling with Colredo, an act strictly forbidden by the Emperor. Alberti slays Rodolpho and is arrested and sent to be imprisoned with the cave of Idra. Constantia is informed of her husband's fate via letter and resolves to use her noble status to secure his freedom. Constantia is denied her plea and a letter signed by the Emperor demands she be housebound or else sent to a convent. In Acts III and IV the British travellers Everard and Faulkner are guided around the cave by a slave. They come across Alberti and Everard recognises him as an old friend, despite his dishevelled state. Constantia has fled her house and enters the cave in disguise. Meanwhile, her brother discovers Seyfert's plot and forgery of the Emperor's signature. Colredo is found to be alive, though Seyfert tried to poison him, and the villain is brought before the Emperor and sentenced to death. Alberti decides to kill himself but is

stopped at the last moment with news he is to be released. The disguised Constantia has witnessed Alberti's suicidal actions and, in a moment of madness, believes he has slain himself and, in a moment that was quintessentially sentimental, she faints. Alberti revives Constantia and they leave the cave, As Seyfert is taken to execution, a grand procession is thrown to celebrate the virtuosity of Constantia and Alberti.

Both Home and Hartson presented their audience with the female as victim, whereas *The Heroine of the Cave* and *The Grecian Daughter* focus on the emotional distress of a central female character who defies authority to save a beloved family member. The plays of Murphy and Hiffernan show a further development in the Gothic form; the transformation of female from weeping victim to bold heroine. As in *The Countess of Salisbury*, these plays end with the restoration of the natural order. In similar fashion to Hartson's aims, Hiffernan and Murphy seem to have written their dramas to showcase the importance of virtue within a world where evil lurks in the bosom of man. As in the works of Home, Hartson, and Walpole, these two plays are populated with aristocratic characters. Paul Hiffernan proclaimed the use of the aristocratic, rather than domestic, character as resulting in greater theatrical effect in his discussion on tragedy. Published in 1770 Hiffernan's *Dramatic Genius: in five books* expresses his theory on the tragic form. In stark contrast to the beliefs of Hume, Hiffernan believes the pleasure gained from viewing tragic drama revolves around the feeling of pride. Hiffernan claims that '[o]ur joy for weeping at a tragedy, is derived from the secret satisfaction of our really being, (or at least thinking ourselves) in a happier, or superior situation, to those unhappy victims of fortune's uncertainty.'⁸³ Hiffernan expresses this theory dramatically in *The Heroine of the Cave* with the character of the Slave. Also imprisoned in the cave, the Slave compares his situation to that of the mistreated Alberti's, and realises how observing 'His hapless fate makes me forget me own.' (III.ii). It is this concept of a pleasurable sense of superiority that provokes Hiffernan's theory on aristocratic characters: 'the reason why the Greeks, Romans, French, English, &c. receive more pleasure from the tragic representations of sovereigns in distress...is, because they give our pride an opportunity, as it were, of raising us above them, by thus benignly lamenting for their disasters.'⁸⁴ It is difficult to detect whether Hiffernan's theory on tragic drama comes from an objective study of the eighteenth-century audience, or from a subjective realm of his infamously inflated ego.

Both sentimentalism and the Gothic became closely linked with the feminine. The sentimental base of the Gothic encouraged the genre's focus on female experience, which, in turn, attracted female writers to adopt the form. On the stage, the early presence of the 'gothic aesthetic' would arise in several dramas by female playwrights, such as Dorothea Ceesia's *Almida* [1771],

83 Paul Hiffernan, *Dramatic Genius, in five books*. (London: T. Becket and P. de Hondt, 1772): 74-75.

84 Hiffernan: 84.

Hannah Cowley's *Albina* [1779], and Hannah More's *Percy* [1777] and *The Fatal Falsehood* [1779]. At the end of the eighteenth century the theatrical Gothic was still being developed by female dramatists such as Joanna Baillie, Elizabeth Inchbald, and Sophia Lee. Lee also published a Gothic novel, the form with which female writers, such as Ann Radcliffe, Clara Reeves and Mary Shelley, would popularise the Gothic romance. It is the shift evident in the works of male writers, such as Hiffernan and Murphy, in the creation of sentimental scenes of women, who are portrayed as being both emotional and strong, that forged a sense of relation between female writers and the Gothic form.

One of the most prevalent elements of the Gothic genre is the symbolic use of nature. In the five 'early gothic' plays mentioned above, we can observe how the school of sentimentalism intersected with the growing interest in nature to create moments of emotional experience that were intensified through the symbolic use of natural setting. David B. Morris has suggested that the increasing interest in nature in the mid-eighteenth century is partially due to the fact that 'an increasing number of readers now lived in cities, where nature is conspicuously absent or violently subordinated to human needs....The new longing for nature is a desire for something in visible retreat.'⁸⁵ The reverence for retreating nature is strongly evident in fashionable diversions outside of the theatre. Both the European tour and British walking tour were popular pastimes amongst aristocratic members of society. Paul Ranger has noted how 'the eighteenth-century passion for travel to remote areas of Britain and Europe led to an appreciation of the untamed qualities of nature.'⁸⁶ In the second half of the eighteenth century, scene painters, such as Philip de Louthembourg, at Drury Lane, and Gaetano Marinari and Michael 'Angelo' Rooker, both at the Haymarket Theatre, transformed the sketches and watercolours they made on tour into striking backdrops. These backdrops gradually evolved from the stock forests and valleys of John Home's *Douglas* [1756] to detailed geographical representations. This vogue for sublime elements of nature is conspicuous in Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757], and highly influenced the role of scenery in Gothic dramas. Burke posited that 'Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime....length strikes least; an hundred yards of even ground will never work such an effect as a tower an hundred yards high, or a rock or mountain of that altitude.'⁸⁷ Ranger notes how in Gothic drama the 'stage forest, in common with the mountain landscape, established the physical insignificance of man.'⁸⁸ The awesome power of

85 David B. Morris, "A Poetry of Absence." in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*. Ed. John Sitter. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001): 229.

86 Paul Ranger, *'Terror and Pity reign in every Breast': Gothic Drama in the London Patent theatres, 1750-1820*. (Avon: The Society for Theatre research, 1991): 9.

87 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*. (St. Ives: Penguin, 2004): 114.

88 Ranger: 28.

nature in comparison to the small figure of man had been explored in the poetry of Gray, Thomson and Young in the preceding two decades. As the Gothic form developed over the next half of the century artwork portraying Gothic scenes would depict tiny figures of people set amidst vast landscapes or buildings. In comparison, the forest and castle settings in earlier Gothic plays such as *Douglas* would have lacked this exaggerated sense of vastness, with stock scenes being used to give a non-specific sense of place. As Gothic drama, with its spectacular landscape panoramas, increased in popularity, the two main London theatres were rebuilt. Theatre Royal Drury Lane, rebuilt 1794, and Theatre Royal Covent Garden, rebuilt 1792, were both remodelled to accommodate more spectators, and to host grand sets and awesome technical effects.

The use of natural settings to reflect the emotional experience of a character was not a new conceit, with the most pertinent examples to the Gothic form being that of Shakespeare's *King Lear* [1603-06] and *Macbeth* [1606]. In the eighteenth century it is steadily utilized in reference to female characters, with a frequency that eventually leads to it becoming a key signifier of the Gothic genre. In Home's *Douglas* [1756], Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772], Jackson's *Eldred* [1773], and Jones' scenes in *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775], natural settings are used symbolically to heighten the portrayal of female emotion. Murphy uses the image of the cave in *The Grecian Daughter*:

This is my last abode; these caves, these rocks,
Shall ring for ever with Euphrasia's wrongs;
All Sicily shall hear me; yonder deep
Shall echo back an injur'd daughter's cause;
Here will I dwell, and rave, and shriek, and give
These scatter'd locks to all the passing winds;
Call on Evander lost; and, pouring curses,
And cruel gods, and cruel stars invoking,
Stand on the cliff in madness and despair.
(II.i).

Murphy positions Euphrasia's anguish with jagged rocks, harsh winds, and a cliff that reverberates with theatrical memories of Lady Randolph's suicide in *Douglas*. This conceit increases the impact of Euphrasia's emotions upon the audience by augmenting her outpourings with images of a harsh environment. Murphy's use of imagery is twofold, the cave reflecting Euphrasia's sorrow both metaphorically and literally: her wails will bounce off walls which are as gloomy and sequestered as her desolation. Paul Ranger has noted that Murphy 'gave only the briefest indication of a location, allowing details to be conveyed in the dialogue.'⁸⁹ Hence it was left to the set designer to figure out the visual details and functionality of the scene. The set for the cavern scenes would most likely have been simplistic, providing a basic atmosphere of enclosed darkness within the candlelit

89 Ranger: 33.

theatre.

Nature is featured most heavily in Jackson's *Eldred* with several scenes set in a grove. Edwena seeks solace in the grove, finding an acceptance of her sad state amongst the elements of nature, which is emphasised with Jackson's personification of the tree:

Welcome, thou sylvan scene, thou leafy grove,
Beneath whose silent shade my Eldiure
In accents bland oft op'd his copious heart,
Teeming with virtuous love – Thou hoary oak,
His faithful confidant, thy moss-grown ribs,
Significant in look, speak to my soul,
Firmness and strength; and pensive in thy gloom,
Thou spread'st a sympathizing shade around,
Grateful to melancholy – Here sit me down,
Here mourn my luckless fate, and ceaseless weep
The absence of my love, my lord, my Elidure.
(II.i).

The equation of female characters, and their emotive states, with their anthropomorphic counterpart of Mother Nature becomes a familiar trope of the Gothic drama. Moments of despair are often punctuated with thunder storms, raging rivers, and ragged cliffs. Such echoing casts these emotions in a destructive light. *Douglas* opens with Lady Randolph retreating from the 'woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom / Accords with my soul's sadness, and draws forth / the voice of sorrow from my bursting heart.' (I.i). At the close of the play her act of self-murder is equated with the 'rifted rocks' onto which she plummets. In *The Grecian Daughter*, Euphrasia's anguish is akin to the 'craggy cliffs, and pointed rocks' she has just climbed (II.i). Hiffernan also likens Constantia's torment to the destructive potential in nature with her hyperbolic exclamation: 'Oh! there's distraction in the horrid thought! / It kindles a new Etna in my bosom, / And drives me mad! a prey to wild despair!' (II.ii). Such metonymy denotes dark and troubled emotions as terrifying but organic parts of life; they are as sublime as the landscape which reflects them. Paul Ranger has noted how, in the Gothic drama, 'the landscape did not exist in its own right but as part of the heroine's consciousness.'⁹⁰ The creation of sound and lighting effects was required in many Gothic plays, particularly in the 1790's, as the symbolic use of natural occurrences became more extravagant. Paul Ranger and David Collison have attentively recorded the various techniques used in the creation of sound in the theatre. Ranger explains how thunder 'was created in the theatre by shaking a thin sheet of copper suspended on a chain...a method replacing the earlier Georgian

90 Paul Ranger, *Terror and Pity reign in every Breast': Gothic Drama in the London Patent Theatres, 1750-1820*. (Avon: The Society for Theatre Research. 1991): 6.

thunder run.⁹¹ The thunder run had been 'a development of the existing Italian method of rolling weights around above the ceiling of the auditorium...with the addition of steps to allow the balls to drop as they rolled along. The heavy balls dropping would add a "boom" to the rumbling sound'.⁹² With thunder there could also be the suggestion of lightning and wind. Lightning could be created by igniting 'a small quantity of a compound of nitrate of barytes, sulphur, nitre, arsenic and charcoal, which burnt with a green flash.'⁹³ The storm scene was completed with the use of wind machines, which consisted of 'silk or canvas stretched tightly over a revolving wooden slatted drum,' which created 'a moaning or screaming sound depending on the speed of the drum and tightness of the canvas.'⁹⁴ Ranger notes how, by the early nineteenth century, lights were strategically placed in order to create dark areas on the stage: 'the contrasts of light and shade gave an atmospheric quality to the performance of the Gothic drama.'⁹⁵ The creation of contrast in Gothic plays was textual as well as aesthetic; the insertion of comedic action amongst the terror and suspense becomes noticeable in plays towards the end of the eighteenth-century, such as *The Castle Spectre* [1797].

Home's *Douglas* sees the exceptional connection of a male character with nature. Throughout the play, Douglas finds his journey shadowed in nature as he seeks the woods as a place for private meditation. Act V opens in the wood, where Douglas surveys his environment as he awaits Norval's arrival:

This is the place, the centre of the grove.
Here stands the oak, the monarch of the wood.
How sweet and solemn this mid-night scene!
The silver moon, unclouded, holds her way
Thro' skies where I could count each little star.
The fanning west wind scarcely stirs the leaves;
The river, rushing o'er its pebbled bed,
Imposes silence with a stilly sound.
In such a place as this, at such an hour,
If ancestry can be ought believ'd,
Descending spirits have convers'd with man,
And told the secrets of the world unknown.
(V.i).

Home utilizes imagery of the woods to mirror, and by mirroring, intensify, the theme of rightful inheritance. With Douglas returned and aware of his true identity, nature produces a peaceful scene, one which suggests the legitimacy of his right to rule. Douglas sees his legitimacy reflected in the

91 Ranger: p. 30.

92 David Collison, *The Sound of Theatre: From the Ancient Greeks to the Modern Digital Age*. (Eastbourne: PLASA, 2008): 25-26.

93 Ranger: p. 30.

94 Collison: p. 33.

95 Ranger: p. 28.

natural environment as he beholds the oak as 'monarch of the wood.' Home's poetic language, combined with a backdrop and flats painted in a forest theme would have created a symbolic imagery which acted upon his audience in both a visual and cerebral manner. Douglas also processes the news of his true identity using imagery of the transforming seasons:

Eventful day! how hast thou chang'd my state!
Once on the cold, and winter shaded side
Of a bleak hill, mischance had rooted me,
Never to thrive, child of another soil:
Transplanted now to the gay sunny vale,
Like the green thorn of May my fortune flowers.
(IV.i).

As the 'gothic aesthetic' becomes further entwined with the female focus of sentimentalism, such links between men and nature are left unexplored. More commonly, mental imagery was created in order to liken female character journey to the changing of the seasons, as demonstrated by Hartson and Jackson. In *The Countess of Salisbury*, Lady Salisbury laments the loss of childhood innocence and happiness:

Sweet state of childhood! unally'd with cares;
Serene as spring-tide morn, new-welcom'd up
With bleat of lamb, with note of woodlark wild.
With riper years come passions turbulent
And rude, a baleful crew, unnumber'd as
The forest leaves that strew the earth in autumn.
(I.i).

Hartson uses the traditional trope of seasons representing physical ageing to also symbolise spiritual and mental maturation. Jackson emphasises Edwena's sorrow in *Eldred* by equating her emotional shift with the cycles of nature:

Cease, cease my song. In vain thy numbers strive
To chace away this melancholy gloom,
Whose sable mantle, shadowing the soul,
Presents a dreary prospect to the sight,
And spreads o'er Nature's works a dusky hue.
Why glows the blushing rose? Why flowers the thorn?
Why is the vale in verdant honours clad?
Sorrow's sad winter plucks their glories down,
And all things fade beneath my sick'ning wo,
To bloom, I fear, no more.'
(I.i).

Though the association of a male character with elements of nature does not become a prominent feature of the Gothic drama, the polysemy of symbolism allows for the interpretation of thunder storms, howling winds, and threatening forests as machismo passion.

The trope of nature is at least partially rooted in eighteenth-century discussions of suicide and melancholia. The emblematic use of nature intensified the audience's sentimental perception of character, and tapped into philosophical attempts to understand the legitimacy of melancholic and, in some cases, suicidal thoughts. One of the common points of consideration was whether feelings of immense gloom and acts of self-destruction should be understood as natural or unnatural. Philosophical enquiries into the matter produced conflicting opinions, which jostled for dominant position in the conceptualisation of social ethics in the long eighteenth-century. Lester G. Crocker notes that 'Montaigne was one of the first to reject the implication that suicide was consequently unnatural; in pointing out that the ability to die was also a gift of nature, he gave an important lead to the humanists of the eighteenth century.'⁹⁶ In 1748, La Mettrie stated that when facing extreme suffering it would be 'unnatural to want to keep on living.'⁹⁷ Such views placed an emphasis on man's innate right to end his own life when he deems fit, and classified emotions surrounding the disenchantment with life as intrinsic to the spectrum of human existence. Voltaire provided a counterargument, stating that man's death should be natural because his birth had been so.⁹⁸ He also highlighted the instinctive act of self-preservation in relation to self-murder when he claimed that 'Nature has sufficiently guarded against it, and hope and fear are the powerful curbs she makes use of to stop the hand of the wretch uplifted to be his own executioner.'⁹⁹ For Voltaire, and others who argued the same line, man who has lost all sense of hope and fear, or who has managed to traverse these barricades, has travelled beyond the boundaries of nature. In the Gothic story, such philosophical musings over whether melancholia and suicide can be justified are located in the figurative use of nature. Fused with the affections of sentimentalism, symbolic manipulations of scenes of nature magnified the portrayal of turmoil and despair. In Chapter 3 I will explore in further detail the influence of the debate on suicide and melancholia on the development of the Gothic form.

96 Lester G. Crocker, "The Discussion of Suicide in the Eighteenth Century." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1952): 60.

97 Ibid.

98 Crocker: 51.

99 Voltaire, *The Works of Voltaire, A Contemporary Version*. Trans. William F. Fleming.
<<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/666/81882>>

Chapter 3 – Suicide and Melancholia in Early Gothic Drama

In the last chapter I mentioned the link between the eighteenth-century interest in suicide and melancholia and nature in the Gothic. The renewed interest in melancholia and suicide was highly influential in the emergence of the Gothic form in literature and theatre. The attributes which accompanied melancholic pondering, such as despair, fear, uncertainty, and sorrow, become essential ingredients in the creation of the pensive doom which permeates the atmosphere of Gothic works. Sentimental interest in exploring emotional experience encouraged and guided contemplations of the 'malady' of melancholia. Theories on sensibility and morality, such as David Hume's, led to the subjects of suicide and melancholia being considered in new, more sympathetic light. Many Gothic works engage directly with issues of melancholia or suicide, through individual character journey or, less subtly, through open debate within the dialogue. Even when these ideas are not specifically featured, repeatedly used themes, which find their roots in philosophical and ethical discussions of suicide, become key features of the Gothic genre. Topoi which can be seen as arising from the renewed debate on suicide include: nature, the place of the individual within society, disinheritance, and the physical compared to the intangible. This chapter will explore the position of the debate on suicide and melancholia in the eighteenth century, and observe how anxieties stemming from these debates manifested themselves in early 'gothic' plays, such as John Jackson's *Eldred* [1773] and Hall Hartson's *The Countess of Salisbury* [1765], and Paul Hiffernan's *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775]. I also examine how John Home's *Douglas* [1756] presented a controversial portrayal of suicide, and how this play was connected with David Hume's essay "Of Suicide" [1755].

The mid-eighteenth century sees the prominence of a 'new death-centered literature for which the prevailing mood is melancholy.'¹⁰⁰ From the beginning of the century it is possible to trace an increasing amount of publications dealing with the subjects of melancholia and suicide. Literature engaged in the exploration of these themes included sermons, poetry, novels, medical journals, plays, and philosophical essays. Lester G. Crocker has suggested that the influx of material on the subject of suicide was sparked by the review of laws concerning self-murder in France.¹⁰¹ As the corresponding laws in England had long been held as controversial, developments in France revived the debate across the channel. It is interesting to note Crocker's observation in conjunction with Angela Wright's theory that the Gothic was 'imported' from France during the mid-eighteenth century. Both Crocker and Wright highlight the influence that occurrences in France had upon

¹⁰⁰ David B. Morris, "A Poetry of Absence," in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. John Sitter (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 2001):

¹⁰¹ Lester G. Crocker, "The Discussion of Suicide in the Eighteenth Century. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1952): 50.

British cultural developments; whether because of perceived similarities and admiration, or out of fear and an attempt to achieve distance, the emergence of the Gothic in Britain owes much to its relations with France. In 1733 physician George Cheyne published his medical treatise 'The English Malady', an attempt to understand a disorder which Cheyne claimed made up 'almost one third of the complaints of the people of condition in England.'¹⁰² In 1755 the writer for *The Connoisseur* claimed that suicide 'begins to prevail so generally,' and was committed with 'uncommon prowess.'¹⁰³ By 1790 suicide was still the subject of printed materials, such as *Thoughts on Suicide* by Reverend John Wesley, who commented 'It is a melancholy consideration, that there is no country in Europe, or perhaps in the habitable world, where the horrid crime of self-murder is so common as it is in England!'¹⁰⁴ In his *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Samuel Johnson conveyed the general judgement of suicide within his definition of the word: 'Self-murder; the horrid crime of of destroying one's self.'¹⁰⁵ Melancholic musings were also evident in poetic form, from Pope's satirical *The Rape of the Lock* [1717] through Matthew Green's advisory piece *The Spleen* [1737], to Young's gloomy reflections in his *Night Thoughts* [1742]. Roland Bartel claims that the concept of eighteenth-century England as a nation of forlorn subjects teetering on the brink of suicide is mythical. He notes that contemporary newspapers created a false reputation with their biased focus on scandalous, unnatural deaths.¹⁰⁶ The frequent output of hack literature from the Grub Street presses, as well as provincial newspaper reports, indicate an ever-growing readership with a penchant for the defamatory: the copious inches of column space dedicated every week to the reporting of untimely and pitiful deaths in newspapers with a high readership suggests public demand for this knowledge. Death, particularly the scandalous or unusual, was a happening of public interest and, as such, it equated to a form of entertainment. David B. Morris has remarked that 'the deathbed held a semi-public status. Death was, ideally, a performance, an event, subject to the same artful preparations as any serious action performed on the stage, and like any stage performance it also held the power to move and to edify its audience.'¹⁰⁷ It was undoubtedly this potential to educate which attracted the reflective tones of moralising writers. Whether the national image of a high suicide rate was accurate or false, the topic of melancholic despair had clearly captured the imaginative and inquisitorial attention of the English public.

Johnson gave three definitions of the word 'melancholy' in his dictionary. His first denotes it

102 George Cheyne, *The English Malady*. Ed. Roy Porter. (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991): preface.

103 Anonymous, *The Connoisseur*, no. 50 (1755) in *Elegant Extracts: Or, Useful and Entertaining Passages in Prose*, ed. Vicesimus Knox. 598-600. (London: C. and J. Rivington, 1824): 599.

104 Reverend John Wesley, "Thoughts on Suicide" in *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley, A.M.* Ed. John Emory. (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1831): 462.

105 Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*. London: W. Stahan et al, 1755.

106

107 David B. Morris, "A Poetry of Absence," in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-century Poetry*. Ed. John Sitter. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001):

as a physiological condition: 'A disease, supposed to proceed from a redundance of black bile.'; his second focuses on mental affliction: 'A kindness [sic] of madness, in which the mind is always fixed on one object.'; and his third suggests it as an inherent emotion: 'A gloomy, pensive, discontented temper.'¹⁰⁸ Johnson's variety of descriptions, though not conflicting, indicate the difficulty to understand the complex nature of what was termed "melancholia" in the eighteenth century. Clark Lawlor has explained how melancholy, also called the spleen or the vapours, became a fashionable disease during the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁰⁹ The fixation upon recognised sufferers of the disease, who were members of the upper classes or well known writers and philosophers, created an affinity between melancholia and genius or success. As a result, melancholic suffering becomes, paradoxically, a gift and a curse; it was a disease which gave birth to acclaimed works of art and philosophical insight but also lead to lethargy, crippling sadness and, in some cases, self-murder. The piqued public interest furthered this contradictory nature as, like moths drawn to a flame, audiences became enchanted with tales of destruction. The complex relationship between joy and woe would occupy creative thought into the next century and the conflictive nature of melancholia, epitomised by Young's 'delightful gloom!' (205),¹¹⁰ would heavily influence the content of many "Gothic" works.

In philosophical debates about suicide one of the main points of contention has always been whether man's life belongs to himself or to God. As Lester G. Crocker has noted in his informative essay "The Discussion of Suicide in the Eighteenth-Century", viewpoints on this matter were essentially split between the humanistic and the authoritarian outlook.¹¹¹ The authoritarians turned to Plato for their answer with the opinion that 'Man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door and run away.' (51). The image provided by Plato of man's body as a dungeon for the soul would become highly influential in the symbolic use of captivity within the Gothic genre. The humanistic view found various sources of influence, from Cicero who claimed that man had the right to 'serenely quit life's theatre when the play has ceased to please,' (52), to John Donne, who adopts Plato's metaphor of incarceration: 'methinks I have the keys of my prison in mine owne hand, and no remedy presents itself so soone to my heart, as mine owne sword.' (53). In the eighteenth century it was David Hume who most strongly voiced the humanitarian position with his essay "Of Suicide". Originally published in 1755 as part of the first edition of his *Five Dissertations*, it was swiftly withdrawn from public circulation when it proved controversial and the remaining essays

108 Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*. London: W. Stahan et al, 1755.

109 Clark Lawlor, "Fashionable Melancholy." in *Melancholy Experience in Literature of the Long Eighteenth Century*. Ed. Allan Ingram. (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011): 25-51.

110 Edward Young, *The Complaint; Or, Night-Thoughts on Life, Death, & Immortality*. (London: William Tegg, 1854).

111 Lester G. Crocker, "The Discussion of Suicide in the Eighteenth Century. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 13, no. 1 (1952): 51.

were published as *Four Dissertations*. Hume's theories, however, surely still circulated privately, as his opinions continued to cause consternation within the Presbyterian church. Hume asserts the existence of man's free will as he thanks 'providence, both for the good, which I have already enjoyed, and for the power, with which I am endowed, of escaping the ill that threatens me.'¹¹² The themes of escape and power, or the lack of it, are concepts which come to be repeatedly explored in the Gothic genre. The humanitarian stance on man's right to self-murder is centred around the role of reason. It is unsurprising that post-enlightenment discussions of suicide take great interest in the source of man's ability to reason and how this impacts upon the notion of free will. Crocker has noted how Voltaire's treatment of suicide within his plays demonstrates his support of 'an analogy made by Saint-Cyran: just as the government stands for God's authority so does man's reason represent God's reason.' (53). Crocker documents similar arguments from French philosopher D'Alembert and English poet Donne, who believed that a consideration of human reason played a vital role in the justification of suicide.

The place of reason in the act of suicide is examined theatrically in Hiffernan's *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775]. The cave provides the setting for Alberti and Everard's dispute about suicide, and these scenes are solely attributed to Henry Jones. In the preface to the printed play Hiffernan notes that 'all the underground part...and the slave Clermont's *exit* speech in act third, are Mr Jones's'.¹¹³ Subject to life imprisonment within the cave, Alberti wishes to commit suicide. At first Everard understands Alberti's argument, stating 'I shou'd not wonder at thy bold resolve, / Nor blame the manly, hardy deed when done' (III,ii). When Everard reconsiders the motivations Alberti rebuffs his friend's doubts with the claim that: 'all my thoughts are in / Their proper places, and attend to reason, / And every intellectual pulse beats right'(III.ii). Alberti believes that his application of reason will justify the act of suicide. This provides the audience with a dramatic example of the humanist notion that man's ability to reason proves his right to kill himself. Ultimately, Jones will undermine this viewpoint, favouring the authoritarian outlook as Alberti's release from captivity proves how misguided his act of suicide would have been. In philosophical debate the act of self-murder has been portrayed as an act of individual liberation and a demonstration of free will. The metaphorical image of the body as a prison is visually expressed in *The Heroine of the Cave*. The multi-sensory arena of the theatre provided greater scope for the development and exploration of symbolic and metaphoric power of the 'gothic aesthetic'. Jones uses the setting of the cave to enhance Alberti's feelings of despair as he contemplates committing suicide; the cave itself is a natural prison within which the incarcerated Alberti wishes to liberate his soul from his body. Alberti's words carry both a literal and symbolic meaning when he exclaims: 'A

112 David Hume, "Of Suicide," in *Essays on Suicide and the Immortality of the Soul*. Ed. James Fieser. (South Bend, IN: Infomotions Inc. , 2001):

113 Paul Hiffernan, *The Heroine of the Cave*. (London: T. Evans, 1775): preface.

friendly dagger here shou'd write my prompt / Discharge, and quickly free me from this cave.'(III.ii). Jones continues the exploration of man's control over his own life and, consequently, his death with the use of a metatheatrical conceit. Alberti's use of the word 'write' suggests the notion of the character taking control of the playwright's job. Alberti's endeavour to dictate the end to what he sees as his own story symbolises the self-murderer's attempt to usurp God's right to end man's life when he sees fit. The audience's awareness that the author retains control over the outcome of the play ensures that Jones' metaphor acts as an affirmation of traditional Christian views. Jones' original title for the play was *The Cave of Idra*, which situated the metaphorical cave as the main focus of the piece. The fact that Jones originally envisioned only three acts, most of which take place underground, supports this theory. The cave is used to symbolise the stifling gloom of melancholia. Jones uses language to intensify this symbolism; Alberti's reflections upon life in the cave evoke the experience of suffering with melancholia: 'This mortal atmosphere my vital gale; / These fumes my frankincense, this vault my heav'n,/ Deep groans my music, and these lamps my noon'(III.ii). The evocation is continued with Constantia's reflections on her revived mental state, which she utters just before leaving the cave: 'How the white brightens, and the black grows pale - / The morning beams; 'tis day-light all around' (IV.ii). The likening of Constantia's happy state of mind with the outside world strengthens the representative use of the cave as the embodiment of melancholic experience. The use of this literary trope echoes the fanciful Cave of Spleen from Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* [1717].

John Jackson's play *Eldred* [1773] also presented its eighteenth-century audience with a colloquy on suicide. The brief discussion occurs in the fifth act between the distressed Edwena and her elderly father-in-law Eldred. The debate is mainly concerned with the religious issues surrounding suicide. When Edwena suggests the possibility of committing suicide she is met with fierce opposition from Eldred. Though Eldred's dialogue refers to an ancient system of beliefs, the tenets he preaches most certainly belong to the Christian church. The referral to 'gods' may be an acknowledgement by Jackson of the ancient world of Plato, whose philosophy on suicide underpins the opinions of Eldred. Jackson's language choices create the suggestion of man's life belonging to God. The concept of the role of a creator is conveyed in Edwena's description of her body: 'I'll find some means to rid me of this clay' (V,i). Eldred castigates Edwena's thoughts calling suicide 'a foul attack / On heaven's prerogative, a theft against / The most Supreme.' (V.i). Eldred's diatribe against the act of suicide continues to explore principles of the Christian faith. Specifically, contemplation is given to the potential consequences in the afterlife for a victim of suicide. The post-mortem destination of the soul is a common concern in the contemplation of suicide. This issue is pondered by Hamlet in what is arguably the most famous dramatic presentation of the subject of suicide: 'Who would fardels bear, / To grunt and sweat under a weary life, / But that the dread of something

after death, / The undiscovered country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns, puzzles the will, /
And makes us rather bear those ills we have / Than fly to others that we know not of?'

(*Hamlet*, III.i.76-82). Unlike Shakespeare, Jackson does not present an unresolved meditation on suicide. Eldred's thoughts on the matter provide the audience with an unquestionable assertion that the act of suicide is unacceptable and those who commit the deed will receive eternal punishment: 'he who robs the gods of his own being, / Though he evade his miseries on earth, / To keener pains must be consign'd hereafter.' (V.i). Eldred's final words on the matter use the imagery of imprisonment and freedom, as he asks Edwena to consider what her fate would be compared those who die naturally, whose souls would tread 'the blissful valleys of Elysium, / Whilst thou, secluded from those bright abodes, / Art doom'd to wander o'er a barren waste / For suicide – the sad eternal mansion' (V.i). By describing the inescapable sufferings of hell as a 'mansion' Jackson takes the metaphor of the body as a prison and applies it to the Christian belief of eternal punishment. This is starkly contrasted with the liberation of the natural 'valleys' of heaven. Those who consider committing suicide may consider their body to be a dungeon on earth, but Eldred reminds Edwena, and the audience, that man will never be able to escape incarceration in hell. Edwena embraces Eldred's effective lecture and begs for further advice on dealing with her dark feelings: 'I feel your words as flakes of ice; / At once they cut, and freeze my wounded soul. / Instruct me how to bear the threatening mischief.' (V.i). Edwena's response highlights the vital role sermons play in the prevention of suicide and suggests a view of the theatre as a crucial forum for the edification of society.

The theme of suicide in Home's *Douglas* [1756] caused great controversy, which undoubtedly contributed to the play's success. The Presbyterian clergy were so outraged at Lady Randolph's act of self-murder that they forced playwright Home, who had been a reverend, out of the church. The clergy's condemnation of the play sparked a pamphlet war which piqued the English public's interest in the piece. Those who opposed the play focused on Home's close friendship with David Hume, believing his opinions, as evident in the withdrawn paper 'Of Suicide', to be a source of bad influence upon the playwright. In one letter of attack the anonymous author suggests Hume's influence upon Home as possessive, as he plays on the similarity of their surnames: 'in the play he [Home] sets forth, not for caution, but rather for example, the cursed principles and doctrine of his intimate acquaintance and beloved friend, David Home the Infidel, concerning the warrantableness of self-murder.'¹¹⁴ It would seem that it was Home's sympathetic portrayal of the suicide victim in line with Hume's theory of justification, rather than the subject itself, that was the source of disapproval; throughout the play Home employs the tone of

114 Anonymous, "A Letter," in *John Home's Douglas: A Tragedy, with Contemporary Commentaries*. ed. Ralph McLean (Glasgow: Humming Earth, 2010): 156.

sentimentalism to create pity for the character of Lady Randolph. Lady Randolph commits suicide off-stage, and the news of her tragic death is delivered by her maid Anna. Anna's description of the scene is focused upon Lady Randolph's pained expression, and her suicide is conveyed as an escape from such misery:

O had you seen her last despairing look!
Upon the brink she stood, and cast her eyes
Down on the deep: then lifting up her head
And her white hands to heaven, seeming to say,
Why am I forc'd to this? She plung'd herself
Into the empty air. (V.i)

The description of her 'white hands' was open to an interpretation of representing innocence and virtue, even at the moment of ultimate sin. Though Anna does not express approval of her mistress's decision she is also not shown to condone the act. The distinct lack of condemnation for this act of suicide is also seen in Lord Randolph, as he orders Anna to 'take this ring, / Full warrant of my power. Let every rite / With cost and pomp upon their funerals wait.'(V.i). Lady Randolph's body is to be treated the same as that of her son, Young Douglas, whose death, though violent, was considered as justified in the eyes of the eighteenth-century church. In a society where suicide victims were provided with no burial rites and lain to rest in dedicated areas for the 'unholy', these closing words from Lord Randolph were bordering on blasphemy. The religious pamphleteers took advantage of the controversy caused by Home's tragedy to express their concerns over the corrupting influence of theatre upon society. Such criticism was not new, having been commonplace in previous centuries, resulting in the closure of the theatres in 1642. The prevailing theatrical interest in the melancholic gave religious critics a new branch of attack to launch upon the immorality of the playhouse. Playwrights were accused of glamorising self-murder with irresponsible representations of the act, or considerations of it. This opinion continued to be preached by various clergy members into the era when the Gothic drama dominated the London stages.

Of the five plays considered, the most complete discussion of suicide is presented in Jones' sections of *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775]. Jones constructs Alberti's imprisonment as a device by which a consideration of the act of suicide could be presented to the audience as an edifying form of entertainment. Though the discussions are centred around Alberti's individual circumstances, the dialogue puts forth many of the main facets of suicide debate. Jones' use of theatre as a forum for moral teachings above entertainment is unsurprising when his previous works are considered. In 1754, Jones had published *The Relief, or Day-Thoughts*, a poem responding to Young's seminal work *The Complaint, or Night Thoughts*, and criticising melancholic works of literature in general.

The poem signals melancholia as a disruptive force which injures reason with its 'fancy'd Fabricks built by Vanity / Upon the Vapours of a heated Brain'.¹¹⁵ Jones advocates the use of reason as key to the comprehension of life's mysteries. Jones decries the provocation of emotional responses such as fear and terror in the art of fiction, claiming that 'Reason scorns, and Common Sense defies' (190) such fiendish creations. For Jones, delving into a world of nightmares and sadness can only be destructive to mankind. He calls for edifying entertainment with the use of reasoning in place of gloomy indulgences: 'Let Mirth, let Joy, let Transport fill their Place; / Philosophy and Faith shall hand them in, / And Nature bid them welcome.' (495-497). Jones utilises the creative arts primarily as a tool for social improvement, delivering philosophical explorations of controversial material through fictitious situations. The resulting products were highly moralising but failed to provide the sense of entertainment craved by an audience; Jones' play did not reach the theatre until Hiffernan had altered it and, even then, it failed to provoke critical or public interest.

In *Douglas, Eldred*, and Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772], suicide is contemplated or committed, yet the issue of motive is never openly questioned. In *The Heroine of the Cave* the characters are employed to represent various philosophical standings on the justification of self-murder. With the claustrophobic setting of the cave as a backdrop Alberti, Everard and Constantia present differing viewpoints on the ethical implications of Alberti's bid to kill himself. The perception of suicide as a cowardly or courageous act has received ample consideration in both literature and philosophy. In Act III Alberti reveals his plan to commit suicide in order to liberate himself from his 'abject, hated, horrid life' in captivity. The act of suicide as a form of escape from a life of certain misery is considered justifiable by Everard, who comments: 'none but hypocrites, and earth-born worms, / Thy firm thy Roman purpose cou'd arraign, / And call the necessary noble deed a crime.' (III.i). Philosopher David Hume asserted the acceptance of self-murder in cases of extreme duress, stating that 'no man ever threw away life, while it was worth keeping.'¹¹⁶ Alberti does, however, have something to live for. He admits to Everard that he has not yet been able to commit the act as he still has Constantia, whose 'bright angelic beam annihilates / This nether hell, and makes it all a heav'n!'(III.i). Alberti's deterrence from suicide is short-lived, as he quickly develops a new motive when Constantia informs him that she wishes to live out the rest of her days in the cave by his side. A horrified Alberti turns to thoughts of suicide once more, this time presenting the act as self-sacrifice: "'Tis sacrilege, 'tis murder to detain her here – / I'd rather die ten thousand deaths than she / Shou'd be a slave' (III.i). The general consensus in early eighteenth-century discussions of suicide considered the motive of love as unacceptable. Crocker has noted that Mme. De Staël considered love as a justifiable motive for suicide. De Staël's *Réflexions sur le Suicide* was

115 Henry Jones, *The Relief; Or Day Thoughts: A Poem*. 1754. 8-9.

116 David Hume, "Of Suicide," in *Essays on Suicide and the Immortality of the Soul*. Ed. James Fieser. (South Bend, IN: Infomotions Inc. , 2001):

published in 1813, demonstrating the impact of the Romantic notion of the power of love upon philosophical reasoning. On the London stage in 1774 Alberti's romantic sacrifice to save his lover is depicted as selfish and unacceptable, with both Everard and Constantia expressing outrage at his claims. When accused of hypocrisy by Alberti, Everard argues that love is a motivation to live rather than die: 'I knew not then the gripe that kept thee here, / The vital anchor that forbid thy passage, / And held thee fasten'd in the port of life' (IV.i). Alberti's continual exclamations that he is 'the martyr of my love' are ultimately shunned by Constantia, who argues for suicide as a selfish, cowardly act:

Was this thy mean invented trick to steal,
And leave me struggling in the breach alone?
What, like a brave, play the coward's part,
The poorest meanest coward's part, fling down
That daring instrument of fear and shame;
And let a woman teach thee to be brave. (IV.i)

Constantia's criticism of Alberti followed the popular stance of Aristotle, who had held that suicide was 'not the mark of a brave man, but rather of a coward; for it is softness to fly from what is troublesome, and such a man endureth death not because it is noble, but to fly from evil.'¹¹⁷ Sir William Blackstone had published a similar opinion in his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* [1765-69], painting suicide as an act of the weak: 'Self-murder, the pretended heroism, but real cowardice, of the Stoic philosophers, who destroyed themselves to avoid those ills which they had not the fortitude to endure.'¹¹⁸ Jones uses the supportive arguments of Everard and Constantia to deconstruct the concept of suicide as a heroic act. In 1779 the first English translation of Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* appeared: the text would both charm and appal the British nation with its romanticised depiction of Werther's noble suicide in the name of love.

The role of hope in the prevention of suicide is key to Everard's argument in *The Heroine in the Cave*. Everard urges his friend to abstain from committing self-murder, alluding to the capricious quality of fate: 'unlook'd for remedies / May sudden come from Heav'n's rich blissful store / To thy relief, and all may yet be well.' (IV.ii). The concept of Providence is central to both the debate on suicide, and the dramatic tension in those plays that depict the subject. The repeated theme of the returned loved one from the grave contains distinct echoes of the resurrection of Christ. Everard's stance foreshadowed that of Dupont de Nemours, who, as Crocker has paraphrased, believed 'that often all is not lost, even when it most surely seems to be.' (57). But Alberti has already informed Everard of his viewpoint on the matter: 'The door of hope, with adamant bolt, / Is barr'd against my banish'd breast for ever.' (III.ii). Undeterred by his friend's

117 As quoted in Crocker, p. 58.

118 As quoted in: Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in 18th Century England*. (Bungay: Routledge, 1989): 50.

pleading, Alberti prepares to commit the act but is interrupted by the arrival of Lorenzo, with news of the discovered treachery and Alberti's release. With this scene, Jones supports the viewpoint that suicide is unjustifiable: man cannot predict his future, therefore, he cannot know whether he has a reason to live or not. Harston presents a similar message in *The Countess of Salisbury* [1765], with Lady Salisbury declaring 'Away with hope, away!'(I.i). She is reunited with her husband, whom she had presumed dead, in the following Act.

The concept of hope is most painfully examined in *Douglas*. In Act I Lady Randolph explains how she managed to forbear the death of her husband, and supposed death of her infant son, as she wails to the phantom memory of her child: 'alas! My child! / How long did thy fond mother grasp the hope / Of having thee, she knew not how, restor'd. / Year after year hath worn her hope away; / But left still undiminished her desire.' (I.i). It is this hope, now vanquished, which kept her from self-destruction, though her spirit has been shattered. The return of Young Douglas affirms the need for hope in moments of despair. Despite her joyous relief, Lady Randolph is plagued by anxiety stemming from years of bitter disappointment. Moments of elation are punctuated with foreboding fragments of intuition: 'The love of thee, before thou saw'st the light, / Sustain'd my life when thy brave father fell. / If thou shalt fall, I have nor love nor hope / In this waste world!' (V.i). In Home's play hope is not a simplistic tool of salvation. Hope cannot exist without doubt and fear; there can be no light without the dark. It is such observations of the conflicting, yet inter-reliant, forces of light and dark, good and evil, which come to permeate the Gothic form. With the murder of Young Douglas, Lady Randolph's concerns are brought to life, as is her awareness of the function of hope as an anchor to existence: 'Now all my hopes are dead! A little while / Was I a wife! A mother not so long! / What am I now?---I know,---But I shall be / That only whilst I please.' (V.i). Hope can provide an incentive to live, but the pain of losing what hope has restored has the power to wreak far greater destruction. It is Home's dramatic 'contrasts between momentary joy and transporting prospects, on the one hand, and, years of grief and despair on the other,' that 'enhance the theme of the tragic nature of life.'¹¹⁹ The Gothic infatuation with ancient settings and the return of people from the 'dead' signifies a perspective wherein that which has been lost, or at least the essence of it, can be reclaimed and reintegrated into contemporary society: in the gloom and sorrow there is always glimmer of light. With the act of suicide one ends their own story: Lady Randolph's self-destruction, much like that of Goethe's *Werther*, brings the play to an affective, analogous close.

The impeded accession of land, money, title or property, becomes an integral theme to the Gothic genre, appearing, in one shape or form, in countless tales of terror. The persistent occurrence of this theme within Gothic fiction can be understood when we understand the evolution of the

119 Paula R. Backscheider, "John Home's *Douglas* and the Theme of the Unfulfilled Life." *Studies on Scottish Literature*. Vol. 14 (1979): 94.

genre as integrated with the renewed debate on suicide. The theme of disrupted inheritance is not merely an extension of eighteenth-century society's anxiety over money and class; it was a specific concern born out of the controversial law regarding the punishment of suicide. Lester G. Crocker has convincingly suggested that the catalyst for the renewed discussion of self-murder was the reconsideration of laws concerning suicide victims in France (50). The conundrum of how punishment could be carried out on a victim of suicide had always been a locus of debate. Contemporary English law stated that the land, property and title of a suicide victim would be seized by the state, and that their bodies would be buried outside of church ground. The measure was one which aimed at prevention as well as punishment, for the self-murderer would be painfully aware that their family would be punished for their crime. Such punishment quelled society's fears over the corruptible force of suicide in the community by attacking legacy; discouragement came in the knowledge that a self-murderer's 'reputation could be ruined and his memory desecrated.'¹²⁰

The Gothic drama communicated apprehension over the consequences of suicide in the shape of tyrannical usurpers, cheated orphans, and unknown identities. In *Douglas*, Young Douglas is an orphaned child, raised by peasants, and unaware of his birthright. His rightful inheritance has been assumed by Lord Randolph, and is coveted by the even less-deserving Glenalvon. Young Douglas' acquisition of the material properties of his father had provided hope to the grieving Lady Randolph, as she explains to Anna in Act I: 'Domains, that should to Douglas' son have giv'n / A Baron's title, and a Baron's power. / Such were my soothing thoughts, while I bewail'd ? The slaughter'd father of a son unborn.' With the loss of her son, Lady Randolph is forced to watch Young Douglas' rightful inheritance transfer to the illegitimate Lord Randolph; as with cases of suicide, the legitimate chain of familial succession is broken with the acquisition of material wealth being seized by an outside force. Lady Randolph herself constitutes part of this misappropriation, an idea that will be discussed in the following chapter. Upon the realisation of Young Douglas' true identity, the restoration of material property to the legitimate heir is brought to attention: 'thou art the rightful heir / Of yonder castle, and the wide domains / Which now Lord Randolph, as my husband, holds. / But thou shalt not be wrong'd; I have the power / To right thee still.' (IV.i). In tales where self-murder and melancholia held a dominating force over the narrative, such representations of disrupted inheritance expressed the impact of suicide upon surviving family. Increasingly, these enactments took the form of an aristocratic tyrant deviously assuming the inheritance of a wronged infant, who is banished to an impoverished orphaned upbringing, such as Manfred's appropriation of Theodore's property in *The Castle of Otranto* [1764], and Earl Osmand's illegitimate acquisition of Angela's birthright in *The Castle Spectre* [1797]. This contrast between tyrannical aristocrat and lowly victim could be seen as symbolizing the confiscation of the suicide victim's property by the

120 Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in 18th Century England*. (Bungay: Routledge, 1989): 51.

state.

Despite the loss of material wealth, Young Douglas claims that to 'be the son of Douglas is to me / Inheritance enough. Declare my birth, / And in the field I'll seek my fame and fortune.' (IV.i). With this declaration, Home has created an idealised character, displaying virtue on a pedestal for his audience's admiration and providing a stark contrast to the illegitimate inheritors. Such dramatic imaginings could serve as inspiration but they could not transmute to the reality of eighteenth-century society. The disregard for the seizure of material wealth in favour of creating one's own prosperity was a chimera which occurred more often in fiction than in real life: 'The laws against self-murder wrought havoc with the normal rules of inheritance and often reduced the family of a substantial member of the community to poverty, to be supported, in all likelihood, by their fellow parishioners.'¹²¹ Gothic tales of wronged heirs, rising from the margins to reclaim what was rightfully theirs, undoubtedly gained some of their popularity from the fact that '[v]isiting the sins of the fathers on their heirs in the form of confiscation seemed to many contemporaries... outrageously unjustified.'¹²²

A variation on the theme of disrupted inheritance in Gothic drama is the tyrannical character's attempt to seize the power and land of the rightful owner. In *The Countess of Salisbury*, Raymond has seized the castle of Lord and Lady Salisbury, causing her to ask: 'Wherefore is my palace throng'd / With strangers? Why, why are my gates shut up / And fortified against their rightful mistress?' (I.i). *The Grecian Daughter* centres around the deposition of 'a virtuous, venerable king, / The father of his people, from a throne.... Torn by a ruffian, by a tyrant's hand' (I.i), with the ensuing war providing a back-drop for the quest to restore legitimate rule. *The Heroine of the Cave* presents the story of Seyfert deviously imprisoning Alberti in order to steal his wife, along with her wealth and land. This plot device is most prominently featured in Jackson's *Eldred*, in which Lochrine's endeavour to take Eldred's home and land is also an attack on Elidure's future inheritance. The plot revolves around Lochrine's yearning for 'one paltry farm.... which maliciously / Intrudes itself within my circling fence.' (II.i). The notion of rightful inheritance is shown to be of utmost importance when Lochrine recounts Eldred's stance: 'There is no price, he cries, / Can e'er prevail upon me to relinquish / My little home bequeath'd me by my poor, / But honest father.' (II.i). Here, Eldred's pride over his material ownership is ascribed to sentimental feeling rather than greed. The school of sentimentality played a discernible role in the debates on suicide; the seizure of property was motivated by a growing sympathy for the family left behind. Jackson uses the theme to present a socio-political debate to his audience, concerning the relationship between class and the appreciation of property:

121 Michael MacDonald, "The Secularisation of Suicide in England, 1600-1800." *Past + Present*, no. 11 (1986): 73.

122 Frank McLynn, *Crime and Punishment in 18th Century England*. (Bungay: Routledge, 1989): 51-52.

ELD: Why will you touch upon the only string
That jars upon the sense. I've told you oft.
My little hovel was my little all;
My all of worldly wealth, my all of life. –
Suppose a stranger traversing these vales,
That gentleman, for instance, or some o'her,
And fancying the beauty of your house,
Should say to you – This likes me for a home;
Propose your price for it, and there's your gold –
Would you relinquish your delightful spot,
Your morning's pleasure, and your mid-day's joy,
To waste your evening in a land of sorrow?

LOC: That case is different –

ELD: How differs it,
My lord, from mine? It may in magnitude,
But not in semblance – This aspiring dome,
Your blushing gardens, and your waving groves,
Are not of more significance to you,
Than are to me my lowly lattic'd shed,
My taper'd holly, and my whit'ning thorn. (III.i)

The aristocrat has no right, legally or morally, to take material wealth from an innocent inheritor. In a similar display of the idealised life of virtue as depicted in *Douglas*, Eldred rejects Brennus' offer to exchange Elidure's inheritance for his son's promotion in the troops. Eldred's harangue promotes morality over materialism, and also portrays the integrity of the less fortunate over the corrupted greed of the state: 'Canst thou give him courage? - That's the staff / Of blooming glory – Canst thou give him virtue?- / That's the flag of fame....'Tis not, Sir / An empty sound, a feather, or a badge, / But worth alone that dignifies the blood. - / My boy, I hope, inherits that within.' (III.i). The role of state punishment for suicide victims is questioned in the closing lines of the play, as Eldred points to God as the only source authorised of casting verdict: "he was guilty found, and merited / The rage of the Supreme; who righteously / Distributes justice to the race of mortals.' (V.i).

It is evident that the debate about suicide influenced the creation of several prominent Gothic characteristics, including the theme of disinheritance, and the melancholic atmosphere that permeates the genre. The rising popularity of sentimentalism played an important role in the renewed interest in issues surrounding suicide, and the sentimental structure of the Gothic romance

was well-suited to emotional explorations of melancholia and grief. Melancholia remains a prominent feature of the Gothic, particularly in relation to female characters, as Angela Wright has noted. Wright identifies the distinct presence of melancholia in novels such as Sophia Lee's *The Recess* [1785], Maria Regina Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* [1796], and Anne Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* [1794], with its 'prevalent themes of absence and mourning.'¹²³ From sentimental extensions of long debated issues, to graveyard haunts and the black mourning clothes of the 1980's Goth music scene, grief, loss and melancholic sufferings come to epitomise the Gothic. The next chapter will explore how early 'gothic' playwrights utilised this atmosphere of loss and mourning in their metaphorical explorations of national identity.

123 Angela Wright, "To live the life of hopeless recollection': Mourning and Melancholia in Female Gothic, 1780-1800." *Gothic Studies*. Vol. 6, no. 1 (2004): 24.

Embodying the Nation: National Identity, the Female Figure and the Gothic

In the first chapter I discussed how the Gothic rose from issues concerning national crisis and the threat of invasion. Chapters 2 and 3 examined the roots of the Gothic preoccupation with nature, and the impact of the debate on suicide and melancholia. This chapter will explore how the emotional experience of the female figure played a vital role in this conceit, in the symbolic form of the woman-as-land motif. I will also examine how nature and an atmosphere of loss were used symbolically in the conceptualisation of national identity in early "gothic" dramas from 1756-1775. In this examination I will continue to focus on John Home's *Douglas* [1756], Hall Hartson's *The Countess of Salisbury* [1765], Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772], John Jackson's *Eldred* [1773], and Paul Hiffernan's *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775]. Finally, I will use an assessment of the allegorical content in *Douglas* to demonstrate how the Gothic genre sprang up from concerns of nationhood. Early "gothic" drama, like much mid-eighteenth-century literary output, was embroiled in the construction of national identity.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, the Gothic genre was born from, and continued to be shaped by, various conflicts. The influence of these conflicts on the formation of the Gothic drama can be seen in works of specific allegory, as is the case with Home's *Douglas*, or in the genre's distinctive atmosphere of discord and loss. One of the ways in which the influence of conflict can be seen in early Gothic dramas is in the recurrent situation of the action against a backdrop of war. *Douglas* contains several references to the impending invasion of Scotland by the Danes, and the plot of Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772] revolves around Dionysius' invasion of Syracuse. In *The Countess of Salisbury* [1765] Lord Randolph has returned from battle with the French, Alberti has gained fame through recent conquest in *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775], whilst Elidure is engrossed in battling the Saxon Hengist in Jackson's *Eldred* [1773]. These plays were fed by fears stemming from the Jacobite rebellions, the Seven Years' War, and tensions over unrest in the American colonies. Angela Wright, Megan Stoner Morgan, and Yoon Sun Lee have noted the significant role these various conflicts play in the complex evolution of the Gothic form. As the genre progressed, the Gothic imagination continued to feed upon the dissonance of the French Revolution, Napoleonic Wars, and colonial rebellions. Numerous conflicts, the threat of invasion, and the expansion of the British Empire led to the conceptualisation of national identity, which was at its peak during the mid-eighteenth century. The construction of national identity was as much an exercise in socio-political propaganda as it was a cultural curiosity of the relationship between the individual and the society in which they lived. Early Gothic works are made up of the outpouring of anxieties surrounding national identity; the form of foreign settings, the dread of the 'other', the battle

between individual and society, and female distress are all themes which stem from the nation in crisis, and their recurrent use made them popular attributes of the genre.

The role of women was particularly important in the conception of national identity and in the development of the Gothic genre. Jane Rendall highlights the role played by Tacitus' history of the Goths, *Germania*, in the exaltation of women in the eighteenth century.¹²⁴ The focus on women's lives in Tacitus' history was interpreted as evidence that the Goths, seen as pure ancestors of Britain, held women as vital members of the community. Rendall, borrowing a term from Terry Castle, states that the 'condition of women was treated as an "index" or even a "thermometer" registering the stage of human development, the level of civilisation, the standard of politeness, achieved in a particular society.'¹²⁵ In their role as 'thermometers' of civic virtue, women became paragons of the nation. The figure of woman became a popular personification of nation, as is evident in the repeated depiction of Britannia by caricature artists in the eighteenth century. The creative imagining of the nation as represented by woman is clearly seen in the Gothic genre, of which the centrality of female experience is a chief characteristic. Both *The Heroine of the Cave* and *The Grecian Daughter* contain high praise for women, placing female virtue on a pedestal as an example for the nation. The titles of both of these plays stress the important role of women in the community, and the closing lines of Hiffernan's play cement this notion: 'from thy sex thou shalt all honours have, / Mirror of wives – and Heroine of the Cave.' (V.iv). *The Grecian Daughter* closes with Euphrasia being crowned as ruler of Sicily, as Murphy transforms her figurative embodiment of civic virtue into a literal one. In contrast to Hiffernan's view of Constantia, the apotheosis of Euphrasia is to be observed by both sexes of the nation: 'A parent to her people; stretch the ray / Of filial piety to times unborn, / That men may hear her unexampled virtue, / And learn to emulate THE GRECIAN DAUGHTER.' (V.i). Euphrasia's 'filial piety', literally the saviour of her sovereign father, is a metaphor for the support of the nation, a concept that is conveyed throughout the play. Euphrasia's act of breastfeeding her malnourished father in Act II is highly connotative of the concept of women birthing the nation: it resonates with the stories of Roman Charity, and Philosophia-Sapientia, the personification of wisdom, who suckled philosophers on her milk of moral virtue and knowledge. In *Eldred*, Edwena also symbolises the state, her personal suffering mirroring that of her country's. Her yearning for Elidure's return is a microcosm of the anxieties of her war-torn nation: 'our country's woes hang heavy on your mind: / But (or I'm much deceiv'd) a nearer tie / Claims your attention, and demands your care.' (I.i). Edwena's lamentations are both public and private matters, and her noble status assists Jackson's use of the domestic to represent the

124 Jane Rendall, "Tacitus engendered: 'Gothic feminism' and British histories, c. 1750-1800." in *Imagining Nations*. Ed. Geoffrey Cubitt, 57-74. Trowbridge: Manchester University Press, 1998.

125 Jane Rendall, "Gender, Race and the Progress of Civilisation." in *Woman, Gender and Enlightenment*. Ed. Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005): 70.

state.

The emblematic use of women in the cultural construction of national identity produces the figure of the heroine in the Gothic genre. Kathleen Wilson notes how "effeminacy" denoted a degenerate moral, political and social state that opposed and subverted the vaunted "manly" characteristics – courage, aggression, martial valour, discipline and strength – that constituted patriotic virtue.¹²⁶ Feminine traits were detrimental to the construction of national identity, yet the figure of woman, especially in the form of Britannia, was becoming fully established as representative of the nation. Therefore, the formation of the personified nation required the presentation of strong, virtuous, and capable women. Traditional gender boundaries are challenged in *The Heroine of the Cave* when Constantia exclaims 'let a woman teach thee to be brave' (IV.ii). Similarly, in *The Grecian Daughter*, Euphrasia shatters the bonds of gender by stabbing the tyrant Dionysius and proclaiming 'A woman's vengeance tow'rs above her sex.' (V.i). Whilst in *Eldred*, Edwena bravely protects her persecuted father-in-law: "Tis I defend him – I – and ere your swords / Can touch his guiltless life, my own hearts blood shall bathe their reeking points,' (V.i). The focus on female strength is still present in Lewis' *The Castle Spectre* [1797] when Angela delivers a fatal blow to the evil Earl Osmond, an act which echoes the close of *The Grecian Daughter*. Despite her peril, the Gothic heroine battles through the dangers she faces, with her exemplary virtue as her weapon. Undoubtedly, the patriotic casting of the female figure played a vital role in the evolution of feminism in the late eighteenth century.

In the Gothic drama, the construction of national identity using the female form is furthered with the use of the woman-as-land motif. Pamela Cheek has registered that the trope had been a figure for national identity since 'its seventeenth-century uses as a figure for colonial possession.'¹²⁷ The connection between women and nature in the Gothic form, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be seen as forming part of this analogy. In *Douglas*, *The Countess of Salisbury*, and *Eldred*, women are linked with land through their connection with property. In these plays women are viewed as commodities; they are coveted both as, and for, their property. In *Douglas*, Glenalvon's language suggests his wish to possess Lady Randolph's land and her body: 'T'll woo her as the lion woos his brides. / The deed's a-doing now, that makes me lord / Of these rich valleys, and a chief of power.' (I.i). *The Countess of Salisbury* opens with Grey's observation of Raymond's yearning for Lady Salisbury: 'Her, and her rich domains he would possess,' (I.i), and in *Eldred*, Jackson presents Brennus' desire for Edwena as analogous to Locrine's coveting of Eldred's land. As Pamela Cheek notes, in the eighteenth-century 'the idea that women and land were property was a foregone

126 Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 186-7.

127 Pamela Cheek, *Sexual Antipodes: Enlightenment Globalization and the Placing of Sex*. (Stanford, C.A.: Stanford University Press, 2003): 85.

conclusion.¹²⁸ In many Gothic works male yearning for the female form assumes a more sinister tone. In an era fraught with conflict, the threat of rape contained clear connotations of invasion. Metaphoric language linking women with landscape, coupled with anthropomorphic depictions of nature, solidified the motif of woman-as-nation.

In *The Countess of Salisbury*, the seizure of Lady Salisbury is described in language rich with nature: 'My lord, my lord, the mound is overleapt; / What now forbids, but without further pause / To crop the rich, the golden fruits within?' (I.i). In the theatre the literal imagery of woman-as-land motif is supported by the visual aspect of scenery. When situated against backdrops of rolling landscapes, the form of the actress, highly sexualised in the eighteenth century, becomes visually recognised as a figuration of the 'body of the nation'. Similarly, the ocular effect of the taller male towering over the female form heightens anxieties of the threat of invasion. In *Douglas*, the attempted rape of Lady Randolph is akin to the seizing of the nation, a concept which I will discuss in further detail later in this chapter. Glenalvon explains his attack on the noble woman with agricultural imagery, as he claims 'Heaven is my witness that I do not love / To sow in peril, and let others reap / The jocund harvest.' (I.i). In *The Countess of Salisbury*, Lady Salisbury's castle has been invaded by Raymond. Her shouts of repulsion make repeated use of the word 'my', which forges a correlation between her land and her self: 'Where's / my people? where the freedom that I late / Was blest with? Wherefore is my palace throng'd / With strangers? Why, why are my gates shut up / And fortified against their rightful mistress?' (I.i). When threatened with rape, Lady Salisbury conjures an image of nature to express her resilience to such a monstrous act: 'Virtue, with her own native strength upheld, / Can brave the shock of ruffian force, unmov'd, / As is the rock, whose firm set base not all / The tumult of the western surge can shake,' (III.i). In *The Heroine of the Cave*, Constantia represents the nation, a concept which is supported with Alberti's claims that she will be beset by 'a siege of wooers,' (I.ii). She also finds herself the target of rape, as it is revealed that the dastardly Seyfert planned 'to have the widow'd mourner seiz'd / And carried to a place for violence form'd, / To force dishonour on a hapless dame, / And then her body in the Danube thrown,' (IV.i). The woman-as-land motif played a vital role in the conceptualisation of the nation, in all types of literature. The Gothic trait of the distressed heroine emerges from the propagandistic use of women during mid-eighteenth-century conflicts, combined with the popularity of the female-centric school of sentimentalism. The Gothic genre continues to grow and mutate beyond the era of extreme nationalism, but the figure of the heroine maintains its central status.

John Home's *Douglas* is, arguably, the most important play for the development of the Gothic genre. It features many elements which would become key characteristics of the Gothic

genre, and its popularity throughout the eighteenth century ensured its widespread influence. Elements of the play can be traced to the influence of sentimentalism, philosophical debate, and graveyard poetry, but, as a whole, the play emitted a tone which was unfamiliar. The atmosphere of conflict, tension, and loss which permeates the Gothic form emerges in *Douglas* from a reflection upon the state of the Scottish nation following the unsuccessful Jacobite rebellion of 1745. Both Megan Stoner Morgan and Yoon Sun Lee have observed the allegorical content in *Douglas*.¹²⁹ Home had fought against the the Jacobites in the '45 uprisings, and his *History of the Rebellion of 1745* was eventually published in 1802. An initial reading of *Douglas* suggests it to be defensive of the revolt against England, though a deeper analysis reveals it to be far more complex. The play neither supports nor criticises the Jacobite cause, and Morgan notes the 'multiplicity of meanings potentially present in *Douglas*.¹³⁰ Morgan suggests that this ambivalence is due to 'Home's willingness to change the text of his play, often substantially, to obtain a better audience.'¹³¹ Two versions of the play were written, one for the original Scottish audience and a slightly altered version for its London performances. The most significant changes made were to the prologue, with Home shifting the patriotic focus to remain pertinent for each country. The Edinburgh prologue establishes a nationalistic tone for the tragedy, as the audience are informed that 'This night our scenes no common tear demand, / He comes, the hero of your native land!' Home instigates patriotic zeal with the suggestion that the audience should be more affected by a tale of one of their own people; he correlates quantity of sympathy with proximity and nationalistic recognition. The London prologue promotes a peaceful union between England and Scotland, painting the concord as a joining of two heroic nations:

From age to age bright shone the British fire,
 And every hero was a hero's sire.
 When powerful fate decreed one warrior's doom,
 Up sprung the Phoenix from his parent's tomb.
 But whilst these generous rivals fought and fell,
 Those generous rivals lov'd each other well:
 Tho' many a bloody field was lost and won,
 Nothing in hate, in honour all was done.

The London prologue ends with a plea to the English audience which touches on Scotland's anxieties surrounding the loss of their identity and sense of heritage:

129 For these critic's interpretations see Megan Stoner Morgan, "Speaking with a Double Voice: John Home's *Douglas* and the Idea of Scotland." *Scottish Literary Review*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2012): 35-56. And Yoon Sun Lee, "Giants in the north: Douglas and the Scottish enlightenment, and Scott's Redgauntlet." *Studies in Romanticism*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2001): 109-121.

130 Megan Stoner Morgan, "Speaking with a Double Voice: John Home's *Douglas* and the Idea of Scotland." *Scottish Literary Review*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2012): 37.

131 *Ibid.*

This night a Douglas your protection claims;
A wife! a mother! Pity's softest names:
The story of her woes indulgent hear,
And grant your suppliant all she begs, a tear.
In confidence she begs; and hope to find
Each English breast, like noble Piercy's, kind.

The Acts of Union, completed 1707, had joined Scotland to England to form Great Britain. The union was controversial, and, fifty years later, tensions still bubbled on both sides. Scottish anxieties focused around the loss of national identity and culture, as well as the infiltration of the corruptive English 'other'. With *Douglas*, Home laid bare these concerns in a form which maintained the presence of Scottish heritage through the telling of a national tale.

Douglas is set against the backdrop of foreign invasion, with the opening scene relating that 'The Danes are landed.' (I.i). War is not visually communicated in the play, though the costumes of Lord Randolph, Glenalvon and various soldiers may have been suggestive of combat, but both direct and symbolic talk of conflict dominate the dialogue. On one level, the Danish threat could be seen as representative of Scotland's conflict with England. Home's decision to specifically mention the arrival of the Danes by sea suggests otherwise; Home's imagery of 'the storm of war' blown in from the North Sea evokes the concept of an island nation (I.i). This image is supported by Lady Randolph's wish: 'O, may adverse winds, / Far from the coast of Scotland, drive their fleet!' (I.i). With these lines Home taps into, what Geoff Quilley has identified as, 'the long-standing nationalistic idea of the island of Britain being defined by its providential affinity with the sea.'¹³² *The Grecian Daughter* contains several references to the sea, with both friend and foe arriving on the waves. The sea is also used to reflect the action of the play, such as the sleeping army camp: 'on the beach / No murmuring billow breaks; the Grecian tents / lie sunk in sleep.' (II.i). The connection of the sea with the female figure of national identity is also present in *The Countess of Salisbury*, with Hartson's use of personification: 'The winds began to shift; up rose a storm, / And heav'd the bosom of the troubled deep.' (II.i). Metaphorical seas had become so popular during the latter half of the eighteenth century that by the early nineteenth century 'the image of the sea becomes a transparent sign for patriotic identification with the nation.'¹³³ The lack of sea between England and Scotland suggests that the Danish invasion of Scotland was not allegory for the '45 rebellion. The

132 Geoff Quilley, "All ocean is her own": the image of the sea and the identity of the maritime nation in eighteenth-century British art." in *Imagining Nations*. Ed. Geoffrey Cubitt. (Trowbridge: Manchester University Press, 1998): 135.

133 Quilley: p. 136.

play was written during the preliminary stages of the Seven Years War, and it is likely that Home was proposing the necessity of a strong union between England and Scotland in order to ward off the threat of French invasion. This message is clarified with Lady Randolph's, rather pointed, diatribe of civil war:

War I detest: but war with foreign foes,
Whose manners, language, and whose looks are strange,
Is not so horrid, nor to me so hateful,
As that which with our neighbours oft we wage.
A river here, there and ideal line,
By fancy drawn, divides the sister kingdoms.
On each side dwells a people similar,
As twins are to each other; valiant both;
Both for their valour famous thro' the world.
Yet will they not unite their kindred arms,
And, if they must have war, wage distant war,
But with each other fight in cruel conflict.
Gallant in strife, and noble in their ire,
The battle is their pastime. They go forth
Gay in the morning, as to summer sport;
When ev'ning comes, the glory of the morn,
The youthful warrior is a clod of clay.
Thus fall the prime of either hapless land;
And such the fruit of Scotch and English wars.
(I.i).

The mention of civil war superficially refers to the Acts of Union and the '45, but it also taps into fissures within the Scottish state itself. Lisa A. Freeman has detected the state of national unrest which surrounded the production of *Douglas*, and it is possible that Home was also alluding to these fractures with his mention of civil war: clashes between moderate and orthodox members of the Presbyterian church, the ever-increasing cultural differences of the highland clans with the lowland cities, and disagreements between the universities and church were all contributors to feelings of instability within the Scottish nation. Home's message about the destructive quality of civil war is also expressed symbolically, in the inner war between good and bad. Glenalvon describes this battle in his attempt to deceive Lady Randolph: 'When beauty pleads for virtue, vice abash'd, / Flies its own colours, and goes o'er to virtue.' (III.i). But the real conflict within Glenalvon is between his passions and morals. He shows an astute awareness of this battle, as he states that the power of 'love transports beyond strict virtue's bounds.' (II.i). He goes on to assert the superior strength of the passions over a sense of morality with the claim that 'mortals know that love is still their lord.' (II.i). This conflict is also evident in Dionysius in *The Grecian Daughter*, who moans that 'Rage and despair, a thousand warring passions, / All rise by turns, and piece-meal rend my heart.' (IV,i). Raymond also struggles to uphold virtue over his desperate desire in *The Countess of Salisbury*:

'She must, she must, / Yes, Grey, she must be mine – and yet – yet fain / Wou'd I persuade the fair one, not compel.' (I.i). The theme prevails too in *Eldred*, where Brennus notes that 'Lochrine, grown frantic through ungovern'd fury, / Seems quite depriv'd of reason,' (V.i). In these scattered beginnings of just a few lines out of thousands, we can discern the seeds of what would become the complex hero-villain character, which rose in popularity in Gothic texts at the turn of the nineteenth-century. From its symbolic concerns of civil war, the inner battle between passions and reason, vice and virtue, and body and mind, is a trope that continues to fuel the development of the Gothic genre.

In Home's allegory of the tension between England and Scotland Young Douglas represents the Jacobite cause. As the rightful heir he mirrors Bonnie Prince Charlie, and, as Morgan points out 'Home notes in his history that during the summer of 1744, Bonnie Prince Charlie himself took on the moniker of the 'Chevalier Douglas.'¹³⁴ Young Douglas, with his adolescence spent 'on the Grampian hills', signifies the traditional Scotland the Jacobites were trying to uphold (II.i). His denied inheritance also relates to the Heritable Jurisdictions Act [1747], which was passed in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion, and saw the removal of inherited rights of Scottish nobles to judge and punish people within their domain. Another act is reflected in Young Douglas' need to 'seek for fame and fortune' on the battlefield (IV.i): The Act of Proscription [1746] enforced the previously passed Disarming Act [1716], which stripped members of highland clans of their right to bear arms. It is also interesting to note the history the play has with The Dress Act [1746], which forbade the wearing of highland dress, effectively removing their visual source of identity. Characters from Pollock's toy theatre version of *Douglas* are dressed in tartan, which suggests that highland dress was worn in later productions of the play, most likely following the repeal of the act in 1782.¹³⁵ Earlier presentations of *Douglas* were most certainly not performed in highland dress, such costuming being too controversial for the stage. Interestingly, the proof of this comes from John Jackson, author of *Eldred*, who had also been an actor. Jackson had auditioned for the role of Young Douglas in front of Garrick at Drury Lane, bringing with him 'a 'Highland dress, accoutered, *cap-a-pee*, with a broad sword, shield and dirk, found upon the field of Culloden', hoping that the authenticity of his costume might earn him the role.¹³⁶ As Morgan has mentioned, Garrick immediately dismissed the idea, 'which Jackson attributes to the fact that at the time 'any thing confessedly Scotch, awakened the embers of dissension'.¹³⁷ Jackson's *Eldred* is also highly

134 Morgan: p.50.

135 Digital images of Pollock's designs are owned by State Art Collection Dresden, and are viewable at their online database: <<http://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/en/contents/show?id=239438>> Last accessed: 04/03/14.

136 Morgan: p. 42. She quotes John Jackson, *The History of the Scottish Stage, from its First Establishment tot he Present Time; with a Distinct Narrative of Some Recent Theatrical Transactions. The Whole Necessarily Interspersed with memoirs of his Own life.* (Edinburgh: 1793): 371-72.

137 Ibid.

allegorical, with its battle for property expressing the current state of unrest caused by the Enclosure Acts [1773].

Lady Randolph, the 'monument of woe' is, in fact, the symbolisation of Scotland's woe. As female figure she represents the nation in its colours of mourning; Home's employment of the woman-as-land motif assures this analogy, as does the connection of Lady Randolph to property. The analogy between Scotland and Lady Randolph as annexed land functions on the premise that Great Britain 'could only come into being through acts of usurpation of property and title'.¹³⁸ April London has stated that 'Women's embodiment of customary and more modern understandings of property derives from...the extrinsic signification women carry in their legal status as the property of father and husband,' and she continues to observe 'the intrinsic meaning they potentially exercise as possessors of their own persons.'¹³⁹ Lady Randolph's attempts to exercise control over her own person with her secret marriage to Lord Douglas results in disaster, out of which she is forced to marry Lord Randolph for her own security. Her past parallels Scotland's failed attempts at independent advancement, in the form of the unsuccessful Darien scheme [1698], which forced the need to enter a union with England. Morgan has argued that Lord Randolph represents a Scotland that is keen for the union.¹⁴⁰ It is also possible to interpret Randolph as England itself, with Lady Randolph, in her role as Scotland, the reluctant bride in this act of union. The character of Glenalvon, reminiscent of Shakespeare's scheming Iago, is, as Morgan has described, 'distasteful because he has no real identity, Scottish or otherwise'.¹⁴¹ He is the 'other', the "unfamiliar" corruption at home. Glenalvon represents concepts of social advancement and development which raised concerns for the Scottish nation. His hunger for progression through any means possible is evident in his yearning to hold power over the Randolph estate; historian T.C. Smout has noted how 'more people were ambitious for estates after the middle of the eighteenth century in Scotland than there had ever been before'.¹⁴² He represents capitalism, greed, and, as this quote demonstrates, atheism: 'Had I one grain of faith / In holy legends, and religious tales, / I should conclude there was an arm above, / That fought against me,' (II.i). It is interesting to note that Home's friend, the philosopher, David Hume, renowned for his assumed atheism, played Glenalvon in initial rehearsals of the play. Though the tragedy of the brave Young Douglas returning to reclaim his rightful Scottish land initially seems pro-Jacobite, the play actually reinforces the need for a strong union between England and Scotland as the only healthy option. Lady Randolph, though in deep mourning, was still alive before the return of Young Douglas. If she had ceased her indulgent grief

138 Diane Hoelever, "Gothic Drama as Nationalistic Catharsis." *The Wordsworth Circle*, vol. 31, no. 3 (2000): 170.

139 April London, *Women and Property in the Eighteenth-Century English Novel*. (Port Chester, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 6.

140 Morgan: p. 49.

141 Morgan: p.52.

142 T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830*. (London: Collins, 1972): 264.

and born an heir with Lord Randolph the future of Scotland would have been secure. Throughout the play Home uses the lurking Glenalvon to signify what could have happened had Lord and Lady Randolph died without producing an heir – the rule of tyranny, corruption, greed, and atheism. It is the return of the Scottish hero Douglas which brings about ultimate tragedy; with Lady Randolph, Douglas and Glenalvon dead, and Lord Randolph seeking his end in war, Scotland has lost all hope of a future.

Philosophical considerations of suicide combined with the spirit of sentimentalism to form an effective theme in which nature is affectively used to explore the place of melancholia in the spectrum of human experience. The theme of emotional exploration was figured in many genres, but it took centre stage in the distinctive shape of the Gothic heroine. Late eighteenth-century re-imagining of women as strong, formidable beings find their stimulus in Gothicised conceptualisations of national identity. In between the fissures created by the Jacobite uprisings the Gothic begins to grow with nationalistic roots. Home's creation of allegory in *Douglas* had a profound impact upon the propulsion of a trend which would eventually be labelled as 'Gothic'. The combination of conflict with a deep-rooted sense of loss encompassed Scottish experience in the mid-eighteenth century, and came to underpin future creations of Gothic tales. The ambivalence of meaning in *Douglas* foreshadows the highly enigmatic nature of the Gothic genre. As a form which develops a characteristic use of symbolism to express 'the unspoken', the Gothic revolves around subjectivity: as Scott Brewster remarks 'Reading Gothic makes us see things.'¹⁴³

143 Scott Brewster, "Seeing Things: Gothic and the Madness of Interpretation." in *A Companion to the Gothic*. Ed. David Punter. (Somerset: Blackwell Publishing, 2000): 281.

Conclusion

Gothic theatre steadily increased in popularity throughout the 1780's, reaching its peak in the 1790's, when the spectacle of terror dominated the London stages. Original works adopting the 'gothic aesthetic' were presented alongside those inspired by the Gothic romance novel. Stage adaptations of Gothic novels proved popular over the following decades, with plays such as Jephson's *The Count of Narbonne* [1781], Henry Siddon's *The Sicilian Romance* [1794], James Boaden's *The Italian Monk* [1797], and Richard Brinsley Peake's *Presumption; or, the Fate of Frankenstein* [1823] capitalising on the success of writers such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, and Mary Shelley. The Gothic play became focused on presentations of the spectacular, as theatres increased in size to accommodate both the grand visions of set designers inspired by de Louthembourg, and the theatre-goers that flocked to see them. The imagination of the playwright and technological advancements in stage machinery provided mutual encouragement in the development of the Gothic drama. The appearance of the supernatural has become synonymous with the term 'Gothic'. Though featured heavily in the Gothic romance novels of Walpole and M.G. Lewis, the supernatural being does not feature in John Home's *Douglas* [1756], Hall Hartson's *The Countess of Salisbury* [1765], Arthur Murphy's *The Grecian Daughter* [1772], John Jackson's *Eldred* [1773], or Paul Hiffernan's *The Heroine of the Cave* [1775]. Representations of frightening apparitions do not become featured in Gothic theatre until the 1790's, when plays such as Boaden's *Fountainville Forest* [1794], M. G. Lewis' *The Castle Spectre* [1797] and *One O' Clock* [1803], and George Colman, the Younger's *Bluebeard* [1798] terrified their audiences with eerie ghosts, moving skeletons, and even flying dragons.

The shocking and spectacular elements of the Gothic tend to eclipse any serious content, but, as I have discussed, the genre has been permeated with socio-political and philosophical concerns since its emergence in the mid-eighteenth century. The five 'gothic' plays that I have focused on in this study demonstrate the development of the symbolic use of tropes that would later be recognised as 'Gothic'. As the Gothic developed and mutated, repeatedly used themes, such as nature, the supernatural, tyrants, orphans, heroines in distress, castles, abbeys, and the usurpation of land, were adapted to express new waves of anxiety. In the five plays I have focused on, all of these elements serve a distinct allegorical or symbolic purpose; if examined in terms of Gothic architecture they are the functioning gargoyle rather than the decorative grotesque. The symbolic potential of such themes continues to be exploited throughout the evolution of the Gothic, from its origins in national conflict, through the terror of the French Revolution, the apprehension of the colonial 'other', and nineteenth-century fears of scientific advancement, to the threat of the AIDS epidemic of the 1980's, terrors of the unknown realm of the world wide web, and the increased fear

of terrorism in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. The themes that I have explored in this study became staples of the Gothic romance, but their origins have been obscured by countless re-workings of them for various symbolic purposes. This study has shown how exploring works on the margins of the Gothic can help to shed light on the genre's origins. The development of the Gothic, including the events and trends that originally inspired some of its most characteristic themes, is as evident in drama as it is in the more studied form of the novel. Examining theatre can help to shed further light on the development of the Gothic, and bridge the gaps between the major romance novels, such as *The Castle of Otranto* [1764], *The Old English Baron* [1777], *Vathek* [1786], and *The Monk* [1796].

The study of plays containing 'gothic' elements prior to 1780 is especially beneficial, as they help to reveal the gradual evolution of the 'gothic aesthetic' prior to its major surge in popularity in the 1790's. These plays, such as the five this study has focused on, reveal the complex origins of the Gothic, a genre which remains heterogeneous throughout its evolution. This study has revealed how some of the most characteristic Gothic elements, such as ancient settings, Catholic superstition, and the heroine standing strong in the face of adversity, have their roots in the emergence of the genre at a moment of conflict and crises of national identity. Other themes, including the sentimental experience of emotion, and a persistent atmosphere of melancholia, reflect trends in philosophical discourse. Much of the allegorical or metaphorical depth that lurks beneath the spectacular surface of many Gothic works was firmly rooted in the time in which it was written. As my study has revealed, this content can only be fully observed with historicised and interdisciplinary considerations that take into account the spectrum of cultural experience at the moment of the production and consumption of a specific work. Without such contextual knowledge many Gothic tropes can seem empty, mere decoration in an attempt to attract audiences through the trivial application of novel themes. The Gothic developed across varying media, with architecture, art, theatre, poetry, and the novel providing a network of influence that fuelled further experimentations with the aesthetic. This dissertation has demonstrated how studying unexplored 'gothic' works can help to illuminate the interaction between these media, and connect the emergence of the Gothic to dominant anxieties and voguish interests of the eighteenth century. By expanding our critical horizons to works on the margins of the 'Gothic', particularly those in more neglected art forms such as theatre, we can work towards garnering a more comprehensive understanding of Gothic origins and evolution.