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"Something old and dark has got its way": Shakespeare's Influence in the Gothic Literary Tradition

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“Something old and dark has got its way”: Shakespeare’s Influence in the Gothic Literary Tradition

by

Natalie Ann Hewitt

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Claremont Graduate University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

Claremont Graduate University
2013

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read, reviewed, and critiqued the dissertation of Natalie Hewitt and do hereby approve it as adequate in scope and quality for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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Abstract

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Claremont Graduate University: 2013

This dissertation examines Shakespeare’s role as the most significant precursor to the Gothic author in Britain, suggesting that Shakespeare used the same literary conventions that Gothic writers embraced as they struggled to create a new subgenre of the novel. By borrowing from Shakespeare’s canon, these novelists aimed to persuade readers and critics that rather than undermining the novel’s emergent, still unassured status as an acceptable literary genre, the nontraditional aspects of their works paid homage to Shakespeare’s imaginative vision. Gothic novelists thereby legitimized their attempts at literary expression. Despite these efforts, Gothic writers did not instantly achieve the type of acceptance or admiration that they sought. The Gothic novel has consistently been viewed as a monstrous, immature literary form—either a poor experiment in the history of the novel or a guilty pleasure for those who might choose to read or to write works that fit within this mode. Writers of Gothic fictions often claim that their works emulate Shakespeare’s dramatic pathos, but they do not acknowledge that the playwright also had to navigate similar opposition to his own creative expression. While early Gothic novelists had to contend with skeptical readers and reviewers, Shakespeare had to negotiate the religious, political, and ideological limitations that members of the court, the church, and the patronage system imposed upon his craft. Interestingly, Shakespeare often succeeded in circumventing these limitations by

employing the literary techniques and topoi that we recognize today as trademarks of Gothic fiction—spectacle, sublime, sepulcher, and the supernatural. Each of these concepts expresses subversive intentions toward authoritative power. For Shakespeare and the Gothic novelists, the dramatic potential of these elements corresponds directly to their ability to target the sociocultural fears and anxieties of their audience; the results are works that frighten as well as amuse. As my dissertation will show, these authors use similar imagery to surreptitiously challenge the authority figures and institutions that sought to prescribe what makes a work of fiction socially acceptable or worthy of critical acclaim.

Dedicated to the memory of my father-in-law

Gary Donald Hewitt

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On a particularly difficult writing day, a dear friend of mine sent me an encouraging note, which included this reminder: “If the voices of the Muses don’t show up, hear the voices of those who support you.” Throughout the dissertation process, several friends, colleagues, family members, and mentors helped me remain focused and inspired when I was unable to stay motivated on my own. Among those individuals, I am happy to say, were many of my students and co-workers. I consider myself fortunate to be surrounded by such a strong support system.

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I am honored that this process brought me a dear friend in Fay Ellwood. She painstakingly read every word, provided feedback, and took a great interest in me, as well as my scholarship. Lastly, I thank my loving husband, Jay Hewitt. This experience showed me that his confidence in me is unwavering and true.

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Introduction

“We do not know how thoroughly pre-Gothic Shakespeare is...until we look back through the Gothic to his most similar motifs and tendencies.”

Jerrold Hogle

This dissertation examines Shakespeare’s role as the most significant precursor to the Gothic author in Britain, suggesting that Shakespeare used the same literary conventions that Gothic writers embraced as they struggled to create a new subgenre of the novel. Early Gothic novelists appropriated content from Shakespeare’s plays and aligned themselves with his reputation for literary greatness in an effort to ward off the criticism their controversial works encountered. By borrowing from Shakespeare’s canon, these novelists aimed to persuade readers and critics that rather than undermining the novel’s emergent, still unassured status as an acceptable literary genre, the nontraditional aspects of their works paid homage to Shakespeare’s imaginative vision. Gothic novelists thereby legitimized their attempts at literary expression. Despite these efforts, Gothic writers did not instantly achieve the type of acceptance or admiration that they sought. The Gothic novel has consistently been viewed as a monstrous, immature literary form—either a poor experiment in the history of the novel or a guilty pleasure for those who might choose to read or to write works that fit within this mode.

Writers of Gothic fictions often claim that their works emulate Shakespeare’s dramatic pathos, but they do not acknowledge that the playwright also had to navigate similar opposition to his own creative expression. While early Gothic novelists had to contend with skeptical readers and reviewers, Shakespeare had to negotiate the religious, political, and ideological limitations that members of the court, the church, and the patronage system imposed upon his craft. Interestingly, Shakespeare often succeeded in

circumventing these limitations by employing the literary techniques and topoi that we recognize today as trademarks of Gothic fiction—spectacle, sublime, sepulcher, and the supernatural. Each of these concepts expresses subversive intentions toward authoritative power. For Shakespeare and the Gothic novelists, the dramatic potential of these elements corresponds directly to their ability to target the sociocultural fears and anxieties of their audience; the results are works that frighten as well as amuse. As my dissertation will show, these authors use similar imagery to surreptitiously challenge the authority figures and institutions that sought to prescribe what makes a work of fiction socially acceptable or worthy of critical acclaim.

When friends, colleagues, and family members discover that my academic interests center on Shakespeare and the Gothic novel, the first question they pose is: “What *exactly* is a Gothic novel?” This situation, as well as my role as an undergraduate instructor, led me to develop a response using the following four words to explain the thematic and aesthetic elements that distinguish Gothic novels from other novelistic genres: sepulcher, spectacle, sublime, and supernatural. I arrived at these four terms while first studying the history of Gothic fiction, recognizing that these common identifying features fulfill a similar purpose for their authors—they provide a way for these writers to depict concerns about abuses of power while still seeming to submit to the culpable systems of authoritative rule.

In my research, I discovered that many scholars have observed that Gothic authors rely on the influence of Shakespeare to create their works of fiction. At that point in time, most critical discussions of Gothic literature that I found cited Walpole’s declaration that he “should be more proud of having imitated...so masterly a pattern than

to enjoy the entire merit of invention” (13), and claimed that most Gothic writers have followed this same procedure. However, in these critics’ estimation, Gothic writers seem to come up short as it concerns the production of works of genius. These critics seem primarily concerned with pointing out the various ways that Gothic writers invoked Shakespeare’s genius by alluding to and borrowing content from his most popular works. Most scholars are content to suggest that the practice is simply a passive-aggressive method of self-promotion. Instead of considering the ways that Shakespeare and Gothic writers may have been attempting to accomplish similar purposes through relatively similar methods, many scholars are hesitant to see Shakespeare’s influence in Gothic fiction as something to take seriously. This type of discussion typically occupies a small portion of most studies of Gothic literature, as opposed to being the focus of any scholar’s approach.

I further discovered that Shakespearean influence in Gothic fiction is far more pervasive than the process of transplanting Shakespeare’s words, stock characters, and scenery in order to establish credibility. Supernatural phenomena, dramatic spectacle, architectural spaces suggestive of paternal failure, and the evocation of the sublime through descriptive language are all imagistic and characterological marks of Shakespearean drama that appealed to early Gothic writers as techniques that allowed them to address the sociocultural anxieties of their readers. Furthermore, contemporary Gothic writers continue to identify Shakespeare as an influence, yet few scholars take the time to discuss the significance of this trend because the works they produce are not considered worthy of claiming such a prestigious literary ancestor. The connections between this novelistic subgenre and Shakespeare’s method of dramatic writing extend

beyond what Walpole may have understood himself to be doing when he sought “to shelter my own daring under the cannon of the brightest genius” in England (13). Walpole’s experiment has made it possible for us to see just how *Gothic* many of Shakespeare’s works can be. Shakespeare might have thought of himself as a Gothic writer had the term been available to use in this way.

The first Gothic novelists were writing during the early development of the novel, and they sought to challenge and confront the neoclassic traditions of realism, unity, decorum, and coherence. The word had already been used at this time to identify works of architecture that were medieval (like the Goths of ancient times) or *not classic*. As a result, early Gothic fiction often contained plot lines that focused on dark deeds, unexplained phenomena, hidden secrets, fear and anxiety—and all of these in excess. Historically, popular interest in the Gothic mode of fiction surges during those periods when sociocultural anxieties reach an apex. Scholars have identified the 1790s as the period when public fears and anxieties about the threat of revolution and apocalypse contributed to popular interest in fiction that sought to terrify the reader. Once again, nearly a century later in the 1890s—the *fin de siècle*—England and the rest of Europe witnessed another surge in the production of Gothic fiction. The first Gothic novelists made a conscious effort to look back to their medieval past to find inspiration and content for their story lines. And because this method has historically offered its readers and writers a way to address anxieties and fears that are also of the moment—the Gothic aesthetic seems to promise that it is always already threatening to return again. Indeed, in the past thirty years, those surrounding the beginning of a new millennium, Gothic productions—on screens, stages, and pages—have reached an all-time high once again.

E.J. Clery's imperative to "[s]cratch the surface of any Gothic fiction and the debt to Shakespeare will be there" is the catalyst for this dissertation ("The genesis of 'Gothic' fiction" 30). Following this statement, Clery briefly identifies the possible reasons for why this is the case. She suggests that Shakespeare, historically and ideologically, met the needs of eighteenth-century authors, like Walpole, who sought to meld together the ancient and the modern, the high and the low, and the national and the Other. Clery's explanation is concise and offers a foundation for this dissertation project, giving me the opportunity to go beyond simply scratching the surface of Gothic works: I determine that Shakespeare and Gothic writers had a common primary goal, which was to succeed professionally and economically within their respective spheres of influence.

Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction, 1762-1800* (1995) and Michael Gamer's *Romanticism and the Gothic: Genre, Reception, and Canon-Formation* (2005) both provide a method of understanding the development of the Gothic novel by concentrating on the commercial circumstances that contributed to the popularity of Gothic writings (and stylistic appropriations) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Gamer sees his book as a response in part to Clery's "theoretical and historiographical" aims (2). Gamer's clarification that he uses the term *gothic* to mean "a 'shifting' aesthetic" as opposed to a "mode [or] a kind of fiction" (4) has shaped my own use of the word related to its ability to travel across boundaries. The early Gothic novelists borrowed heavily from Shakespeare's canon, but this tradition has continued beyond the eighteenth century and has transcended national boundaries as well.

To my knowledge, there is no critical book written by one author that primarily addresses the extent of Shakespeare's influence in the tradition of Gothic fiction. Two

recently published books address the relationship between Shakespeare and Gothic literature, but both are collections of essays contributed by various scholars who are interested in this field of study. The first is *Gothic Shakespeares* (2008), one of the volumes in the Accents on Shakespeare Series. This collection of essays offers a broad range of related topics, and in many ways, it supports some of the essential elements of this dissertation project. The authors highlight Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* as the origin of the Gothic—even though earlier works contain similar aesthetic elements—because Walpole is the first author to make such a clear declaration that his literary experiment is “A *Gothic* story,” and that he found inspiration in Shakespeare's genius. As a whole, this set of essays also suggests that the reason for Shakespeare's influence in Gothic fiction—originally and continually—hinges on the persistence of certain sociocultural anxieties. The editor, John Drakakis, acknowledges the need for continued scholarship into this area, and he briefly mentions connections to be found in a comparison of *Frankenstein* and *The Tempest*—admitting though that “[t]his is not the place to tease out [this] complex dialogue” (15). His essay, as well as others in this collection, like Steven Craig's *Shakespeare Among the Goths*, which contains some discussion about the differences between *Titus Andronicus* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, engages in an analysis that resembles my own. Jerrold E. Hogle's “Afterword” proved to be a useful tool as well, for he explains, “We do not realize how thoroughly pre-Gothic Shakespeare is [...] until we look back through the Gothic to his most similar motifs and tendencies” (202).

This method of looking back at Shakespeare *through the Gothic* has encouraged me to use a New Historicist approach in my treatment of these texts. Like most New

Historicist critics, I am interested in the ways that literary works have been interpreted, valued, and criticized throughout the years since they were first produced. I am also concerned that those who are in a position to valorize or to denigrate a work of fiction—censors, critics, scholars, educators, and religious, moral leaders—will often overlook aspects of its cultural significance because of their own presuppositions concerning what is morally or socially acceptable at any point in time. All too often, the logical basis used to determine the value of a literary work is interconnected with the individual's own personal sphere of influence, making the process far more complicated and unstable than it is often acknowledged to be. In this dissertation, I combine an examination of pertinent historical, biographical data with close reading analysis of important scenes to suggest that Shakespeare and Gothic novelists were also concerned with this process. Instead of using their works to confront this practice directly, they used similar ambiguous ideological images that furtively promote distrust toward the ruling authorities in any area of society.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Yale dissertation *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1986), first published in 1975, contains additions from her attempts to revisit the subject matter that intrigued her as a PhD student. In many ways, Sedgwick's book has encouraged me to maintain my use of the thematic patterns in Gothic novels as a way to tease out the continued significance of the Gothic mode as a vehicle for dealing with cultural anxieties. In the preface, Sedgwick explains her ultimate goal by stating the following:

I have had in mind as one object the facilitating of a particular critical gesture: I want to make it easier for the reader of 'respectable' nineteenth-century novels to

write 'Gothic' in the margin next to certain especially interesting passages, and to make that notation with a sense of linking specific elements in the passage with specific elements in the constellation of Gothic conventions. (4)

The conventions Sedgwick identifies in the chapters that follow are linguistic markers (the Gothic novel's repeated use of the word *unspeakable*), story-telling techniques (frame narrative), and consistent symbolic images (like that of the veil). For Sedgwick, these conventions enable her to point out that these Gothic elements appear and re-appear in what she considers *respectable* novels from the nineteenth century. In this dissertation, my goal is to challenge this use of the term *respectable* in the context of how we discuss Shakespeare's influence in the Gothic tradition. It would seem that Sedgwick's approach encourages readers to look for Gothic conventions in works that scholars and critics have determined are of great literary value in order to claim that Gothic fictions are, indeed, respectable. Shakespeare, of course, is an author whose status as a literary genius has been widely articulated, and perhaps too easily accepted, since the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It is tempting to use any exploration of Shakespeare's influence in Gothic fiction as a means to assign greater literary merit to a subgenre that has been neglected and undervalued by scholars and critics. Instead of engaging in this type of argument, my hope is that in evaluating the literary and cultural significance of those Gothic conventions used by Shakespeare, we will be able to understand how these literary topoi allowed these authors to produce works that addressed the fears and concerns of their audiences.

I began this method of analysis in 2006 while completing the thesis requirement for a Master of Arts degree in English literature. The project consisted of discussing how

an early Gothic novelist appropriates content from at least one of Shakespeare's plays to address certain sociocultural anxieties of his period. The results of my research led to the completion of two separate sections, each one devoted to analyzing how a single Gothic convention is at work in both texts to serve a similar purpose for the authors. These discussions now make up the first two chapters of the dissertation.

The first chapter examines the use of the sepulcher as a primary locus that represents the failure of paternal authority in *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. In both of these works, the locus of the sepulcher—a sometimes-labyrinthine vault of death, darkness and the horrifying unknown—unearths feelings of fear, confusion, isolation, and desire, forbidden or permissible, especially for the heroines in the works. Two texts written by Fred Botting are the most influential, relevant secondary sources for my focus on the sepulcher as the site of paternal failure. First, in Botting's contribution to the New Critical Idiom series, entitled *Gothic*, he contends that the horror of a labyrinthine space and its symbolic representation of both anxiety and desire "lies in its utter separation from all social rules and complete transgression of all conventional limits" (81). In a second work of Botting's, "Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black holes," he examines the role of the paternal metaphor in Gothic fiction. For Botting, Walpole's novel sets a standard for future Gothic texts by presenting and creating "a crisis in the legitimacy and authority of the structured circulation of social exchanges and meanings over which the father figure presides" (282). These observations serve as the impetus for the analysis of Shakespeare's play and Walpole's Gothic romance in chapter one of this dissertation, which suggests that the use of the paternal metaphor to dramatize the effects of fathers who transgress is not a literary

convention that originated with the creation of the Gothic novel. Shakespeare altered the significance of the medieval stage property of the tomb by using it in *Romeo and Juliet* to represent anxieties about the failure of paternal authority figures. Gothic writers, starting with Walpole, have followed Shakespeare's model of using claustrophobic spaces—death-filled chambers—as architectural environments that connote the fears associated with patriarchal transgressions.

The second chapter argues that the dominant aesthetic of *The Monk* and *Titus Andronicus* is that of violent spectacle, which questions the ostensible efficacy of punitive measures and the powers that aim to enforce them. Molly Easo Smith's article "Spectacles of Torment in *Titus Andronicus*," along with Emma McEvoy's introduction to Matthew Lewis's novel *The Monk*, provides the support to chapter two's thesis that using dramatic spectacle, *Titus* and *The Monk* expose the crisis that occurs when punishment fails to yield the results desired by the authority that enforces it. Both pieces rely heavily on graphic details of blood, gore, sexuality, and more attention to vice than virtue. Additionally, Robert Hume's essay "Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel," encouraged me to consider how these works use dramatic spectacle to entertain and disgust the audience. Both texts fit into the category Hume distinguishes as *Horror-Gothic* because "instead of holding the reader's attention through suspense or dread, they attack him frontally with events that shock or disturb him" (285). In order to prove that this method does not merely glorify the shock value of horrific scenes, I use examples from both works that reveal how Shakespeare and Lewis use this type of Gothic spectacle to establish a representation of reality where moral ambiguity and the hero-villain co-exist. The spectators are not presented with examples of how to live

morally, but are encouraged to use their imaginations to consider the potential depravity of humankind. This is instruction of a far different kind; it involves examination of character that goes beyond the exterior and encourages this type of exploration in all aspects of society. Smith's essay posits that the power of *Titus Andronicus* is in Shakespeare's clever "transference of the spectacle of death and dismemberment from Tyburn and other such precincts to the theatrical arena" (315). Similarly, Lewis's novel, published shortly after Robespierre's Reign of Terror and considered by conservative critics to have the potential to corrupt youth by promoting an irreverent, distrustful attitude toward religious authority, also uses spectacle to criticize institutions that use unnecessarily harsh or physical punishment as a means of social control. In following Shakespeare's use of dramatic spectacle as social critique in *Titus Andronicus*, Lewis perpetuated a new tradition for future Gothic writers.

The remaining chapters continue to follow this method of analysis. The third chapter examines Gothic sublimity as it relates to fear and education in *Frankenstein* and *The Tempest*. David B. Morris's essay "Gothic Sublimity" offers an ideal starting point for the chapter on *The Tempest* and *Frankenstein* since he argues that the Gothic novel significantly alters the eighteenth-century notions of the sublime. Samuel H. Monk's *The Sublime* (1960) provides the most thorough explanation of the ways that this concept becomes so central to eighteenth and nineteenth-century readers' perceptions of themselves in relation to something much greater. In Patricia Merivale's essay "Learning the Hard Way: Gothic Pedagogy in the Modern Romantic Quest," she discusses the tradition of "teaching through fear" as it is depicted in "pageants, rituals" and other dramatic performances (147). Her parenthetical mentioning of how this occurs through

Prospero in *The Tempest* provides the foundation for this chapter's argument that both Shakespeare's play and *Frankenstein* demonstrate this pedagogical method by evoking a sense of the sublime in nature and practice. Often scholars explain that the supernatural figures in a Gothic work are considered sublime objects because of their ability to incite fear and terror. However, in *Frankenstein* and *The Tempest*, the truly frightening figures are Prospero and Victor Frankenstein—protagonists who neglect those whom they should protect. As an instrument of the sublime, alchemy serves as a catalyst for transformation by Shakespeare and is revisited and transfigured by the writers of Gothic novels, like Shelley. Prospero's engagement with the art of alchemy establishes a connection to the sublime as a metaphysical process. Prospero's magical skill and learning is an instrument of the sublime, which he uses to exert power of his enemies and subjects until he learns that he has been abusing others with his gifts. In both works, Gothic sublimity works as an educative technique that relies on fear as a catalyst for growth and transformation.

The fourth chapter focuses on the use of the supernatural in *Wuthering Heights* and *Macbeth* as a vehicle to articulate the complexity of human desire for and resistance to divine intervention. M.H. Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971) and Clery's *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction* helped me to sharpen my own understanding of the complicated ways that the supernatural has been negotiated and appropriated in literary works, especially in the years between the publication of *Otranto* (1764) and the publication of *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is indebted to Shakespeare's treatment of supernaturalism. Both authors use supernaturalism to highlight a struggle that is at times an attraction to and a rebellion against the right order of things. Shakespeare and Brontë create the impression of an established order only to

subvert it by calling attention to the possible threat and interference of otherworldly forces. In this chapter's analysis, the comparison of Shakespeare's tragedy and Brontë's novel identifies that Macbeth and Heathcliff struggle with and against supernatural forces. They both encounter and seek out supernatural assistance, and shamefully, they behave like criminals in their respective works. Although the endings of both texts appear to be peaceful, the stories themselves are actually disturbing—they seek to frighten by highlighting the potential threats to order that has been re-established, which, in turn, makes them a significant part of the Gothic literary tradition.

The scope of this dissertation encompasses the study of several different time periods, considering Shakespeare's plays were written and first performed during the Elizabethan and Jacobean period, and the first novels that identified themselves as *Gothic* were published in the middle of the eighteenth century. It is also necessary to consider certain eighteenth-century productions of Shakespeare's plays, to comment on the ways that readers, spectators, and early Gothic novelists responded to representations of Shakespeare's art. Because this scope is rather broad, I have chosen to limit the number of primary literary texts to one play and one novel for each chapter. However, in the conclusion the analysis is directed toward works from the twentieth-century and the present. The conclusion considers the ways that Shakespeare's influence in Orson Welles's Gothic cinematic approach made it possible for artists working in film and television to continue to participate in this tradition of borrowing from Shakespeare to create Gothic fictions. Instead of examining Gothic novels as a medium for Shakespeare's influence, the discussion extends to Gothic cinematic and filmic representations as well.

Chapter 1

The Sepulcher as the Site of Paternal Failure: *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Castle of Otranto*

“Thou, great God, Whose image upon earth a father is, Dost thou indeed abandon me?”

Beatrice Cenci in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s, *The Cenci*

Not long before Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) made its debut into the literary market, the theatres in London experienced an increase of performances of Shakespeare’s plays, especially *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* (1597). George Winchester Stone, Jr. explains that between the years of 1748 and 1776, “in the two major London theatres alone over 329 performances of the play occurred” (191). Although the play’s popularity is often attributed to the intriguing love story, most scholars believe that *Romeo and Juliet* functions successfully because of the efficacy of Shakespeare’s wordplay—that it enforces the play’s rich imagistic impact and allows characterological development to occur. While Walpole’s experimental novel has not received the same type of praise, the numerous published editions of *Otranto*, as well as the successful dramatic adaptation, *The Count of Narbonne* (1781), indicate that Walpole was in part able to emulate Shakespeare’s ability to engage his audience in the theatre (Gamer xi). The frequent allusions to *Romeo and Juliet* found within *The Castle of Otranto* provide a backdrop for Walpole’s story, one that deliberately evokes concepts found within Shakespeare’s works that have become definitive features of Gothic texts as well. Shakespeare’s first tragic romance and Walpole’s first Gothic story have both relished popular appeal and censure for centuries.¹ Incidentally, both works belong to an experimental period for their respective authors. *Romeo and Juliet* was Shakespeare’s

¹ Scholars writing about either of these works tend to comment on how these pieces reveal the authors’ attempts to incorporate elements of both comedy and tragedy.

first romantic tragedy, and his choice of subject shifted from historical figures to “fictional lovers, young aristocrats but not royal” (Kermode 1102). *Otranto* was Walpole’s first attempt at novel writing; he chose to abandon his former practice of writing essays, poetry, political pamphlets, and catalogues, in order to produce a fantastical love story while “shelter[ing] my own daring under the cannon of the brightest genius in the country” (Walpole 13). These facts provide an interesting comparison between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Otranto*; however, the most striking marks of Shakespeare’s influence on Walpole are evident in the character development of *Otranto*, most significantly, the constant failure of paternal figures, and the compelling imagery established using the sepulcher as a primary locus.

Original Gothic

On April 11, 1765, Horace Walpole published the second edition of his novel *The Castle of Otranto* with a new subtitle that had changed from simply ‘A Story’ to ‘A Gothic Story.’ This seemingly minor augmentation marks a significant shift in literary culture that has progressed throughout the following centuries. Nearly thirty years after the publication of *Otranto*, the literary market experienced a massive influx of stories that belonged to what was then called “the terrorist system of novel writing” (Miles 41). The authors who chose to write in this mode were often criticized for “confining the heroes and heroines in old gloomy castles, full of spectres, apparitions, ghosts, and dead men’s bones” (NAEL 601). These novelists borrowed these and other central elements from *Otranto*, pointing back toward Walpole as a fundamental figure in the development of the literary genre we now call Gothic fiction. Walpole’s eventual decision to identify himself as the author of this story, after first publishing it as an artifact “found in the library of an

ancient catholic family,” allowed him the opportunity to promulgate the rules for this *new* form of storytelling (5).

In form and content, *The Castle of Otranto* confronts the neoclassical rules of composition and beauty that had become an integral part of eighteenth-century criticism and culture. In place of uniformity, order, proportion, and reason, Walpole’s work invites excess, imagination, emotion, and transgression. His literary experiment resembles the Gothic revival in architecture that had motivated him to re-design his estate Strawberry Hill in 1747 and turn it into a model of a medieval castle, complete with spires, turrets, and excessive ornamentation. Gamer explains that after the publication of *Otranto*, Walpole “encouraged friends and readers to associate Strawberry Hill with the setting” of the novel (xxiv). Even though Walpole was not the first person to “appropriate Gothic architecture into a domestic setting,” he is considered responsible for reviving the Gothic as a popular architectural style because of this association to his literary curiosity (Gamer xxiii). Since Walpole, Gothic fictions tend to rely heavily on spaces and places that harken back to a medieval past, such as castles with labyrinthine passages that lead to dungeons and exotic locations, conveying the mystery of far-off lands, as well as the fear and anxiety that these environments tend to produce.

According to Walpole, *Otranto* is an amalgamation of ancient and modern romance—a marriage of the two that embraces certain elements of neoclassical thought and archaic fancy. His argument for creating such an art form promotes his belief that the two reconciled permits characters to respond realistically to improbable circumstances, evoking nature in both its reasonable essence and wild capabilities. In the preface to the second edition of *Otranto*, Walpole explains his desire to let the “powers of fancy” roam

freely through the “boundless realms of invention, and thence of creating more interesting situations, he wished to conduct the agents of his drama according to the rules of probability” (9). Yet this form of blending rules along with an impulse to supersede them is not wholly original, and Walpole admits to such truth. In his own words, Walpole explains that much of his technique follows the pattern of “the great master of nature, Shakespeare” (10). Whether Walpole’s invocation of such a muse renders his work worthy of serious literary consideration is as controversial as the question of whether Shakespeare’s role as the Immortal Bard is justifiable because of the quality of his work alone. Nevertheless, both figures have paved the way for the literary and cultural phenomenon of Gothic fiction that has remained throughout subsequent centuries in various forms of art and entertainment: literature, theater, film, television, music, fashion, and video and computer games. Walpole’s decision to harness the “genius” of a figure whose posthumous popularity was almost frenetic at the time of publication of *Otranto* reflects the eighteenth-century novelist’s practice of invoking the aid of England’s dramatic heritage—a tradition that has become common in both the creation and study of English literature. For those novelists who chose to write in the Gothic mode, this practice seemed to occur without exception.

Commenting on the Elizabethan age and its intellectual and theatrical setting, Patrick Cruttwell claims that a common sentiment of this society is “a sad looking back to a past idealized out of all reality, when life and love, society and individuals, were simpler and better” (136). Because of this sentiment, he asserts, “Elizabethans were just as prone as later ages to ‘Gothick’ fantasies,” and their motivation was similar to that of Gothic writers because they used these storytelling devices to depict the shortcomings of

their current situation (136). Gothic fictions connote feelings of the past and with these emotions, a haunting fear of the unknown prevails, for specific incidents of ancient times can never completely be explained or understood. The novelists who participated in the development of the Gothic genre concentrated primarily on storytelling elements that conjured emotions of anxiety, fear, and mystery. Evidently, they found their greatest source of inspiration in the works of a playwright who used similar imagistic and characterological tropes to address the anxieties of his audience.

Regarding Walpole's frequent use of Shakespearean allusions, Robert Mack says that *Otranto* "asks its readers to carry their knowledge of the entire corpus of Shakespeare's drama to the work so that those very readers can themselves fill in the narrative gaps in the volume with the resonance of a shared theatrical tradition" (xx). In this way, Shakespeare is the most significant precursor to the Gothic author in eighteenth-century Britain. The discovery of certain elements that are considered traits of Gothic fiction, which already exist in Shakespeare's plays, challenges us to consider why and how these authors sought to use these elements to dramatize the social and political concerns of each respective period. In particular, when we examine Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet* and Walpole's original Gothic text, *The Castle of Otranto*, it becomes clear that both of these works address this issue of the failure of paternal order in a similar manner.

Many stories possess characteristics that can be associated with the conventions that scholars have come to identify as trademarks of Gothic fiction. The passion story of the Christ is in effect a Gothic romance replete with the trappings of terror and suspense, supernatural phenomena, prophecy, a distressed heroine, and a mysteriously powerful

lineage. The action of the story centers on a grotesque spectacle of death, an attempt at entrapment in a tomb, and an ending of sublime proportions, where order is temporarily restored, but the threat of apocalypse remains. That these elements can also be found in several of Shakespeare's dramatic works increases the likelihood of his having seen and experienced at least one of the annual Corpus Christi pageants, or mystery cycles, performed at Coventry when Shakespeare was young.²

While watching one of these pageants, which took place throughout the city where each cycle was staged upon "specially built scaffolds or carts," Shakespeare would have witnessed the production of some of the most theatrical moments of the story of humanity—"from the creation and the Fall to the redemption" (Greenblatt 37).³ Among the list of the various scenes that would have been depicted during these cycles, Greenblatt includes "Jesus on the Cross," as well as "the three Marys at the tomb" (37). I am most interested in considering how the young Shakespeare might have considered the dramatic potential of these scenes, especially in their attempt to capture the gravity of these critical moments in the passion play narrative.

To envision what dramatic elements could have been included, it is worth consulting *The Geneva Bible* (1560) as a source for the descriptive language upon which these scenes may have been based. In Mark's account of the crucifixion, the text reads, "And at the ninth houre Jesus cryed with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama-

² In Janette Dillon's study of the Early English theatre, she identifies that although the Corpus Christi plays "constitute the best surviving and best known form of medieval drama now, they were certainly not the most common form of drama in their time" (16). Stephen Greenblatt explains that because the plays were "not strictly Catholic, and the civic pride and pleasure in them was intense...they lingered, in the teeth of opposition into the 1570s and '80s" (*Will in the World* 37). Shakespeare would have been fifteen years old in 1579.

³ As Greenblatt suggests, the young Shakespeare may have been inspired by the powerful effect of staging these moments—"their way of constructing a shared community of spectators, their confidence that all things in the heavens and the earth can be represented on stage, their delicious blending of homeliness and exaltation" (37).

sabachthani? which is by interpretacion interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (*The Geneva Bible* 15.34). Mark 15.40 indicates that among those who witnessed this event, “There were also women, which beheld affareof, amog whome was Marie Magdalene, and Marie (the mother of James the lesse and of Joseph) and Salome” (*The Geneva Bible*).⁴ If we consider the possibility that these scenes may have been staged either upon the same scaffold or side-by-side, it is all the more compelling that the emotional anguish felt by Jesus and the women at the tomb is strikingly similar—all are feeling abandoned by the Father.

I do not intend to suggest that Shakespeare used the locus of the tomb to oppose belief in the sovereignty of God although he may have personally considered this attitude acceptable.⁵ Instead, I am interested in the ways that Shakespeare harnessed the frightening potential of this moment in the Corpus Christ cycle to alter its traditional significance. In those of Shakespeare’s plays where pivotal scenes take place in or near the setting of a tomb, *Titus Andronicus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Anthony and Cleopatra*, the environment is associated with the permanence of death—complete annihilation through the process of physical decay and isolation from the society of the living—rather than the miracle of resurrection.

In Michael Neill’s *Issues of Death*, Neill explains that Shakespeare’s use of the tomb as a stage property in several of his plays was indeed “a survival from the mystery cycles,” but Neill claims that the tomb was usually used in the medieval theater as “a sign

⁴ Note the commentary on this passage, found in the 1599 *Geneva Study Bible*, states, “Christ, to the great shame of the men who forsook the Lord, chose women for his witnesses, who beheld this entire event.”

⁵ I am convinced that when we look at Shakespeare’s plays to discover his religious beliefs, all we will find is his skillful way of avoiding aligning himself with any one way of thinking or believing. More importantly, I believe that in his representations of religious belief and skepticism, Shakespeare, like the other dramatists in this period, made his dramatic decisions by tending to the politics of religion, patronage, and monarchical authority.

of spiritual triumph, the Christian victory over death” (309). Neill does suggest, however, that Shakespeare and his contemporaries may have been using the *visitatio sepulchri* (visit to the tomb) motif in various ways in order to develop “an extended range of secular meanings” (310). These tomb-properties, or the discovery space used to represent such an environment, may have been used as “symbols of humanist transcendence” or as “emblems of human transience” (Neill 309-310). He also argues that these dramatists might have sought to “capitalize on both aspects of their meaning to convert them into signs of the deadly grip of the past upon the present” (310). In *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare creates a family sepulcher that is not a sign of resurrection or an indication of the hopeful promise of a victorious future. It is, as Neill describes, an “emblem of a pride so consuming that it devours its own progeny” (311). Capulet’s “ancient receptacle” is symbolic of the past as it is the storehouse of his “buried ancestors,” but it also houses the devastation of his present loss—the daughter whose future he failed to protect (4.3.39).

Gothic writers, starting with Walpole, have followed Shakespeare’s model of using claustrophobic spaces—death-filled chambers—as architectural environments that connote the fears associated with patriarchal transgressions. Fred Botting acknowledges that all Gothic fiction is entangled with the use of the paternal metaphor. Botting claims that the origin of this trope as a Gothic convention occurs when Walpole makes it the primary focus of *Otranto*, arguing that “since Walpole, Gothic has emerged as an effect of and an engagement with a crisis in the legitimacy and authority of the structured circulation of social exchanges and meanings over which the father figure presides” (282). However, the use of the paternal metaphor to dramatize the effects of fathers who

transgress is not a literary convention that originated with the creation of the Gothic novel. In Shakespeare's plays, father figures exert the most control over the shape of the narrative. Most of the maternal characters are either non-existent or dormant. Even those mothers who are shown to be capable of transgressions receive very little active attention by comparison. In Shakespeare's worlds, most of the mothering tends to happen offstage, before the play begins, or, not at all.⁶ The dominant figures are the paternal characters—those who establish the rules for their wives, daughters, sons, and servants. More often than not, those rules lead to disappointment and devastation, especially for their daughters. In *Romeo and Juliet*, and in Walpole's novel, all of the characters suffer the consequences of paternal transgressions, but for Juliet and Matilda, the consequences of their fathers' mistakes are fatal.

Romeo and Juliet and *Otranto* are stories based on legends, as opposed to factual realities. Yet these fictional accounts of patriarchal deficiency expose the increasing anxieties about the methods of determining the political effectiveness and legitimacy of the monarch in England during the lifetimes of both authors. For Walpole, living in post-Restoration England—a period marked by the development of constitutional monarchy—meant that the status of the monarch was constantly in question. As the son of Robert Walpole—Britain's first and longest-serving prime minister—Horace Walpole would

⁶ For more on this topic, see Mary Beth Rose's essay, "Where are the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance" (1991). In Rose's book, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (2002), Rose mentions that despite the various, changing constructions of motherhood in Renaissance England "all ideological agendas about the family agreed more or less ambivalently that maternity was incompatible with the public domain" (1079). Rose also suggests that any "direct evocation of the queen as mother was far more likely to provoke anxiety than to provide reassurance" (Rose 1079). Perhaps because Shakespeare was sensitive to the needs of his royal patron, he directed his attention to issues of fatherhood—a topic more likely to garner sympathy for Queen Elizabeth, considering the notoriety of her father's behavior toward her mother.

have had to grapple with the personal and social nature of this issue.⁷ When Walpole began writing *Otranto*, he had already been a Member of Parliament for almost twenty-five years, but those years are often discussed by his biographers by way of comparison to the successes and eventual downfall of his father. Michael Gamer points out that the young Walpole's first speech in the House of Commons took place just after Robert Walpole's government "had fallen after over two decades in power," and as such, the focus of the address was "in defence of his father, who in the wake of his resignation, faced multiple allegations of corruption" (xix). Describing Horace Walpole's performance as an MP, Paul Langford asserts, "He lacked the presence, the voice, and the combative instinct that made for success in the eighteenth-century House of Commons." According to Langford, Walpole could not escape the stigma of his father's political ruin. Even after his father's death in 1745, Horace's political ideas continued to be "shaped by what he took to be the opinions of his father and those of his father's followers who had not been implicated in his downfall in 1742" (Langford). It is no wonder then that despite Walpole's claim that his motivation for writing *Otranto* was to escape the world of politics, the book "evinces a startling infusion of the characters, events, and ideas in Walpole's political life in 1764" (Samson 145). Perhaps when Walpole wrote the first preface to the novel and stated of its pseudonymous author, "I could wish he had grounded his plan on a more useful moral than this; that *the sins of fathers are visited on*

⁷ The entry for Walpole in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, written by Paul Langford, describes the author's childhood with language that recalls the dynamic Walpole created for his character of Conrad, the only male heir of Manfred and Hippolita. It reads, "The child was sickly and much cherished by his mother, whose domestic life was narrowed by her husband's absences with his mistress Maria Skerrett on his Norfolk estate at Houghton and in his hunting-lodge in Richmond Park. She dwelled mainly in Arlington Street, and during the summer at the family villa in Chelsea, where much of the young Horace's time was spent." Additional biographical data reveals that Horace may have found his father to be a source for the character of Manfred. Manfred's coldness toward Hippolita, and his eagerness to obtain Isabella for his wife, might be connected to the fact that sources indicate that when Horace's mother died in 1737, Walpole's "father displayed little emotion, and married his mistress Maria Skerrett soon after."

their children to the third and fourth generation,” he is admitting his desire to be rid of his father’s past.

One critic, Benjamin Bird, also reads the novella as Walpole’s attempt to express certain anxieties of the period, but for Bird, the questions the novel poses are directed at the legitimacy of the monarchy alone. He does not consider that Walpole may have been taking issue with figures of patriarchal authority, including his own father. Bird’s essay, “Treason and Imagination: The Anxiety of the Legitimacy in the Subject of the 1760s” (2006), asserts that *Otranto* “bears traces of the grave disquiet Walpole felt about the legitimacy of the contemporary monarchy” (190). As many scholars and critics have done, Bird points out that *Otranto*, and other works within the Gothic genre, tend to demonstrate an “obsessive concern...with questions of legitimacy and usurpation” (190). Bird uses what he calls “key canonical texts of the 1760s” to connect the decade of *Otranto*’s composition to the period of the 1790s where “suspicions of the monarchy extended deep into the imaginative life of the king’s subjects” (189). Although Bird admits that Walpole “remained to all appearances a monarchist,” he argues that the story’s “preoccupation with monarchical corruption and illegitimacy” indicates Walpole’s frustration with the monarchical system (193). Bird suggests that Walpole “may even have remained unconscious of the treasonous implications of his thoughts on the subject” (193). What Bird fails to address is how complicated these issues had to have been for Walpole—the son of a father for whom he may have never felt a deep affection and whose political career may have haunted and disturbed his dreams. For this reason, the novel does not offer either a straightforward legitimist message or an appeal to those

who might indulge in treasonous imaginings. Instead, *Otranto* is a narrative preoccupied primarily with the sins of fathers.

E.J. Clery agrees that it is difficult to find “any straightforward legitimist message” in the novel even though Walpole had a “notorious fascination with things royal and genealogical” (72). But Clery attributes this difficulty to the “ambivalence of the prophecy” that guides the narrative, not to Walpole’s own political ambivalence. The following anecdotes, found in Clery’s *The Rise of Supernatural Fiction: 1762-1800* (1995), expose Walpole’s conflicted emotions regarding following the example of his father, “who was described by his admirers as the great parliamentary defender of constitutional monarchy against the threat of royal prerogative” (72). Clery mentions, “[i]n the years before the Revolution in France, he [Walpole] liked to characterise himself as a ‘quiet republican,’ content to see the ‘shadow of monarchy, like Banquo’s ghost, fill the empty chair of state’ as an obstacle to worse evils of ambition and tyranny” (72-3). She also explains that while he lived “at Strawberry Hill he kept a copy of the Magna Carta on one side of his bed and the warrant for the execution of Charles I on the other, as if to boast that no royal spectre was going to murder his sleep” (73). Instead of allowing an imagination provoked by thoughts of regicide to help Walpole craft his story, Walpole’s imagination seems more troubled by the frightening nature of the type of political involvement that nearly destroyed his father.⁸

⁸ It is also worth pointing out here that it seems Walpole liked to visualize himself as though he were a character in a Shakespeare play. Pat Rogers calls attention to this particular trait of Walpole’s by listing the contents of a letter that Walpole wrote while visiting “a hamlet among the mountains of Savoy.” Rogers believes the letter reveals that Walpole “took pleasure in devising fantasies to match the grandeur of his surroundings.” In the letter, Walpole states, “Yesterday I was a shepherd of Dauphiné; today an Alpine savage; tomorrow a Carthusian monk; and Friday a Swiss Calvinist.” Rogers asserts that Walpole’s “fondness for such playacting survived with him throughout life.”

Questions concerning the moral, political legitimacy of authority figures were not new concerns for the people of England. For the Elizabethans, this discourse included the topic of the relationship between gender and authority.⁹ Because Shakespeare was writing *Romeo and Juliet* during the last years of the reign of Elizabeth I, meant, to some, that the many years of questions and concerns about the legitimacy of a female sovereign were about to end, but without an appointed heir, the new era held the potential of generating just as much turmoil.¹⁰ For this reason, it is possible to read *Romeo and Juliet* as a text that argues in favor of a female monarch over a traditionally male sovereign. Because the play highlights the ultimate failure of paternal authority in Verona, it also honors the legacy of a female monarch who was able to persevere in spite of the sins of her own father. Walpole's ability to characterize Manfred as a selfish, foolish tyrant certainly benefits from the ways in which his motives and behaviors mirror Henry VIII's failed attempts to avoid a female monarchy for England's future. The dramatic impact of these sociocultural, political anxieties exists in their tendency to occur throughout centuries and continuing in many nations today—that these images make their way into the literature of every epoch. Through the characterological development of the male authoritative figures in both of these works, the Gothic convention of the sepulcher as the site of paternal failure continues.

⁹ See Mary Beth Rose's *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (2002) for an excellent analysis of the ways that Elizabeth used language throughout her reign to manage fears and concerns related to her gender and her ability to rule. Rose claims that Elizabeth used "her verbal powers to define her authority and legitimize her actions in gendered terms" (27). By analyzing the various forms and versions of Elizabeth's speeches, Rose argues that Elizabeth's strategy in public discourse went beyond the appropriation of masculine valor; she established a "heroic persona...by monopolizing all gendered positions" (Rose 27).

¹⁰ Although Shakespeare's death occurs thirty-three years before the execution of Charles I, the political climate surrounding Shakespeare's own final years is also marked by a growing unrest with the sovereignty of James I, Charles's predecessor.

Sepulcher

In Gothic romances the locus of the sepulcher, a sometimes-labyrinthine vault of death, darkness and the horrifying unknown, unearths feelings of fear, confusion, isolation, and desire—forbidden or permissible. The use of this locus for dramatic effect also occurs throughout *Romeo and Juliet*. For example, when Romeo approaches the tomb of the Capulet family, his apostrophe to the monument expresses the ambiguous nature of life and death that is apparent throughout the play:

Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death,
Gorg'd with the dearest morsel of the earth,
Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open,
And in despite I'll cram thee with more food. (5.3.45-48)

Despite his feelings of repulsion and anger, Romeo is capable of recognizing the enigmatic paradox that death and life are contingent upon each other. Death cannot occur without the existence of life, and death allows the process of life to continue. Romeo willingly enters into the tomb, personified as the gaping mouth of a voracious animal, and ironically, he associates the space with the life-giving environment of the womb. In an earlier scene, Friar Lawrence explains, “The earth that’s nature mother is her tomb; / What is her burying grave that is her womb” (2.3.9-10). The Friar’s words address the soil and its ability to produce various elements, each one virtuous by nature but capable of vice if “misapplied.” Because we learn later that one of the Friar’s herbal concoctions contributes to the unfortunate death of the young lovers, these lines, delivered during the second act, foreshadow effectively the tragic paradox that vivifying peace in Verona is only achieved through the death of Romeo and Juliet. The usage of the terms *womb* and

tomb in frequent apposition force the reader to consider the significance of the interdependence of life and death. The tumultuous nature of this relationship expressed through the verbal ambiguities of Shakespeare's characters precipitates the "two hours traffic" of the Elizabethan stage and eventually becomes a constant imagistic component of all Gothic fictions.

Walpole's text relies heavily upon the sepulcher as a symbolic location that occupies an important role within the context of the story. Much like the other architectural environments of *Otranto*, the tomb of Alfonso in St. Nicholas's church contributes to the plot much like a traditional character does. Most scholars and critics focus on the castle when they discuss Walpole's technique of allowing a physical locality to perform the function of a traditional character. In doing so, they overlook the symbolic significance of the castle's physical and metaphorical connection to the church and its corresponding tomb. Robert Kiely suggests that despite Walpole's limited description of the castle, "its presence is felt on nearly every page" (40). Kiely argues, "If anything gives this novel unity and animation, it is the castle" (40). However, in Kiely's analysis of the language that Walpole uses to create the emotional charge that animates the castle, which Kiely believes allows the castle to "require little assistance from the characters," Kiely actually cites from the narrator's description of the castle's underground passages, which lead directly to Alfonso's tomb. Walpole's narrator describes this "lower part of the castle" with words that connote religious reverence, noting that it is "hollowed into several intricate cloisters" where "[a]n awful silence reigned" (26). The castle and the church are inextricably linked. Depending on which patriarchal authority figure enters either location at any given moment, they can become a place of horror or freedom. The

subterraneous passages that connect these two settings emphasize the threat of confinement and immurement, which faces all the characters that live in fear of Manfred's tyranny.

When Manfred, enraged by an irrational jealousy, approaches the tomb of Alfonso, he is "guided by an imperfect gleam of moonshine that shone faintly through the illuminated windows" (95). The church, like the castle and its sighing portraits and hidden passageways, becomes an unavoidable, looming presence in the novel. Alfonso's tomb is the central location for many of the novel's most compelling moments—moments that lead to Matilda's tragic murder and the restoration of the rightful heir to *Otranto*. The tomb of Alfonso is the site where Frederic, the marquis tempted to engage in corruption by Manfred, encounters the frightening figure that possesses "the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton" and communicates the message to "forget Matilda!" (93-94). Even the origin of this space is an essential component of the novel's final resolution. Once Matilda's death occurs, the full story unfolds, and the characters discover that St. Nicholas's church had been established because of the desperate vow made by Manfred's guilty ancestor, Ricardo, who in an attempt to obtain absolution for his crimes, promised to "found a church and two convents" (99). Instead of securing the remission of his sins, the establishment of St. Nicholas's church provides the appropriate setting for the final consequence of his sins. The fulfillment of the prophecy, that the rightful heir will inhabit the throne inevitably, occurs through Manfred's accidental murder of Matilda within the sepulcher of Alfonso.

Romeo and Juliet begins and ends with the focus on Capulet and Montague—the fathers whose inability to maintain peace with one another precipitates their children's

deaths. Capulet's tyrannical control of Juliet, which would leave her homeless and without status in society should she refuse to marry Paris, forces her to search for help from the only other paternal figure available, Friar Lawrence. Once Juliet faces rejection from her mother and the Nurse, who, as agents of the father, represent his approval and protection, she resolves to seek the Friar's assistance but decides beforehand that, "If all else fail, myself have power to die" (3.5.242). At this point in the play, Juliet begins to acknowledge that her father, the figure who traditionally maintains authority over and offers protection to his offspring, is no longer willing to provide such elements for her. The paternal metaphor extends to the play's conclusion and becomes the truly tragic impression as all four figures of paternal authority, Capulet, Montague, Friar Lawrence, and Prince Escalus recognize their inability to maintain civic order and provide safety for those under their care.

In light of the impotency of the paternal figures in these works, the sepulcher possesses the most potential to inspire hope and fear for the distressed female characters in both works. When Juliet is isolated in her room preparing to drink the Friar's "distilling liquor," she contemplates the terrifying possibilities of waking in her family's burial tomb:

O, if I [wake], shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears,
And madly play with my forefathers' joints,
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,
And in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club, dash out my desp'rate brains? (4.3.49-54)

The imagery evoked through the language of this soliloquy epitomizes the eighteenth-century Gothic heroine caught perpetually in a state of isolated terror. The vivid description of what Juliet may encounter in the sepulcher is ghastly yet appealing because it is her only way to escape the limitations and constraints of the present situation. For this reason, Juliet chooses to enter the tomb after telling Tybalt's imagined corpse to stay away while welcoming the possibility of a future with Romeo declaring, "Romeo, Romeo, Romeo! Here's drink – I drink to thee" (4.3.58-59). Juliet's emotional response to her dire situation anticipates those tormented females that inhabit Gothic novels and vacillate between succumbing to fear or pleasure.

In *Otranto*, Isabella, one of Walpole's two young heroines, escapes from the villainous Manfred by making her way through the lower portion of the castle, "that long labyrinth of darkness," where "every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind" (26). For a substantial amount of time, she maintains the emotional state described as "the agony of despair" (26-27). Although the horrifying effect of this environment causes Isabella to tremble with fear and anxiety, she is also somewhat attracted to the mysterious and unknown presence of a figure lurking there in the darkness. She advances "eagerly" toward what she fears is a ghost and there encounters Theodore, who provides her means of escape (27). These combinations of fear and freedom, attraction and repulsion, horror and hope, placed strategically within a location frequently associated with vice alone renders imagery that leaves the reader suspended in a state of ambiguity, where the subversive is no longer identifiable solely as such. The suspenseful and frightening journey through a subterraneous region not only provides a scene of intrigue

for the reader but also creates the emotional effect for which Gothic works have come to be known—a curious awareness of the pleasure that can come from fear.¹¹

Fred Botting suggests that these labyrinthine spaces tend to reappear in works of Gothic fiction because the horror of such a location “lies in its utter separation from all social rules and complete transgression of all conventional limits” (81). Shakespeare’s emphasis on fate as the ultimate force that presides over the actions of all those that inhabit Verona allows for the city to feel as suffocating as an underground tomb.

Botting’s observation about the horrifying effect of these claustrophobic spaces can also be applied to Juliet’s attitude toward the fate that she seems compelled—or feels obligated—to embrace. However frightful “The horrible conceit of death and night, / Together with the terror of the place” (5.3.37-38) is to Juliet, she is still willing, if not eager, to undertake such a journey. Similar to a Gothic heroine, captivated by the enigmatic dark-browed villain, Juliet is drawn to death, darkness, and the pursuit of something counter to the expectations placed upon her. It is the “black brow’d night” that she invokes in a previous scene when she states:

Come, gentle night, come loving black-brow’d night,

Give me my Romeo, and, when I shall die,

Take him and cut him out in little stars,

And he will make the face of heaven so fine,

¹¹ Of course, as I identify this effect, I am thinking of Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), but I will return to Burke’s theory in chapter four, where the discussion of the sublime as a Gothic convention is the main topic. It is also relevant to mention here another source that comments upon the human tendency to derive a certain sense of pleasure from contemplating ostensibly disagreeable images. E.F. Carrit comments on this trend with the following observations: “Many such things—death, pain, despised love, are hardly likely by any freak of fashion to become agreeable to the mass of mankind. But many objects that strike one age mainly by their mystery and strangeness, their contempt and cruelty for our comfortable uses, become to the next such familiar objects of aesthetic pleasure...” (371).

That all the world will be in love with night

And pay no worship to the garish sun. (3.2.21-25)

Shakespeare's Verona is "all the world" for Juliet, but it is stifling to her. Once the expectations imposed by this society restrict her from being able to choose whom she will love, she gives in to the desire to transgress the limits set for her. Her language in this soliloquy indicates that she is somehow aware that the only means of escape is through death. In this death, she sees the hopeful potential for the creation of a new heaven and a new earth—an environment that will no longer dictate what objects or persons are worthy to be worshiped.

As identified by Molly Mahood, there is an implied connection between Juliet and her seemingly intended bridegroom, Death. Mahood believes that "the theme grows too persistent to be mere dramatic irony" (393). Upon hearing that Romeo is her family's enemy by birth, Juliet tells the nurse, "If he be married, my grave is like to be my wedding-bed" (1.5.134-5). After receiving the news of Romeo's banishment, Juliet declares, "And death not Romeo, take my maiden head" (3.2.137). Additionally, Juliet urges her mother to postpone the newly arranged marriage to Paris or else "make the bridal bed in that dim monument where Tybalt lies" (3.5.200-201). Furthermore, when Capulet finds Juliet in her death-like sleep, he proclaims, "Death is my son-in-law, Death is my heir, My daughter he hath wedded" (4.5.38-39). The agreement between Montague and Capulet is a business transaction, just as Juliet's marriage to Paris would have been. The play's ending then might suggest to the audience that Montague's promise to erect a statue of Juliet is a poor, tactless substitute; it is immortal but it is only her likeness. Such a statue cannot speak as Juliet's character does so powerfully throughout the play.

In every scene, Juliet shows herself to have more rhetorical control than any of her opponents. She is able to navigate the Nurse's bawdy banter while maintaining her innocence. Juliet consistently impresses upon the Nurse that she is wise beyond her years. With her mother, Juliet converses skillfully, maintaining remarkable control, especially when her mother's emotional volatility is apparent. Before confessing that she has already chosen Romeo over Paris, Juliet faces her mother's declarations of hate toward Romeo with a steady volley of puns that intensify the tragic irony of the unfortunate circumstances behind her cousin's murder. More importantly, Juliet consistently answers all of Romeo's declarations of love with commands that he prove himself faithful. Apparently, Juliet is far too familiar with the disappointment that comes from empty promises, and she is determined to see that Romeo's actions agree with the meaning of his words. This sophisticated awareness of the arbitrariness of language allows Juliet to deceive others when it is necessary for her survival, but it also grants her the most sincere poetic voice in the play. She is the character who demonstrates the most courage through her actions. And yet, as the play reveals, Juliet's courage is not enough to save her and Romeo from the "fearful passage of their death-marked love" (Prologue line 9). Juliet uses language to rebel against the claustrophobic environment into which she is born, and Shakespeare immortalizes her character by aligning her character with the evocative imagery that challenges the conventional notions that constrained her.

Juliet's decision to oppose societal conventions occurs early on in the play when she defies her parents by choosing Romeo instead of Paris. Initially, Juliet's response to her mother's request for Juliet to determine if she can "love the gentleman" by "Read[ing] o'er the volume of young Paris' face" conveys a willingly submissive spirit

(1.3.81, 83). Juliet's perfectly measured reply is, "I'll look to like, if looking liking move;
/ But no more deep will I endart mine eye / Than your consent gives strength to make it
fly" (1.3.99-101). Compared to her mother, who is distracted, and the Nurse, who is unfocused, Juliet does not struggle with maintaining clear, concise verbal communication. Her words are brief, just as her mother has commanded that they be, and she mirrors the rhetorical technique that Lady Capulet hopes will persuade her daughter to believe that she actually has a say in the matter. This is the first instance of Shakespeare's decision to grant Juliet's character with the trait of mastery over language. Suggesting that Juliet can both "read" a situation and a person's true intentions, she takes control of the metaphor and uses it to convince her mother that she is aware of the permission she has been granted, but will not overstep those boundaries.

Although Juliet's words express obedience to her mother, her actions indicate the opposite. It is likely that submitting to her parents and accepting their choice of suitor was never her intention. Shakespeare does not take the opportunity to reveal whether Juliet has followed through on her promise to "examine every married lineament" of Paris's face (1.3.85). Instead of creating dialogue between Juliet and Paris, Shakespeare makes Juliet's verbal exchange with Romeo the focus of the scene that occurs during the Capulets' feast. As they address each other for the first time, playfully allowing their words to follow the pattern of a sonnet, Juliet responds to Romeo's declarations of love by putting him to the test. She challenges his word choice, demanding that his devotion to her be sincere, not just an eloquent display of words used to obtain the physical response that he desires. Evidently, Romeo proves himself a worthy recipient of Juliet's affection. Her willingness to play along with him is evidenced by subtle way that she invites him to

kiss her once more, saying, “Then have my lips the sin that they have took” (1.5.105). The enjoyment they experience together during this interchange reveals that Juliet—to use Lady Capulet’s words—has managed to “find delight writ there with beauty’s pen” (1.3.84). Perhaps when Juliet concludes their second kiss by telling Romeo, “You kiss by th’ book” (1.5.108), she is recalling her mother’s words, “This precious book of love, this unbound lover / To beautify him only lacks a cover” (1.3.89-90). If so, then Juliet’s comment reveals that, even at his skill level, he meets her expectations.

As their combined sonnet reveals, Romeo and Juliet are both fully aware that acting upon their attraction to each other transgresses certain societal conventions. Even before they are aware of each other’s family backgrounds, they seem to understand that others might deem their desire forbidden or sinful. With their first verbal and physical interchange, Shakespeare slows down the fast-paced momentum that he has established throughout the first act, and this change allows the audience to recognize Juliet’s verbal acuity once again. To a certain extent, Shakespeare allows Juliet to choose Romeo. Romeo’s attempt to present himself as a holy pilgrim, seeking the sacred object of Juliet’s “tender kiss,” is only a successful persuasive technique once Juliet decides that it should be so. Even still, Juliet’s awareness that her choice of Romeo is a transgression against the expectations of her family is a pivotal moment in the play. It is the first of many events that eventually leads to Juliet’s death within her family’s tomb.¹²

Shakespeare may have borrowed this particular aspect of Juliet’s character—her willingness to rebel against her parents—from the sources that he used to compose his own version of the story, but overall, he maintains a sympathetic portrayal of the young

¹² Before Romeo meets Juliet, he is already plagued by fears of an “untimely death” (1.4.111). But, Juliet does not speak in these terms until after she has “trespassed” by allowing Romeo to kiss her (1.5.106).

lovers. Anthony Davies explains that Shakespeare had many versions of the tragedy to choose from as sources of content and inspiration, citing those from the Italian Renaissance that were eventually adapted into the French prose tale that influenced Shakespeare's principal source, Arthur Brooke's English poem, *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562).¹³ Davies points out that Brooke's poem "is mainly on the side of the lovers' parents, moralizing against 'dishonest desire' and disobedience" (399). Brooke's Juliet is a "'wily wench' who takes pleasure in deceiving her mother into thinking she prefers Paris to Romeo, and the lovers' deaths are represented as righteous punishments for their own sins" (Davies 399). In Shakespeare's tale, there is no righteous punishment for his woeful lovers because they are not deserving of such treatment. Instead, as the Chorus and the Prince indicate, their deaths are the disciplinary action that their parents deserve. Shakespeare's young lovers are not their parents' enemies; they are the means by which their parents learn to reconcile with the enemies they have chosen.

Shakespeare does not seem interested in making his young lovers appear completely innocent, though. Just as "all are punished" (5.3.294), all are complicit in this tragedy—even the post. Romeo is impulsive and hasty. He often hides from those who seem to care for his wellbeing, and the lovesickness that he believes plagues him is really a symptom of his immaturity. Until he speaks with Juliet, he has not yet learned that to demonstrate love one is not required to put on a show.¹⁴ Compared to Juliet, he has far

¹³ Davies identifies Masuccio Salernitano's *Il novelino* (1474) as one of the earliest precursors to Shakespeare's play, but he mentions that Luigi da Porto's *Istoria novellament ritrovata di due nobile* (1560) is the first source that uses the names Romeo and Giulietta, as well as the setting of Verona as "the backdrop of a feud between Montagues and Capulets" (397). Bandello's adaptation of daPorto's story, included in Bandello's *Le novella di Bandello* (1560), was translated into English and included in William Painter's *Palace of Pleasure* (1566-7), and it also became the source for Pierre Boaistreau's version, which was published in Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques* (1559-182) (Davies 398-399).

¹⁴ Consider Mahood's idea that in Romeo's conversation with Benvolio about Rosaline, Romeo is "already aware of his own absurdity and is 'posing at posing'" (395). Mahood arrives at this conclusion because she

more difficulty managing his emotions. He is only able to regulate his impulsiveness once Juliet teaches him how to love sincerely, or, as the Friar would suggest, to “love moderately” (2.5.14). Overall, Shakespeare does make it possible for us to consider that the mistakes the lovers make are triggered by their parents’ failings.¹⁵ Juliet’s disobedience is set against her parents’ incompetence. She often demonstrates more maturity than they do. Capulet’s excessive rage and his wife’s avoidant manner, as well as their inability to maintain appropriate social interaction with other members of society, combine with fate to depict Juliet as a tragic victim of unfortunate circumstances. As some have concluded, Juliet’s actions may reveal an immature desire to rebel against her parents’ wishes, or she may be insisting upon her ability to choose a suitor for herself, because she trusts in her own power of discernment. I believe Shakespeare intended for his audience to conclude the latter.

If Shakespeare did intend for Juliet to be viewed as a clever individual who is willing to face opposition with courage and tenacity, then we must also consider why he would stress that such an individual cannot survive in this environment. Why would Shakespeare’s Verona be such a threatening environment for these two young lovers? The answer lies in the tragic irony that there is truth in Romeo’s assessment of Juliet. She does embody a “Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear” because the inhabitants of

considers that the Petrarchan and anti-Petrarchan conventions of love are expressed here in an exaggerated manner. I am not convinced that Shakespeare wants us to see Romeo as so self-aware. Mahood thinks that the scene reveals that Romeo is “ready to be weaned from Rosaline,” but I do not think one can argue this with certainty (395). When Romeo begins speaking to Juliet for the first time, he is still posing. Juliet’s ability to challenge him in his attempt to woo her in this way is the moment he becomes aware that to win Juliet’s affection, he does not need to play the part well; instead, he must prove his sincerity.

¹⁵ This ambiguity concerning the cause-effect relationship between family dynamics and human behavior allows this text to be so useful in discussions of psychoanalytic theory in Shakespeare’s canon. Romeo and Juliet are born into strife. They have inherited the ancient grudge that their parents have perpetuated, which may have predestined their fate. Studies of attachment theory would suggest that the chaos of their homes might have caused them to be attracted to one another.

Verona do not know how to treat so “rich [a] jewel” (1.5.44).¹⁶ When Romeo speaks these lines, the audience is instructed to look at Juliet from Romeo’s perspective—through the eyes of a courtly lover who has just learned to estimate the true value of his beloved. According to his desires, such a beautiful object would not be subject to the laws of nature (i.e. aging or mortality). Shakespeare seems eager to keep his audience in this position throughout the tale by focusing on Juliet’s mortality. As a whole, the play is more focused on the devastating loss of Juliet’s death than it is concerned with the potential loss of Romeo’s life.

Janette Dillon observes that *Romeo and Juliet* is unlike many of Shakespeare’s other tragedies in that it has a strong female center—composed of Juliet, her mother, and the Nurse. However, in order to explain how these three female characters work together to form what Dillon calls a “power-centre,” she calls attention to the play’s “opposing rival power-centre,” which is orchestrated by the male figures (45). Dillon states that “between them these three create the sense of a female world in which women find a way of being that is quite separate and different from the way most of the men operate in the play” (45). She believes that the “excessiveness” of Capulet’s violent reaction to Juliet’s disobedience is underlined by the Nurse and Lady Capulet’s “intervention,” but she does not comment on the fact that, ultimately, their attempts are ineffective (45). Lady Montague’s sudden death upon Romeo’s banishment suggests that it may be impossible for a woman to “find a way of being” in this society.

¹⁶ The gloss for this line in the *Norton Shakespeare* reads, “Too precious for this world; too valuable to die and be buried in the earth” (919). I am aware that many editors explain the use of the term *earth* here as another instance of the playwright’s foreshadowing of Juliet’s burial “in the earth” as opposed to the meaning I have derived, which suggests that the term also refers to the world in which Juliet and Romeo live. Among the entries in the OED is the following definition: “The world considered as the dwelling place of humans.” One of the examples provided to demonstrate this usage is Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* (1623) “Those that have knowne the Earth so full of faults” (1.3.45).

The lack of a stable figure of paternal order creates an environment where the terror and horror of isolation for the female heroine grows to excess. Juliet's moment of utter desperation is heightened by her absolute abandonment when she wakes in the tomb to find her new lord and husband, Romeo, dead by her side. The only source of help that remains is the Friar, her "ghostly father", who urges "Come, I'll dispose of thee among a sisterhood of holy nuns" (5.3.156-157). Throughout the play, both Romeo and Juliet turn to the Friar for counsel and protection, and he is able to provide the support they seek. Ostensibly, Friar Lawrence has the potential to be a figure of stable paternal authority for Juliet, but when the circumstances of the situation reach a level that is beyond his control, it is not long before he chooses to abandon Juliet like the others have done. When Friar Lawrence is frightened by an unknown sound, he runs from the tomb leaving Juliet to take matters into her own hands. Juliet's final moments represent not only the tragedy of a forbidden love, but also the tragic loss of appropriate authority and protection that should be a natural byproduct of paternal order.

Shakespeare does not appear to intimate that the union between Juliet and Death is an outcome administered solely by fate. It is clear that the enmity of the two families is to blame for a large part of the tragedy that occurs, and both Romeo and Juliet make rash and unadvised decisions that contribute to the play's conclusion. However, it is impossible to ignore the role fate occupies within this play, and this inclusion of the supernatural force of destiny makes its way into Walpole's Gothic prototype. Shakespeare's use of language reinforces Juliet's betrothal to her destiny, and Walpole evokes this imagery through persistent allusion to this aspect of Juliet's character.

Like Juliet, Matilda succumbs to desires that exceed the limits established by “filial duty” (64). When Matilda chooses to help Theodore escape from Manfred’s punishment of death, she ultimately rejects her father and the boundaries that he has forced upon her; unfortunately, this opposition to his tyrannical control leads to her murder at the tomb of Theodore’s ancestor. Although Matilda demonstrates the power to act according to her own desires, Walpole makes it clear that Matilda’s fate is also somewhat predetermined because her ancestral lineage contains tyrants and usurpers. The sequence of events in the novel that culminate in Matilda’s murder connects directly to the prophecy mentioned throughout the story. The giant saber is brought to the castle where the matching helmet has fallen on the firstborn son of Manfred, fulfilling the prophecy engraved on the sword. The rightful heir of Alfonso enters into the turmoil of the initial spectacle, reunites with his father, and discovers his lineage just in time to obtain possession of the kingdom. Furthermore, the unexplained supernatural phenomena coincide with the fulfillment of each prophecy. Frederic’s encounter with the skeletal apparition reminds him of his final task ordained by powers unseen. The nose of Alfonso’s statue bleeds signifying that Manfred’s child, Matilda, cannot be married to Frederic or Theodore—both heirs to Alfonso. Just as Shakespeare envelops Juliet with language that forewarns her unfortunate demise, the circumstances that surround Matilda imply that, like Juliet, she possesses a “Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear!” (1.5.47).

In *Otranto*, Matilda is the primary victim of fate and fulfilled prophecy. Immediately, Walpole sets up an implied comparison of Theodore and Matilda to Romeo and Juliet. Theodore and Matilda have their first conversation when Matilda is at her

bedroom window and Theodore is trapped in the casement below. With an obvious allusion to the staging of the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, Walpole conjures a troubled yet amorous association with Shakespeare's own "star-crossed lovers." The conversation between Matilda and Theodore closely parallels Juliet's dialogue with Romeo concerning how he gained entrance to the Capulet estate:

How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb,

And the place death considering who thou art,

If any of my kinsmen find thee here. (2.2.62-65)

After Theodore's introduces himself as a stranger, Matilda responds by asking, "How didst thou come there at this unusual hour, when all the gates of the castle are locked?" (39). Here, Walpole's adopted use of Shakespeare's setting is an instance of imitation as opposed to invention. But as the novella continues, Walpole's focus on the tomb as more than just a staging device reveals a dynamic engagement with the various levels of meaning in Shakespeare's text.

Matilda is also strangely connected to an ancient sepulcher. Prior to her introduction to Theodore, Matilda reveals to Bianca her feelings of an inexplicable connection to the deceased Alfonso the Good, whose tomb her mother, Hippolita, has instructed Matilda to visit and "pour forth" prayers. Similarly, Shakespeare gives us Juliet's prophetic comment to Romeo as he is leaving her bedchamber: "O, God, I have an ill-divining soul! / Methinks I see thee now, thou art so low, / As one dead in the bottom of a tomb" (3.5.54-56). Walpole attempts to reproduce this imagery of foreboding when Matilda tells Bianca, "I know the adoration with which I look at that picture is

uncommon – but I am not in love with a coloured panel... somehow or other my destiny is linked with something relating to him” (37-38). Unbeknownst to Matilda, the man with whom she is about to converse is indeed the heir of Alfonso and the figure linked to her fate.

Revealing the ultimate paternal betrayal, Manfred murders Matilda during the height of his rage. Once again, the allusion to Shakespeare is evident when Manfred misses the intended recipient of his fatal blow, calling to the reader’s mind, the pivotal moment in *Romeo and Juliet* when Juliet’s cousin, Tybalt, murders the innocent Mercutio under the arm of Romeo. Tybalt’s villainy is foreshadowed at the play’s start, when he declares his contempt for peace in Act I and his stated determination to see that the interaction between his enemy and his kin turns from “seeming sweet” to “bitt’rest gall” (1.5.92). Ultimately, Matilda’s murder is a result of Manfred’s initial decision to embrace what Walpole describes as the character’s soul transitioning to “exquisite villainy,” yet Manfred’s failure to maintain paternal order and adequate care for his offspring is overwhelmingly present throughout the novel (35). Within the first few sentences of the text, we learn that Manfred is inconsistent in his love for his children. To Matilda, he has shown no “symptoms of affection,” and his favor rests with his only son, Conrad, a character of “no promising disposition” (17). Although Conrad is sickly and weak, Manfred is impatient to see him married in order to avoid the mysterious and elusive prophecy. With no regard to his wife’s concerns, Manfred insists that the union must take place immediately, and his response to Hippolita’s fears is to remind her of her inability to bear him a healthy heir. In addition, Manfred’s treatment of all women in the story is deplorable. He neglects Matilda and insists on marrying his deceased son’s betrothed

princess, Isabella, without legitimate cause for divorcing Hippolita. Furthermore, throughout the course of the novel, it becomes evident that Manfred is one in the line of many tyrannical ancestors. The sins of Manfred's father and the continued offenses committed by Manfred himself precipitate Matilda's devastating outcome, just as the many male figures in Juliet's world contribute to her untimely end.

The character of Father Jerome in *Otranto* represents the continuation of the paternal metaphor by yet another religious figure who fails to provide protection and support for those under his care. Hippolita, Isabella, Theodore, and Matilda are all dependent on Father Jerome's wisdom and guidance. Much like Friar Lawrence, he is capable of providing assistance for some and to a certain extent. He offers a place of safety for Isabella and confronts Manfred on her behalf, while also devising a way to protect Hippolita from Manfred's schemes. He truthfully claims Theodore as his own in order to save him from Manfred's rage, yet once Theodore sets his affections on Matilda, Jerome's only solution is to dissuade Theodore from any romantic involvement with her. Jerome's logic reveals superstition rather than spiritual wisdom when he claims, "It is sinful to cherish those whom heaven has doomed to destruction" (83). This conversation takes place at Alfonso's tomb where Alfonso's statue provides for Jerome a visual spectacle that he uses to incite fear and anger in Theodore. While urging Theodore to gaze upon the marble monument, Jerome attempts to tell Theodore a story of horror "that will expel every sentiment from thy soul, but sensations of vengeance" (83). Jerome cares little for Theodore's feelings for Matilda and does nothing to provide safety for Matilda. She is not only the victim of fate, Matilda is an innocent sacrifice made in the name of superstition.

The open vacuum of a tomb, a storehouse for decaying human remains also conversely signifies sacred peace and eternal rest. Shakespeare's audience is compelled to focus on this incongruity when Friar Lawrence questions:

Alack, Alack, what blood is this, which stains

The stony entrance of this sepulcher?

What mean these masterless and gory swords

To lie discolored by this place of peace? (5.3.140-144)

These words, spoken by the central religious figure in the play further emphasize the shocking results of a lack of paternal order. In *Otranto*, Father Jerome draws attention to the contradictory nature of such an event occurring in a sacred location when he exclaims, "heaven has permitted its altar to be polluted by assassination, that thou mightest shed thy own blood at the foot of that prince's sepulcher!" (96). Matilda's response to Jerome in this moment reveals the compassion the friar lacks when she cries, "Cruel man! To aggravate the woes of a parent! May heaven bless my father and forgive him, as I do!" (96). Once again, Father Jerome is more concerned with the fulfillment of prophecy than the condition of the human soul. Not only does the location of the sepulcher confront the efficacy and need of a paternal figure for female survival, it also encourages an examination of the usefulness of religious authority.

For Shakespeare, who lived during the tumult of the Protestant Reformation in England, religious affiliation had the potential to incite terror and fear in those whose choice did not coincide with that of the queen. Born during the early eighteenth-century, Walpole was no doubt influenced by Enlightenment thinkers who questioned whether rationalism should replace religion as a means to create order. The combined authorities

of church and state and the oppression that occurred because of the pursuit of absolute truth during the Protestant Reformation inevitably paved the way for the age of Enlightenment. It is reasonable, therefore, to consider that for both authors, the sepulcher—a place that signifies physical death and spiritual rebirth—used as a dramatic platform reflects a disturbing ambivalence toward the efficaciousness of religious authority. Friar Lawrence and Father Jerome are the relatively omniscient figures that expound the details at each story's end; however, their positions of power and influence are as ineffective as the authority of the aristocratic characters.

Both Shakespeare and Walpole use the ominous locus of the sepulcher to accentuate the dramatic impact of the failure of paternal order, yet the metaphor extends beyond the scope of the biological and religious fathers' realm and into the world of the male hero. In the play, Shakespeare introduces Romeo while he is brooding over his unrequited love, Rosaline. Like a melancholy lover, Romeo steals "into the covert of the wood" (1.1.125) and spends his days hiding from daylight by retreating to his chamber and pulling the curtains closed to make for himself an "artificial night" (1.1.140). Romeo's tendency to succumb to excessive emotion debilitates him throughout the play; for this reason, Romeo vengefully pursues Tybalt until he is murdered, and eventually acquires the most effective poison known to the apothecary. Similarly, Walpole places Theodore within an environment that recalls Romeo's foreboding grove of sycamores. When Matilda directs Theodore to a place of safety, she sends him to a "chain of rocks hollowed into a labyrinth of caverns that reach to the sea-coast" (66). Upon his arrival, Theodore discovers an environment that corresponds to his conflicted emotional state. The narrator explains, "[H]e sought the gloomiest shades, as best suited to the pleasing

melancholy that reigned in his mind” (67). When confronted with feelings of alienation and anxiety while inside the haunted caves, Theodore longs to use this location for an opportunity to prove his valor and makes an impetuous move that nearly ends the life of Isabella’s father, Frederic. In this moment, Theodore follows the pattern of Romeo’s impulsive and rash nature. Like Romeo, Theodore is unable to protect his beloved from a disastrous end. That each heroine’s demise occurs within an ancient chamber linked to her ancestral lineage while her “heroic” lover fails to provide protection or escape only heightens the tragic significance of the paternal void.

The imagery conjured using the sepulcher as a significant locus in Gothic fiction invites the reader to delve into the dangers of unknown spaces, physical and social, and consider the possibilities of escape. In doing so, the story becomes what Matilda’s servant Bianca calls “a charming adventure” full of peril and desire (40). Though often criticized for simply entertaining the reader with wild fancy and useless adventure, this genre of literature continues the practice of utilizing richly evocative imagery that is found also in the works of Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights. The sepulcher provides an exploration into the frightening human realities of isolation, abandonment, and annihilation, and through the reactions of various characters, we are prompted to consider other human responses to them as well. This process is not a straightforward lesson in how to act or think; alternatively, it pushes us beyond the limits into unknown regions that, like a Gothic villain, must be confronted.

Chapter 2

Controversy and Appeal: Dramatic Spectacle in *Titus Andronicus* and *The Monk*

“Up! my soul, do what no coming age shall approve, but none forget. I must dare some crime, atrocious, bloody, such as my brother would more wish were his. Crimes thou dost not avenge, save as thou dost surpass them.”

Atreus in Seneca’s *Thyestes* (lines 193-196)

Similar to the dilemma of failed paternal authority that is seething beneath the surfaces of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Castle of Otranto*, Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (1594) and Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796) expose the crisis that occurs when punishment fails to yield the results desired by the authority that enforces it. In Shakespeare’s play, the Romans are as bloodthirsty and uncivilized as the Goths that they attempt to overtake—acts of prolonged torture and physical punishment are meted out on both sides indiscriminately. In Lewis’s novel, the individuals that lead the church and govern the family rely on harsh measures to train up those under their care, and the results are disastrous for all. Although the authority figures in these works rationalize their choices in the name of religion or morality, the authors suggest that these characters’ motives are triggered by personal gain. Each act of domination is triggered by a desire for ambition, revenge, or social control.

Both works conclude with the most brutal form of punishment assigned to the one character that engages in moral transgressions to satisfy his lustful desires. Ambrosio, the central figure of *The Monk*, and Aaron, Shakespeare’s devilish villain, view themselves as beyond the expectations of normal or proper society, and as such, they satiate their lust without shame. However, when the authority figures in these societies also commit atrocious crimes against one another—crimes that bring them personal satisfaction, which they mask with the pretense of justice—the so-called villains appear more

admirable in that they are honest concerning their desire. Ambrosio and Aaron represent the emblematic figure on the scaffold, a presence repulsive and unwanted, yet enigmatic and captivating to behold.

This particular assessment of these two characters—their repugnance and lure—reflects the tradition of mixed responses to their respective works as well. For centuries, critics and audiences have used similar descriptors to evaluate and determine the literary quality of these controversial pieces. *The Monk* established a pattern for future Gothic writers. Like Lewis, they tend to produce works that perpetuate a cultural desire for stories that display psychological, emotional, and social anxieties through terrifying spectacle. In *Titus Andronicus*, Shakespeare engaged in a similar dramatic experiment. The playwright's intensification of the gory details found in the classical sources he borrowed from reveals a desire to outdo his dramatic predecessors, as well as an attempt to expose the contemporary relevance of such behaviors.¹⁷ The similarities between the most criticized and reviled characters and scenes depicted in Shakespeare's play and Lewis's novel, reveal not only Shakespeare's imagistic and characterological influence on this early Gothic romance, but also help us to identify Shakespeare's contribution to another consistent convention of Gothic fiction—the use of dramatic spectacle to generate critical controversy and popular appeal.

¹⁷ Katharine Eisaman Maus mentions that Shakespeare began working on the play in 1592, and she recognizes that some scholars believe that he did so with the help of another dramatist, George Peele (399). For more on this discussion, see Brian Vickers's "*Titus Andronicus* with George Peele." *Shakespeare, Co-Author: A Historical Study of Five Collaborative Plays* (2002). In Jonathan Bate's introduction to the play, written for The Royal Shakespeare Company in 2011, Bate explains, "modern scholarship has persuasively demonstrated by means of close stylistic analysis that *Titus Andronicus* was begun by another dramatist, George Peele" (7). However, Bate also admits, "[w]e do not know whether the play was written as a purposeful collaboration or whether Shakespeare came in to do a rewrite or to complete an unfinished work. Nor do we know at precisely what point the writing became his alone—though there is no doubt that he is the author of all the most dramatic scenes, from the rape through the hand-chopping to the fly-killing banquet (which was his later addition, not included in the earliest printed text) to the feast at the climax" (7). According to the textual note in the *Norton Shakespeare*, the "fly-killing scene" was "probably written by Shakespeare for a revival of the play in 1594" (406).

Influenced by the popular response to Walpole's literary experiment, many of the writers in the 1790s were writing in the Gothic mode, which was fashionable but also highly criticized at the same time. Scholars agree that the sociocultural climate of this decade, produced by the fears and hopes caused by Robespierre's Reign of Terror and the French Revolution, contributed significantly to the rise of Gothic fiction. In the 1590s—the period of Shakespeare's dramatic apprenticeship—the playwright was likely experiencing his first exposure to London and its “nonstop theater of punishments,” where the public display of corporal discipline was an unavoidable spectacle (Greenblatt, *Will* 178).¹⁸ The overwhelming effect of both *Titus* and *The Monk* is the ability to stimulate a visual response within the imagination, resulting in a disturbing spectacle that compellingly challenges and entertains the spectator. Though both works have been condemned for containing an unnecessary amount of violence and gore, these shocking moments relate to the catastrophic events occurring during the period in which each was written. As such, they offer more serious significance than much of the negative criticism would seem to indicate.

The periods of the early novel and the early modern theater share a common struggle. Despite immense popularity with the general audience, both forms underwent attack regarding the effect and purpose of artistic works. During Shakespeare's lifetime and years prior, the leading assumption about approaches to works of art, including drama, “was that it [art] should teach, and should do so through delight” (Dillon 172). For the early modern dramatist, problems arose when the combination of entertainment and

¹⁸ In *Will in the World*, Greenblatt explains that scholars have recently considered the possibility that Shakespeare may have joined the Queen's Men while they were visiting Stratford in 1587. This circumstance would have given Shakespeare the opportunity to leave Stratford and to make his way to London (162-163).

instruction failed to achieve a balanced status, resulting in a production that better resembled a sermon or an outrageous display of stagecraft and spectacle. Centuries later, when the novel first emerged, these concerns remained. For authors, like Lewis, who were experimenting with novelistic forms, the Gothic mode allowed them to react to the prejudices of the critics by granting the majority of the reading public what they desired. In the same way, *Titus* was a daring, unique experiment for Shakespeare. It was his first tragedy, and compared to the other revenge tragedies written by his fellow playwrights and dramatic predecessors, *Titus* is excessively bloody and shockingly subversive. Even so, Shakespeare managed to create a play that delighted the audience in his lifetime but has continued to challenge and baffle those who consider it too distasteful to be the product of his great, sophisticated imagination.

Lewis and other early Gothic novelists followed Walpole's example of referring to Shakespeare's plays in their own Gothic fictions, but very few, if any, alluded to *Titus Andronicus*. And yet, *Titus* stands out amongst those in the canon as the one play of Shakespeare's that revels in the same kind of dramatic spectacle found in works that have contributed to the Gothic literary tradition. This method of dramatic, outrageous excess has allowed authors to communicate controversial, sometimes subversive, opinions regarding the failures of societal institutions and their practices, precisely because those individuals who would consider these ideas distasteful or even harmful might disregard these works of fiction as though they existed for entertainment purposes only.

Gothic Spectacle

In Emma McEvoy's introduction to *The Monk*, she asserts that the novel's "dominant aesthetic" is "spectacle—violent, showy, abrupt and glittering" (xxx).

McEvoy sees this as one of the redeeming qualities of the novel because it indicates that the author has a “strong sense of theatricality” (xxx). Of course, the use of this technique has its origins in dramatic literature—works created for the stage where the visual effects are dominant and striking. In Aristotle’s *Poetics*, the term for spectacle is *opsis*, which literally means *sight*. To address the function of spectacle within works of art, Aristotle designates what he believes is its proper place. He writes, “Spectacle belongs still less to the art of poetry, but is enthralling. It supplies, as a great benefit to dramas, both tragic and comic, the masks, scenery and costumes” (54).¹⁹ Since the development of the novel, however, the word applies to “both spectacle as what an audience sees and the visual or graphic aspect of what a reader sees on a page” (Harmon 364). Early Gothic romances, like *The Monk*, are responsible in part for this shift in literary culture. Lewis’s contribution to the development of the novel is his bold attempt to use theatrical, visual techniques in a literary form that was designated for readers not spectators.

Coral Ann Howells addresses this issue of the propensity of Gothic fictions to be appropriate for both the page and the stage by calling attention to the fact that Gothic novels have consistently been criticized as “sensational, theatrical and melodramatic”; she urges us to re-consider the significance of these terms (16). Howells points out that these words can be viewed as positive descriptors since they are often the elements that make these works appealing. She agrees that Gothic novels tend to make the reader’s experience more akin to that of a theatregoer’s, and she points out that “at no other period has the English novel been so close to the drama as it was between 1790 and 1820” (16). This observation leads her to challenge critics to re-evaluate their assessment of this

¹⁹ In the *Poetics*, Aristotle is responding to Plato’s argument in the *Republic* that poetry is the highest form of art and “that the only poems to be allowed in the ideal state are hymns to the gods and poems in praise of good men; tragedy, epic, and comedy are banned” (Janko xii).

interaction by suggesting, “We may think that the wholesale transplanting of dramatic techniques into prose fiction is uncomfortable or inappropriate, but as an experiment in widening the emotional rhetoric of the novel, what Gothic writers did is undeniably interesting” (16).²⁰ Many scholars, including Howells, tend to explain that these writers were using Shakespeare’s plays as the dominant source for inspiration because of his emerging status as the preeminent dramatist in their lifetimes. While this conclusion is an accurate assessment of the pervasive nature of Shakespeare’s influence in much of the literature that was written in this period, it does not address the issue that this practice did not guarantee the critical approval of works of Gothic fiction. As the critical reviews suggest, it often worked against them. Gothic writers were often accused of not being talented enough to treat the subject matter with the mature sophistication that could compare to the Bard’s skill in this area.²¹ As a result, even today, many overlook the possibility that Shakespeare may have been writing under similar constraints— especially when he was attempting to establish himself as a dramatist—and he may have embraced Gothic spectacle to combat these circumstances.

²⁰ Howells goes on to note: “When we consider that these novelists from Walpole to Maturin without exception acknowledged Shakespeare as the major influence on their work, and that some of them, for example Lewis and Maturin, wrote more plays and melodramas than novels, not to mention the ease with which Gothic novels were adapted for the stage...we begin to realise how accurately the word ‘theatrical’ can be used to describe the techniques and effects of Gothic fiction” (16). Howells does not attempt to explain why Lewis did not write any more novels, which is an issue I will discuss later in the chapter.

²¹ Consider Howell’s own comments regarding the failure of Gothic writers in the 18th century. She states, “The Gothic novelists imitated Shakespeare’s methods for showing passions in action, though they ignored his subtle investigations of those passions which made violence convincing” (19). Also, notice the contradiction and disdain that an anonymous writer conveys in the following review of Harriet Lee’s stage drama *The Mysterious Marriage* (1798), which includes “the ghost of a murdered female”: “We are really sorry, that any merit should be claimed for perverting the simplicity of the drama by the introduction of visionary and phantastic beings. Miss Lee will hardly plead a precedent in Shakespeare or Ben Jonson; her own good sense, surely, will suggest the impropriety of an attempt to revive the exploded superstitions of a former age...” (“Gothic Documents” 197). Harriet is the sister of Sophia Lee, author of the Gothic novel *The Recess* (1783). Harriet also wrote novels of her own, and she collaborated with her sister to produce a collection of stories called *Canterbury Tales* (5 vols, 1797-1805), which contains Harriet’s tale “Kruitznier”—noted as a possible source for Byron’s *Manfred* (“Gothic Documents” 197).

Lewis's novel follows many traditions of the theater in the early modern age, and he did not hide the fact that he was employing many of the same attention-seeking, theatrical devices found in the plays of Shakespeare. Janette Dillon identifies that the traditions of excessive display and the "explicit pursuit of pleasure" led to censure of theatre performances as well (212). If we choose to disregard works like *The Monk* and *Titus Andronicus* because the content may be considered distasteful, shocking, or excessive, we will fail to understand the reasons why they were compelling and meaningful to their respective audiences, despite the critical response these works have garnered.

Climates of Criticism

In 1790, Henry Mackenzie, the Scottish novelist, witnessed a production of Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller's *Die Räuber* (1781) and then wrote an account of the play's effect on those who also viewed it.²² Mackenzie explains that he had long desired to write a "long and particular account of the tragedy" because he considers it "one of the most uncommon productions of untutored genius that modern times can boast" (135).²³ The piece has its faults, according to Mackenzie, but what most fascinates him is the powerful effect the play had on the young students at the University of Fribourg. Mackenzie calls attention to the fact that the anecdote itself had already become widespread gossip, but he cannot help but repeat it in order to address what he sees as the

²² Schiller's play is recognized as one of the seminal works to come from the *Sturm und Drang* movement in German literature. *Die Räuber* was translated in English as *The Robbers*, and its appearance in England in 1792 provoked much interest and controversy. The account mentioned here is found in Clery's *Gothic Documents*, which also includes a quote from a letter written by Coleridge, while studying at Cambridge, to Robert Southey: "My God! Southey! Who is Schiller? This Convulsor of the Heart? Did he write his Tragedy amid the yelling of Fiends?—I should not like to [be] able to describe such Characters—I tremble like and Aspen Leaf—Upon my Soul, I write to you because I am frightened... Why have we ever called Milton Sublime?" (135).

²³ Clery provides the document's source: *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, vol. II, pages 191-192.

work's "power over the heart and the imagination" (135). The young scholars, as Mackenzie calls them, sought to imitate what they had seen and create a performance all their own, the details of which are worth quoting here in full:

They were so struck and captivated with the grandeur of the character of its hero *Moor*, that they agreed to form a band like his in the forests of Bohemia, had elected a young nobleman for their chief, and had pitched on a beautiful young lady for his Amelia, whom they were to carry off from her parents [*sic*] house, to accompany their flight. To the accomplishment of this design, they had bound themselves by the most solemn and tremendous oaths; but the conspiracy was discovered by an accident, and its execution prevented. (135)

At first, it seems as though Mackenzie is simply amused by the mock-production, viewing it as an innocent prank. It also appears that he might even consider the attempt to be a compliment to the playwright's success, but in the next paragraph, Mackenzie's tone shifts, and he makes the nature of his concerns very clear.

From Mackenzie's point of view, it is not a wonder that the tragedy inspired young minds. As he sees it, their "imagination[s] are readily inflamed by the enthusiasm of gigantic enterprise and desperate valour," and they are prone to "feel[ing] a sort of dignity and pride in leaving the beaten road of worldly prudence," by way of the path that often "deviate[s] from moral rectitude" (136). The "danger of a drama such as this"—one with elements that are now recognizable staples of Gothic fictions—is that it "covers the natural deformity of criminal actions with the veil of high sentiment and virtuous feeling" and fails to guide the audience toward the "moral sense" that it "ought to produce" (Mackenzie 136). The veil that Mackenzie refers to might very well signify the dazzling

drapery of theatrical machinery and the author's willingness to use it to dramatize evil deeds in a performance.²⁴ Mackenzie does not clarify what particular aspects of moral correctness that he would have preferred Schiller to represent in his play, but he does suggest that if Schiller were to direct his energies toward "better subjects, and to a more regular conduct of the drama," then he would be worthy of the praise he deserves (136).²⁵ After all, Mackenzie is willing to concede that Schiller's talents exceed those of his contemporaries, by saying: "no modern poet seems to possess powers, so capable of bending the mind before him, of rousing its feelings by the elevation of his sentiments, or of thrilling them with the terrors of his imagination..." (136). Mackenzie's praise for the terrors of Schiller's imagination contradicts his concern for the dangerous impact he thinks such representations of terror could have on those who witness them in performance. In essence, Mackenzie seems uncomfortable with his own response to *Die Räuber*—he is not sure whether to praise it or condemn it, and so he does both.

Die Räuber does have scenes that portray violent excess and moral rebellion; the universal struggle of good versus evil drives the plot, but at times, it is difficult to discern if either of the main characters is capable of goodness. The play consists of storytelling devices that have been considered socially acceptable for centuries. Overall, it depicts the archetypal trope of sibling rivalry and the tragic consequences of vigilante heroism. The main characters—two brothers competing for their inheritance—engage in unjustifiable

²⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's chapter on the Gothic imagery of the veil alerted me to Mackenzie's ambiguous use of the term.

²⁵ Note the following comments of Schiller's, written in a preface that was published in 1781: "It is the course of mortal things that the good should be shadowed by the bad, and virtue shine the brightest when contrasted with vice. Whoever proposes to discourage vice and to vindicate religion, morality, and social order against their enemies, must unveil crime in all its deformity, and place it before the eyes of men in its colossal magnitude; he must diligently explore its dark mazes, and make himself familiar with sentiments at the wickedness of which his soul revolts."

criminal behavior and often without remorse.²⁶ However, the particular scene the students selected to reenact, which Mackenzie uses to imply that play is reason enough for the author to be castigated by society, is certainly not the one that Schiller would have selected to encapsulate the moral message of the overall plot.

Schiller's remarks in the preface to the play—composed nearly a decade before Mackenzie's account was published— suggest that Schiller thought the play's concluding scene to be reason enough to consider the entire work morally admirable. He defends the questionable content of his play with the following statement: "In consequence the remarkable catastrophe which ends my play, I may justly claim for it a place among books of morality, for crime meets at last with the punishment it deserves; the lost one enters again within the pale of the law, and virtue is triumphant." Mackenzie's review would indicate that this declaration was insufficient in garnering support for Schiller's creative decisions. For Mackenzie explains:

[Schiller] has, since its first publication, been candid enough to acknowledge, and reprobates...his own production as of a very pernicious tendency. He has left his native country, *Wirtemberg*, from which I believe indeed some consequences of the publication of this tragedy had driven him, and now lives at Manheim, where he publishes a periodical work, and has written one or two other tragedies, which have a high reputation. (136)²⁷

²⁶ The plot elements are similar to those found in the Genesis accounts of Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, as well as Joseph and his brothers and their treatment of their father, Jacob (Israel). It is also easy to see that the play resembles several of Shakespeare's plays—namely, *As You Like It*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*.

²⁷ Apparently, Schiller attempted to reduce the rebellious tone of the play before its first performance (Jan. 13, 1782) at the National Theatre at Mannheim. However, the performance still "created a sensation" ("Friedrich"). According to the entry in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Schiller travelled to Mannheim without the Duke's permission in order to be present on the first night. When the Duke heard of this visit, he sentenced the poet to a fortnight's detention and forbade him to write any more plays." The entry continues, describing the repeated rejections of Schiller's plays and the financial struggles he experienced

It is important to recognize that Mackenzie's own interests as a novelist, literary critic, and opponent of the French Revolution, may have led him to believe that he also stood to gain by seeing Schiller's mistakes publicly corrected and his talents turned toward subject matter that is more socially acceptable.

Mackenzie's concern for Schiller's literary success and personal reputation is noted to be the first of many occasions where British critics, authors, and politicians in this period struggled to respond appropriately to foreign plays like *Die Räuber*. Peter Mortensen explains that *Die Räuber*'s "extreme popularity and equally extreme unpopularity" challenged "conservative British critics, poets, playwrights, and translators" (45).²⁸ These individuals seemed to think that "if Schiller's early masterpiece were imaginatively reconceptualised and carefully refashioned – if the play were subjected to a rigorous revisionist criticism – it could still become a powerful, economically propitious instrument in the ideological re-consolidation of British nationhood during the French Revolution crisis" (45).²⁹ While Lewis certainly used his acquisition of the German language to publish his own translations of works from the

as a result. He was able to re-enter the arena of dramatic writing with *Kabale und Linde* (1784)—Lewis's translation, *The Minister*, was published in 1797. However, it was not until Schiller returned to Weimar in 1787—and with Goethe's recommendation, took on a professorship of history—that he began what scholars refer to as his "classic period."

²⁸ See Peter Mortensen's essay, "Robbing *The Robbers*: Schiller, Xenophobia and the Politics of British Romantic Translation" for an analysis of translations of the play that stripped the original of its potentially anti-establishment content. He also mentions Mackenzie's account, stating that it anticipated the response that *The Robbers* received once it was translated into English. Mortensen concludes his essay by asserting that even though the expurgated translations of Schiller's original play "are no longer plays *advocating* revolution, they of course remains plays *about* revolution, and therefore they never become entirely safe" (59).

²⁹ At least one English translation of *Die Räuber* was published during the years that Lewis was trying to establish himself as an author. Mortensen states, "Alexander F. Tytler's translation *The Robbers* (1792) had already appeared in four editions by 1800" (43). Lewis himself never translated this particular play of Schiller's, but it is possible to consider that the success of *The Monk* may have contributed to the increased demand for translated editions of the play throughout the decade and into the new century. Mortensen gives the following statistic: "The British Library on-line catalogue lists no fewer than eight direct translations of *Die Räuber* published between 1792 and 1827" (44).

German school, it does not appear as though he was interested in anything more than imitating and reproducing works that he found thrilling and entertaining, which he also hoped would allow him to accomplish his goal of becoming a successful author. In spite of the relatively innocuous nature of Lewis's intentions, the publication of *The Monk* started a literary revolution that instigated further debates concerning the social role of literature.³⁰

Significantly, *Die Räuber* concludes, as *The Monk* does, with punishment for its protagonist. Karl Moor, the idealist turned criminal, realizes that his thirst for revenge turned him into a terrorist; much like Ambrosio, the priest turned sinner, acknowledges that his prideful arrogance and unrestrained lust for sexual gratification has made him a monster.³¹ Like Schiller's play, *The Monk* relies heavily on spectacles of death, torture, and lasciviousness. As a result, during the period of its publication, the novel, and Lewis himself, encountered the mixed messages of criticism and disapproval from fastidious reviewers, as well as the intense satisfaction and delight of the general reader. *The Monk*, with its surfeit of disturbing images and erotically suggestive overtones caused many to fear the immoral implications it would have on society, just as it satisfied the popular desire for fiction that contained such controversial content.

It is not a coincidence that the history of and critical response to Matthew Lewis's publication of *The Monk*, is similar to what Schiller encountered with the publication of *Die Räuber*. Many scholars claim that the public appeal of *The Monk*, and Lewis's subsequent literary fame, can be largely attributed to Lewis's ability to fashion his novel

³⁰ Maggie Kilgour's *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* focuses on this aspect of the novel's literary history in the chapter entitled, "Lewis's Gothic Revolution" (142-168).

³¹ F.J. Lampport describes Schiller himself as an "idealistic champion of freedom and progress" who was "shocked by the excesses of the French Revolution" even "though on the strength of *The Robbers* he was made an honorary citizen of the French Republic."

after the works of those German authors who were relatively unknown by the British reading public at the time of his novel's publication. Sir Walter Scott, writing about Lewis thirty-five years after *The Monk* was published, explained that Lewis was "the person who first attempted to introduce something like the German taste into English fictitious and dramatic poetical composition," which "engaged general attention" (qtd. in Parreaux 26). Because Lewis's novel was easily identifiable by some as "a romance in the German taste" (Scott, qtd. in Parreaux 26), he experienced public scrutiny of his personal character and his literary talent.

Unlike Matthew Lewis, Schiller was eventually able to improve his literary reputation. As Lamport describes it, Schiller's later works are examples of how he was able to move past the scandal of *Die Räuber*. For Lamport, Schiller's later works reveal his "dramatic maturity" because Schiller allowed "[t]he themes of self-determination, of idealism, of personal and political freedom to take on new significance." Remarkably, what Lamport identifies as new levels of meaning is actually the reinforcement of traditional, conservative, and Anti-revolutionary ideals. Lamport interprets Schiller's moral position in these later works with the following thematic statement: "True freedom is now seen to be 'ideal' in the sense that it cannot be achieved in the real world, or measured by any kind of material success, but is only to be found in the acceptance of moral responsibility." Lamport sees this as the theme that Schiller repeatedly addresses in *The Wallenstein Trilogy* (1799) and *Mary Stuart* (1800). These are the two works that Lamport believes "mark the summit of Schiller's classical phase, combining a rich and complex historical subject matter and lofty philosophical themes with a high degree of dramatic concentration and formal discipline—a synthesis, as Schiller himself defined his

aim, of Shakespearian and Sophoclean drama.” Evidently, both Lamport and Schiller see this ideological stance as something Shakespearean in scope although neither makes mention of which of Shakespeare’s works would best support this claim. It is highly unlikely that Schiller would have considered *Titus* as an exemplary model for his attempt to restore his reputation as a respectable author and dramatist.

It is not entirely clear whether Lewis ever considered it possible to become an author who would be recognized for the ability to write works of a more serious nature.³² Lewis certainly admired Schiller’s play, but he does not seem to have been completely aware of its controversial content. Instead, he saw something in it worth emulating. Between the years of 1791-1795—the time when Lewis was evidently “groping towards the mode of *The Monk*” (Macdonald 104)—he had just recently been exposed to the early works of Schiller’s.³³ During this period, Lewis was enrolled at Oxford, but he spent much of his time traveling abroad for the purposes of studying German and obtaining the skills necessary for a future career in diplomacy. Although Lewis obtained mastery over the language, his letters convey that he was more concerned with using his

³² For a compelling argument that suggests Lewis may have intended for *The Monk* to support a more conservative sociopolitical stance than what many scholars have previously identified, see Daniel Watkins’s essay, “Social Hierarchy in Matthew Lewis’s *The Monk*.” If Watkins’s claim is true—and I am not convinced that it can be proven with certainty—then Lewis may have been attempting to communicate a message that is rather similar to the conservative agendas found in the English translations of *Die Räuber* that Mortensen mentions in his analysis. Watkins believes that the “social context” of *The Monk* is “highly conservative and even reactionary” (122). For Watkins, “The fear and horror in the story arise from the unquestioned assumption that without tradition specifically—without the traditional definitions of religion, family, law, aristocracy—human society will collapse into a Hobbesian state of nature and all human value will be destroyed” (123). While I do agree that Lewis was attempting to grapple with the social issues of his current moment, I believe he was more interested in the dramatic potential of depicting the possibility of such an upheaval in society.

³³ The majority of the information in this section is attributed to Lewis’s main biographers, Louis F. Peck and D.L. Macdonald. Macdonald uses Peck’s *A Life of Matthew G. Lewis* (1961) to offer an updated, critical take on Lewis’s life and career in his, *Monk Lewis: A Critical Biography* (2000). Both of Lewis’s biographers agree that Lewis’s travels exposed him to the types of literature that he found exciting and would help him become a successful author and dramatist. All quoted portions of Lewis’s letters can be found in the “Selected Letters” section of Peck’s book.

skill to render accurate translations of the German literature he found most entertaining.³⁴ While traveling from Paris to Weimar to the Netherlands, along with frequent trips back to London, Lewis appears to have developed an even greater interest in a future career as a writer. However, the trajectory of Lewis's career does not resemble Schiller's progression from scandalized to revered. Lewis's reputation as the author of the most scandalous work of Gothic fiction in his day made it difficult for him to escape the stigma associated with its contents.

Throughout his travels, Lewis wrote frequently to his mother about his desire to become an author.³⁵ In 1791, while visiting Paris, Lewis mentions in one letter that he has been working on several pieces—a novel, some plays, and several songs that he believes might go well with one of the plays.³⁶ He was only fifteen years old at the time, and the letter ends with a reminder, “never to let the least hint drop to any body (particularly to any of my Uncles) that I had the least idea of writing any thing belonging to the Theatre” (186). Evidently, Lewis did not let his concerns keep him from writing dramas for the stage, for within months he mentions a project that he is certain will produce for his mother “a little money” (189). He calls it “a Roma[nce] in the style of the Castle of

³⁴ Evidently, while staying in Weimar for six months, Lewis met “Mr. de Goethe,” as he calls him. Seven years after their acquaintance, Lewis wrote him a letter, and in it, Lewis recalls the incident of sharing his own translation of *Erl König* with the author during his visit (Peck 13).

³⁵ According to Peck, Lewis's mother, Frances Maria Sewell was well known for her musical talent and dancing abilities. Her popularity with “musical, theatrical, and literary people” made her a poor companion to Lewis's father, who held the position of Deputy-Secretary at War (2). She left Lewis's father when M.G. Lewis was only six years old. Lewis's father sought to obtain a divorce from Lewis's mother in 1783, and even though he was able to prove that had been involved in an affair that produced an “illegitimate child,” the divorce was not granted and the two remained married although estranged (7). M.G. Lewis's letters to his mother show that the two shared an interest in theater and entertainment, and that Lewis felt it was his responsibility to provide financial assistance to his mother.

³⁶ The following details are found in the “Selected Letters” section of Peck's biography. This particular letter is dated September 7, 1791. In it, Lewis writes, “As to the Novel I have nearly written the 2 first volumes; for the 1st I managed cleverly about, and lost: I was consequently obliged to write it over again” (185). Peck notes that the novel in question is probably *The Effusions of Sensibility*, which was never published. Lewis refers to one of the plays as “the Farce,” and Peck notes that it is likely *The Epistolary Intrigue*.

Otranto,” which, according to *The Life and Correspondence of M.G. Lewis* (1839), eventually became Lewis’s highly successful Gothic play, *The Castle Spectre* (1798). There is good reason to believe that at this point, Lewis might have been referring to what would eventually become *The Monk* as well. It is possible, of course, that Lewis was working on draft forms of both pieces simultaneously.

Lewis does refer specifically to *The Monk* in a letter written to his mother, just two years later. He states that he has written, “in the space of ten weeks, a romance of between three and four hundred pages octavo...It is called The Monk.” Peck believes that the author of *The Life* may not have wanted to discredit Lewis’s claim to having written the novel in such a short amount of time, and so, he asserts that “this romance formed no part of *The Monk* but became the basis of *The Castle Spectre*” (Peck 20). While the actual composition of *The Monk* may have only taken a relatively short amount of time, Lewis’s letters reveal that for the few years prior to the novel’s completion, his reading interests consist primarily of the earliest works of Gothic fiction.

Lewis turned his time traveling abroad into a literary apprenticeship in Gothic fiction. After his arrival at The Hague in May 1794, Lewis admits, “I have again taken up my Romance...I was induced to go on with it by reading ‘The Mysteries of Udolpho,’ which is in my opinion one of the most interesting Books that ever have been published.” He mentions his concern with the fact that the author’s description of the “Villain of the Tale” bears some resemblance to his own character and confesses “not feel[ing] much flattered by the likeness.” Two months later, he alludes to Schiller by saying, “The Author of The Robbers has written several other plays.” These works have seem to have inspired him to create more dramatic pieces of his own because in the sentences that

follow, Lewis lists the major plot points of “a little Farce” he has just written. One, in particular, sounds much like a hybrid version of *Die Räuber* and Shakespeare’s *Comedy of Errors*.³⁷ He immediately follows this description with an abrupt confession that he believes he has been “horribly bit by the rage of writing.” He describes himself as possessed by the combination of the drive to create and the boredom he feels while staying at The Hague, where the “Devil Ennui” has also made his abode. His letter reveals that he views himself in a passive state, unable to resist the compulsion to produce works of fiction like those he has been consuming. His next letter contains his explanation of the rapid writing process that resulted in *The Monk*, and an acknowledgment of his being so pleased that he will see it published if no one else will. In his mind, his training has paid off, and the result is a literary experiment from which he is proud to make a profit.

Lewis began writing out of an eagerness to become a “perfect Author,” as well as a way for him to earn money to support his mother.³⁸ Unfortunately, the progression of his writing career ends rather sadly. The controversy surrounding *The Monk* permanently damaged Lewis’s social position once his authorship was revealed. Lewis’s role as a legislator only exacerbated the critics’ concerns with the novel’s impropriety. Unlike Schiller, Lewis was unable to salvage his reputation. In spite of this negative publicity (or perhaps because of it), he was able to direct his energies toward publishing or producing eighteen dramatic works in seventeen years, which made him “the leading

³⁷ Lewis’s description of his Farce is as follows: “It is calculated solely for his [Bannister’s] acting, and is on the subject of two Twin Brothers, one a Rake and the other a Quaker who are constantly mistaken for each other; and I have arranged the scenes, that as the Brothers are never both on the Stage at the same time, they may be played by the same Person, who of course must be Bannister” (qtd. in Peck 210). Peck explains that the storyline originates from Jean François Régnard’s comedy, *Les Menechmes, ou Les Jumeaux* (1705) (79).

³⁸ Just before describing the process of writing *The Monk*, he discloses, “They say, that practice makes perfect; If so, I shall one day be a perfect Author, for I practice most furiously.”

popular dramatist of his day” (Peck 68). He discontinued writing for the stage once his father died in 1812, leaving Lewis his inheritance.³⁹ The last book of Lewis’s own writing that he saw published was released in that same year. It is a volume of his own verse, called *Poems* (1812), and as such, the collection can be seen as Lewis’s final attempt to prove to his contemporaries that he was capable of being more than a contributor to the declining state of “popular stage entertainment” (Peck 113). In the advertisement, Lewis reveals a level of humility, indicating his awareness that his contemporaries did not take his writing successes seriously. He explains that he “selected from a great mass of Verse such as appeared to myself and my Friends to be the least discreditable to their Author; I have endeavoured to remove such faults as were pointed out to me; and indeed have bestowed more time on their improvement, than such trifles can possibly be worth” (qtd. in Peck 147). Today, however, he is considered an author of importance, because in his attempt to write a novel in the style of both *The Castle of Otranto* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, he outdid his competitors as it concerns Gothic excess. In this way, *The Monk* resembles *Titus*—the contents of which suggest that Shakespeare was uninhibited in his effort to surpass his dramatic predecessors. Despite the critical attacks that both works have received throughout the centuries since their initial publication and performance, audiences continue to find them to be intriguing. Indeed, they are fascinating stories because they demonstrate a willingness to defy expectations and to dramatize controversial content unashamedly.

³⁹ In 1801, Lewis added a postscript to one of his plays, and in it, he offers a curious response to the criticism directed at *The Monk*, as well as *The Castle Spectre* (1796). “Every thing which I have hitherto published, except my Imitation of Juvenal, and the translation of a play of Kotzebue’s was written between fourteen and twenty-one; a period which I passed in scribbling Novels and Plays, but which, I am aware, would have been much better employed in reading sense than in writing nonsense. Formerly, indeed, I was of a different opinion; and the consequence is, that I have it still in my power to deluge the town with such an inundation of Ghosts and Magicians, as would satisfy the thirst of the most insatiable swallower of wonders. Whether I shall exercise this power in future, I am not decided” (qtd. in Peck 113).

Like Walpole and Radcliffe, Lewis included quotations from and allusions to Shakespeare's plays in his novel. Perhaps this technique evolved out of an effort to ward off the criticism they anticipated they would receive for writing in a mode that disregarded the neoclassical principles that many scholars and critics felt should be adhered to at that time. Not only were these novelists experimenting with a form that was still quite new, they were taking even greater risks by using this form to express content that made many individuals uncomfortable. For Walpole, invoking Shakespeare's celebrated genius grants him the permission he seeks in order to offer the reading public a narrative filled with moving statues, ghastly specters, corrupt leaders, feelings of dread and horror, and dark family secrets—all elements that can be traced back to Shakespeare's canon but now best exemplify the Gothic genre. Radcliffe's intentions may have stemmed from a desire to be associated with Shakespeare—an author whose status as the national poet was up for debate at the time. Clearly, Lewis saw something worth imitating in these authors' novels, just as they found something worth repeating that existed in Shakespeare's works.⁴⁰

There is no way of knowing if these authors believed they might be able to alter the development of the novel as a whole by improving upon it. Coral Ann Howells suggests that Gothic writers were “expressing attitudes which were hostile to eighteenth-

⁴⁰ John Drakakis writes extensively about the intertextual nature of Gothic works in his “Introduction” to the collection of essays, *Gothic Shakespeares*. Drakakis provides a brief overview of the ways that contemporary scholars discuss why Shakespearean quotations and allusions are employed by authors of Gothic fiction. He argues, “Shakespeare becomes one of the main mediating forces through which the ‘Goth’ experience passes, and that process of mediation varies in its level of sophistication from writer to writer” (8). He points out that in *The Monk*, Lewis’s “relatively sparse quotation from Shakespeare is subsumed into an operatic finale that owes much to Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*” (9). Drakakis criticizes Jonathan Bate’s “weak Freudian reading of the difference between quotation and allusion” in *Shakespeare and The English Romantic Imagination* where Bate comments that “a quotation or allusion may merely invoke a canonised text as authority” (qtd. in Drakakis 9). Drakakis also suggests that Bate’s “sparse mention of ‘Gothic’ writing...reinforces the tacit assumption that their [Walpole, Lewis, and Radcliffe] prolific deployment of Shakespearean texts in a variety of guises is not to be taken seriously, and that it is sufficient to treat only of the textual relations between ‘canonical’ writers” (9).

century Enlightened views of human potential, but so timidly that they undermined the significance of their own insights” (7). In a similar way, these writers also seemed to question their ability to create a drastic change in literary preferences. With *The Monk*, Lewis seems to have taken the boldest step toward that type of radical overhaul, especially as it relates to content. But as the progression of Lewis’s career shows, he eventually resigned himself to the fate of being valued only a popular dramatist whose works would gain recognition for their sensationalist appeal alone.

The scholars and critics who choose to address the historical significance and literary value of *Titus* or *The Monk* tend to point to the authors’ relative immaturity or inexperience at the time of writing. To conclude the chapter on the notoriety and influence of *The Monk*, Lewis’s biographer, Louis F. Peck, makes the following observation: “At nineteen Lewis was inexperienced and overconfident and wrote without concern for the prejudices of the day, a freedom which he never again allowed himself” (35). In a similar manner, Katharine Eisaman Maus closes the introduction to *Titus Andronicus* in the *Norton Shakespeare* by labeling the play as a “daring experiment, one that Shakespeare did not repeat but that nonetheless provides fascinating insight into his development as a dramatist” (406). This emphasis on the fact that the authors did not dare to reproduce works of a similar nature implies that somehow they may have learned their lesson.

As far as Lewis is concerned, the possibility of becoming a respectable—or even financially successful—novelist in his lifetime would never become a reality. This may indicate more about the development of the novel itself than it does about Lewis’s talent. Gothic writers were contributing to the development of a subgenre—the Gothic

romance—but the novel itself was still a relatively unstable literary form. Perhaps this is why Lewis spent the remainder of his literary career writing for the stage. In Shakespeare's case, *Titus* did not appear to be a hindrance to his career as a dramatist; instead, the play's popular appeal may have been instrumental in granting the playwright the celebrity status necessary to break into the competitive world of the theater as a tragedian.

The Monk is not an adapted, novelistic version of any one of Shakespeare's plays although it contains many scenes that reveal a debt to several of his works. All of the Shakespearean references in *The Monk* come from those plays of Shakespeare's that were considered admirable during this period, and *Titus Andronicus* was not one of them. For some time, Shakespeare's authorship of the play had been in question because few could understand how such an esteemed playwright could produce something so crude and detestable.⁴¹ Edward Ravenscroft's unsuccessful attempt to create a revised version of the play for Restoration audiences marks the beginning of "a long period of infrequent revival and generally low esteem" for the stage performances of *Titus* ("Titus Andronicus" 1125).⁴² Jonathan Bate mentions that between the years of 1751-1800, *Titus*

⁴¹ In Bate's introduction, he offers the following synopsis of the controversy surrounding *Titus*'s reputation: "From the 1700s to the Second World War *Titus Andronicus* was considered so shocking and so subversive of the noble Roman ideal of decorum that it was hardly ever staged and was frequently said to be by someone other than Shakespeare. High-minded critics and scholars could not imagine the National Poet soiling himself with a barbaric feast of rape, dismemberment, and cannibalism. Yet *Titus* was one of the most popular plays of the Elizabethan age" (2). For more on Shakespearean Bardolatry, see Jonathan Bate's *Shakespearean Constitutions: Politics, Theatre, Criticism 1730-1830*. Chapter two, entitled "Shakespeare," discusses Shakespeare's reputation in the eighteenth century, specifically as it relates to "Shakespeare's dissemination in the culture" (23). Bate mentions that "David Garrick's (in)famous Jubilee" often marks 1769 as the year when "the deification of Shakespeare took place," but he argues that the late seventeenth century is the starting point for "Shakespeare's apotheosis" (22).

⁴² Michael Dobson discusses the political impetus behind Ravenscroft's adaptation in Dobson's book, *The Making of the National Poet* (1992). Dobson explains that Ravenscroft eventually confessed that his purpose for adapting the play was not, as he had originally declared, just a way to pay respect to Shakespeare's greatness. Once the printed version of his adaptation was released, Ravenscroft admitted that "he chose to resurrect Titus as a satire on [Titus] Oates and the Whigs" (Dobson 72). Dobson posits that

was among the plays of Shakespeare's that were "not performed at all" (97) in the London patent theaters. The play's unpopularity may have prompted Lewis to avoid making any direct references to it in his novel. As a student at Oxford, Lewis was required to read the works of "our own great poet Shakespeare" and many of the classical sources from which Shakespeare borrowed; however, he may not have even seen or read a version of *Titus* before writing *The Monk* (Macdonald 98).⁴³ It is not necessary to know whether Lewis was intentionally using *Titus Andronicus* as a source for any one of his works. But it is intriguing to discover that the similarities between these two works go beyond imagistic and characterological content. *Titus* is Shakespeare's most Gothic work not only because of the attention to spectacle but also because for centuries it has been treated like a Gothic fiction—considered by some to be as crude and barbaric as the depictions of the Gothic invaders who threatened the boundaries of the Roman Empire. The Gothic novel's emergence as a subgenre of the novel continues to be met with resistance by those who desire to prescribe what constitutes a work of literary genius.

Even today, literary critics, such as Harold Bloom, find it hard to accept that *Titus Andronicus* was written by Shakespeare, the god of their Bardolatry. In Bloom's *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, he does not attempt to argue against the evidence that supports Shakespeare's authorship of the text, but he does confess that he

Ravenscroft's backpedaling reveals that the original version of the play "provides both a vehicle for topical comment and a useful cover-story, Ravenscroft deploying canonization—the promotion of Shakespeare as an author supposedly above and beyond contemporary politics—as a way of creating a space of sanctuary around his own adaptation" (73).

⁴³ Lewis's biographers do not identify *Titus Andronicus* as a source of influence for Lewis even though they do discuss several other Shakespearean plays. D. L. Macdonald lists what types of reading Lewis may have been assigned while a student at Oxford. He uses Lewis's letters and other primary source materials to explain that his education was largely classical. Lewis mentioned to his mother once that he should conclude the letter and return to his reading of Xerxes and Cicero (Macdonald 98). Macdonald also includes an anecdote about the dean, Cyril Jackson, who was a friend of Lewis's parents. Jackson told one student: "Homer and the Greek Tragedies will assist you [in the improvement of your imagination] and so will our own great poet Shakespeare" (qtd. in Macdonald 98).

wishes Shakespeare had not committed such a literary crime. Bloom seems disturbed by the violent excess of the play although he is hesitant to identify it as such. He suggests vaguely, “Something about *Titus Andronicus* is archaic, in an unpleasant way,” and with a disapproving tone, he claims that the play’s remoteness makes it the original source for Brecht’s “alienation effect” (77, 78). Throughout his essay, Bloom struggles to clarify that the “bombast and gore” is what makes it so difficult for him to conceive that the Shakespeare he admires—the iconic image of the refined poetic genius that Bloom has cultivated—could have written something equal to “what we now respond to in Stephen King and in much cinema” (78). He admits, “As perhaps the last High Romantic Bardolator, I am rendered incredulous, and still wish that Shakespeare had not perpetrated this poetic atrocity, even as a catharsis” (79). In order to reconcile Bloom’s own tastes with a work that he feels does not live up to them, he argues that Shakespeare did not intend for *Titus* to be “a sincere and serious tragedy” (83). Instead, he insists, the playwright must have been writing a parody. In constructing this argument, Bloom does what many opponents of Gothic fiction have done for years—he avoids examining the text as being capable of assisting in the purgation of anxieties or fears. In fact, Bloom mocks those scholars who do so, and he even goes so far as to assert that Shakespeare may have been using the play to scoff at his audience as well. While Bloom’s assessment of the play exposes his own unwillingness to take it seriously—as well as his desire to align himself with the version of Shakespeare that he prefers—there is one aspect of his argument that is useful to my own. Bloom agrees that the excess of horrors that dominate the text are a direct result of Shakespeare’s motivation to compete with the playwrights who preceded him.

In pointing out that *Titus* may have been Shakespeare's attempt to "carr[y] on an agon with Christopher Marlowe," Bloom offers a valid connection to what Lewis may have been doing when he made his first attempt to enter the world of novel writing (80). Lewis's letters reveal that his readings of Schiller, Goethe, Walpole, and Radcliffe inspired him to write his own English version of the *Schauerroman*, and the novel itself reveals how hard Lewis worked to include all of the elements of this mode. For some time now, scholars have identified that *Titus* unabashedly displays its debt to Seneca, Ovid, Thomas Kyd, and Christopher Marlowe.⁴⁴ The most striking similarity between the content of *The Monk* and *Titus* and their authors' methods is that they both used dramatic spectacle to compete with their predecessors.

Katharine Eisaman Maus opposes Bloom's reading of *Titus* as a parody by elaborating upon the play's indebtedness to its dramatic ancestors and much closer relatives. She emphasizes that the play is a revenge tragedy, "a very old form that originated in ancient Greece, flourished in ancient Rome, and was revived in the 1580s in England by Shakespeare's predecessor Thomas Kyd" (399). Although Maus's analysis reveals that she disagrees with Bloom's interpretation, she also believes that this is the one play in Shakespeare's canon where the playwright does not hold back in his effort to provide the type of dramatic spectacle that had appealed to bloodthirsty audiences for centuries.⁴⁵ Maus suggests that when we evaluate why, in *Titus*, Shakespeare consistently "exceed[ed] the prototype," we should also consider the following:

⁴⁴ For more on the play's relationship to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Eugene Waith's "The Metamorphosis of Violence in *Titus Andronicus*," *Shakespeare Survey* 10 (1957): 39-59.

⁴⁵ Maus also explains that she sees "an interesting corollary between the spiraling ferocity typical of the revenge plot and the competitive way in which the characters in Shakespeare's revenge play fit themselves into a Roman tradition by exceeding its paradigms, enacting its stories 'with a vengeance,' as one says" (402).

From our point of view, Shakespeare seems the world's preeminent dramatist, secure in the greatness that was already beginning to be accorded him at the time of his death. But in the early years of his career, Shakespeare might well have wondered whether and how it was possible to use, even while surpassing, the examples writers had set for him. The notorious excesses of *Titus Andronicus* are one way of employing, even while going beyond, the examples he inherited. (403)

While Maus's observations certainly challenge Bloom's interpretation of the play, she does not do away with the notion of Shakespeare's prestige as an influential dramatist. Instead, her assessment allows for a broader perspective, one that encourages a more objective form of analysis. If we employ a similar kind of consideration in our discussions regarding the Gothic literary tradition, we may arrive at a more fair assessment of the creative decisions that authors feel compelled to make. The result is the type of analysis that resists using personal preference and critical prejudice to formulate conclusions about the value of any literary work.

Calling Upon Hell

The Marquis de Sade, writing about the Gothic explosion of the 1790s in his *Idee sur les romans* (1800), presents an argument in favor of a more balanced assessment of the significance of the controversial nature of the content that was beginning to inform people's opinions of the genre overall. He describes the Gothic novel's relationship to the sociopolitical climate in the following way:

The genre was the inevitable product of the revolutionary shocks with which the whole of Europe resounded. For those who were acquainted with all the ills that are brought upon men by the wicked, the romantic novel was becoming somewhat

difficult to write, and merely monotonous to read: there was nobody left who had not experienced more misfortunes in four or five years than could be depicted in a century by literature's most famous novelists: it was necessary to call upon hell for aid in order to arouse interest, and to find in the land of fantasies what was common knowledge from historical observation of man in this iron age. But this way of writing presented so many inconveniences [*sic*]! The author of [*The Monk*] failed to avoid them no less than did Mrs. Radcliffe; either of these two alternatives was unavoidable; either to explain away all the magic elements, and from then on be interesting no longer, or never raise the curtain, and there you are in the most horrible unreality. (qtd. in Macdonald 111)

As de Sade suggests, the writers of Gothic fiction aroused the interest of the reading public by unleashing the terrors, fears, beliefs and practices often attributed to a more distant, less civilized representation of the past. Sade's blend of admiration for these novelists' brave attempts and his critical evaluation of their effectiveness is still worthy of our consideration. It can help us to address the fact that for centuries, Lewis's novel, *The Monk*, and Shakespeare's Roman tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, have been criticized for failing to achieve a synthesis of instruction and delight, without determining that these works ought to be deemed regrettable moments in literary history.

Literary critics have continued to comment on the shocking sensationalism of these pieces, and the similarities of these evaluations should cause us to examine the implications of the type of reality these authors seem determined to depict. J. Dover Wilson's reaction to *Titus Andronicus* focuses on the play's carnivalesque nature when he compares it to "some broken-down cart, laden with bleeding corpses from an Elizabethan

scaffold, and driven by an executioner from Bedlam dressed in caps and bells” (qtd. in Smith 315). Similarly, Robert Miles’s comments about *The Monk* acknowledge the author’s use of “transgressive excess” where “every taboo is broken” (52). He claims that the novel “was shockingly new because it inverted, parodied, or exaggerated the features it cannibalized” (53). Both pieces rely heavily on graphic details of blood, gore, sexuality, and more attention to vice than virtue. They appear to fit into the category identified by Robert D. Hume as “Horror-Gothic” because “instead of holding the reader’s attention through suspense or dread, they attack him frontally with events that shock or disturb him” (285). On the surface, this method merely glorifies the shock value of horrific scenes; however, Shakespeare and Lewis use Gothic spectacle to establish a representation of reality where moral ambiguity and the hero-villain exist. Ironically, this microcosm is entertaining as well as offensive. Furthermore, the spectator is no longer instructed how to live morally, but is encouraged to use his imagination to consider the psychological depths of humankind. This is instruction of a far different kind; it involves examination of character that goes beyond the exterior and encourages this type of exploration in all aspects of society.

Spectacles of Moral Depravity

The barbaric practices of the Roman and Gothic figures, on display at the onset of *Titus*, establish a sense of ambivalence toward those who enforce the law and maintain order on both sides. The first act committed when the Andronici return to Rome from conquering the Goths is the ritual sacrifice of the eldest son of Tamora, the captive Queen of the Goths. This is the first instance where the audience might determine that the principles of Roman authority are arbitrary and oppressive. The inversion of good and

evil in this scene is apparent when Tamora and her sons, whom the Romans consider barbaric and aggressive, “in turn decry the Roman spectacle of retaliation and vengeance as primitive and inhuman” (Smith 319). In response to Titus’s claim that a religious sacrifice is necessary, Tamora states “O cruel irreligious piety!”—a sentiment reinforced by Chiron’s declaration, “Was never Scythia so barbarous!” (1.1.130-131). The play itself hints at the cruelty of the Roman religious tradition, which requires Tamora’s “sons to be slaughtered in the streets / For valiant doings in their country’s cause” (1.1.112-113), when in the final scene, a similar line of reasoning causes Titus “To slay his daughter with his own right hand / Because she was enforced, stained, and deflowered” (5.3.37-38). Such horrendous atrocities overwhelm the events of the play, and most of the moments of physical brutality occur by Titus’s own hand because, as he understands it, Roman authority would have him do so.

Immediately after burying those of his sons who were slain in battle, Titus hastily kills his son, Mutius, because of Mutius’s role in a quarrel that would put Titus out of the new emperor’s good graces. Ironically, Titus calls on the Emperor’s guard to assist him in stopping his traitorous sons, but he must put down the uprising on his own. Shakespeare continually places Titus in situations like this one, where he is caught between showing loyalty to the Roman tradition or to the protection of those in his family. Each time, he does not hesitate to show that his primary concern is obedience to the preservation of Rome’s glorious past.

On the surface level, it appears as though the playwright wants us to see Titus, and his descent into the madness of revenge, as the cause of all that has gone so terribly wrong in this story. But, Titus is not the typical revenger, who begins as a law-abiding

individual and descends to the status of a criminal in order to satisfy his thirst for revenge.⁴⁶ Titus does not view his plans as illegal but necessary, because his acts of brutality all have literary or historical precedence. They can be found in the classical narratives that chronicle the “glorious Roman past” (Maus 402). Rather than acts of ruthless vengeance, Titus’s deeds are the result of his own ambitious desire to achieve the legacy of a glorious Roman warrior.

Shakespeare does complicate the issue by giving us reason to believe that he is setting up Titus to be one of the revenge characters that have captivated audiences for centuries. One of the most disturbing elements of horrifying spectacle that occurs in the play is the physical destruction of Titus’s daughter, Lavinia, a character that symbolizes virtue and innocence. Lavinia is initially the object of every man’s desire—even her father declares that she is the “cordial of mine age to glad my heart” (1.1.166). The play begins with her betrothal to the newly declared Emperor, yet the marriage is never fulfilled because his brother, Bassianus, claims his right to take her as his own. Lavinia is a constant pawn within the revenge strategies that occur, including those of her own family members. Avenging the death of her firstborn son, Tamora encourages her sons to rape and mutilate Lavinia, cutting out her tongue and hewing her hands, creating the most shocking of spectacles within the play. Lavinia stands speechless on stage as “a crimson river of warm blood” (2.4.22) pours forth and her uncle speaks to her for over fifty lines. The visual horror is striking and indelible for the audience, exposing the potential reality of human depravity.

⁴⁶ Katherine Eisaman Maus’s introduction to the play in *The Norton Shakespeare* discusses Titus as a “highly exaggerated” version of the revenge figure that Shakespeare’s predecessors had established as the norm. While I do believe that Titus is an extreme representation of this type, I do not believe we are supposed to view him as one who descends into criminal madness. The tragic aspect of his character is that he is essentially abiding by the law throughout the play.

Even before Titus discovers that Lavinia has been raped and mutilated, he is in a posture of mourning much like the kind his brother Marcus predicts will occur once Titus sees Lavinia in this state. However, we quickly discover that the cause for Titus's grief is not only the recent, dishonorable deaths of his sons, Quintus and Martius, but the fact that their alleged murder of Bassianus has tarnished Titus's reputation and may permanently alter the valorous distinction he has fought to achieve. When Titus sees that both Lavinia's hands have been hewed, he uses her misfortune as an opportunity to return to his grief, lamenting the fact that he is no longer of valuable service to Rome. Instead of focusing on the devastating effects this injury will have on Lavinia's future, he imagines what such an injury would do to him, which leads him to more self-pity:

My grief was at the height before thou cam'st,
And now like Nilus it disdaineth bounds.
Give me a sword, I'll chop off my hands too,
For they have fought for Rome, and all in vain:
And they have nursed this woe, in feeding life:
In bootless prayer have they been held up,
And they have served me to effectless use.
Now all the service I require of them
Is that the one will help to cut the other.
'Tis well, Lavinia, that thou hast no hands,
For hands to do Rome service is but vain. (3.1.77-80)

This declaration of Titus's does not indicate that he has given up the hope of honoring the Roman tradition and has decided to turn criminal. Instead, he reveals his true motives

when he explains to Marcus and Lucius, “Let us that have our tongues / Plot some device of further misery, / To make us wondered at in time to come” (3.1.133-135). For Titus, the current state of Rome is corrupt, but instead of simply overthrowing Saturninus and his new queen, Tamora, Titus seeks to teach them a lesson.

Titus’s final act of revenge is a performance, so excessive in its bloodlust—as Saturninus exclaims, “so unnatural and unkind” (5.3.47)—that we might forget he is paying homage to those classical narratives that Roman law is built upon. This is not just an act of deference to ancient narratives and their creators. Titus’s strategy is well orchestrated in its dramatic effect—these are not the plans of a lunatic who has lost all sense of control. He is very clear in his intention to use the ritualistic murder of his own daughter as a way to show Saturninus that he is justified in his actions and will likely be revered and commemorated for it, like the Roman centurion Virginius, who killed his daughter to protect them both from shame. That Titus accomplishes this act while Tamora unknowingly eats the crushed bones of her own children means he is playing two legendary roles at once. By imitating Virginius and Progne, Titus seeks to write himself into the annals of history.

In *Titus*, the authority figures are the Roman rulers and their Gothic opponents. On both sides, their methods of maintaining social order are based on the traditions of their ancestors or inspired by the narratives found in texts, such as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, the tragedies of Seneca, and the histories of the Roman Republic and Empire.⁴⁷ The play suggests that the Roman tradition is the model the Goths eventually feel compelled to embrace, considering their willingness to “drown their

⁴⁷ See Maus’s introduction for a brief rundown of how, in this play, Shakespeare “exceeds the prototype” of these narratives (402).

enmity in [Lucius's] true tears" (5.3.107-109) and take arms against their former Queen. Interestingly, the Goths are not able to accede to the superiority of the Roman order until they discover that Tamora engaged in the act of miscegenation, which is evidently a shared taboo for both cultures. In their minds, Tamora's sexual relationship with the Moor places her beyond the hope of restitution. Once the Goths arrive in Rome and discover that Tamora and her sons were murdered in such a shocking and grotesque manner, they offer no protest and see no reason to oppose Lucius's decree that her body be thrown "forth to beasts and birds to prey" (5.3.196-197). The supposed villainous characters in the play, the Goths, Aaron the Moor, Tamora, and her sons, commit heinous crimes, but their opposites, the Romans, prove to be cruel and inhumane also.

Shakespeare allows the authority figures in this play to create principles of Roman order based on the literary and historical narratives of the past. Those outside of Rome lack such a template and so they must look to their enemies for a pattern to emulate. Maus suggests that this approach reflects Shakespeare's own educational experience:

Shakespeare's Goths and Africans apparently have no history, no myths, of their own; instead they invoke and mimic examples provided by their conquerors, just as Renaissance Europeans revived the classical literary inheritance, testifying to its importance in the very act of reading and imitating it. (402)

According to this line of thinking, it would seem that Shakespeare might want his audience to view Titus as the tragic victor of the play—his final performance shows he knows his literary and historical predecessors so well. But, Titus, like the Goths, only imitates and exaggerates the atrocious details from narratives he has read; he does not invent new ones.

Aaron is the one character in this play that is able to recognize the hypocrisy and superficiality of the Roman tradition—his commentary on the ways this society operates is shockingly insensitive and cruel, but it is true. Aaron’s skin color automatically relegates him to a subordinate status in both worlds, but he capitalizes on this injustice to get what he wants. He is his own authority; he does not operate under the rules of any system but the one that he creates—a system of open defiance against the Romans and the Goths, which allows him to refrain from “collaborating in his own oppression” (Maus 404). Throughout the play, his speeches are the most logical and consistent although they oppose the religious, moral principles that the Romans *and* Goths use to enforce a status quo that is, in reality not very enticing.

Although Aaron is an outsider in both of these worlds, he is an expert in their ways. More than any other character, he uses classical allusions to explain his motives and stratagems. In his first soliloquy alone, he refers to characters and places from Greek, Mesopotamian, and Roman mythology. While he may not be an accepted member of Roman society, he knows its customs and practices so well that he frequently informs Chiron and Demetrius about how to accomplish their own evil purposes in this hostile environment. Aaron is consistently shown to be more clever and crafty than the Goths, who are only capable of imitating Roman practices.

Aaron is also more aware of the Goths’ own culture and customs, and as such, Shakespeare uses him to show that Chiron and Demetrius, and to a lesser extent, Tamora, are uninformed regarding Roman and Gothic ways. When Chiron reads a letter sent to him and Demetrius by Titus, Aaron is the only one capable of deciphering its double meaning. Chiron is able to translate the “verse in Horace,” since he “read it in the

grammar long ago” (4.2.22-23), but he does not understand Titus’s purpose like Aaron does. Shakespeare places Aaron in a position of intellectual superiority in this moment, as he condescendingly says to Chiron, “Ay, just: a verse in Horace, right, you have it” (4.2.24), just before he states in aside:

Now, what a thing it is to be an ass!

Here’s no sound jest! The old man hath found their guilt,

And sends them weapons wrapped about with lines

That wound beyond their feeling to the quick.

But were our witty empress well afoot

She would applaud Andronicus’ conceit:

But let her rest in her unrest awhile. (4.2.26-31)

Like Tamora, Aaron’s marginalized status makes him a keen observer of his enemies’ ways. However, unlike Tamora, Aaron’s gender makes him a competitor to Saturninus; Aaron cannot be bought or manipulated into a subordinate position. Once Tamora gives birth to Aaron’s child, Saturninus is cuckolded and defeated by an outsider.

Aaron knows enough about the religious traditions in Rome to consider them unjust, and so he opposes them. This constantly subversive, irreligious attitude makes him a nuisance and a dangerous threat to the ruling authority. Interestingly, Aaron’s outright villainy drives Lucius to begin his new role as Emperor by imitating Saturninus’s method of rule. In earlier scenes, we discover that Saturninus responds to rebellious subjects by demanding that they be tortured before death. When he believes that Quintus and Martius are guilty of murdering Bassianus, Saturninus says, “There let them bide until we have devised / Some never-heard-of torturing pain for them” (2.3.284-285).

Again, just moments later, as though this is the only way Saturninus can find satisfaction, he declares, “Some bring the murdered body, some the murderers: / Let them not speak a word—the guilt is plain; / For, by my soul, were there worse end than death / That end upon them should be executed. (2.3.300-303) Following the Roman tradition, Saturninus and Titus both look for ways to torment not just kill their enemies.

When Lucius is faced with the task of needing to discipline Aaron and establish his own authoritative rule, he devises a similar plan. Lucius commands:

Set him breast-deep in earth and famish him.

There let him stand and rave and cry for food.

If anyone relieves or pities him,

For the offence he dies. This is our doom.

Some stay to see him fastened in the earth. (5.3.178-182)

Evidently, Aaron has heard this kind of strategy before, and he finds it rather comical in its unoriginality. Compared to Lucius, Aaron is more clever and courageous. Aaron refuses to adhere to the type of religious conformity that Rome seems to value over the individual freedom of will. His final words reveal his cunning and tenacity:

O, why should wrath be mute and fury dumb?

I am no baby, I, that with base prayers

I should repent the evils I have done.

Ten thousand worse than ever yet I did

Would I perform, if I might have my will.

If one good deed in all my life I did

I do repent it from my very soul. (5.3.183-189)

Clearly, Lucius's method of punishment does not silence Aaron's mockery and rebellious nature; instead, it turns him into something much more powerful than a fictitious character from an ancient Roman revenge tragedy— a powerful public spectacle, an image that persists in people's minds even after the criminal is dead.

Lucius makes Aaron a martyr whose cause is opposition to hypocritical authority figures that use physical punishment to make themselves appear more powerful. Aaron's charismatic, persuasive pleas spoken on the public scaffold may convince others to distrust and disrespect the ruling authority. The play ends with the image of Aaron persistently verbalizing disgust for the authority he despises. As Smith suggests, this example of Lucius's "sadistic pleasure in prolonged punishment" exposes the "growing skepticism about the value of torture as discipline or punishment" (318). One of the primary reasons that the exorbitant amount of death and brutality in *Titus* functions as more than just a mere exploitation of shocking scenes is that the ceremony of public punishment is such a conspicuous part of the history of Tudor and Elizabethan England. The popularity of *Titus* connects to Shakespeare's clever "transference of the spectacle of death and dismemberment from Tyburn and other such precincts to the theatrical arena" (Smith 315). For some members of the Elizabethan audience, and perhaps the playwright himself, the scenes that depict physical torture as the necessary means of social control might have encouraged opposition to authority rather than obedience.

The Hero-Villain as Literary Revolutionary

The Monk, published shortly after Robespierre's Reign of Terror, was considered by conservative critics to have the potential to corrupt youth "because of its supposed

irreligion, which they associated with a dangerous revolutionary spirit” (McEvoy viii).⁴⁸ Indeed, Lewis’s inclusion of the Spanish Inquisition as an important yet innocuous role in Ambrosio’s torturous demise becomes a social commentary on the ostensible efficacy of punitive measures and the powers that aim to enforce them. Ambrosio’s death does not occur through his sentence of death in the *Auto da Fé*. Instead, he faces his executioner, Lucifer, who tells him that “Heaven itself” cannot save Ambrosio from the Dæmon’s power (440). In *The Monk*, Lewis puts forth a message similar to that of Shakespeare’s attitude in *Titus*. Both authors use these works to question the methods of those societal institutions that use repression as an insidious but torturous means of control. Although the institutions that Lewis focuses on in the novel are primarily religious ones, his critique applies to those individuals whose attacks on Gothic fiction perpetuated a shaming attitude toward those who wrote and read such works. In other words, *The Monk* rebels against those who promote a stance of literary repression.

The lack of truly virtuous or heroic authority figures in *Titus Andronicus* creates a middle ground of sorts that more closely resembles reality than literary works that use stock characters to demonstrate one-dimensional behaviors. This scenario forces the spectator to engage mentally and emotionally with what he sees, rather than simply observing a false world where good always conquers evil. This form of characterization becomes a recognized staple of Gothic fiction—the hero-villain—a character that is not completely good or wholly evil.

⁴⁸ Although Lewis never spoke against or in favor of any demonstrations of violence or aggression, while visiting France in 1791, he expressed feelings of disgust toward the French aristocracy in a surviving letter, which reads: “Paris was my first station. For some time I was enchanted with it, as indeed must be every man who is young, rich, and fond of pleasure. Yet, among all its gaities, I felt that the people among whom I lived, and whose exterior was so polished and seducing, were at bottom frivolous, unfeeling, and insincere. I turned from the inhabitants of Paris with disgust, and quitted that theatre of luxury without heaving one sigh of regret” (qtd. in Peck 9).

Like *Titus*, every character in *The Monk* is subject to moral failure. Macdonald explains, “[t]he main plot of *The Monk* is largely a sinner’s progress” (117). Nearly all of the characters in novel are responsible for some act of deception or vice. While there is no questioning that Ambrosio and Matilda are guilty of the most detestable crimes such as murder and rape, no other figure is free from moral transgression. In his confession to Lorenzo, Don Raymond admits taking advantage of Lorenzo’s sister, Agnes, when he confesses, “in an unguarded moment the honour of Agnes was sacrificed to my passion” (186). Even Lorenzo, whose strength of character appears the most resilient, surrenders his judgment to the visual spectacle of the most beautiful women he sees. In doing so, Lewis addresses the superficiality of the romantic hero—a type that dominates those fictions Lewis might have found disingenuous. When Lorenzo first encounters Antonia, he sees her as an object like the “Medicean Venus” (9) and decides to pursue her. Additionally, prior to Antonia’s death, Lorenzo views another beautiful woman, Virginia, considering her only “a fine statue” and confessing, “That He never beheld more perfect beauty, and had not his heart been Antonia’s, it must have fallen a sacrifice to this enchanting Girl” (348). Although Don Raymond and Lorenzo come closest to achieving noble status in the novel, they also lack the type of moral strength that would allow them to be exemplary models of how to interact with others without objectifying them.

On the surface, the female characters in the novel demonstrate moral weakness as well. Antonia, in her naiveté, gives in to an attraction to Ambrosio, desiring his visits in spite of her mother’s orders; furthermore, even “virtuous” Virginia strategically places herself in the most admirable positions in order to win the heart of Lorenzo. While Lorenzo is mourning over the loss of Antonia, Virginia finds every opportunity to remain

connected to his relatives, and the language Lewis employs to narrate her actions resembles the plotting of an evildoer. Virginia seemed “calculated to make him happy” and “her passion continued to prey upon her heart in secret” (398). Virginia’s weakness parallels that of the saintly Lavinia in *Titus*, when Lavinia makes derogatory, heartless comments to Tamora and the Moor. Even the most innocent characters within these works are depicted as prone to selfishness and unchecked desire. This barrage of transgressions and moral failure inundate the reader with characterological development that in and of itself becomes a form of spectacle.

The character of Agnes grants Lewis the opportunity to complicate this aspect of the novel. Agnes opposes the monastic life and embodies rebellion against authority, but Lewis implies that these behaviors are the result of her unfortunate circumstances—the repressive nature of her family life drives her to desperate and immoral measures as a means to escape. The plot details Lewis assigns to Agnes’s character are modeled after Isabella, Juliet, and Mariana from Shakespeare’s *Measure for Measure*. Like Juliet, Agnes becomes pregnant out of wedlock and has to fear the consequences dictated by an unmerciful tyrant—although in Shakespeare’s play, Juliet’s life is spared *because* she is with child. Like Isabella, Agnes’s rhetoric is highly effective and emotionally powerful. In a fit of despair, Agnes proclaims:

Insolent in your yet-unshaken virtue, you disdained the prayers of a penitent; but God will shew mercy, though you shew none. And where is the merit of your boasted virtue? What temptations have you vanquished? Coward! You have fled from it, not opposed seduction. But the day of trial will arrive. Oh! then when you yield to impetuous passions; when you feel that man is weak, and born to err;

when, shuddering, you look back upon your crimes, and solicit, with terror, the mercy of your God, oh! In that fearful moment, think upon me! Think upon your cruelty! Think upon Agnes, and despair of pardon. (27)

As Agnes begs for mercy, she also convinces the reader of Ambrosio's hypocrisy and depravity. Finally, like Shakespeare's Mariana, Agnes is not in control of the events of her life; they both survive these tragedies by marrying the one they love, but the reader is not convinced that they are better off. The prioress punishes Agnes by imprisoning her and her child in the tomb of the abbey, where they are both left to starve. One on level, certain imperious readers might suggest that the gruesome death of Agnes's premature child is the appropriate punishment for her impropriety. In the end, Agnes survives, but her illegitimate child's death is strikingly similar to Ambrosio's final hours of life. The child is born but lives only for a short, torturous amount of time. Similarly, Ambrosio is "rescued from the Inquisition" by Lucifer but only so that his last days of life will consist of excruciating pain and agony.

These repeated acts of prolonged physical punishment demonstrate that Lewis may have used his novel to reveal his skepticism concerning the concepts of divine mercy and human goodness. Each episode in the novel seems to suggest that even those educational, religious institutions that seek to inculcate what it means to be a moral individual will fail inevitably because human beings are naturally self-seeking. Lewis's third-person narrator communicates a skeptical attitude toward religion and religious education as a method of social control, by commenting on the ways that the authority figures in these institutions fail to equip and protect those who are under their care. Ambrosio's status as an abandoned orphan—left on the doorstep of the Capuchin Abbey

as an infant—makes him the ideal character for Lewis to demonstrate this message. There is little question that Ambrosio's progression toward villainy is the product of his inherent natural qualities. The narrator clearly identifies those who are responsible for Ambrosio's downfall while narrating Ambrosio's backstory in the following manner:

To deserve admittance into the order of St Francis was Ambrosio's highest ambition. His instructors carefully repressed those virtues, whose grandeur and disinterestedness were ill suited to the cloister. Instead of universal benevolence, he adopted a selfish partiality for his own particular establishment: he was taught to consider compassion for the errors of others as a crime of the blackest dye: the noble frankness of his temper was exchanged for servile humility; and in order to break his natural spirit, the monks terrified his young mind, by placing before him all the horrors with which superstition could furnish them: they painted to him the torments of the damned in colours the most dark, terrible and fantastic, and threatened him at the slightest fault with eternal perdition. No wonder that his imagination constantly dwelling upon these fearful objects should have rendered his character timid and apprehensive. Add to this, that his long absence from the great world, and total unacquaintance with the common dangers of life, made him form of them an idea far more dismal than the reality. While the monks were busied in rooting out his virtues, and narrowing his sentiments, they allowed every vice which had fallen to his share to arrive at full perfection. He was suffered to be proud, vain, ambitious, and disdainful: he was jealous of his equals, and despised all merit but his own: he was implacable when offended, and cruel in his revenge. (123)

Lewis wants us to see that the repressive and competitive nature of this environment, and its proponents, is responsible for Ambrosio's vain hypocrisy and his eventual inability to control his lustful desires.

Once Ambrosio is given access to a person for whom he feels sexual desire, and he experiences the temptation that he had previously been shielded from, he becomes the type of sinner he sermonized about with such disdain that to those listening, Ambrosio "seemed as if he was ready to eat them" (12). Early on, the narrator warns us that this novel's message is that repression, which is a form of physical torment, inevitably leads to hypocrisy when he states, "Ambrosio was yet to learn, that to an heart unacquainted with her, vice is ever most dangerous when lurking behind the mask of virtue" (26). That Lewis uses his own novel to acquaint readers with the types of vice so often censored in the novels written during his lifetime, indicates he may have wanted to make his readers aware of the hypocrisy of those works that strive to inculcate virtue by censoring sin.

Just as the violent abuse of Lavinia is the most visceral, affective spectacle of *Titus*, Lewis's decision to allow the monk to ravish and murder the modest and lovely Antonia, long after murdering her innocent mother, creates the most horrifying manifestation of evil and immorality. She is a tragic victim whose virtue leads to her demise. Her purity entices Ambrosio, and once he destroys that chastity, she is no longer an object of his desire. Although, this aspect of the novel is incredibly disturbing, like the impression Lavinia's mutilated figure creates, Antonia's tragic circumstances are visually engaging for the reader—the scene is clearly the work of an imaginative dramatist. Antonia's tragic murder drives the novel to its compelling conclusion. Ambrosio's gruesome death and eternal punishment seem somewhat justified because of his treatment

of Antonia. Rather than mocking feminine modesty and virtue, Lewis shocks readers by depicting this figure as an arresting tableau to demonstrate the ramifications of unnecessary repression enforced by societal or religious constraints.

Conclusion

There is a constant subversion of hierarchies throughout Shakespeare's play and Lewis's novel, emphasizing the potential for corruption within institutions as well as within each individual. In *Titus*, the conquering war hero becomes villain and victim. Tamora becomes Empress of Rome; the once heroic Andronici become traitors; and originally enemies to Rome, the Goths become allies when they assist Lucius, the last in the Andronicus line, in overtaking the throne. In *The Monk*, the sanctimonious figures are the greatest sinners. The chivalric heroes fail to rescue the damsels, and at the novel's end, the powers of hell punish the villain. The result is a proliferation of defeat, deception, and moral depravity, and the audience must consider that all of the characters contribute to these displays of immorality.

After the scandal of *The Monk*, few writers embraced the Gothic genre willingly. Instead, much of the literature produced in the nineteenth century is better identified as containing Gothic elements instead of settling neatly into the category of Gothic romance. In David Punter's book *The Literature of Terror* (1980), he identifies that the major writers of the Romantic period felt the influence of the Gothic genre, claiming that even those who were not necessarily perceived at the time as writing within this mode, "played a part in shaping the Gothic, in articulating a set of images of terror" (87). These images of terror help us to understand the ways in which our understanding of the Gothic can extend beyond genre formation and toward its definition as an aesthetic or an artistic

expression that connects to the psychological development of individuals and the corporate anxieties produced by the threat of change in society—whether it be social, political, or technological. With this broader understanding of Gothic signifiers, it is easier to assess the ways in which works of “high-romantic” literature may contain certain Gothic elements—intriguing images that either frighten or mystify readers, often resisting reasonable explanation—but not necessarily fit neatly into the category of Gothic fiction. The literature created by the writers throughout the Romantic and Victorian eras continue to exhibit signs of Gothic trappings, such as supernatural powers, which are more often identified as the powerful force of the author’s imagination rather than an actual ghost; mysterious, isolated or persecuted characters, and the sublimity evoked through gloomy landscapes, and of course, the influence of Shakespeare.⁴⁹ The important distinction to note is that these works contain *traces* of the Gothic because these authors did not appear to be eager to produce works that followed the formula that Walpole promoted and other writers, readers, and critics resisted. It is not altogether entirely surprising that we would find Gothic conventions in works that have resisted being identified as Gothic literature precisely because works that were clearly grouped into this category were both rejected by some and consumed by others because of these fashionable traits. Identifying the Gothic as both a genre and an aesthetic allows us to see the ways in which it threatens to transcend boundaries and find its way into the literature of the high-romantic period and those that followed.

⁴⁹ Many of these elements can be found in the following works that we primarily identify with the Romantic tradition in literature and resist labeling as Gothic: Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, and *Kubla Khan*; Wordsworth’s *Tintern Abbey* and certain poems from the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* like “The Thorn” and “Nutting”; Shelley’s *Alastor* and *The Cenci*; Byron’s *Manfred* and *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, and Keats’s “The Eve of St. Agnes.”

Chapter 3

Education by Fear: Gothic Sublimity in *The Tempest* and *Frankenstein*

“Fear opens wide the eyes and mouth, gives the countenance an air of wildness, covers it with deadly paleness, draws back the elbows parallel with the sides, lifts up the open hands, with the fingers spread, to the height of the breast, at some distance before it. The body seems shrinking from the danger. The heart beats violently, the breath is quick and short, and the whole body is thrown into a general tremor.”

Dialogues for Schools an 1813 textbook

Gothic fiction is most commonly identified by the inclusion of supernatural elements, but the genre’s preference for the ghostly corresponds directly to its connection to the notion of the sublime—a term that existed during Shakespeare’s lifetime but gathered new, different levels of meaning and gained popular attention during the rise of the Gothic novel. As Stuart Curran explains in his hypertext edition of *Frankenstein*, “the Gothic gave greater emphasis to the Sublime and the supernatural.” It is a complicated task to discover exactly how these elements came to be such essential components of the genre; furthermore, it is often equally difficult to distinguish between the two. The supernatural figures in a Gothic work are often considered sublime objects because of their ability to incite fear and terror. Gothic supernaturalism highlights the human resistance to and the longing for divine intervention and Gothic sublimity is the aesthetic that, conversely, seeks to engender the reader’s submission to external, unnamable forces beyond his control. The resulting tension is a *frisson* of terror. In this way, the supernatural and the sublime are the two halves of the “dual vision” that contribute to the ambiguous treatment of the revolutionary spirit that is the undercurrent of Gothic fiction (Cox 40).⁵⁰ The sublime aesthetic allows the natural to be considered as a vision or an

⁵⁰ While discussing the elements that make Matthew Lewis’s play, *The Castle Spectre*, “the quintessential Gothic drama,” Jeffrey N. Cox describes what he calls, “the dual vision of the Revolution that ...marks the

indication of the supernatural. That which is seen is a reflection of that which is unseen. It is a force to be reckoned with because it imposes a frightening lesson to be learned. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* exemplify this Gothic pedagogical approach, which relies on the threat of fear as an educative technique.

Gothic Sublimity

Any discussion that concerns the history and development of the Gothic novel requires an analysis of the theoretical influence of the sublime, and any analysis of the sublime necessitates a clarification of terms. In David Morris's essay "Gothic Sublimity," he claims, "the sublime, like the Gothic novel, embraces such a variety of historical practices and of theoretical accounts that the quest for a single, unchanging feature or essence is futile" (300). This observation leads Morris to conclude: "There is no essence of the sublime," only shared "family resemblances" (300).⁵¹ The primary objective of Morris's essay is to prove that the Gothic novel, beginning with Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, offers a revision of the Burkean concept of the sublime.⁵² Morris believes that most scholars err in their attempts to explain Gothic sublimity through Burke alone, and so he uses Freud's essay "The Uncanny" (1919), which, of course, Walpole would not have read, to explain the ways that he believes Gothic novelists revised the 18th century notion of the sublime. For Morris, "The Gothic novel stands as an implicit critique of

Gothic" (40). Cox specifically mentions how the play offers a "celebration of *liberation* of the heroine from the clutches of a lustful aristocrat...and *sympathy* for the charismatic but evil Osmond" (italics mine) (40).

⁵¹ Morris credits Wittgenstein with this phrase and then explains that these resemblances "link the countless, related discussions of sublimity beginning with Longinus" and ending with Burke, "before he was replaced by Kant" (300).

⁵² Morris's thesis is as follows: "By reopening discussion of two important mid-century texts—Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764)—I want to examine ways in which the Gothic novel participates in a significant revision of the eighteenth-century sublime. I will argue that Gothic sublimity as developed in Walpole's novel cannot be adequately explained on the basis of Burke's theories, which is how all previous studies of the sublime have explained it." Primarily, Morris seems concerned with the fact that Walpole's novel has been severely criticized and not taken seriously.

Burke—a testament to how much he and his age were unable to explain about the sublime” (302). However, in his analysis, Morris fails to discuss one author whose works seem to suggest how much she believed Burke really did know about the sublime aesthetic as a means to educate by fear.

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*—“a pure Gothic novel” (Merivale 152)—is an endorsement rather than a revision of Burke’s ideas. I believe that Shelley uses her horror story to support Burke’s conservative vision of the sublime as a terror that teaches restraint. The Gothic novels written by Mary Shelley’s parents, who were staunch opponents of Burke’s political perspective, do seem to participate in an attempt to offer an alternative to Burke’s ideology.⁵³ But Shelley’s own Gothic novels have been identified as supporting Burke’s conservative stance—“a position that upholds the traditional, organically evolving, affectionate nuclear family and condemns the revolutionary irresponsibility of Promethean politics” (215).⁵⁴ Burke’s conception of the sublime as a vehicle that uses fear and terror to elevate the mind and achieve literary greatness allows Mary Shelley to engage in an ongoing discourse with her literary family, which also includes her husband. In each edition of *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley responds to the belief in the transformative power of the sublime aesthetic by asserting that this type of literary success should not be prioritized over human kindness.

⁵³ For an incisive analysis of the dynamic between Godwin and Burke, see Monika Fludernik’s “William Godwin’s ‘Caleb Williams’: The Tarnishing of the Sublime” (2001). Fludernik explains, “One should not therefore simply read *Caleb Williams* as an exercise in discrediting the Burkean sublime, even if—and one would really need to specify to which extent this is actually true—the novel can in other respects be seen as a rebuttal of Burke’s theses” (868). I believe that Anne Mellor’s *Mary Shelley, Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (1988) contains the specifics that Fludernik desires. Because Fludernik does not investigate Shelley’s use of the sublime in *Frankenstein*, she does not reference Mellor’s ideas in the essay.

⁵⁴ Throughout Mellor’s book, she repeatedly demonstrates that Shelley seems to favor Burke’s ideologies, as opposed to those of her father and her husband. Mellor offers specific examples from each of Shelley’s novels (*Frankenstein*, *The Last Man*, and *Mathilda*), and asserts that Mary Shelley “has more sympathy for Edmund Burke’s vision” of societal progress that can be achieved through the guidance of “enlightened and benevolent rulers” than she has for “the impractical, visionary utopianism of Godwin and Percy Shelley” (163).

Although Godwin, Wollstonecraft, and Percy Shelley would have identified themselves as opponents of Burke's political ideals, there are certain aspects of Burke's theories on the sublime on which they seem to have agreed, especially those ideas that address sublimity in writing style. As many writers have concluded and continue to assert, Shakespeare's remains a source of inspiration in this endeavor.⁵⁵ Just as Burke lists Shakespeare as one of the writers who is "supremely 'sublime'" (De Bruyn 88), Percy Shelley implies the same admiration in the unsigned Preface to the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, which is dedicated to William Godwin.⁵⁶ The Preface contains a declaration of the author's goal "to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature." For an exemplary model, the text identifies "Shakespeare, in the *Tempest* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*," as one of the influential authors, along with Homer and Milton, whose selected works are examples of those that also "conform to this rule" (429).⁵⁷ By mentioning Shakespeare's influence in this way, the Preface directs the reader's attention to the potentially historic nature of this project. For Mary Shelley's surviving family members, *Frankenstein* would be the literary creation that would establish Godwin and Wollstonecraft's daughter as the rightful inheritor of their sublime

⁵⁵ See *Shakespeare in the Eighteenth Century* (2008) for more on the ways that writers in this period looked to Shakespeare's canon for inspiration and source materials. In particular, Frans De Bruyn's chapter, "William Shakespeare and Edmund Burke: Literary Allusion in Eighteenth-Century British Political Rhetoric," points out that Shakespeare is fifth in Burke's list behind "the Bible, Virgil, Homer, and Milton" (88). The focus of De Bruyn's chapter is to point out the Shakespearean allusions in all of Burke's writings, but he feels that in Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*, Burke's decision to place Shakespeare fifth reflects, "the prevailing view in the period that Shakespeare was, above all, a master of pathos rather than the sublime" (88). I would argue that at the turn of the nineteenth century, many writers sought to challenge this notion by elevating Shakespeare's status as a master of the sublime. The Gothic literary tradition, aided by Burke's focus on fear and terror, is a part of this process.

⁵⁶ Mary Shelley later explains that the preface to the first edition was "written entirely" by Percy Shelley as though he were the author. Their collaborative efforts on the first draft of *Frankenstein* are presented, with PBS's words italicized, in the recent collection of both the 1816/17 and 1818 editions, in Charles E. Robinson's *The Original Frankenstein* (2008).

⁵⁷ All quotations from the novel are taken from Charles Robinson's edition *The Original Frankenstein* (2008), unless otherwise indicated.

talents. The Preface continues by suggesting that what Shakespeare and his fellow poets have achieved is also within the grasp of one who seeks to write using this relatively new medium of the novel:

[T]he most humble novelist, who seeks to confer or receive amusement from his labours, may, without presumption, apply to prose fiction a licence, or rather a rule, from the adoption of which so many exquisite combinations of human feeling have resulted in the highest specimens of poetry. (429)

Here we see the path being forged for Mary Shelley by the reputation of her novelist father and the aspirations of her poet husband.

For Percy Shelley, the myth of Prometheus was a liberating tale, rather than the impetus for a ghost story that concludes as tragically as Mary Shelley's does. Yet, Percy's ideas concerning the sublime nature of the poet enables her to use *Frankenstein* to offer a subtle critique of his beliefs.⁵⁸ Victor Frankenstein is like Mary Shelley's husband, who seeks to achieve success by harnessing his own imaginative capabilities to achieve the godlike status of creator. Maggie Kilgour, in her *Rise of the Gothic Novel*, uses Percy's language to show how his interest in Prometheus supported his understanding that "the poet is a god who recreates the world with his redemptive imagination, which 'transmutes all that it touches...its secret alchemy turns to potable gold the poisonous waters which flow from death through life'" (194). Percy's description of this process, taken from his essay, *A Defence of Poetry* (1840), reveals a

⁵⁸ Many scholars see this as one of the moral lessons of the novel. Consider the following statement from Maurice Hindle's introduction to the 2003 Penguin edition of the text: "The Romantic idealism of Shelley and his 'overreaching' heroes was like all idealisms, based on a faith in man's, or more correctly, *men's* supposedly divine or creative powers. It is Mary Shelley's critique of where such highly *abstracted* creative powers can lead when put in a 'realizing' scientific context and then driven along by 'lofty ambition' and 'high destiny' that we see in the pages of *Frankenstein*" (xxiv).

link to the ways in which Shakespeare and his contemporaries would have understood the meaning of the word *sublime* in its various contexts.⁵⁹

Until the late seventeenth century, the word *sublime* was used to communicate height, either in the literal or metaphorical sense, especially as it related to something or someone heavenly, heroic, or noble. It also had an alchemical denotation, derived from its usage as a verb, meaning “To subject (a substance) to the action of heat in a container so as to convert it into vapour” (*OED*). As Luke White explains:

To ‘sublime’ a material, in alchemical terminology, was to transform it from its (base, earthly) solid state to its (more spiritual, heavenly) gaseous state without passing through an intermediate liquid state. It was possible to do this with a number of the substances in which the alchemists were most interested. Such a transformation had obvious metaphysical overtones for the alchemists.

Therefore, as an instrument of the sublime, alchemy serves as a catalyst for transformation by Shakespeare and is revisited and transfigured by the writers of Gothic novels. In allowing Prospero, the protagonist of *The Tempest*, to be heavily invested in the art of alchemy, Shakespeare embraces the concept of the sublime as a metaphysical process, which enables him to tell a powerful story that highlights his protagonist’s fall and eventual redemption. H.J. Sheppard’s entry in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* offers an explanation of the historical tradition of the term *alchemy*, which could also be used to describe sublimity: “Alchemy is the art of liberating parts of the Cosmos from temporal existence and achieving perfection which, for metals is gold, and for man, longevity, then immortality and, finally, redemption” (155). Prospero’s transformational power over others and his ability to be reformed and restored makes him

⁵⁹ Mary Shelley was responsible for the essay’s publication after Percy’s death.

the ideal protagonist for play that offers such a lesson. In *Frankenstein* however, Shelley's protagonist dies without being redeemed; this inversion of *The Tempest's* ending makes the novel a prime example of Shakespeare's influence in the development of Gothic sublimity. Shelley's novel is yet another example of how authors writing in the Gothic genre successfully borrowed a concept that informed Shakespeare's approach not only to earn approval for their fictions but also to use it to create something new.

What Percy Shelley may have seen as a way to connect Mary Shelley's novelistic experiment to Shakespeare's reputation of poetic greatness became the component that allowed Mary Shelley to correct her husband's own overreaching—his tendency to miss the moral mark.⁶⁰ As many scholars have noted, the same could be said of her father.

Frankenstein's conclusion indicates that the redemption that Mary Shelley seeks to display is that of a child seeking to forgive its parent even though the parent is undeserving, mistaken, or absent.⁶¹ *Frankenstein's* behavior does not warrant the kindness the creature offers, and Shelley seems to want us to understand that the creature is only able to offer this unmerited gift because he is indebted to Victor for giving him

⁶⁰ The particular moral failings I am referring to here would be Percy Shelley's attempts to have an open marriage in spite of Mary Shelley's resistance, and his frequently noted lack of concern for both Mary and their children. Regarding Godwin, his initial disapproval of the Shelleys' marriage, his financial struggles and dependence on Percy Shelley's inheritance, and his unfeeling attitude toward Mary when she experienced the losses of her children, have all been noted as causing Mary great distress. Most biographies concerning the Shelleys and the Godwins will provide the notorious details of Percy Shelley's interactions with his wives, his children, other women, and his friends and colleagues, as well as information about the strained relationship between Mary and her father. Daisy Hays's *Young Romantics: The Tangled Lives of English Poetry's Greatest Generation* (2010) is an excellent, recent discussion of the dramatic details of the lives of the second generation of Romantic poets and their circle of friends. See Mellor's chapter entitled "Fathers and Daughters, or 'A Sexual Education'" for an analysis of the relationship between Godwin and Mary.

⁶¹ See Maggie Kilgour's analysis of *Frankenstein's* ending, where she connects the conclusion of *Frankenstein* to the ending of Caleb Williams. Kilgour states, "His [the creature's] final statements include praise of his creator, and self-condemnation as his murderer. The monster thus becomes a version of Caleb, who moves from denouncing to praising Falkland, and also of the author Shelley, who paid tribute to her creators in the preface" (212).

life. In this respect, the novel can be read as both a tribute and a rebuttal to Shelley's parents and her husband.

Gothic Pedagogy

In Patricia Merivale's essay "Learning the Hard Way: Gothic Pedagogy in the Modern Romantic Quest," she discusses the tradition of "teaching through fear" as it is depicted in "pageants, rituals" and other dramatic performances (147). Merivale uses the phrase "Gothic pedagogy" to explain what she sees as a consistent structural pattern in a series of works, where the author creates an "astonishing, terrifying, yet phantasmagorical sequence of lessons, made up of separate episodes chiefly connected with each other by the fact that the hero experiences them" (146).⁶² Merivale argues that Gothic pedagogy allows these works to be identified as "hero-quests," as well as "Gothicized godgames," because "a Magus, devil-god, and stage director, has devised and produced them to reinforce his didactic manipulations of the hero" (146).⁶³ Although Merivale's essay is not concerned with identifying the Shakespearean influence in a Gothic novel such as *Frankenstein*, the results of her analysis provide a direct connection to this investigation. *The Tempest* and *Frankenstein* both contain a plot structure that is guided by the Gothic strategy of education by fear through evoking a sense of the sublime in nature and practice.

⁶² Merivale briefly mentions *The Tempest* and *Frankenstein*, but the specific works she focuses on in the essay are as follows: Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791), Goethe's *Faust* (1806, 1832), Flaubert's *La Tentation de St. Antoine* (1856), James Branch Cabell's *Jurgen* (1919), David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1920), and Hermann Hesse's *Steppenwolf* (1927) and John Fowles's *The Magus* (1966).

⁶³ For more on the hero-quest, see Harold Bloom's essay, "The Internalization of Quest-Romance." Bloom explains that "[t]he internalization of quest-romance made of the poet-hero a seeker not after nature but after his own mature powers, and so the Romantic poet turned away, not from society to nature, but from nature to what was more integral than nature, within himself" (15). In Gothic fiction, authors typically represent this type of process as a frightening, mysterious experience. Gothic fictions focus on inward rather than upward movement—psychologically, spatially, or emotionally. These tales often highlight the oppressive nature of this focus as opposed to viewing its liberating potential.

For an early example of a work that structurally resembles this type of godgame, Merivale briefly mentions *The Tempest*, “where a benevolent Prospero manipulates the action in order to educate and initiate” (147). While it is easy to see that Prospero does see himself as fulfilling the role of educator, I am not as convinced that Prospero’s educational methods are in the best interest of others. Prospero’s benevolence is ambiguous—he is not always kind to those under his power. At times, Prospero is overreaching and his desire for justice becomes a thirst for revenge. The redemptive turn within this play emerges once Prospero learns that his spectacular demonstrations of power have caused him to neglect his ability to experience “a feeling / Of their [his prisoners’] afflictions” (5.1.21-22) and, as a result, to treat them unkindly. It is likely that Shakespeare intentionally characterized Prospero in this way so that he could use his own play to “educate and initiate” the audience members, to render them fearful, to amaze them by the dramatic power of the poet-playwright, but also, to imply that leaders, who are placed in positions of authority, must learn to wield their power responsibly. In this way, Shakespeare entrusts his audience with the authority to accept or to reject the playwright’s artistic offering.

Shelley uses Victor Frankenstein, who, like Prospero and his students, is “largely educated by fear,” to create a Gothicized godgame, where “The monster teaches by terror the master who has become his slave” (Merivale 152-153). A similar kind of role reversal occurs in Shakespeare’s play when Ariel, Prospero’s servant, subdues his master and teaches him how to be kind. The result is relatively positive for all those involved, even for Caliban, who seems to be satisfied with being restored to his status as menial servant, since he is embarrassed by the foolish nature of his own mistakes. For Victor

Frankenstein and his creature, the lessons learned have tragic consequences. Through Walton's eyes, the reader witnesses how "enlightened benevolence gives way to Gothic vengefulness" (Merivale 152). The stakes are much higher for Shelley's characters.

I believe that both Shakespeare and Shelley intended for these works to be moral tales that instruct the audience to consider what it means to be and to act like admirable human beings. These authors seek to achieve the same goal despite the different outcomes they choose for their central figures. In *Prospero*, Shakespeare creates a human protagonist with supernatural powers who must learn how to co-exist with characters that are non-human entities—an airy, wise spirit like Ariel and an earthy, foolish creature like Caliban. Prospero learns that to be fully, wonderfully human, he must surrender his skill because likely it came from an overreaching impulse in the first place. In addition, Prospero learns how to reconcile with those who have wronged him and with those whom he has wronged, but he does not adopt an egalitarian attitude toward them. This is one of the primary differences between Shakespeare's play and Shelley's novel. Shelley's novel is a Gothic tale, written in defense of those who have suffered the consequences of Frankenstein's overreaching.⁶⁴ Like Prospero, Victor Frankenstein comes to discover that he has misused his power, but there is no restoration or reconciliation for Frankenstein. His punishment is death. Shakespeare sees hope for Prospero's future as a ruler, whereas Shelley sees doom for Victor. The Magus relinquishes his obsessive desire for control over others, and the playwright rewards Prospero for learning this lesson by restoring him to a position of authoritative rule.

⁶⁴ In response to an observation of Leigh Hunt's that "Polyphemus...always appears to me a pathetic rather than a monstrous person though his disappointed sympathies at last made him cruel," MWS replied, regarding the creature in *Frankenstein*, "I have written a defence of Polypheme—have I not?" (qtd. in Mellor 245).

For Shakespeare and the early modern audience, Prospero must maintain his status as a noble, authoritative figure whose commands are to be obeyed. The hierarchy must be preserved. That Shakespeare allows his god-like protagonist to “renounce his divinity” and to be educated by fear is revolutionary enough for the period.⁶⁵

Frankenstein, however, was published in a very different time. Therefore, we should also consider what Anne K. Mellor suggests as a possible message found within the novel:

[Mary Shelley] thus put forth a revolutionary concept of the ideal structure of the English middle-class family as one in which both marriage partners participated in the emotional care and education of their children and were mutually respected as equals within the home. (215)

Mellor believes that in all of MWS’s novels there is a “celebration of the egalitarian bourgeois family” (215).⁶⁶ But *Frankenstein* is certainly not a celebratory tale. Shelley uses her own imaginative powers—her unique representation of Gothic sublimity—to demonstrate “what happens, both psychologically and socially, when such a family, and especially a loving parent, is absent” (Mellor 215). Victor’s refusal to act as a nurturing parent transforms the creature into a murderous monster; his is a nature that knows no

⁶⁵ Steven Marx compares *The Tempest* to the book of Revelation in the chapter entitled “The Tempest as Apocalypse,” found in Marx’s *Shakespeare and The Bible*. In stating the three primary differences between the play and Revelation, Marx points out the following: “Unlike God who fully realizes his omnipotence, casts out his enemies, and seals up history, Prospero renounces divinity, forgives those who wronged him, and leaves the final outcome of events open” (144). Marx asserts that these differences might reveal a subversive motive on Shakespeare’s part, “a critique of divine-right monarchy” (144). Marx also quotes C.A. Patrides who sees the possibility that Shakespeare may have intended to “demystify the apocalypse and thereby humanize it...to turn responsibility for the shaping of history over to man and thereby secularize the Christian prophecy” (144). Interestingly, Marx offers a third alternative, which blends the secular and the religious by suggesting that Shakespeare may have been linking Prospero to the Jesus of the gospels “whose ‘kenosis’ or relinquishment of divinity to suffer as a mortal for the sake of his subjects” and also “provides a different paradigm for the glorification of rulers” (145). To support this idea, Marx points out that Prospero’s last words resemble those from the Lord’s Prayer, which was a “model for the administration of royal pardons” (145).

⁶⁶ Mellor explains that “Mary Shelley’s visionary family was rooted in her mother’s lower-class proto-industrial culture... a world of cottage industries which expected husbands and wives to contribute equally to the family welfare” (215).

nurture. This neglect illustrates that Victor Frankenstein is even more monstrous than the creature; Frankenstein receives the nurture, affirmation, and education that Shelley—and her mother—believes all people deserve, yet he chooses to withhold these qualities from his own child.

Shakespeare's Haunted Play

Critics often rely on the relevant circumstances of Mary Shelley's personal life to access the various levels of meaning in her novel, and *The Tempest* presents a similar opportunity. While Shakespeare was working on *The Tempest*, he was concerned with the future success of the children who would survive him, as well as preserving the reputation he had worked so hard to establish during his lifetime. *The Tempest* is the first play printed in the First Folio (1623), but is likely the last that Shakespeare wrote non-collaboratively before retiring to Stratford. As a result, it offers the playwright one final opportunity to enact the purposes of his career: to thrill his audience with the elusive power of language and performance. Like Prospero's final speech, the play offers a plea to be forgiven for any harsh or unfavorable message it may have imparted and to be accepted on the merit of its vitality—the creative storytelling energy generated by the poet-performer. This link between the playwright and the play's master tempts us to think of Prospero as an allegorical representation of Shakespeare himself despite the many scholars that have warned it is often “perilous to identify Shakespeare too closely with any of his characters, let alone an exiled, embittered, manipulative, princely wizard” (Greenblatt, “The Tempest” 3055). However, the claim that this sort of analysis is *dangerous* strikes me as unnecessary; do we need to fear the possibility that the invention of Prospero may have been personally cathartic for Shakespeare?

Even as Greenblatt warns against taking this approach too far, he also admits that a close reading of the play does warrant comparative analysis because “when Prospero and others speak of his powerful ‘art,’ it is difficult not to associate the skill of the great magician with the skill of the great playwright” (3055). Like many critics, Greenblatt is concerned with the tendency to conflate these two figures into one, limiting Prospero’s characterization and seeing him only as Shakespeare’s autobiographical persona. We have no way of determining whether the playwright considered Prospero a representation of his own creative energies or desires, but such data is not needed for interpretative analysis. The biographical data regarding the incidents of Shakespeare’s life that exists today is scant and subject to much interpretation. While it is difficult to claim that the way Prospero orchestrates events on the island is an analogue for Shakespeare’s behavior in his public or private world, it is worthwhile to examine what information is accessible and explore its connections to the play, especially since this same interpretative approach can be applied to *Frankenstein*.

The most compelling argument for why we should consider that Shakespeare might have used aspects of his own personal life to create any one of these characters is that he is their sole creator. *The Tempest* is not like most of the plays in Shakespeare’s canon—there does not seem to be a dominant story source from which the playwright borrowed most of the details of plot, setting, and character.⁶⁷ The plot, driven primarily by the character of Prospero, seems to be entirely Shakespeare’s own invention.

Greenblatt recognizes that the play fits into the category that modern editors call *romance*

⁶⁷ The introduction to the play in *The Arden Shakespeare* does mention that the play seems to indicate that Shakespeare read John Florio’s English version of Montaigne’s “Of the Cannibals” (1602), which may have given him the idea of Caliban’s name and inspired the content of Gonzalo’s speech in 2.1. The editors also suggest that the play reflects the influence of Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* although what the playwright may have *used* from these works is limited to word choice and some imagery.

because of “its story of loss and recovery and its air of wonder” (3055). This observation also helps us realize the play’s distinctive quality: it “resonates...with issues that haunted Shakespeare’s imagination throughout his career,” and, as such, we might best consider it an “echo chamber of Shakespearean motifs” (3055).⁶⁸ Like many of his other plays, *The Tempest* is concerned with the process of creation, performance, and reception, but it is the most self-reflexive about this progression. In the same way that Prospero demands his daughter Miranda hear his own tale and understand the lesson it offers, the play commands an attentive audience. From the storm, which marks the opening scenes, to the promise of “calm seas, auspicious gales” (5.1.318), which precedes the final applause, the play is a series of spectacular events that make up a thrilling, meaningful adventure.

One piece of pertinent biographical data is the series of events that occurred in Shakespeare’s life during the years surrounding the play’s composition, performance, and up to Shakespeare’s death, which precedes the first publication of the play. While most scholars agree that the play was written sometime between 1610-1611,⁶⁹ there is also record of its being included in the fourteen plays (along with *The Winter’s Tale*) that were a part of the festivities to honor King James’s daughter Elizabeth and her engagement to Frederick, the elector palatine.⁷⁰ For this reason, most editors mention that Prospero’s use of his magic to conjure the betrothal masque, what he calls “some vanity of mine art” (4.1.41), allows us to associate Prospero’s powers with the playwright’s

⁶⁸ Among the various motifs Greenblatt lists, the following are those most relevant to this chapter’s discussion of the connections between the play and Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: 1) “the painful necessity for a father to let his daughter go”; 2) “the young heiress, torn from her place in the social hierarchy”; 3) “the dream of manipulating others by means of art, especially by staging miniature plays within plays”; 4) “the relationship between nature and nurture” and 5) “the harnessing of magical powers” (3055). Many of these haunting motifs also appear in part as thematic elements of Shelley’s novel.

⁶⁹ The first recorded performance is at Court on 1 November 1611.

⁷⁰ The date for these wedding festivities is 1612-1613.

skills. Some scholars claim that the wedding masque is an addition made expressly for this royal celebration, meaning Shakespeare may have drawn upon his own experiences as a father in order to prepare for the occasion that prompted this particular performance.

By the time Shakespeare was at work on *The Tempest*, he had recently witnessed the marriage of one of his daughters. Just three years before the composition of the play, his eldest daughter Susanna married the successful, wealthy Stratford physician Dr. John Hall. Regarding this union, Boyce explains, the marriage “must have pleased Shakespeare tremendously, for Shakespeare appointed John and Susanna executors of his will” (529). In contrast, the marriage of his younger daughter Judith was likely a source of great disappointment for the playwright who, by this point, had achieved the respectable reputation he had been seeking. Judith Shakespeare’s romantic relationship with a vintner named Thomas Quiney led to their eventual marriage in February 1616, but Quiney’s failure to get the marriage license in time led to the couple’s excommunication. Boyce mentions that critics often speculate, “[T]his scandal may have hastened Shakespeare’s death, for he died a few weeks later, after changing his will to protect Judith’s inheritance from Quiney” (529). Boyce and other scholars mention the fact that Quiney had been prosecuted previously for “carnal copulation” with a local woman named Margaret Wheeler, who had died that March, along with her baby by Quiney—his confession prompted a sentence of performing public penance (529).⁷¹

Although their union took place three years after the celebratory performance of *The*

⁷¹ E.A.J. Honigmann offers the following details regarding the controversy of the revisions made to Shakespeare’s last will and testament: “The first page of the will had to be revised on 15 March 1616, just a month before Shakespeare died, because his younger daughter Judith had married, on 10 February, but not by special licence (as required by ecclesiastical law in the Period 28 January to 7 April), and it emerged on 16 March that her new husband, Thomas Quiney, confessed his ‘incontinence’ with a certain Margaret Wheeler. Margaret Wheeler ‘and her child’ were buried some days earlier, and this unhappy story seems to have reached Shakespeare, leading to the revision of his will” (709).

Tempest, we have no way of knowing when exactly this relationship began and whether concerns about Judith's involvement with Quiney may have troubled the playwright for some time.

E.A.J. Honigmann uses this data to suggest that the scandal may have caused a great deal of enmity between Shakespeare and his wife, Anne, which in turn may have prompted Shakespeare to treat both women "unkindly" by altering his will to their detriment and in Susanna's favor (709). Honigmann also applies this family conflict to the struggle between Lear and his daughters, arguing that Cordelia may represent Susanna, Shakespeare's favorite, while Goneril "would take the place of Anne Hathaway" (710). Honigmann sees this relationship between Shakespeare's life and the text as a useful discussion of possibilities for interpretative analysis; he does not go so far as to read *King Lear* as the playwright's "self-portrait" (711). Instead, he believes that such a connection means that the "King Lear story opened emotional territories that he had, so far, avoided" (711). If this is true, then perhaps the successful use of his own family dynamic to create theatric tensions in *King Lear* may have made Shakespeare willing to do the same in *The Tempest*.

Several of Shakespeare's plays indicate that he was interested in the theatrical potential of the dynamics that exist between a father and his daughter, with particular emphasis on the decision of whom the daughter should marry. Baptista's struggle to find the appropriate suitor for both Kate and Bianca leads to the dominant conflict between Katherine and Petruccio in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Leonato's outrage toward and subsequent harsh treatment of Hero for her alleged shameful, immodest behavior is the dramatic pinnacle of *Much Ado About Nothing*. The emotional impact of witnessing

Leonato's violence and Hero's despair at the altar instantly shifts the tone of the play from comic to serious. Brabantio's role as protective father— aided by superstition and xenophobia—causes him to question Othello's motives and methods in wooing Desdemona and adds another level of tragic irony as the father's fear of ultimately losing his daughter does come true.

Stephen Orgel's "Prospero's Wife" shows that there are important connections to be made concerning Shakespeare's family history and his representations of family systems throughout his oeuvre. Orgel sees a progression in Shakespeare's representations of what he calls "familial feelings," contending that the earlier plays are more concerned with emotions directed "toward parents and siblings" (57), but in his later years, after his mother's death in 1608, the plays, like *The Tempest*, reveal that Shakespeare's thoughts center primarily on his daughters. Orgel presents this claim with the attentiveness of a prudent scholar by suggesting, "If we take the plays to express what Shakespeare thought about himself...then we will say that he was apparently free to think of himself as a father—to his two surviving daughters—only after the death of both of his parents" (57). It is no coincidence that much of what troubles and motivates Prospero is his desire to ensure that Miranda's future is secure and she will not have to suffer betrayal and abandonment as he has. For practical and personal reasons, Shakespeare would have wanted his own daughters to marry wisely and well, much like his royal patron would have felt about his daughter's marital arrangement. As Shakespeare did often, he seems to have capitalized on this type of connection by incorporating it into the world of the play, allowing a similar thematic strain to emerge.

Prospero is not a parody of the king nor is he the playwright's autobiographical puppet. To achieve this effect, Shakespeare assigns Prospero's character several roles: father, magus, ruler, and master-poet. In all of these, the emphasis remains upon the notion that he is an authority figure who wields great power over his subjects. Orgel believes that "Prospero's magic power is exemplified, overall, as power over children: his daughter Miranda, the bad child Caliban, the obedient but impatient Ariel, the adolescent Ferdinand, the wicked younger brother Antonio, and indeed, the shipwreck victims as a whole, who are treated like a group of bad children" (60). It is difficult to determine whether Shakespeare intended Prospero's characterization to be a flattering portrayal of a father's struggle, which is why many readers find it a challenge to discern whether Prospero is benevolent or manipulative. At times, he embodies both traits. He often expresses his good intentions, but it is easy to see that his motives are not enough to curb the monomania that troubles him. As the play reveals, performing this fatherly role is Prospero's obsession. He disciplines and supervises all who step onto the island, and, like an overzealous, controlling parent, he relies on tactics of fear to control his children.

On this mysterious island, a father who has suffered betrayal and disappointment creates a new world for himself where he causes others to undergo similar experiences—to experience the same emotions—in what seems like his attempt to achieve true reconciliation for all. Prospero's art is not perfect; it is subject to the pitfalls of his imperfect nature. In this way, he reminds us that the artist—in this case, the poet-playwright—feels a great sense of responsibility not only to amuse the audience but also to offer it something meaningful: an educational experience. *The Tempest* is a play about plays and can help us to see that the dramatic, theatrical moments of our lives teach us

how to be and feel human, and, in Shelley's novel, the sublime moments she creates also teach us that our most noble feelings and behaviors can enable us to act humanely (i.e. not like a monster).

The parent/child motif in Shakespeare's play offers a connection to the parent/child relationship that Shelley uses to write her own creation myth. Victor Frankenstein and Prospero share a similar burden: they possess the skill and power to create beings that can choose to resist their control. They are both deeply troubled by this process just as they are enamored with its dizzying effects upon themselves and others. In this way, these protagonists are projections of the authors' conflicted attitudes about the authorial process. *The Tempest* is a self-conscious play; its primary conflict suggests that Shakespeare is highly alert to the responsibilities—parental duties, as well as political ones—that he and his royal patron share. Similarly, *Frankenstein* is a self-conscious novel. Shelley's myth of fearful creation can be seen as her struggle to find her own place alongside the members of her literary family. As the wife to Percy Bysshe Shelley and the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft—all prominent writers and revolutionary thinkers whose works brought about cultural and philosophical change—Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley inherited expectations as well as a literary legacy.

A Sublime, Gothic Heritage

When Mary Shelley began writing *Frankenstein* in 1816, she had already obtained a significant place in literary history. She was the daughter of two radical thinkers who had achieved fame and success as writers of fiction and political philosophy. In the 1790s, when the public interest in tales of terror reached an all-time high, Godwin and Wollstonecraft both embraced the trend—incorporating Gothic

elements in their writings— to produce novels that communicated their controversial positions on the social institutions and practices they deemed oppressive.

Wollstonecraft's *Maria or The Wrongs of Woman* (1798) is a novel about the horrors of a patriarchal society, where a husband can unjustly place his wife in an insane asylum and take their child away from her—a fitting plot for a Gothic tale.⁷² *Maria* gave

Wollstonecraft a different way to represent the main argument of her essay *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), in which she challenges the “prevailing opinion that woman was created for man” (ch. 2). For Wollstonecraft, this belief is a dangerous crime that leads to the types of evils committed by people like her novel's villain, Mr.

Venables, who uses Maria for selfish gain. Wollstonecraft's early death in 1797 meant that she would never witness the publication of *Maria*, but Godwin's decision to complete the fragmented manuscript and see it published one year later made it possible for their daughter to read her mother's novel, which may have influenced her decision to address a similar moral in her first work of fiction.

The notion that MWS discovered her mother through reading about her is compelling since it resembles a plot from a Gothic tale. In *The Gothic Sublime*, Vijay Mishra discusses the fact that much of Mary Shelley's knowledge of her own mother likely came from reading “narrative fragments...discovered through her father's manuscripts” (197).⁷³ Godwin's *Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) did not garner approval for his deceased wife; instead, the work generated controversy about Mary's Wollstonecraft's propriety and damaged her posthumous

⁷² Wollstonecraft's first novel *Mary: A Fiction* (1788) contains a self-educated central character and plot details inspired by the events of Wollstonecraft's life, many of which overlap with those in *Maria*.

⁷³ Mishra believes the death of MWS's mother through childbirth might be “the original moment of trauma” that made “all other deaths then repetitions (in the compulsive sense of the word) of a death that had something of an originary, almost phylogenetic status” (197).

reputation as a writer and critic. Godwin was also criticized and attacked for representing his wife in such an unfeeling manner. In many ways, what we know of Mary Shelley's life makes her a Gothic heroine.⁷⁴ She had to mature (evidently without healthy nurture) and achieve autonomy as a wife, mother, and writer, while navigating the unforgiving spotlight of her parents' literary successes and scandals.

Published shortly after Godwin's treatise *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), the novel *Caleb Williams, or Things as They Are* (1794) gave Godwin a way to present his theories on the defects of the English social system in a popularized form. Godwin's original preface was withdrawn from the first publication due to booksellers' fears that it would incriminate the author. In the original preface, Godwin identifies that despite the perceived faults of the terrorist system of novel writing, he values it as a mode that allows him to expose the horrors of his current social sphere.⁷⁵ He sees this type of genre as an ideal way to express his concern that "the spirit and character of the Government intrudes itself into every rank of society."⁷⁶ Godwin's first-person narrator Caleb Williams, a self-educated protagonist, resembles Victor Frankenstein, because in both narratives, their intense curiosity generates the primary conflict.⁷⁷ Caleb's writing talent and Victor's scientific skill—their creative energies—produce allies who become

⁷⁴ See Ellen Moers's *Female Gothic* for a discussion of the traits that make up the female Gothic.

⁷⁵ Godwin's original preface was dated May 12, 1794. One editor, Ernest A. Baker, explains, "Terror was the order of the day; and it was feared that even the humble novelist might be shown to be constructively a traitor."

⁷⁶ Godwin also writes, "But this is a truth highly worthy to be communicated to persons whom books of philosophy and science are never likely to reach. Accordingly, it was proposed, in the invention of the following work, to comprehend, as far as the progressive nature of a single story would allow, a general review of the modes of domestic and unrecorded despotism by which man becomes the destroyer of man. If the author shall have taught a valuable lesson, without subtracting from the interest and passion by which a performance of this sort ought to be characterised, he will have reason to congratulate himself upon the vehicle he has chosen."

⁷⁷ Note that Captain Walton is afraid that his being self-educated will lead to his failure. Walton's position as student to Victor Frankenstein gives Mary Shelley a way to demonstrate the importance of learning from others' prideful mistakes.

enemies, and their mutual pursuits of each other lead to tragic consequences they cannot avoid or conquer.

Both Godwin and Wollstonecraft established a precedent for their daughter by using Gothic conventions to create fictionalized versions of their sociopolitical concerns. For them, the Gothic mode of writing—with its unapologetic display of tyrannous, evil forces—was the ideal vehicle to express their dissatisfaction with the traditions and institutions that enslaved rather than freed individuals. In their philosophical writings, Godwin and Wollstonecraft also stood against these social evils by opposing another influential thinker in their day, Edmund Burke. Their disagreement with Burke plays an important role in the Gothic literary tradition because it reflects the influence of Burke's earlier theory on the sublime.

When Burke initially set out to broach the subject of the sublime in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), the term itself was a fashionable word that scholars and literary theorists were using to educate others about the qualitative properties of works of art. Adam Phillips's recent introduction to Burke's treatise explains how the term was being used in the early eighteenth century. Phillips sees the sublime as operating in that period as "a piece of jargon, a term that would identify, and could therefore be used to caricature, the modish or university educated" (x). Phillips explains that Burke recalls first reading Addison's *The Spectator* while studying at Trinity College (x).⁷⁸ It is likely then that Addison's articles "on the pleasures of the imagination" may have motivated Burke to offer his own ideas on the matter (Phillips x). In his essays, Addison mentions that great writing

⁷⁸ According to Samuel H. Monk, "There is a well-authenticated tradition that the *Enquiry* was begun when Burke was a student at Trinity College, Dublin, and that in its earliest form, it was read before the Club which he founded and sponsored" (86).

(especially dramatic poetry) can be achieved by adhering to the neoclassical principles of unity, order, and harmony, but he also alludes to Longinus as one of the few thinkers who “considered” that this type of greatness—the pleasure that the reader can experience—could be attributed to something more (Phillips x).⁷⁹ For Burke, this *something more* is what he attempts to identify as the sublime; it has the potential to excite our emotions and cause us to recognize a power greater than ourselves. However, Burke believes it is a phenomenon best understood by that which is perceptible to our senses.

To define the essence of the sublime in the *Enquiry*, Burke seeks to give it a more tangible form and in doing so, he intends to “discover what affections of the mind produce certain emotions of the body” (117).⁸⁰ The physical is crucial to Burke. For him, the body and its sensations provide an anchor that keeps the philosopher grounded and aware of his humanness. Burke links fear and terror to the sublime in this same type of relational equation: “Whatever is qualified to cause terror is a *foundation* capable of the sublime” (119).⁸¹ In Burke’s theory, the object that generates terror becomes the stable force that catapults the reader into that unstable, heightened state of awe and wonder. In an author’s pursuit of greatness in writing, he can draw from the “source of the sublime” because, as Burke reminds us, the creation of a work such as a tragedy is an act of

⁷⁹ Monk refers to Longinus’s *Peri Hupsous* or *On the Sublime* as “the pseudo-Longinian treatise” that is the “fountain-head of all ideas on the subject” even though the eighteenth-century study of the Sublime leads us “far away from the Greek critic’s views” (10). Monk also explains that William Smith’s translation of *Dionysus Longinus On the Sublime*, which was published first in 1739 and went through four editions by 1800, is the best version to help us “become familiar with the Longinian vocabulary” of the period (10).

⁸⁰ In connecting the sublime directly to the effects upon the mind and body, Burke’s concept of the word also retains the significance of the term in its rare usage as a verb, often used in the passive sense, just as the following example taken from a 1609 sermon, “Let your thoughts be sublimed by the spirit of God” (OED). The spirit of God then acts as the catalyzing agent that can transform the mind of man.

⁸¹ Italics mine.

imitation (36).⁸² The threat of terror is not real, but in appearing that way and leading others to visualize the realistic potential of such representations, the work achieves aesthetic power. Marilyn Butler summarizes Burke's theory by stating that he "holds that terror, the source of the sublime...is evoked, characteristically, by contemplating power. Power may be invested in a figure of authority, a master or a king, but ultimately it derives from God" (qtd. in Fludernik 860). Burke equates acquiring knowledge of the sublime to the traditional sense of the word in its adjectival form, as a word that denotes greatness in achievement.

One of the entries in the *OED* ("Of language, style, or a literary work: expressing noble ideas in a grand and elevated manner. Also of a writer: skilled in or noted for such a style") is from a 1586 handbook *The English Secreterie* composed by Angell Day, a stationer, who writes, "We doe finde three sortes [*sc.* of style]...to haue been generally commended. Sublime, the highest and stateliest maner, and loftiest deliuerance of anye thing that maye be, expressing the heroicall and mighty actions of Kings [etc.]." Burke is loyal to the traditional meaning of this word, but he is also fiercely loyal to the ideological concept that it represents. For him, the monarchy deserves the obedience of its subjects and to consider overthrowing such an ancient and heroic force is to commit an act of real and violent terror.

Burke's language in the *Enquiry* suggests that the process is educational for him and his readers. He frequently refers to his explanations as experimental considerations and is hesitant to claim that his theories are completely accurate although he thinks

⁸² In Section VII, entitled "Of the Sublime," Burke provides a thorough list of what he believes makes up this source: "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (36).

“something not unuseful” can be accomplished with whatever “distinct knowledge of our passions” we are able to achieve (117). Burke’s anxiety about the results of the *Enquiry* stems from his recognition that the project he undertakes is extensive and even frightening to him. Because Burke believes human understanding is limited, his analysis of the sublime—a powerful force that exists outside of ourselves—reads like a philosopher’s thoughts on an experiment he views as thrilling because it is potentially dangerous. He is painfully aware that what he is doing may be viewed as an attempt to test the limits of human knowledge, and he admits to viewing his own study in this way. In relating his investigation to study of the laws of attraction first articulated by Isaac Newton in *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (1687), Burke accuses Newton of going too far in his explanation of natural phenomena by abandoning “his usual cautious manner of philosophizing” and suggesting that the cause of these occurrences is a “subtle elastic aether” (117).⁸³ Burke sees Newton’s vagueness as an explanation of the “ultimate cause” of the phenomena, which is a crime Burke will not commit, for he warns, “That great chain of causes, which linking one to another even to the throne of God himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. When we go but one step beyond the immediately sensible qualities of things, we go out of our depth” (117). This threat of danger is central to Burke’s conception of the sublime; he uses it to create the meaning he seeks. According to Burke’s logic, his own investigation is a sublime endeavor because he fears that acquiring this knowledge may be an affront to Nature, but

⁸³ Phillips refers readers to the English translation from 1729 of Newton’s, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica*. The footnote in Phillips’s edition of the *Enquiry* offers the following supplemental information regarding Burke’s reference to Newton’s theory in this section: “Newton believed that it was the medium of aether that made motion possible. But what Burke calls this ‘subtle elastic aether’ was an unobservable explanatory hypothesis” (170).

he pursues the practice anyway in order to experience the thrilling pleasure of reminding himself that he is a finite being.⁸⁴

In the *Enquiry*, Burke makes the sublime mean something that it had not yet meant before— permission to test the limits of human knowledge as well as a fearful reminder not to overreach those boundaries. The Burkean sublime is still a lofty, noble process, but it is also a frightening one because the individual must be responsible to know when to relinquish the desire to play God. For Burke, boundaries are necessary reminders of his values and inasmuch, as he finds pleasure in testing the limits of human reason, his primary objective is to argue for the necessity of curbing the appetite overall. Rather than seeing limits as threats to the human experience of pleasure in all spheres of life—political, social, intellectual, emotional, and familial—he views them as delightful (yet painful) reminders of humanness.⁸⁵ In this respect, a close reading of Shakespeare’s play reveals that the playwright was moved to use his talent for creative expression to tell a story that offers a similar message.

The Tempest and the Sublime Wonder of the Created Thing

The Tempest opens with the threat of a frightening catastrophe. The pacing of the action in the scene is rapid. The storm is at its worst, and all who are aboard the ship prepare themselves to die. While trying to grasp for some sense of control over the chaos, the Boatswain turns to Gonzalo and appeals to his gift of persuasion, requesting that Gonzalo find a way to remove the king and his attendants from the deck. Their presence is a dangerous nuisance to the Boatswain. Even though he is their servant, the Boatswain

⁸⁴Phillips summarizes Burke’s theory of the sublime as pulling in opposite directions: “[I]f the Sublime in art is productive of delight, the Sublime in nature is a form of paralysis, a literally stunning invasion” (xxi).

⁸⁵ Phillips believes that in the *Enquiry*, “we find the beginnings of a secular language for profound human experience” (xi).

does not hesitate to challenge the authority of those figures that are utterly dependent on him in this situation. Gonzalo makes a polite attempt to put the Boatswain in his place saying, “Good, yet remember whom thou hast aboard” (1.1. 17). To this rebuke, the Boatswain responds:

None that I more love than myself. You are a councilor; if you can command these elements to silence and work peace of the present, we will not hand a rope more. Use your authority. If you cannot, give thanks you have lived so long and make yourself ready in your cabin for the mischance of the hour, if it so hap.

(1.1.18-23)

The Boatswain’s plea is a declaration of his allegiance to survival instead of a blind submission to royal authority; he knows he cannot serve the King if he cannot keep himself alive. These words also convey the Boatswain’s philosophy on man’s finite control of environmental forces. He has already proclaimed to Gonzalo that the sea will have its way by demanding, “What cares these roarers [the ocean’s waves] for the name of the king?” (1.1.15-16). Perhaps his experiences at sea have taught the Boatswain that despite our best efforts, Nature will have its way. Overall, the Boatswain’s response convinces Gonzalo that the Boatswain is destined for a different fate. Their conversation inspires Gonzalo to proclaim that the Boatswain “has no drowning mark upon him; his complexion is perfect gallows” (1.1.26).⁸⁶ Gonzalo interprets this interaction as a sign that “good Fate” (1.1.27) has destined the Boatswain to be their protection against death by drowning at sea.⁸⁷ This comforts Gonzalo and allows him to ride out the storm until

⁸⁶ The footnote in the *Norton Shakespeare* references the proverbial phrase: “He that was born to be hanged will never be drowned.”

⁸⁷ Note that Prospero’s name in Spanish and Italian means *prosperous* or *fortunate*. In this way, Shakespeare links Prospero allegorically to the “good Fate” that Gonzalo calls upon in this scene.

the scene concludes with his final line: “The wills above be done, but I would fain die a dry death” (1.1.60). Of course, as the next scene reveals, the irony here is that the storm is not the result of natural forces; it is the first move in Prospero’s godgame.

In the next scene, the audience learns that the storm is not an act of nature but a tactic of Prospero’s. The storm is a spectacular demonstration of his skill—what he and Miranda refer to as *art* and Caliban later labels *sorcery*—but Prospero does not conjure the waves simply because he can. The tempest is not a prideful display of power without purpose. We come to understand through Miranda, who is more like Prospero’s pupil than she is his daughter, that Prospero has been biding his time for this exact moment. This is an elaborate production prompted by a serious motive and executed with an educative goal. Miranda’s reaction to the storm shows that she is fully aware that her father is capable of creating such a disastrous occurrence:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems, would poor down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to th’ welkin’s cheek,
Dashes the fire out. (1.2.1-5).

Miranda’s description of the terrible, horrifying aspects of the shipwreck recalls Longinus’s discussion of the ways to “infuse sublimity into our writings,” where he suggests that “it proceeds from his application of the most formidable incidents that the Poet [Homer] excels so much in describing tempests” (49).⁸⁸ Miranda’s words elevate the

⁸⁸ The quotation is from William Smith’s (1752) translation of *On the Sublime*. In this section, Smith provides lengthy footnotes on Shakespeare’s description of the storm in *King Lear*, urging that Shakespeare “has, with inimitable art, made use of a storm” to show the “piteous condition of those who are expos’d to it in open air; one almost hears the wind and thunder, and beholds the flashes of lightning” (56).

storm to the status of a frighteningly fatal disaster. In her words, the cries of those on board “did knock against my heart” (1.2.8-9). She even proclaims them all dead although she is not certain it is so. Before Prospero speaks, Miranda tells him what she thinks she has seen, and it is disturbing enough to cause her great emotional distress.

Miranda does not automatically trust that Prospero’s intentions are benevolent; instead, she is frightened enough to believe that he is responsible for the deaths of those “poor souls” (1.2.9). Perhaps in an effort to suggest that her father is not worthy of his god-like power, Miranda concludes her first monologue with the following implied directive: “Had I been any god of power, I would / Have sunk the sea within the earth, or ere / It should the good ship so have swallowed and / The fraughting souls within her” (1.2.13). Evidently, Miranda is aware that her father is capable of being seen as a “god of power,” or at least she is able to recognize that he views himself in this way. But just as Miranda’s name indicates, she is left to wonder why her father would use his art to manipulate the elements to endanger others instead of protecting them.⁸⁹ As Miranda inquires after father’s purpose, her language reveals an element of the sublime in writing.

William Smith’s commentary in his translation of Longinus’s *On the Sublime* (1752) refers to Shakespeare’s greatness as a poet by mentioning his use of the storm in *Lear*, but Smith does not discuss the shipwreck from *The Tempest*. However, Smith does refer to “a description of a tempest” in Psalm 107, “which runs in a very high vein of Sublimity” (55). Smith claims that the psalmist’s description “has more spirit in it” than those Longinus selects from the classical “authors of antiquity” for the following reasons:

[W]hen the storm is in all its rage, and the danger become extreme, almighty

Power is introduced to calm at once the roaring main, and give preservation to the

⁸⁹ The gloss in the *Norton Shakespeare* indicates, “*Miranda* in Latin means ‘admirable’ or ‘wondering.’”

miserable distressed. It ends in that fervency of devotion, which such grand occurrences are fitted to raise in the minds of the thoughtful. (56)

According to Smith's criterion, Miranda's idea to "sink the sea within the earth" (1.2.11) —as opposed to letting it swallow up the ship and the souls aboard—is as sublime as the psalmist's description of the Lord's protection of "the children of men" (*KJV*; Psalm 107.31). Miranda is truly *admirable* because her motives as well as her words are sublime. Her descriptive language informs the imagination of the early modern viewer and enables Shakespeare to demonstrate his skill as a poet capable of sublimity of style.

As the scene continues, Prospero reveals his past and his plan to Miranda, but instead of speaking to her in a simple, informative manner, he makes a production out of this conversation. Prospero's actions appear to be choreographed by his own method. He asks Miranda to "Lend thy hand, and pluck my magic garment from me" (1.2.23-24), before playing the role of "schoolmaster" (1.2.173), and he stands to put the garment on again after he has taught her the lesson of his misfortunes. He directs Miranda into postures befitting an obedient pupil, telling her to "Sit down" to "know farther" (1.2.32-33), and he chastises her repeatedly for not listening even though her responses indicate that she is completely focused on every word of his tale, which she says, "would cure deafness" (1.2.107). Prospero's movements are not simply those that a playwright carefully, seamlessly constructs to further the plot and develop each of his characters. Prospero's theatricality, like his magic, is a skill he uses to maintain control.

The story of Prospero's banishment to the island is a frightening tale of deception and corruption. He spares no detail as he relates to Miranda the complicated ways that his brother—her uncle—Antonio managed to turn Prospero's great strength of learning into

a weakness. According to Prospero, his own interest and unparalleled success in studying the “liberal arts” (1.2.73) kept him “transported and rapt in secret studies” (1.2.76-77). He confesses to Miranda that for this reason, “The government I cast upon my brother” (1.2.75), which gave Antonio the opportunity to usurp Prospero’s dukedom and collaborate with the enemy, the King of Naples, to raise a “treacherous army” (1.2.128) and send Prospero and a young, tearful Miranda outside the gates of Milan “i’th dead of darkness” (1.2.130). Upon hearing how close Prospero and Miranda came to destruction and that their only means of escape was a “rotten carcass” (1.2.146) of a boat, so unprepared for the roaring sea that “the very rats instinctively have quit it” (1.2.147-148), the audience may begin to understand Prospero’s purpose for conjuring the shipwreck that troubled his daughter. Prospero does not only want to return to the kingdom that is rightly his; he wants to punish the brother who took it from him. Prospero’s own experience has taught him that facing the threat of death while at sea might be a fitting punitive measure for the ones who placed him in a similar situation.

Instead of confessing to Miranda the motives that led to planning the tempest, Prospero focuses on the blessing that banishment has provided for them. He offers an initial conclusion to the tale saying, “Here in this island we arrived, and here / Have I thy schoolmaster made thee more profit / Than other princes can, that have more time / For vainer hours and tutors not so careful” (1.2.172-175). In this way, he is commending himself for making the most of their circumstances by giving her an exemplary education. Dutifully, Miranda offers her thanks, but then she reminds her father of the question that is still “beating in my mind” (1.2.177). For it seems that in the midst of his storytelling, Prospero forgets that Miranda is most eager to know his “reason for raising

this sea-storm” (1.2.177-178). The answer he provides is curious. It reveals Prospero’s hopeful belief that astrological forces are now working in his favor, as well as his fearful anxiety about whether he will be successful in joining them:

By accident most strange, bountiful Fortune,
Now my dear lady, hath mine enemies
Brought to this shore; and by my prescience
I find my zenith doth depend upon
A most auspicious star, whose influence
If now I court not, but omit, my fortunes
Will ever after droop. (1.2.179-185)

After this confession, Prospero commands Miranda to stop questioning him; evidently, her lessons are over for now. In this scene, we are never able to hear if Miranda believes her father’s use of his god-like power was justified; in fact, we are not even able to see if she fully understands his motives because he places her in a deep sleep before she is able to respond.

While Miranda sleeps, Ariel relates the events of the shipwreck to Prospero in a way that delights the magus. Through Ariel’s report, we learn that his assignment was not just to use his control of the elements to maneuver the ship toward the island but to terrify those aboard:

I boarded the King’s ship. Now on the beak,
Now in the waste, the deck, in every cabin,
I flamed amazement. Sometimes I’d divide,
And burn in many places; on the top-mast,

The yards, and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly;

Then meet and join. (1.2.197-202)

The spirit has been instructed well in the art of striking terror in the hearts of his master's enemies. Ariel continues his narration, but he shifts his focus from simply describing his actions to comparing them to those of Jove and Neptune. From Ariel's perspective, he is faster than "Jove's lightning," which precedes the "dreadful thunderclaps" (1.2.202-203), and the fire Ariel caused frightens "the most mighty Neptune," making "his bold waves tremble" and "his dread trident shake" (1.2.205-207).⁹⁰ Ariel's handiwork rivals that of the gods, and his motivation seems to come from a desire to please and appease Prospero. The tasks Prospero assigns to Ariel expose Prospero's belief that to achieve greatness he must keep himself in Fortune's favor by performing feats that rival those created by Nature.

Immediately after praising Ariel for his bravery, it becomes clear that Prospero's motives go beyond revenge and eventual restitution—he wants his enemies to become so shaken by this disastrous event that they begin to lose their minds. He asks Ariel if anyone aboard was strong enough to resist letting "this coil infect his reason?" (1.2.209). Ariel replies, "Not a soul but felt a fever of the mad and played some tricks of desperation" (1.2.210). Ironically, both Ariel and Prospero seem most pleased with Ferdinand's horrified reaction of being "the first man that leaped; [crying] 'Hell is empty, and all the devils are here'" (1.2.215-216). Even though he is King Alonso's son,

⁹⁰ When Longinus describes what "those god-like writers had in view, who laboured so much in raising their compositions to the highest pitch of the Sublime," he explains that Nature is responsible for the impulse. His theory is Nature "implanted in his Soul an invincible love of Grandeur, and a constant Emulation of whatever seems to approach nearer to Divinity than himself... Thus the Impulse of Nature inclines us to admire, not a little clear transparent Rivulet that ministers to our Necessities, but the Nile, the Ister, the Rhine, or still much more, the Ocean. We are never surprized [sic] at the sight of a small Fire that burns clear, and blazes out on our own private Hearth, but view with Amaze the celestial Fires, tho' they are often obscured by Vapours and Eclipses" (84-85).

Ferdinand is actually quite innocent—he has not harmed Prospero, and he could not have been involved in Prospero and Miranda’s banishment. Evidently, Prospero’s plans are not for his enemies alone. Ferdinand’s life is not in danger, but his ability to reason for himself may be significantly altered, a consequence that Prospero does not consider erroneous.

If we examine the series of Prospero’s interactions with other characters in Act 1, Scene 2—the longest scene in the play—we can identify how Prospero manages those under his command. Prospero’s actions in *The Tempest* are formulaic.⁹¹ He is consistent in his authoritative method, which is to test his subjects’ obedience by reminding them of their indebtedness to him and then threatening to work against them if they do not do as he pleases. His interactions with the inhabitants of the isle follow this pattern, which he then repeats with those he brings there to punish. Prospero acts as father, master, and educator to Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban, and he does not hesitate to manipulate each one by threatening to take away the quality they desire most: individual freedom. First, he silences Miranda’s questions by placing her in a deep sleep. Later, he inexplicably forces her eyelids to close until he is ready to place Ferdinand on display before her. Like a stage magician, he directs her to lift “the fringed curtains of thine eye” (1.2.412) to see Ferdinand for the first time. This action allows for another of Prospero’s ploys to happen.

⁹¹ The textual note in the *Norton Shakespeare* explains that the text of *The Tempest*, the only print version being created for the First Folio (1623), “seems to have been prepared with care.” According to Greenblatt, “certain features of this transcription have led scholars to the conclusion that it was done by Ralph Crane” (“The Tempest” 3062). There are 505 lines in 1.2, making it one of the longest scenes in Shakespeare’s canon. 1.2. of *The Winter’s Tale* is 465 lines long which makes sense considering these two plays were composed around the same time and both were likely to have been set from a transcript prepared by Crane. 5.2 of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* contains 904 lines. 2.2 of *Hamlet* has 580 lines, but along with dialogue, this scene also includes the First Player’s speech, which is another play within the play (the one that precedes *The Mousetrap*). In addition, the textual histories of both *Love’s Labour’s Lost* and *Hamlet* are far more complicated than that of *The Tempest*. It is difficult to know exactly how long Shakespeare intended any of these scenes to be, but in the case of *The Tempest*, we might consider the possibility that Shakespeare intended 1.2 to be one long scene that focuses on Prospero as the central figure.

Miranda's future happiness is secured through marriage to Ferdinand. "They are both in either's powers," he explains, but the cunning mastermind is not content with this "swift business" (1.1.454). He has yet to teach Ferdinand how to respect his most prized possession. Prospero's control over Miranda is primarily that of a concerned father. Prospero wants to test Ferdinand's love for Miranda in order to gain confidence in the young man's character. However, even in this endeavor, Prospero cannot resist his desire to "make too rash a trial out of him" (2.1.471).⁹²

With Ariel, Prospero's motives are more difficult to discern. His attitude toward Ariel is often inconsistent, and reveals the darker side of Prospero's dealings with others. Prospero responds both kindly and cruelly toward Ariel, and frequently, it appears as though Ariel has more power than the great Magus does. Once the spirit reminds Prospero of the promises he has made to set him free, Prospero responds with harsh reminders that Ariel is Prospero's subject, and his freedom must be earned. However, Prospero needs Ariel to accomplish his purposes, and for this reason, the scene reveals more about Prospero's weaknesses than his strengths. As he has just done with Miranda, Prospero seeks to teach Ariel who he is by re-telling the frightening story of Ariel's origins: "I must once in a month recount what thou hast been, which thou forget'st" (1.2.264-265). Like Miranda, Ariel does not seem to have forgotten the details, but Prospero speaks condescendingly, as though Ariel is ungrateful and needs to be reminded of Prospero's greatness. In this way, Prospero models for Ariel an authoritative rule that is fueled by insecurity and inadequacy. Ariel responds to Prospero's threat of punishment by offering gratitude, and as the scene progresses, Prospero repeatedly marvels at Ariel's

⁹² This is Miranda's protest to her father, indicating again that perhaps Miranda has seen her father treat others with unwarranted harshness before this occurrence.

skillfulness, promising, “Delicate Ariel, I’ll set thee free for this” (1.2.446). Ariel submits and does his master’s bidding throughout the remainder of the play, but the lesson Ariel has learned is not lost. He has witnessed the potential for cruelty in his master, and it is likely that this interaction inspires Ariel to wait for the perfect moment to appeal to Prospero’s softer side and gently remind him of the greatness that comes from kindness.

Prospero has god-like power but not complete control over all of the events of his life, and as a result, the entire play consists of a series of tableaux that displays the strategies of his godgame, which ends in his eventual surrender.⁹³ Often, Prospero is successful at seeing his plans come to fruition, but ultimately, he accepts the status of being more human than divine because Ariel creates an opportunity for Prospero to recognize the sublimity of human nature. As witness to all of Prospero’s interactions and maneuvers, Ariel possesses the insight necessary to convince Prospero to “abjure” his “rough magic” (5.1.50-51), but the airy spirit seems to bide his time until Prospero is ready to accept his limitations and embrace his humanness.

After Prospero has successfully “hunted” (4.1.258) his enemies and they are “confined together” by Prospero’s charms, Ariel instructs Prospero in his next steps. At first, Prospero speaks with hopeful confidence about the successful completion of his “project” (5.1.1), which he admits can be completed only with Ariel’s assistance.⁹⁴ In this moment, Ariel seems to recognize the experimental nature of Prospero’s actions—perhaps Prospero is now unsure of the right way to use his power over his enemies. Ariel

⁹³ In Harold Bloom’s *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Bloom criticizes *The Tempest* as having no plot. Bloom sees the play’s structure as a weakness, whereas, I consider this pattern to be one of the play’s strengths. These episodes revolve around Prospero’s educational strategy, and the trajectory we witness is the teacher becoming the pupil.

⁹⁴ The footnote in *The Norton Shakespeare* explains that the word *project* “suggests an alchemical projection or experiment” (3107).

then uses emotional manipulation to persuade Prospero in what he should do by stating, “Your charm so strongly works ‘em that if you now beheld them your affections would become tender” (5.1.17-19). Prospero’s response is to question whether Ariel’s feelings would be the same, and the spirit wisely answers, “Mine would, sir, were I human” (5.1.20). Ariel’s appeal to Prospero’s humanness is both convincing and convicting to Prospero, primarily because Prospero realizes that Ariel has taught him something that he should have already known: “The rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance” (5.1.27-28). In spite of Ariel’s being “but air” (5.1.21), the spirit has empathy for Prospero’s enemies. The pain and sadness Ariel experiences while seeing them under Prospero’s debilitating spell convinces Prospero to relinquish his overreaching “fury” and feel the emotions that are associated with his “nobler reason” (5.1.26). In effect, Ariel teaches his proud, powerful, and ambitious ruler to be human.

Clearly, Ariel has the power to influence his master. So, why does he wait for this particular moment to advise him in this way? Ariel seems to have known all along that Prospero’s powers, while great, are limited. However, Ariel has also observed that Prospero’s methods of control hinge upon his desire to cause others to learn their lessons the hard way. Prospero’s strategy employs manipulation, fear, and psychological distress in order to achieve the submission of his subjects. As Prospero’s assistant, Ariel has witnessed his penchant for the dramatic spectacle of imitating nature’s greatness by “calling forth the mutinous winds” (5.1.42) and giving fire “to the dread rattling thunder” (5.1. 44-45). With this knowledge—as well as having been the means of accomplishing such acts—Ariel waits to teach Prospero what it means to be human until Prospero has encountered an element in nature that he cannot mold in his own image—Caliban.

Both Prospero and Caliban are educated by the fear of each other. Throughout the play, Prospero is most threatened by Caliban's unruly ways, and Caliban is the recipient of Prospero's most violent, threatening tactics. The backstory the audience receives comes from Caliban himself as he angrily responds to Prospero's desperate attempts to manage his "poisonous slave" (1.2.323). In this way, Caliban reverses the pattern that Shakespeare has presented in this scene. Caliban tells Prospero the story of his origin—as he remembers it—before Prospero is able to take on, once again, the role of educator to this uncouth pupil. Of course, this is the dynamic that we are to assume has existed on the island before the action of the play begins.

Caliban's version of the events is emotionally intriguing. After witnessing Prospero's discipline of Miranda and Ariel, it is not difficult to imagine that his words might be true:

This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother
Which thou tak'st from. When thou cam'st first,
Thou strok'st me and made much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in't, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night; and then I loved thee,
And showed thee all the qualities o'th'isle,
The fresh springs, brine-pits, barren place and fertile—
Cursed be I that did so! (2.1.334-342)

Caliban's claim to the island as his own—his rightful inheritance, which Prospero has taken from him—is reminiscent of Prospero's own loss of the dukedom of Milan. Just as

Antonio took advantage of Prospero's knowledge and used it to banish Prospero from his home, Prospero learned the secrets of the island—"All the charms of Sycorax" (1.2.342-343)—from Caliban and then banished him from "the rest of the island" (1.2.347). The relationship between Prospero and Caliban is symbiotic; they are far more akin than Prospero would like to admit. Each time Prospero attempts to neglect or avoid Caliban, he is unable to do so.

In the middle of the wedding masque, which Prospero conjures with Ariel's crucial assistance, Prospero stops suddenly and becomes enraged as he remembers, "that foul conspiracy of the beast Caliban and his confederates against my life" (4.1.139-141). Even though at this point Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo are truly harmless, Prospero is so troubled by the thought of Caliban's scheme that he explains to Ferdinand, "Sir, I am vexed. / Bear with my weakness. My old brain is troubled. / Be not disturbed with my infirmity" (4.1.158-169).⁹⁵ Evidently, Caliban is able to afflict Prospero with the same type of psychological, emotional distress that Prospero enjoys administering to others.

Prospero is so visibly affected by Caliban's disobedience and his obstinate desire for independence from Prospero's rule that the magus temporarily contemplates the justice in torturing him:

A devil, a born devil, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick; on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost,
And, as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all
Even to roaring. (4.1.188-193).

⁹⁵ Ariel did not mention them to Prospero simply for fear that he "might anger" him (4.1.69).

In Prospero's mind, the greatest justification for his hatred toward Caliban is his belief that Caliban has an evil nature. Prospero sees his initial attempt to treat Caliban "with human care" (1.2.349) as a futile effort because it is likely Prospero may never have believed Caliban to be capable of goodness—even before Caliban's alleged attempt to "violate the honour" of Miranda (1.2.350-351). Of course, this incident is reason enough for Prospero to establish boundaries to protect his daughter. And, as we can see by Prospero's methods of managing and educating Miranda and Ariel, his efforts are more about his own needs being met than his genuine concern for the moral development of his subjects.⁹⁶ In Prospero's mind, no amount of learning will alter Caliban's villainous ways.⁹⁷ For this reason, Prospero offers the following as his argument for Caliban's enforced confinement: "But thy vile race, though thou didst learn, had that in't which good natures could not abide to be with" (1.2.361-363). However, as the play progresses, it becomes clear that Prospero's desire to punish and abuse Caliban stems from the frightening realization that Caliban—like Sycorax, a witch "so strong / That could control the moon / And deal in her command without her power" (5.1.272-274)—is a force Prospero cannot manipulate for his own successful ends.

In the play's final scene, Prospero does manage to subdue Caliban but only after he calls him his own, claiming "This thing of darkness I / acknowledge mine" (5.1.278-279). At this point, Prospero has already drowned his book, abandoned his desire for

⁹⁶ When Miranda tells her father that Caliban is "a villain, sir, / I do not love to look on" (1.2.313-314), Prospero's reply does not even consider his daughter's need for safety. Instead, he likens Caliban to a necessary evil: "But as 'tis, / We cannot miss him. / He does make our fire, / Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices / That profit us" (1.2.313-316).

⁹⁷ The following quoted material is from a speech assigned to Miranda in the text, but I agree with the many editors who think the designation could be a print error and believe Prospero to be the speaker here. The lines do not fit with Miranda's character; furthermore, the content of this speech responds to the complaints Caliban directed toward Prospero. It is unlikely that Prospero would let such accusations go without a response of his own.

revenge by offering forgiveness to his enemies, and granted Ariel freedom. In his own words, he will no longer use his “potent art” to “work mine ends upon their senses” (5.1.50, 53). Now, the only roles Prospero will assume are that of father and rightful King. In accepting Caliban as his, Prospero makes himself a father to the being he calls “demi-devil” and “bastard” (5.1.275-276). But fathering Caliban does not mean Prospero is willing to take responsibility for Caliban’s evil nature.⁹⁸ To Prospero, Caliban is still intractable; he is more animal than human and, therefore, Prospero does not alter the assignment he has for him. As the play ends, Prospero is restored to the throne while Caliban returns to the role of domestic servant.

As a successful playwright, theater shareholder, and father, Shakespeare had much in common with King James; both held positions of political, social, and cultural power and both were aware that the decisions they made within those spheres had far-reaching implications. Shakespeare uses repeated dichotomies in *The Tempest*—master/servant, father/child, and teacher/pupil—to offer his King a story that would display the powerful magnificence and responsibility of authority. The relational dynamics that exist between Prospero and others allows Shakespeare to reinforce his belief that the theater, like the monarchy, can inspire greatness as well as obedience. In this way, Shakespeare uses his art to offer a moral that echoes Longinus’s ideas about the sublime. Longinus believes that writers struggle to achieve sublimity in their writing because “Nature never designed Man to be a grov’ling ungenerous Animal but brought him into Life, and placed him in the World, as in a crowded Theatre, not to be an idle Spectator, but spurr’d on by an eager Thrift of excelling, ardently in the Pursuit of Glory”

⁹⁸ Caliban “is as disproportioned in his manners / As in his shape,” and so Prospero’s final command is to send him to Prospero’s cell where to receive the pardon he seeks, Caliban must “trim it handsomely” (5.1.297).

(84). For Shakespeare, the pursuit of glory comes in one final opportunity to highlight the fearful wonder to be found in the type of storytelling that holds us captive and teaches us how to live.

From Tempest to Torment

Shakespeare uses Miranda, Ariel, and Caliban to highlight the moral progression of Prospero's character in the same manner that Shelley creates through Victor Frankenstein's relationships with Captain Robert Walton, Henry Clerval, and the creature. Shakespeare opens *The Tempest* with the threat of a sea storm, and as the drama unfolds, the audience comes to understand its importance through the parent-child, student-teacher dynamic he establishes between Prospero and Miranda. Likewise, Shelley begins *Frankenstein* with the description of a frightening moment at sea that forges a similar relationship between Walton and Victor Frankenstein. Just as Miranda marvels at Prospero's skill and wisdom, Captain Walton admires Victor and listens attentively to his frightening tale.⁹⁹ Unlike Miranda, Walton is not forced into a subordinate position; instead, he seems to choose it. Miranda is a frightened daughter and pupil, who must obey her father's commands. She marvels at Prospero's magic, showing him reverence, but the play suggests that she has no other choice. Walton, however, longs for someone he admires to be in a position of authority over him.

⁹⁹ I first began seeing areas of comparison between Walton and Miranda while reading Marilyn Butler's editorial comments in the 1818 text of *Frankenstein*. In Butler's introduction, she explains that Walton's admiration for Victor is "immature" because he "yearn[s] to follow his [Frankenstein's] last bad advice, to sacrifice the lives of the crew in a push to the North Pole." In Appendix A, Butler's lists the differences between the 1818 and 1831 editions of the novel, and she claims, "Walton acquires a gentle, almost feminine character, literariness, and an even greater propensity than in 1818 to hero-worship Frankenstein." Walton's child-like, feminine qualities make him comparable to Miranda. In *The Tempest*, Miranda is Prospero's child and a female character, but Shakespeare imbues her with qualities that challenge the often negative, stereotypical associations related to these traits. She questions her father's motives but remains dutiful and obedient. Miranda does not "hero-worship" Prospero in the same way that Walton adores Frankenstein.

The novel's first few pages consist of the framing device of Walton's letters home to his sister, and in them, Walton reveals that his adventures have a sublime purpose.

Although the practical goals of his voyage are to explore a place that has been a source of "beauty and delight" to his imagination and to satisfy his "ardent curiosity" with the sight of this unexplored region (44), Walton also admits that he believes these discoveries "are sufficient to conquer all fear of danger or death" (45). Even as he is writing about these aspirations, Walton is able to combat the feelings of despair he was experiencing before contacting his sister. He writes, "These reflections have dispelled the agitation with which I began my letter, and I feel my heart glow with an enthusiasm which elevates me to heaven; for nothing contributes so much to tranquillize the mind as a steady purpose,—a point on which the soul may fix its intellectual eye" (45). His words convey a state of sublime ecstasy, where the fears that plague his mind are immobilized, and then replaced by the prospect of a noble, lofty goal. Walton also reminds his sister that he had once before tried to abandon this dream of "embark[ing] in a seafaring life" but instead sought to replace it with the goal of becoming a great poet:

These visions faded when I perused, for the first time, those poets whose effusions entranced my soul, and lifted it to heaven. I also became a poet, and for one year lived in a Paradise of my own creation; I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated. (45)

In comparing his current emotional state to his failed attempt at becoming a poet, Walton reveals that he is constantly searching for some alchemical agent that will enact the subliming process and turn his dreams and aspirations into a wondrous reality.

In Walton's mind, the powerful catalyst he seeks is a friend. Walton expresses what he "feels as a most severe evil. I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection" (47). These confessions set the stage for us to recognize that Walton's perceived need for Frankenstein's influence is of powerful significance to him. His longing for a companion is not simply a selfish desire for solace or entertainment; he is seeking the panacea to remedy what he sees as "the still greater evil to me that I am self-educated" (48). Essentially, Walton is in need of a parent and teacher, someone, as he puts it, "to amend or approve my plans" and "repair the faults of your poor brother" (48).¹⁰⁰ Walton's fears about not being educationally equipped are tied to his desire to accomplish "some great purpose" (46); he is afraid that because his "education was neglected" (45), he will fail once again in his pursuit of glory.

What Victor Frankenstein offers to Walton by telling him of his failed experiment creates the novel's first link to the connection between sublimity and the Gothic pedagogy of education by fear. Walton fears that his lack of education will inhibit his future success, but Frankenstein's narration of the events of his own life shows Walton that a complete education can lead to terrible consequences if the pupil uses his knowledge for selfish gain. In other words, Shelley uses the form and the content of the novel to suggest that an individual who is in the role of educator—either to a child or to a

¹⁰⁰ Note that Walton compares his own imaginative capabilities to the task of a painter who has great potential but lacks the training necessary to achieve greatness. He confesses, "It is true that I have thought more, and that my day dreams are more extended and magnificent; but they want (as the painters call it) keeping; and I greatly need a friend who would have sense enough not to despise me as romantic, and affection enough for me to endeavour to regulate my mind" (48).

friend—must recognize knowledge that is offered and used without nurture and affection is a horrible evil.

Frankenstein's narrative teaches Walton another frightening lesson.

Unfortunately, Frankenstein's experiences have shown him that even the type of friendship that Walton seeks is not a guarantee against failure and disappointment. For Victor, his dearest companions, Henry Clerval and Elizabeth Lavenza, suffer the consequences of his mistakes. This tragic aspect of the novel is one of the major divergences from Shakespeare's plot in *The Tempest*. In the same way that Ariel is a source of delight for Prospero, Clerval is a joyful companion to Frankenstein.¹⁰¹ However, in the play, Ariel's companionship helps Prospero avoid catastrophe and achieve true greatness by convincing him to show kindness to his enemies. Despite his efforts, Clerval is unable to maintain a similar influence on Frankenstein.

Clerval's friendship with Frankenstein plays a pivotal role in Shelley's representation of Gothic sublimity in the novel. Clerval represents the positive effects of the sublime, which stands in stark contrast to Frankenstein who is associated with the negative aspects of this very same aesthetic. Shelley uses Clerval to remind Frankenstein of the nurturing elements found in nature, which emphasizes Frankenstein's fatal flaw of failing to emulate them. Clerval's surprise visit to Frankenstein occurs right after that "dreary night of November" (80) when Frankenstein gave life to the creature, and then, with feelings of disgust and horror, he abandoned it. Ironically, Clerval's presence brings Frankenstein immediate relief and reminds him of his own loving family. In this moment,

¹⁰¹ Victor tells Walton the following about Clerval's qualities as a childhood friend and constant companion: "Henry Clerval was the son of a merchant of Geneva, an intimate friend of my father. He was a boy of singular talent and fancy. I remember when he was only nine years old he wrote a fairy tale which was the delight and amazement of all his companions" (62).

Clerval is a clarifying agent for the reader. If Shelley intended for the novel to be a defense of the creature, then this sequence of events highlights Frankenstein's selfishness. Clerval provides the emotional support and care that Victor needs, but no one is there to play that role for the creature.

The next time Clerval and Frankenstein are together is after the creature presents himself to Frankenstein and demands that he create a companion, "a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself" (170). Mellor describes the reunion between Clerval and Frankenstein as "a moment of innocence regained" for the two friends as they "find ecstasy" (137) in viewing the picturesque quality of their surroundings. In recounting this scene to Walton, Frankenstein calls attention to the differences between himself and Clerval, suggesting that Walton would find a greater affinity with Clerval because "He [Clerval] was alive to every new scene; joyful when he saw the beauties of the setting sun and more happy when he saw it rise and recommence a new day" (178).¹⁰² In Frankenstein's memory, Clerval seems to have been teaching him to how to distinguish between the sublime and the beautiful. As they gaze upon the lake in front of them, Clerval offers the following description:

I have seen this lake agitated by a tempest, when the wind tore up whirlwinds of water and gave you an idea of what the water-spout must be on the great ocean—and the waves dash with fury on the base of the mountain, where the priest and his mistress were overwhelmed by an avalanche and where their dying voices are

¹⁰² Among the many statements of comparison that Frankenstein makes, the following sentences stand out as remarkable for their emphasis on the juxtaposition of the two characters: "If I lay at the bottom of the boat; and, as I gazed on the cloudless blue sky, I seemed to drink in a tranquility to which I had long been a stranger. And if these were my sensations, who can describe those of Henry? He felt as if he had been transported to fairy land and enjoyed a happiness seldom tasted by man" (179). Clerval is capable of experiencing a sublime transcendence that is positive and peaceful; Frankenstein, however, associates himself with Gothic sublimity, which views heavenly aspirations from a position below and paralyzes him with the fear that such positive emotions are out of his grasp.

still said to be heard amid the pauses of the night wind. I have seen the mountains of La Valais and the Pays de Vaud, but this country, Victor, pleases me more than all those wonders. The mountains of Switzerland are more majestic and strange, but there is a charm in the banks of this divine river that I never before saw equalled. Look at that castle which overhangs yon precipice; and that also, on the island, almost concealed among the foliage of those lovely trees; and now that group of labourers coming from among their vines; and that village half-hid in the recess of the mountain. Oh! surely the spirit that inhabits and guards this place has a soul more in harmony with man than those who pile the glacier or retire to the inaccessible peaks of the mountains of our own country. (179)

Mellor uses this moment in the novel to assert that Clerval is an “idealized figure” (137) because he prefers the beautiful to the sublime and offers the greatest contrast to Frankenstein’s depraved state. While I agree with Mellor’s analysis, I think it is important to note that while Clerval does value the sublime wonder and strange mystery of the high precipices, he finds greater *pleasure* in the beauty of the river bank because of its close connection to man. This is a position that Frankenstein chooses to resist because he believes he is doomed to solitude, and yet he takes pride in it. He seems to believe that his pain and suffering makes him exceptional. As Ariel does when he speaks to Prospero, Clerval reminds us of the power of the poet who is capable of creating the sublime experience that focuses our attention on otherworldly realms but does not allow us to remain there.

Frankenstein, however, refuses to be moved in the same manner as Clerval. Frankenstein reminisces to Walton about how he responded then to Clerval’s perspective,

and his words reveal a condescending attitude and the egoism of one who views himself as the tragic, romantic hero, doomed to a most miserable fate:

I smiled at the enthusiasm of my friend and remembered with a sigh the period when my eyes would have glistened with joy to behold the scenes which I now viewed. But the recollection of those days was too painful; I must shut out all thought to enjoy tranquility, and that reflection alone is sufficient to poison every pleasure. (180)¹⁰³

Through Clerval, Shelley wants us to see that her novel's protagonist could have chosen a different philosophical perspective—one that may have kept him from engaging in his dangerous scientific experiment. In creating a physical monster that eventually destroys him, Frankenstein is the victim of his own strategy. In essence, Frankenstein prefers Gothic sublimity. He chooses to be educated by fear, and the unfortunate consequence is that Victor teaches his creature, by example, to use a similar pedagogical approach to enact revenge against his creator.

Murdering Frankenstein's bride, Elizabeth Lavenza, is the creature's final attempt to punish his master, but it is also the perfect opportunity for the creature to show Victor that he has been well taught. Many readers feel that this murder, which takes place on Victor's wedding night, is the climax of the novel because from this point forward, Victor

¹⁰³ This quotation is from the 1816/1817 draft, and according to Robinson, it did not remain in the text of the novel after "the proof stage in late October 1817" (250). In the original editions of the novel, Frankenstein is far less heroic, except for the fact that he sees his status as an isolated genius as something to be admired. In the 1831 edition, especially, Shelley seems invested in granting him more emotionally sympathetic, chivalric qualities. Consider the following content that replaced this quotation in both the 1818 and 1831 editions. Frankenstein responds to Clerval's observations with what he calls a "gush of sorrow" (86) in tribute to his murdered friend. Notice that in these sentences, Frankenstein also praises his friend for his poetic sensibilities: "Clerval! Beloved friend! Even now it delights me to record your words and to dwell on the praise of which you are so eminently deserving. He was a being formed in the 'very poetry of nature.' His wild and enthusiastic imagination was chastened by the sensibility of his heart" (86).

directs his energies toward revenge and destruction. Prior to this incident, Frankenstein spends most of his time trying to avoid the creature and escape from the reality of his situation, all the while subjecting himself to an emotional torture that often borders on self-flagellation. Victor's wedding night is the pivotal moment that Frankenstein has been anticipating from the moment that he gave his monster life; murder is the punishment he seems to believe he deserves although he is not certain whether he or Elizabeth will be the one to die.

Similarly, the wedding masque that Prospero creates to celebrate the upcoming marriage of his daughter is the dramatic apex of *The Tempest*. The spectacular performance is interrupted unexpectedly by the reminder that Caliban is a threat to Prospero's wellbeing. However, Prospero comes to the realization on his own—a frightening realization for him, but it anticipates Prospero's redemptive act of choosing to acknowledge that Caliban belongs to him. By comparison, Victor's own wedding night is cut short because Victor stubbornly avoids taking any responsibility for the meeting the needs of the creature. From the creature's perspective, not only has his parent ignored his basic needs of attachment, his creator has denied him the right to companionship with one of his kind. By going through with his own wedding after destroying any possibility of the creature being able to experience similar happiness, Frankenstein's narcissism is at its peak. But once the creature's revenge has been executed, Frankenstein reflects, "No creature had ever been so miserable as I was; so frightful an event was single upon earth" (220). In murdering Frankenstein's closest companions, the creature succeeds in taking away Frankenstein's hope for happiness, but more importantly, the monster's actions cause Frankenstein to identify with the feelings the creature has experienced throughout

his life. These are the feelings of devastating terror, what Burke refers to as the “the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling” (59), that Shelley hopes will “speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror.”¹⁰⁴ Frankenstein and his monster both act as catalysts for the sublime terror that Shelley wants to evoke so that her story will help her achieve the literary greatness expected of her.

In keeping with the conventions of the genre that Shelley is emulating, she allows both Victor and his monster to prioritize the dramatic nature of their conflict. They both take pleasure in their own potential to generate feelings of dread and terror in each other. Victor calls his eventual death the inevitable “fulfillment of my destiny” (192), while the creature feels that he has no other option but to destroy his creator. Theirs is a symbiotic relationship. Like Prospero and Caliban, they are more alike than they would like to accept. At times, they revel in the strife that exists between them; it gives them purpose. The creature desires to be acknowledged as Frankenstein’s own, but tragically, this desire will never be fulfilled. However, the novel’s conclusion reveals that the creature is able to become like and subsequently replace his master.

The creature’s final words, spoken to Walton while they look upon Frankenstein’s dead body, echo those spoken by Frankenstein throughout much of the novel. Just as Frankenstein viewed himself as one falling from the idealism of his youth into an isolated figure, destined for doom, the creature describes himself by stating the following:

¹⁰⁴ The quotation is from the preface to the 1831 edition where Shelley explains in detail about the ghost story competition that allegedly inspired her to write the novel. I include it here in full: “I busied myself to think of a story—a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be unworthy of its name. I thought and pondered vainly. I felt that blank incapability of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship, when dull Nothing replies to our anxious invocations. ‘Have you thought of a story?’ I was asked each morning, and each morning I was forced to reply with a mortifying negative.”

Once I hoped to meet with one who, pardoning my outward form, would love me for the excellent qualities which I was so eminently capable of bringing forth. I was then filled with high thoughts of honour and self-devotion. [...] I cannot believe that I am he whose thoughts were once filled with sublime and transcendent visions of loveliness. But it is even so. The fallen angel becomes a malignant devil. Yet he, even he, man's enemy, had friends and associates; I am quite alone. (243)¹⁰⁵

In a reversal of Shakespeare's plot, Shelley defends the creature—her hero turned villain—by allowing him to do what Prospero does in *The Tempest*. Both Prospero and Frankenstein's monster have the last say in their respective works; their final words leave the lasting impression. More importantly, they both lay claim to a "thing of darkness" that has caused them much pain, but they admit to having offended it as well.

At the end of Shelley's novel, Walton remains as the one character that knows the entire story and has encountered both the creature and his creator. In this way, Walton is their student and their offspring. The creature's description of his disappointment in achieving the kind of bond he sought with his creator resembles the fears that Walton explains in his letters to his sister. Frankenstein and the creature describe their experiences in such a way that should cause Walton to see his own potential to commit the same mistakes but instead of doing so, Walton has the opportunity to change. Shelley

¹⁰⁵ Notice the structural similarity between this quotation and the following words spoken by Victor while narrating his travels in London with Clerval (after having heard the monster's tale and threatening request). He explains, "During my youthful days discontent never visited my mind, and if I was ever overcome by ennui, the sight of what is beautiful in nature or the study of what is excellent and sublime in the productions of man could always interest my heart and communicate elasticity to my spirits. But I am a blasted tree; the bolt has entered my soul; and I felt then that I should survive to exhibit what I shall soon cease to be—a miserable spectacle of wrecked humanity, pitiable to others and intolerable to myself" (165).

does not allow us to see whether Walton is aware of the commonalities that unite all three of them. She lets the creature's final words linger over the final image of the creature that Walton offers as the novel's conclusion, "pushing himself off, he was carried away by the waves, and I soon lost sight of him in the darkness and distance" (245). By concluding this way, perhaps Shelley invites the reader to learn what Walton may not be capable of understanding.

Through *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley intentionally creates a horrifying story to warn of the ramifications of neglect and implements the Gothic pedagogical practice of education by fear to accomplish this goal.¹⁰⁶ She also accesses Shakespeare's talent for storytelling in order to establish herself as a novelist. Evidently, Shelley desired that her novel would offer a moral regarding human behavior similar to the one Shakespeare implies in *The Tempest*. Shakespeare uses his last play to speak to his audience and his daughters about the necessity of obedience to authority, even if that obedience is at times feigned. The obedience he desires from his own children is gracious and forgiving since he has not been a perfect father. He wants his children to see his authoritative power as sublime—magical and worthy of respect but still human. He also wants his audience to learn the importance of submission to royal authority even when it is undeserved. Shakespeare is the master of carefully constructing his plays to appeal to the rebel and the conservative. This is his sublime process of creation, and it is his gift to the Gothic literary tradition. In a similar manner, Mary Shelley uses *Frankenstein* to speak to her

¹⁰⁶ In Robinson's edition, he offers his interpretation of the novel's didactic purpose: "it is a cautionary tale that uses the monster to stand for any and all human constructs. The monster can stand for science gone wrong, the French Revolution gone wrong, or even a novel gone wrong. Whether the creator is a scientist, a political scientist, or a creative writer, the attempt, as Victor Frankenstein remarked, will be disastrous to anyone who 'aspires to become greater than his nature will allow.' Knowledge can be constructive, but it too often leads to the fiery destruction of self and others. That message is Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's warning to her husband, to us, and possibly to herself" (35).

absent father and to teach him the importance of treating his progeny with respect, nurture, and genuine affection.¹⁰⁷ Because Shelley is a daughter, who is essentially writing with her literary lineage in mind, her story speaks up in defense of the child whose basic needs are avoided when parental affection is replaced with the pressure of expectations of greatness. These works have blazed a trail for those authors that employ the conventions of the Gothic genre in their works of fiction but inevitably find themselves having to prove that their creations have more to offer than just a pastiche of Gothic trappings. They are instantly accepted into a family whose shared resemblances allow them to be claimed by their original creator.

¹⁰⁷ UC Knoepfelmacher believes that “*Frankenstein* resurrects and rearranges an adolescent's conflicting emotions about her relation both to the dead mother she idealized and mourned and to the living, ‘sententious and authoritative’ father-philosopher she admired and deeply resented for his imperfect attempts at ‘moulding’ Mary Wollstonecraft's two daughters” (91).

Chapter 4

Supernatural Intervention in *Macbeth* and *Wuthering Heights*

“Oh I should never be weary of dwelling on the perfection of Shakespeare, in his management of every scene connected with that most solemn and mysterious being, which takes such entire possession of the imagination, that we hardly seem conscious we are beings of this world while we contemplate ‘the extravagant and erring spirit.’”

Mr. W— in Ann Radcliffe’s “On the Supernatural in Poetry”

Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is indebted to Shakespeare’s treatment of supernaturalism, but the novel does not simply follow the playwright’s formula. Brontë’s novel is not a Victorian version of any one of Shakespeare’s tragedies; it does, however, seem to owe a great deal of its dramatic power to the influence of Shakespeare’s most tragic characters and their imaginative fascination with the supernatural. Shakespeare’s unique handling of the otherworldly—his ability to make hauntings *seem* real—establishes a precedent for future Gothic novelists. Of all the plays in Shakespeare’s canon, *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is the one most dominated by these “supernatural solicitings” (1.3.129). The dramatic intensity of the Macbeths’ interactions with the supernatural prefigures Brontë’s depiction of Heathcliff and Cathy’s preoccupation with the afterlife and each other’s ghosts. The supernatural elements found in both *Wuthering Heights* and *Macbeth* function metaphorically to address the complexity of human desire for divine intervention. In these works, supernaturalism—an identifiable convention of Gothic fiction—highlights a struggle that is at times an attraction to and a rebellion against the right order of things. To demonstrate this conflict, the authors create the impression of an established order only to subvert it by calling attention to the possible threat and interference of otherworldly forces. While scholars have noted that this technique is a part of the Gothic literary tradition, this tendency is

primarily Shakespearean in intention and effect. Arguably, the purpose of the supernatural elements in these two works, and in all of Gothic literature, is to offer the artist and his or her audience a way to consider how much control individuals have over the events of their lives while leaving open the possibility that there exists a force or forces beyond human control.

In an excerpt intended to be a part of Ann Radcliffe's posthumously published novel *Glaston de Blondeville*, Mother Radcliffe, the Great Enchantress known in her time for the popular success of her Gothic novels, creates a fictional dialogue between two characters, Mr. W— and Mr. S—, whose subject of interest is the inclusion of supernatural elements in a fictional work.¹⁰⁸ The omniscient narrator reveals that in response to Mr. S's "grave dissertation on the illusions of the imagination," Mr. W becomes lost in his own "airy conjectures" and begins "following Shakespeare into unknown regions." With great awe and admiration, W lists the "appalling circumstances, with others of supernatural import" found in several of Shakespeare's plays. Mr. S, however, is unwilling to agree with his assertion that Shakespeare displays his imaginative genius in creating these elements, and a debate ensues as the two gentlemen begin to argue about the playwright's description of the witches and their supernatural environment in *Macbeth*.

Mr. W claims that the Scottish play shows "how much Shakespeare delighted to heighten the effect of his characters and his story by correspondent scenery: there the desolate heath, the troubled elements, assist the mischief of his malignant beings." For W, this desire is perfected in Shakespeare's indication that the witches "look not like the

¹⁰⁸ "On the Supernatural in Poetry" was published separately in the *New Monthly Magazine*, volume 16, no. 1 (1826).

inhabitants o' the earth" (1.3.39), and W decries anyone who would consider "reducing them to mere human beings" by portraying them as anything but the otherworldly spirits Shakespeare meant them to be. To make his point clear, W remarks that dressing these characters as "downright Scotch-women" instead of in wild, unnatural garb would remove from "these cruel agents of the passions all that strange and supernatural air which had made them so affecting to the imagination, and which was entirely suitable to the solemn and important events they were foretelling and accomplishing." In response, Mr. S argues such a portrayal—"to make Scotch witches on the stage appear like Scotch women"—had always seemed sensible to him, considering the superstition regarding witches, that "they lived familiarly upon the earth, mortal sorcerers, and were not always known from mere old women." This position is laughable to Mr. W. It is quite clear he values Shakespeare's portrayal (as evidenced by his language) primarily because it is *not* realistic and does not credit that "obsolete superstition which destroyed so many wretched, yet guiltless persons." Then, possibly to persuade his companion to abandon the logic he has been relying upon, Mr. W uses the following metaphor:

I am speaking of the only real witch—the witch of the poet; and all our notions and feelings connected with terror accord with his. The wild attire, the look not of this earth, are essential traits of supernatural agents, working evil in the darkness of mystery. Whenever the poet's witch condescends, according to the vulgar notion, to mingle mere ordinary mischief with her malignity, and to become familiar, she is ludicrous, and loses her power over the imagination; the illusion vanishes.

The lesson seems to be ignored as Mr. S remains resolute, placing emphasis on the witches as beings based on "popular superstition." As such, their manner and dress

should coincide with “popular notions.” Of course, Mr. W finds that this perspective would make these characters too common and familiar, lessening their potential to lean more toward the fantastic. Radcliffe’s Mr. W challenges us to view supernaturalism in fiction as an effective artistic technique precisely because it is potentially so *affective*. Yet, just as he indicates, this motivation to excite the audience and to heighten the dramatic force of the work is not merely founded on mischief that is to be associated with everyday happenings; it must take us beyond the familiar and toward the supernatural. It is not surprising that many scholars refer to Mr. W’s ideas in this conversation as Radcliffe’s own. In fact, W’s statement regarding the primary difference between terror and horror is often referred to as a means to understanding Mother Radcliffe’s own approach toward the use of unexplained versus explained phenomena in her novels. “Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a higher degree of life; the other contracts, freezes, and nearly annihilates them,” says Mr. W before placing Shakespeare (along with Milton and Mr. Burke) in the category of those who would consider the former of greater imaginative potential.

Just as these two fictional gentlemen discover, *Macbeth* is a prime example of the Shakespearean influence because of the playwright’s use of supernatural phenomena.¹⁰⁹ That these two individuals are fictional characters created by one of the most popularly successful novelists in the Gothic tradition only emphasizes the fact that Gothic fiction owes a debt to Shakespeare’s unique use of the supernatural. It is tempting to deduce that

¹⁰⁹ As the conversation continues, Mr. W explains that in his opinion, the most impressive of Shakespeare’s ghosts is the ghost of King Hamlet, and the dialogue ends with a lengthy explanation of what he feels must have been the image in Shakespeare’s mind when he created the scene where the ghost visits his son on the castle ramparts. His meditation focuses on the sublime nature of this image. This topic of the sublime in Gothic fiction will be revisited in the next chapter of this dissertation.

the supernatural elements that occur in works of Gothic fiction exist for the sole purpose of captivating the audience's attention. Assuredly, Mr. W's thoughts about the imaginative impact of Shakespeare's supernatural elements represent an accurate perspective, especially when we consider the popular success of a play that begins with thunder and lightning, dramatically marking the entrance of three witches who begin to cast a spell upon the play's atmosphere. Such a display not only demands the attention of the spectator but it transports those watching into a liminal space, and for the Jacobean audience, filled with many who would have considered witches as responsible for poor weather, this environment is a place potentially dominated by evil—even if that evil comes from a fictionally constructed source. However, merely interpreting the inclusion of ghosts, spirits, and unexplained phenomena as trappings that an author uses just to excite an audience is incomplete and as a result, can be misleading. *Macbeth* stands out in the canon as one play that undoubtedly uses the supernatural to address the sociocultural anxieties of the playwright's audience and his king.

Shakespearean Supernaturalism

For some time, scholars and critics have identified Shakespeare's unique handling of supernatural elements—primarily, the ghosts that inhabit his tragedies—as a mark of his imaginative genius. This is not to say that Shakespeare's ghosts, spirits, and witches are the sole product of the poet's imagination; he was participating in a long-standing dramatic tradition, following the practices of Seneca, and his own contemporaries, such as Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd. Yet in many ways, Shakespeare seems to have updated the supernatural spectacle on the early modern stage by allowing his ghosts to look, act, and speak like the characters they are haunting. In effect, Shakespeare's

supernatural beings are written in such a way as to be so convincing that each audience member must ask, “Do I believe this *could* be true?”

In F.W. Moorman’s analysis of Shakespeare’s many ghosts, he explains that in Shakespeare’s hands, the ghost figure became more human, but he also “gave to it a spiritual significance of which his predecessors had but a very faint conception” (192). For Moorman, “The Shakespearean ghost is at once the embodiment of remorseful presentiment and the instrument of divine justice” (192). Moorman arrives at this interpretation by examining the metaphorical and metaphysical qualities of several of Shakespeare’s ghosts and by investigating their symbolic significance within their respective plays. He points out that the ghosts of Banquo, Julius Caesar, and Richard III’s murdered nephews can readily be identified with the “moral and intellectual” (200) human beings that the spectators would have seen earlier in the play; therefore, they are able to gain the audience’s sympathy while representing the moral order that their murderers sought to overthrow.

As for those supernatural beings that are in spirit form only throughout the duration of the play, such as Hamlet’s father and the witches in *Macbeth*, the playwright goes to great lengths to establish their credibility and to use them as a plot device to set up the possibility that justice may be achieved from beyond the grave. The ghost of Hamlet’s father appears to the watch “with his beaver up” so that his face can be seen clearly, and Horatio can exclaim, “So frowned he once when in an angry parley / He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice” (1.1.61-62), proving that even in death, he is a warrior who will return to protect his kingdom. The paradoxical physical appearance of the witches in *Macbeth* confuses both Macbeth and Banquo, but the playwright grounds

these characters in reality through Banquo's observations. They do not look like they belong on earth yet they stand upon it. They should be women, according to folklore, but they have beards like men—perhaps like the beards Macbeth and Banquo have as well. Despite the witches' unnatural shape and ability to vanish "into the air" (1.3.79), they convince these men and the audience that within the world of the play, they are neither a hallucination nor a delusion as their prophecies are fulfilled. Shakespeare's supernatural beings seem to operate within his plays as harbingers of truth and agents who attempt to restore order, but along the way, their presence also creates terror and confusion.¹¹⁰

One of the most influential aspects of Shakespearean supernaturalism is its verisimilitude. In his plays, Shakespeare's depiction of the supernatural is realistic enough so that these stories *could* conceivably be true—this was essential to the playwright's success in the theatrical, political arena. Like most serious novelists, Emily Brontë sought to make her characters believable and compelling and the same goes for her intentions in creating those characters that are not entirely human. Perhaps inspired by the naturalistic presentation of Shakespeare's ghosts, Brontë may have followed the playwright's example by ensuring that the supernatural beings in *Wuthering Heights* look, speak, and act (in part) like the characters they are haunting.¹¹¹ Ultimately, Heathcliff and Cathy starve themselves to death and *become* their own ghosts.

¹¹⁰ It is not surprising then that Horace Walpole is noted to have found symbolic significance in one of Shakespeare's most famous ghosts, identifying himself as a "quiet republican" pleased to envision the "shadow of monarchy, like Banquo's ghost, fill the empty chair of state" (qtd. in Clery 72) to oppose "worse evils of ambition and tyranny" (Clery 73). Clery mentions that Walpole's *Otranto* contains many parallels with Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and suggests that the play "conservatively restates the divine right of kings" while Walpole's novel might represent an "ironic, 'Whig' rewriting of the play" (72).

¹¹¹ Lew Girdler's 1956 essay "*Wuthering Heights* and Shakespeare" examines the Shakespearean allusions and references in the novel and explains that "[t]hey are the only evidence from Emily's own pen that she knew any Shakespearean plays" (387). With the very limited, highly subjective biographical data that exists today concerning what Emily read and what inspired her specific writing choices, it is difficult to prove that she had certain characters of Shakespeare's in her mind, but the traces of his influence are evident, especially concerning the plausibility of the supernatural figures.

Shakespearean supernaturalism is at its best most believable because the playwright's ghostly characters embody the fears of his human characters and his audience, and this influential approach sets a precedent for Gothic supernaturalism—a trope that teases out the very real sociocultural anxieties of the current moment. While many Gothic writers struggle to achieve verisimilitude in their representations of the supernatural, they still use the supernatural to question the reality or possibility of divine intervention, a cosmic questioning that usually incites fear rather than comfort.

To achieve this kind of tension in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare emphasizes the supernatural content taken from his principal influential source, Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1587). Even those critics who are hesitant to claim that King James's own preoccupation with witchcraft may have motivated Shakespeare to do so acknowledge that he may have read works such as James's own study of witchcraft, *Daemonologie* (1597), and Reginald Scot's opposition to belief in such matters, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584).¹¹²

Stephen Greenblatt's essay "Shakespeare Bewitched" suggests that Shakespeare used King James's belief in the supernatural, as well as the skepticism of opposing thinkers such as Scot, to create *Macbeth*. The play itself is best understood as the

¹¹² A.C. Bradley's confusing, contradictory commentary regarding this dilemma is of significance. In one sense, he is willing to admit, "Shakespeare took, as material for his purposes, the ideas about witch-craft that he found existing in people around him and in books like Reginald Scot's" (188). But he also insists that Shakespeare did not intend for the witches to be thought of as supernatural agents. He argues, "The Witches, that is to say, are not goddesses, or fates, or, in any way whatever, supernatural beings [...]. He read, to be sure, in Holinshed, his main source for the story of *Macbeth*, that, according to the common opinion, the 'women' who met *Macbeth* 'were eyther the weird sisters, that is (as ye would say) ye Goddesses of destinee, or els some Nimphes or Feiries.' But what does that matter? What he read in his authority was absolutely nothing to his audience, and remains nothing to us, unless he used what he read. And he did not use this idea. He used nothing but the phrase 'weird sisters'" (189). Critics like Bradley (and Harold Bloom for that matter) are less willing to admit that Shakespeare would have created a play that even allows for the belief that the supernatural elements could be responsible for any part of the action. It seems as though these scholars are hesitant to consider that Shakespeare himself may have believed—like James did—that "in some instances accusations of witchcraft were delusional, in others perfectly accurate" (Greenblatt, "Shakespeare Bewitched" 120).

dramatist's attempt to use the tools of his trade to represent a conflict that confronted the Jacobean audience—the complex struggle to believe or reject belief in the supernatural. As such, Greenblatt's analysis of the play's sociocultural context aids in our understanding of the playwright's use of supernatural agency to address the anxieties of his king and his audience.

Greenblatt uses Scot to expose Shakespeare's own ambivalence toward his play's representations of supernatural agency, vacillating between promoting either skepticism or belief, which in turn calls attention to the sociopolitical ramifications of either stance. He explains that the primary motive of the "great witchmongers of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance" was to counter the developing trend of what Greenblatt calls "a dangerous current of disbelief" (108). The danger of course was the potential threat that skepticism would have posed to those who had relied on the people's fear of witches to control and subdue the unruly women in society. He mentions Reginone's *De Ecclesiasticis Disciplinis*, which encourages skepticism about beliefs associated with "the witch cult" but is not a "thoroughgoing skeptical critique of supernatural agency" (108). Greenblatt identifies a shift that occurs within the next century, after Burchard, the bishop of Worms, writes the *Canon episcopi* and condemns belief in witchcraft as a sin and "a heretical relapse into paganism" (109). The imagery Burchard uses to communicate his concern with these practices reveals that the bishop himself does not maintain the belief that witches have any real "diabolic agency"—a position of skepticism—but instead considers them subject to illusions of the brain, "vain dreams of night-flying and animal metamorphosis, and impotent fantasies of murderous potency" (Greenblatt 109). Instead of being subject to a source outside themselves—specifically an evil force—these

individuals are responding to something beyond their control that apparently exists within. Burchard inquires of his readers: “Who is there who has not been taken out of himself in dreams and nightmares and seen in his sleep things he would never see when awake? Who is imbecile enough to imagine such things, seen only in the mind, have a bodily reality?” (qtd. in Flint 123). Interestingly, these questions, while seeming to instruct readers toward disbelief in the supernatural agency of an entity such as a witch, foster a different kind of belief in the mind’s ability—one’s imaginative capability—to produce supernatural phenomena. According to Greenblatt, these two important works culminate in a text created at the end of the fourteenth century by Dominican inquisitors, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, the *Malleus Malifacarum* (1484), which addresses both skeptics and those engaging in the practice of witchcraft. Kramer and Sprenger seek to grant a certain reality to the imaginative dangers that Burchard already identified in order to urge others to fight against what they see as the legitimate “menace of witchcraft” (109). This stance highlights the angst that many must have felt upon reading such a document; the doubt and disbelief that the church had previously sanctioned as the proper, theologically sound way of responding to supernatural practices is now seen as a way of contributing to the problem. In order to treat witchcraft and demonic practice as the potential threats they pose, one must believe their propensity to be real.

At this point in his essay, Greenblatt relegates to a footnote an idea that I believe to be crucial in deciphering how these texts and their rhetorical, political positions toward supernatural agency contribute to the images and characterological conflict Shakespeare depicted in *Macbeth*, specifically. In the corresponding footnote, Greenblatt observes that Kramer and Sprenger’s urging of authorities to believe that agents of evil are a realistic

threat, and therefore must be prosecuted is “linked to an intensification of the claims of sovereignty” (128). He considers this connection an “oblique” point of reference to *Macbeth* since the witches can be interpreted as “part of a strategy whereby Macbeth is not simply a ruthless political opportunist but a metaphysical nightmare and Duncan, Malcolm, Banquo (and Fleance), and ultimately King James VI/I are not simply admired rulers but agents of the divine will” (128). For the purposes of my argument, which is committed to identifying the ways that Shakespeare’s works are pre-Gothic in their “motifs and tendencies” (Hogle 202), this interpretation of the play’s historical background and context is significant. If we can agree that a portion of Shakespeare’s creative intentions might have hinged upon his desire to give people a way to visualize their concerns and questions regarding the limits and bounds of supernatural forces, then we can also see the ways this approach is tied closely to supernaturalism in Gothic fiction.

The decision to place this interpretative statement regarding authorial intent in an area reserved for secondary thoughts is an important one that also deserves consideration. It forces us to consider the circumstances and ramifications associated with producing a play for an audience and ruler whose anxieties and concerns are of a very serious nature. After indicating that the logical conclusion one reaches when he considers the play as contributing to the Jacobean “fear of demonic agency” and the subsequent “persecution and killing of women” is to consider the play itself “evil” (111), Greenblatt then explains that there are four reasons why we should hesitate to reach such a hasty conclusion. All four of Greenblatt’s reasons for resisting the assumption that *Macbeth* is an evil play are predicated on the sense that Shakespeare and his players were in no position to create a

work of art that directly offered a right or even clear way of responding to the questions that theologians, rulers, and religious leaders had been posing for centuries. Greenblatt urges that we acknowledge *Macbeth* as “a self-conscious work of theatrical fiction, and entertainment in which nothing need be taken as real” (111). However, the play’s realistic depiction of the supernatural may have touched upon the very real fears of those who were watching.

In our contemporary moment, when time and distance may alter our ability to grasp the complex role of the theater in early modern society, it is imperative to recognize that despite being the King’s Men, “[n]either Shakespeare nor his company was speaking dogmatically or indirectly on behalf of any institution except the marginal, somewhat disreputable institution of the theater, disreputable precisely because it was the acknowledged house of fantasies” (111). Greenblatt’s third and final points are best understood when examined together and through a close analysis of the ambiguities within the text itself. He claims that the play does not offer any kind of counsel regarding how to “behave toward the witches and no apparent sanctioning...of legal prosecution or execution,” and to believe this claim leads to the conclusion that “[T]here is profound ambiguity about the actual significance and power of [the witches’] malevolent intervention” (111). This ambiguous quality of the Weird Sisters, as well as the uncertainties tied to the remainder of the supernatural phenomena in the play, grants us access to the context in which the play was written. While Shakespeare’s audience had some confidence in knowing that what they were witnessing on stage was a production, and those behaving like witches on the stage were actors, the impression this performance leaves upon the viewer’s imagination is a lasting, perplexing one primarily *because* the

rulers and authority figures vacillated between belief and unbelief in similar occurrences taking place off stage and in their own society.

These observations also lead to a more thorough awareness of the ways that Shakespeare was engaged in a process that teased out complex interrogations with these sociocultural concerns, as opposed to prescribing a way to think about them. Many critics want to discern which theological perspective *Macbeth* best represents, but Shakespeare wisely avoided such systematic assertions. One critic, John Stachniewski, argues that the play caters to the early modern individuals who would have aligned themselves with this theological framework. He bases his argument upon the following claim: “Calvin and Calvinists were fond of the theater as an image of God’s relationship to the world: It was the theater of his judgements” (183). Stachniewski also mentions that James himself was a Calvinist although he does not find this factor to be Shakespeare’s primary motivation; instead, he believes Shakespeare employed the “dark theology of Calvin which gave a kind of cogency to the perception that evil results from a complex play of forces beyond the individual’s ken and control” (187). For Stachniewski, Shakespeare uses Calvinism to “strengthen the potency of ironic disclosure” within the play; in this way, *Macbeth* is the reprobate whose self-exposure would delight the Calvinist in his fascination with this process since it reinforces the belief in God’s sovereign will (183). However, just as it is difficult to identify how strictly James adhered to Calvinist orthodoxy, the play itself resists being categorized as touting any one of the many theological perspectives that were presented to the Jacobean public.¹¹³

¹¹³ For a discussion on the “myth” of James’s Calvinism, see Peter Lake’s “Calvinism and the Early Church 1570-1635” (pages 49-51). Lake explains how during James’s reign the competition between anti-Calvinists and Calvinists created a tension that the king sought to manage diplomatically: “James,

Instead of using the play to offer a clear directive about the nature of God's interaction with humans, Shakespeare places his characters in a chaotic environment where they are in a constant state of flux, searching for a way to understand how to behave in a world where the intentions of supernatural forces are not so easy to discern. In this way, the play resembles what many early modern individuals experienced while living through a period of religious, political upheaval and confusion. At the turn of the seventeenth century, when James took the throne and Shakespeare began writing *Macbeth*, the early modern audience had access to various theories presented by theologians and church leaders. In Kristen Poole's examination of the play and its theological influences, she goes so far as to caution against the use of the term *Calvinist* to describe the popular theology of this period. Poole mentions that "[t]he laity received their theology from a variety of sources: the pulpit, the printing press, conversations with neighbors, and their own contemplations and the notion that these thoughts were clearly marked as 'Calvinist' is misleading."¹¹⁴ There is no question that thinkers such as John Calvin and Richard Hooker "made a fundamental impact on how people imagined themselves and their God" (Poole).¹¹⁵ But it is crucial that we take into account that

therefore, was prepared to give favour and preferment to anti-Calvinists and to allow a range of theological opinion within the establishment of the church. But he did not want open theological debate or dispute, and in order to avoid it he imposed silence on the anti-Calvinists, while at the same time distancing himself from the excesses of hyper-Calvinism" (51).

¹¹⁴ Poole extends this argument even further by asserting that applying this term as a descriptor for this play is also problematic: "The imprecise nature of the terms is enhanced by the thinking patterns of the specialists, as the Early Modern clergy didn't use the label of 'Calvinist' for themselves, either. Calvin was considered one great thinker amongst a host of great thinkers, and preachers and theologians borrowed from his writings as they saw fit, not as a mode of restricted self-identification. Our own scholarly debate about whether or not *Macbeth* is a 'Calvinist' play thus seems to me misguided, or based on a category that does not really hold."

¹¹⁵ Poole's discussion of the ways that Calvin and Hooker's ideas compare is useful as it relates to the ways that Shakespeare manages a similar tension in the play: "Calvin argues that those who put their faith in a cosmic system rob God of his will; Hooker maintains that it was the will of God to establish a cosmic system, one which he devised but which he also freely obeys." Using this analysis, Poole claims, "*Macbeth* seems to long for the world of Hooker (and, we might project, of Newton), a physical world of certainty

Shakespeare's success as a playwright depended upon his ability to cater to a broad spectrum of ideas and beliefs, including skeptical attitudes toward religious thinking.

Regarding the play's religious ambiguity, Poole posits "if *Macbeth* defies a convenient theological label," which I believe it does, it still most certainly enacts how an exploration of "the operations of the cosmos and an individual's relationship to the time, space and matter of the environment influences their sense of themselves and the divine." The characters in *Macbeth* are less concerned with determining God's sovereign will than they are with discerning how to navigate the "hurly-burly." Good and evil forces are at work in this environment, but the playwright does not use this story to present a larger argument that these forces are in a battle for human souls. It is more concerned with earthly authority and the role of the divine in sanctioning it. *Macbeth* does not offer a message that promises eternal salvation or freedom from transgressions, but it does expose the audience to the imaginative possibility that these ideals—and the order that they represent—might always be at risk.

Supernaturalism in the Gothic Tradition

Gothic literature is most often identified by its preoccupation with the supernatural; most individuals seeking to discern how a Gothic novel is distinguishable from a Romance novel find that ghosts, spirits, and unexplained phenomena are *the* distinctive traits. Gothic fictions are stories that haunt just as they are tales of hauntings, and their creators rely on the superstitious beliefs and skepticism of their intended audience to grant them special access to the fears and anxious desires that make such hauntings possible. The Gothic mode of fiction experienced its first explosion in Britain

and order-and yet, as he seems painfully self-aware, he is caught in the volatile physics of Calvin's universe."

in the 1790s when sociocultural anxieties related to the threat (and for some, the promise) of yet another revolution reached a heightened state. Regarding the Gothic tendency to represent this type of struggle, Fred Botting offers the following assertion:

While much Gothic fiction can be seen as a way of imagining an order based on divine or metaphysical principles that had been displaced by Enlightenment rationality, a way of conserving justice, privilege and familial social hierarchies, its concern with modes of representing such an order required that it exceed the boundaries of reason and propriety. It is in this context that Gothic fiction can be said to blur rather than distinguish the boundaries that regulated social life, and interrogate, rather than restore, any imagined continuity between past and present, nature and culture, reason and passion, individuality and family and society. (47)

From the beginning of this trend, authors writing in the Gothic mode did not address these issues in a manner that directly exposed the actual cause of fear in society. Instead, they relied on metaphor to make this kind of message possible. In place of a realistic plot focused on two characters embroiled in a political or social battle, we read of visitations from strange beings, doors that seem to open of their own accord and prophetic warnings that occur through seemingly impossible means. Naturally, using such ambiguous signifiers lends itself to obscure interpretations, parodies, harsh criticism, and polarized opinions regarding the author's intentions. Supernatural elements are Gothic literature's most identifiable yet controversial convention.

Far too many critics have dismissed various levels of meaning in works of Gothic fiction because of these supernatural elements. To some extent, this is the case with *Wuthering Heights*, which can be considered a Gothic novel primarily because of its

supernatural components. In Sheila Smith's analysis of the novel, she identifies that it "is remarkable in its period for its convincing portrayal of the supernatural" (499). Yet Melvin Watson claims, "If [...] we assume that *Wuthering Heights* is nothing more than a Gothic romance, we automatically exclude it as a serious study of any human problem" (88). Watson's implication that the Gothic novel holds such a low status has much more to do with the Gothic genre's complicated history of critical reception than it does with the quality of Brontë's writing. However, it does call to attention the possibility that without Cathy's ghost and Heathcliff's belief in it, the work would best be described as a romantic novel. Then, of course, it would lack the "mystic significance" (Leavis 85) that also contributed to its rise to the status of a literary classic even with its Gothic trappings.

Q.D. Leavis's "A Fresh Approach to *Wuthering Heights*" exposes the ongoing struggle to assess the novel's merit in spite of its disturbing, confusing content—the macabre scenes, hauntings, physical violence and vengefulness that seem to permeate all interactions at the Heights as well as Thrushcross Grange. Leavis does not examine the novel as a work of Gothic fiction; instead, she regards Brontë's use of the supernatural as a sign of weakness, arguing that "the dark superstitions about premonitions of death, about ghosts and primitive beliefs about the soul" must be the result of Emily's reading the "ghastly supernatural stories" by Hogg and Hoffman (91). Leavis clearly expresses her outright disapproval when she concludes: "It is a proof of her [Brontë's] immaturity at the time of the original conception of *Wuthering Heights* that she should express real psychological insights in such inappropriate forms" (91). This declaration is the final sentence in a lengthy paragraph, which begins with Leavis's desire to "clear out of the way the *confusions* of the plot" (italics not mine), as well as a focus on the Shakespearean

influence in the novel, especially as it relates to the “Lear-world of violence, cruelty, unnatural crimes, family disruption, and physical horrors” (88-89). She writes approvingly of these particular Shakespearean elements, but does not address them as being related to Brontë’s use of the supernatural.

Brontë does not hide the fact that her novel’s world evokes that of King Lear’s. When Lockwood visits Wuthering Heights for the second time, he tries to escape from the unpleasant inhabitants and manage his own way back to the Grange in the middle of a storm, but he is held back once Joseph sends the dogs to attack, fearing Lockwood has stolen their lantern. In his struggle to get away and in a fruitless effort to punish Heathcliff, Hareton, Joseph, and Cathy for humiliating and intimidating him, Lockwood compares himself to the troubled, angry king in Shakespeare’s dramatization:

I was forced to lie till their malignant masters pleased to deliver me: then, hatless and trembling with wrath, I ordered the miscreants to let me out - on their peril to keep me one minute longer - with several incoherent threats of retaliation that, in their indefinite depth of virulency, smacked of King Lear. (372; ch. 2)

Leavis believes that *Heights* begins with a “false start” that produces a “regional version of the sub-plot of *Lear*,” and she reasons that Shakespeare was “generally the inspiration for those early nineteenth-century novelists who rejected the eighteenth-century idea of the novel” (89). What Leavis fails to consider is that many of those authors whose works confronted and challenged the rules of neoclassical fiction used Gothic conventions to do so. Leavis does not assess Shakespeare’s use of the supernatural as a sign of his immaturity as a writer nor does she consider his ghosts to be inappropriate vehicles for his artistic or psychological intentions. When Leavis is most impressed with Brontë’s

ability to create a vivid, arresting tableau for the reader—such as the moment when Catherine tells Nelly she fears her bedroom is haunted after seeing her own reflection in the mirror—she praises the novelist for coming close to achieving something of Shakespeare’s greatness.

Throughout the essay, Leavis relies on the “Shakespearian intention” (89) as a means of legitimizing Brontë’s decisions to create a setting for her novel that resembles that of an Elizabethan tragedy and to present her characters in a *realistic* fashion, not creating an otherworldly atmosphere. In a footnote that corresponds to her declaration that Joseph is “[i]n fact, a Shakespearean character,” Leavis complains that “concentration on the ‘metaphysical’ account of *Wuthering Heights* has lost sight of the realistic novel it really is” (133). For Leavis, Joseph is a marker of the novelist’s “indebtedness to Shakespeare,” and she even goes so far as to conclude that the works of the playwright offer “novelistic method and technique that she [Brontë] could have learnt nowhere else” (133). Leavis is careful to limit her praise for those moments in the novel when the metaphysical is emphasized, and her essay presents a contradictory attitude toward the novelist’s attention to superstitious belief and supernatural occurrences. Leavis cannot quite support Brontë’s decision to incorporate unexplained phenomena in the novel, calling them “romantic or ‘Gothic’ aberrations” (148), and in doing so, she overlooks the significance of the Shakespearean influence in the novel’s treatment of the supernatural. Leavis sees Brontë as demonstrating “an impartial treatment of belief in the supernatural” (148). She explains that this type of superstition and the “whole pagan mode of thought about life and death...gave dignity and meaning to a hard and narrow existence” but “has nothing to do with” the following elements: “cannibal teeth and the

reopening of coffins to look at beloved corpses” (148). These examples are specific occurrences in the novel for which the author intended some sort of meaning—to write these moments off, as signs of immaturity and ghastly nonsense, is irresponsible. Unfortunately, Leavis fails to see the Shakespearean influence in the novel as it relates to anything outside of the tragic effect and realism that she believes too often goes unnoticed in Brontë’s tale.

The first time that the word *ghost* is spoken in the novel, it is used to utter a curse that is actually quite innocuous considering the relationship between the speaker and the recipient. Young Catherine Linton, feeling frustrated by Lockwood’s need for an escort through the storm and back to Thrushcross Grange, turns to Hareton for his assistance, and is met with an indignant refusal to take orders from her. In response to Hareton’s decision to let Lockwood brave the foul weather alone, Catherine exclaims, “Then I hope his ghost will haunt you...” (372; ch. 2). Later in the text, we are able to identify this banter between these two young people as a desperate maneuver to suppress their own flirtatious desires. But, this interaction is only one of the many moments in the novel where one character sees in another the potential to become or behave like a supernatural being and uses this image as a self-protecting mechanism. Lockwood describes Catherine as behaving like a little witch, albeit playfully, when he observes her response to Joseph’s angry remark that she will “goa raight to t’ divil, like yer mother afore ye!” (372; ch. 2). Every member of the household, including the unwelcomed guest, sees the threatening presence of ghosts, goblins, and witches in each other during moments of conflict and strife.

Victorian Gothic

In considering *Wuthering Heights* as Brontë's contribution to the tradition and development of the Gothic novel, we can begin to understand how she may have been following Shakespeare's method of using supernaturalism to express the anxieties related to class and social position that many felt during her lifetime. Brontë's novel tends to baffle readers because of its complex narrative technique and what many feel is its confusing, amoral message. In many ways, these critiques support the argument that the novel reflects the age in which it was written. The Victorian era in England is a period marked by significant, rapid change. Only a few years before Queen Victoria took the throne, Parliament passed the First Reform Bill (1832), which altered the political, economic climate and inspired other members of society to long for further reform that would offer voting privileges to all individuals, regardless of gender, possession of property, or class distinction. The installation of public railway lines also drastically altered the face of England's social and physical landscape; the effects of urbanization and industrialization startled many Victorian individuals, just as they inspired and motivated others. The intensity of these changes and the many ways that they altered people's lives charged the atmosphere with an energy that in the 1840s seemed to portend that a possible revolution was imminent. This threat of social unrest brought with it reminders of the past, namely that of the literary response to the French Revolution, which failed to bring about the political, social change that many found so promising in the preceding era. These issues continued to confront Victorians throughout the century as the Empire expanded and more voices were given opportunities to speak. It is not a

coincidence that within this time the Brontë sisters sought to contribute to the social discourse by way of creating and publishing their own novels.¹¹⁶

Thomas Carlyle's *Past and Present* (1843) reveals his own growing dissatisfaction with economic, social unrest in England and his willingness to suggest a tradition from the past to help alleviate it. Carlyle likens the changes brought about by industrialization, capitalism and a *Laissez-faire* attitude to a Hell-like state, lamenting the effects of "Competition, at railway-speed, in all branches of commerce and work." For him though, the answer lies in the example set by the feudal system where "to be a noble Master, among noble Workers" would be of greater benefit to all. In Carlyle's mind, a return to this hierarchical method that relied on a rural, land-based economy instead of the urban, mechanical productivity that was allowing England to expand its resources and power would restore England to a state of being "a Society with something of Heroism in it, something of Heaven's blessing on it." This vision of the potentially heroic nature of a land-owning aristocrat would not hold out much hope for many of the writers in this period who sought to capture in their works a growing distrust in a social order that relied on inheritance and family origins to dictate who should have the authority to lead or to control others.

Brontë's troubling tale seethes with this type of unrest and extreme dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, but it does so in a manner that is at first difficult to decipher. Several characters in the novel challenge and subvert traditional notions of heroism and conventional images of heaven and hell, but because of the novel's many characters, its complicated narrative structure, and its ambiguously *happy* ending, many readers struggle

¹¹⁶ Kathleen Tillotson writes about the literary climate in this period in Britain in her book, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties*.

to ascertain the moral of this story, and some conclude that it is too full of despicable characters to be interpreted. Do Lockwood and Nelly Dean, the narrators whose judgments inevitably alter our perceptions of each character, tell us the truth as the author wants us to see it? Or, are we to pay close attention to the ways that these narrators' differing social positions motivate them to offer commentary that needs to be questioned just as each character's motives should also be? Does the peace that is achieved at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange offer a picture of heaven restored to earth by the means of fate? Or, does the resolution at the novel's end occur primarily because two willful, rebellious, vengeful individuals, Cathy and Heathcliff, have finally been replaced by younger, more obedient versions of themselves—in essence, because somehow good has truly triumphed over evil? To develop concrete answers to these questions, the reader must do away with the uncomfortable ambiguities of the text, which the author seems to insist simply will not disappear.

Maggie Kilgour, in her book *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, identifies this type of conflict pattern in a literary work as a trademark of Gothic fiction:

[T]he gothic appears to be a transgressive rebellion against norms which yet ends up restating them, an eruption of unlicensed desire that is fully controlled by governing systems of limitation. It delights in rebellion, while finally punishing it, often with death or damnation, and the reaffirmation of a system of moral and social order. (8)

Heathcliff's desire to be the master of his own fate is a rebellious motivation for a novel's protagonist. He demonstrates this compulsion by his obsessive drive to end his own life and reunite with Cathy beyond the grave in a heaven of his own choosing. Brontë makes

clear that those witnessing Heathcliff and Cathy's self-destructive behaviors and their demise ultimately find them to be poor examples of the right way to live and die. Even so, the tragic sense that the fault is not entirely their own is pervasive.

On a social level, the novel addresses the Victorian question of whether the inheritance of fortune (i.e. land or property) makes a man or woman noble enough in nature to justify an opportunity to move up in social class. This metaphysical romance begins from the perspective of an outsider, Lockwood, who tells us he has just returned from a visit to his landlord, his "solitary neighbor" whom we will soon discover does not fit the mold of a heroic landlord, which Carlyle hopes will restore England to his idealistic vision of a heavenly state. Heathcliff, the landlord of two estates, Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights, is the Byronic hero from England's not too distant Romantic literary past, a disturbing figure that occupies the majority of the novel's focus. Once Lockwood begins to understand the deviant quality of Heathcliff's character, he seeks to uncover the story of his origins, desiring ultimately to know how such an individual came to be in possession of these two estates. It is clear from the start that Lockwood is concerned with the right order of things, assessing each individual's status in the household and basing his opinions of them on whether he can benefit from their services, company or, as in the case of the young Catherine, beauty. Before Nelly Dean's re-telling of Heathcliff's story, Lockwood envisions himself as a hero capable of rescuing Catherine from the miserable conditions of Wuthering Heights, but he realizes, just as the reader does, that the rightful inheritors of these estates are being propelled toward ownership by supernatural forces that are beyond their own control. Peace is finally restored to Wuthering Heights but not in such a way that the reader triumphs in

Heathcliff's demise. Heathcliff's tragic story begins once Earnshaw's son Hindley revokes Heathcliff's adopted status in the Earnshaw family. Although Heathcliff manages to obtain the property he thinks will bring about vengeance and retaliation toward those who have caused him pain, he is never truly a welcome figure in either household. Yet Brontë concludes the novel with an image of perfect restoration as Hareton and young Catherine, both from the Earnshaw line, are joined in marriage, a union that Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw were never able to obtain while living but the author hints that they may have been able to experience in death. Theirs is a union that transcends earthly limitations and ostensibly offers the reader a final sense of catharsis.

Right Order Restored

Shakespeare's version of the Macbeths' pursuit of the Scottish throne concludes with an indication that justice is served and the rightful heir is restored to his position of authority. In this way, Shakespeare reinforces the basic elements of the Scottish section of the 1587 edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. In both the *Chronicles* and the play, Macduff, acting on Malcolm's behalf, successfully puts down the tyrant Macbeth by cutting off his head and delivering it to Duncan's appointed heir. Malcolm's last speech, the final words of the play, welcomes home those who, like Banquo's son Fleance, "fled the snares of watchful tyranny" (5.11.33). The ominous atmosphere established in the play's opening lines seems to dissipate as Malcolm proclaims with confidence that Scotland is now rid of "this dead butcher, and his fiend-like queen" (5.11.35). Moreover, he implies that his own coronation will usher in a new order—one he promises to "perform in measure, time, and place" (5.11.40), and in obedience to whatever is asked of

him “by the grace of Grace” (5.11.39).¹¹⁷ The play’s conclusion points toward a new, orderly reign that will be brought about by a monarch’s commitment to justice.

Shakespeare’s primary source, Holinshed’s account of Macbeth’s reign and defeat, ends with a look back at the significance of the events that the chronicler just described.

Holinshed summarizes Macbeth’s history with a succinct statement: “In the beginning of his reigne he accomplished manie woorthie acts, verie profitable to the common-wealth (as ye haue heard) but afterward *by illusion of the diuell*, he defamed the same with most terrible crueltie” [italics mine]. Holinshed makes clear what Shakespeare obfuscates.

In Holinshed, Macbeth is at first a good man who succumbs to the influence of external, evil sources. The chronicler explains that the witches’ necromancy, proven by the veracity of their first few prophesies, and Lady Macbeth’s persuasive tactics, fueled by her ambition and “vnquenchable desire to beare the name of a quéene,” encouraged Macbeth to reject the “vprightnesse of iustice” he previously upheld. In Shakespeare, these external forces still exist and exert control over the tragic hero, but the playwright’s Macbeth proves to be all the more under the influence of his own imaginative capabilities. Shakespeare directs our attention to the threat of evil that can occur internally—the kind of power that can subvert the longing for justice, goodness, or moral authority and turn it into the very thing that destroys. Both accounts advocate that external forces of good and evil exist. In the case of the historical figure of Macbeth, his story ultimately proves that in the end, the good or the right authority is reaffirmed, but

¹¹⁷ In *The Norton Shakespeare*, which is based on the Oxford Edition, the second *grace* is not capitalized; however, the *Arden Shakespeare* does show this word to be capitalized, personifying Grace and making it possible to consider Malcolm is claiming to answer to a higher power in this moment. For this reason, I have used the punctuation from the Arden version but maintained the line references from the Norton edition. Both editors indicate that the control text for their editions is the First Folio (1623), the first published version of the play.

Shakespeare revises the original source to expose his audience to a more complex, terrifying reality that the threat to the established order is always already at work within each of us.

Graham Bradshaw's "Imaginative Openness and the *Macbeth*-Terror" searches for the appropriate interpretative framework that can help readers avoid the mistake of focusing primarily on the play's representation of an externalized order that triumphs in the end and subsequently glossing over the terrifying elements of the play that are the result of Shakespeare's additions to his primary source. Bradshaw believes that many critics, especially those that tend to accept a Christian "providential-moralistic" reading, write about the play as though it is not truly frightening (224). If Macbeth's bloody deeds are prompted by demonic forces, and Banquo represents the Righteous Man who stands up against the influence and temptation of those same forces, then the play's conclusion reinforces the moral and spiritual order that would in fact support King James's pride in claiming to be in the line of Banquo. While Bradshaw does agree that the play suggests there is an "all-encompassing order" (224), he also sees in it a disquietude about that very same structure. For Bradshaw, *Macbeth* "terrifies, not by denying the existence of 'order' in some dogmatically sceptical or nihilistic way, but by making its reality so alarmingly uncertain" (224). In discussing the play's conclusion, Bradshaw explains that it does offer "a strong sense of closure" but he also observes that the ending contains many "unnerving suggestions that the satisfying idea of a reestablished natural order may prove to be yet another Seeming comfort, from which Discomfort will swell" (230). The "externalised order" (235) that the critics look for leads them to consider the play as a relatively simple tale that warns against regicide and flatters the Scottish King for whom

it was likely written. But it is not a simple play, and we can recognize its complexity once we evaluate the frightening effect such threatening possibilities may have had upon the king.

Although *Macbeth* was officially published first in the 1623 First Folio, the play's traditionally accepted production date of 1606 situates its first performance soon after the unnerving series of events surrounding the Gunpowder Plot conspiracy. King James could have felt threatened by this play even though Shakespeare and his players took measures to ensure that it be safely constructed and politically sound. Considering the evidence that exists regarding the popular appeal of Shakespeare's villains, James may have been just as concerned with the public response to the character of Macbeth as he would have been with the appropriate representation of his ancestor, Banquo.¹¹⁸ *Macbeth* is most terrifying because the forces that motivate the Macbeths to commit such atrocious crimes are internal responses to external, ambiguous circumstances, and the ruling authority is not actually able to maintain full control. Their movement toward evil comes from within, but they justify this behavior by attributing it to the supernatural agents that tempt them. Shakespeare's version of these events is not a comforting reminder that order brings peace.

¹¹⁸ John Manningham, a student studying law in London in 1602, includes in his diary an account that informs us of the significant cultural appeal of one of Shakespeare's most villainous characters: Richard III. The anecdote, thought likely to be an example of Elizabethan celebrity gossip, reveals that "a citizen grew so far in liking" with Richard Burbage's Richard III that upon leaving the playhouse, she requested that he visit her that evening while still in character. As Manningham tells it, Shakespeare himself overheard the plan and "went before, was entertained and at his game ere Burbage came," and when the report was made that Burbage was at the door, the playwright responded wittily, "that William the Conqueror was before Richard III" (Greenblatt, "Richard III" 539). Despite Shakespeare's attention to the details that portrayed Richard's physical, moral faults, which helped to successfully propagate the "Tudor Myth," the playwright's representation of the villain, aided by Burbage's popularity as the actor who portrayed him, aroused the interest and desire of the audience instead of generating only feelings of repulsion.

To describe the interpretative framework that identifies the threat to the external “all-encompassing moral and spiritual order” in the play, Bradshaw quotes the following words that Kafka reportedly used to discuss an old Czech legend with Gustav Janouch:

The longing for the divine, the sense of shame at the violation of holiness which always accompanies it, men’s innate demand for justice—these are mighty and invincible forces, which grow stronger as men try to oppose them. They exert a moral control. A criminal must therefore suppress these forces in himself before he can commit an objectively criminal act. For that reason every crime is preceded by a spiritual mutilation. (qtd. in Bradshaw 234)

It is not the presence of divine beings or the reminder that such forces may exist that has such control over individuals but the internal conflict that builds up as the feelings increase. Bradshaw clarifies that “the mighty forces to which Kafka refers are not Divinity and Justice, but the human *longing* for the divine and men’s innate demand for justice” (234). Kafka uses terms like *innate* and *objective* in his own wrestling with these concepts and in doing so, he concedes that an external sense of right and wrong exists—a set of standards to distinguish moral behaviors from immoral ones— but the emphasis rests upon the individual’s reaction to and engagement with divine or otherworldly elements. Kafka’s words forge a connection between Shakespeare’s tragedy and Brontë’s novel, enabling us to identify that Macbeth and Heathcliff struggle with and against these powerful forces; they both encounter and seek out supernatural assistance, and shamefully, they behave like criminals in their respective works. Unfortunately, their female love interests often do the same.

When examined in this way, the basic plot structure of *Macbeth* and *Wuthering Heights* follow a similar pattern. In both of these works, the longing for the divine more closely resembles a longing for supernatural intervention, a means of rescue that would come from an inexplicable, non-human or once-human source. The Macbeths call upon and place their trust in the witches and their prophecies, as well as the spirits who “tend on mortal thoughts” (1.5. 39). Heathcliff and Catherine look to their own ghosts and fixate on them as their only means of escape. For all of these characters, the justice they seek is difficult to discern, becomes distorted, and begins to resemble injustice. They find it difficult to uphold and obey the established or imposed moral order because of their circumstances but also because of fear. In many ways, they can be viewed as victims first. How can they understand individual justice when they are so frequently subjugated by authority figures that use them to do their dirty work? Macbeth lives in a society where he can only earn titles of nobility by committing murder. He earns King Duncan’s favor by killing the king’s enemies for him but he must also accept that this action is not enough to achieve the crown. Heathcliff, an orphan adopted into a land-owning family, soon discovers that this property can never truly be his own—despite all of his hard work to maintain it and manage it—unless he destroys the rightful heir, the brother whose jealousy for his father’s affection causes him to treat Heathcliff so horribly.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ In my opinion, readers fail to attribute Heathcliff’s brutality to Hindley’s poor treatment of him. After Hindley returns home for his father’s funeral, Nelly tells us that Hindley’s wife had an unwarranted disdain for Heathcliff, and “...when she grew peevish, Hindley became tyrannical. A few words from her, evincing a dislike to Heathcliff, were enough to rouse in him all his old hatred of the boy. He drove him from their company to the servants, deprived him of the instructions of the curate, and insisted that he should labour out of doors instead; compelling him to do so as hard as any other lad on the farm” (387; ch. 6). If terror makes Lockwood cruel, then surely Hindley’s role as tyrant can produce the same effect on Heathcliff.

The Terror that Makes Them Cruel

Once Macbeth and Banquo appear on stage, the audience witnesses the first inexplicable phenomenon of the play—a moment that might go unnoticed by a spectator not attuned to the significance of word choice. Macbeth’s first line, “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” (1.3.36) recalls the incantatory couplet spoken by all the three of the weird sisters at the close of the first scene: “Fair is foul, and foul is fair, / Hover through the fog and filthy air” (1.1.10-110). Macbeth’s unknowing repetition of this phrase establishes the preternatural environment of this play, perhaps more so than the witches’ producing of a “pilot’s thumb” (1.3.26) and the thunder and lightning upon the heath where they gather to meet him. This is a world where the uncanny prevails—dismal thoughts and bloody deeds occur and reoccur, creating a haunting effect upon the characters that inhabit this place, as well as those who witness it. Upon seeing the witches for the first time, Banquo responds to their enigmatic appearance by asking the following:

What are these that look not like th’ inhabitants o’ th’ earth
And yet are on’t?—Live you, or are you aught
That man may question? You seem to understand me
By each at once her choppy finger laying
Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so. (1.3.37-44)

Banquo’s endeavor to solve this puzzle—his earnest desire to interpret the signs, both natural and unnatural—closely resembles the pattern that the reader of Gothic fiction

tends to follow. It must also be noted that writers of Gothic fiction are relying on this inquisitive aspect of human nature to drive their stories toward a conclusion that leaves the reader with more questions left unanswered. If done effectively, this approach generates within the reader a desire for more, and Shakespeare appears to have capitalized on this aspect of his audience's curiosity as well.

As Banquo questions the witches "I'th' name of truth" as to whether they are "fantastical" and imaginary figures or just as they indeed appear to be, he also provides the directions for Macbeth's behavior indicating, "that he seems rapt withal" (1.3.50, 51, 55). Macbeth is nearly immobilized by the witches' predictions, and once the first promise is fulfilled, he begins to take action to ensure that each prophetic statement becomes truth in spite of Banquo's warning against trusting "the instruments of darkness" (1.3.122), which proves to be just as prophetic as the weird sisters' proclamations.¹²⁰ However, the play is Macbeth's world after all, not Banquo's. While Shakespeare places both characters in a position that requires them to interact with supernatural powers, he also directs all attention in this moment toward the tragic hero. Under such duress, Macbeth shows himself to be a man of inquisitive contemplation as well as dramatic action. His anxious preoccupation with "this supernatural soliciting" transforms him into a divided man. He is so wholly transformed that he speaks of his own physical responses as horrifyingly unnatural:

¹²⁰ Cf. Horatio's warning to Hamlet once the ghost gestures him to follow: "What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord, / Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff / That beetles o'er his base into the sea, / And there assume some other horrible form / Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason / And draw you into madness? Think of it" (1.4.50-55). One could argue that Horatio's words are true. Hamlet does follow the ghost—a horrible form in and of itself—and is drawn into a "madness" that eventually culminates in his tragic death.

I am Thane of Cawdor.

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion

Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair

And make my seated heart knock at my ribs

Against the use of nature? (1.3.132-136)

Faced with such possibilities, Macbeth cannot determine whether the prophecy is for his benefit or his destruction primarily because the thought of it moves him toward “horrible imaginings” and a murderous fantasy that as he explains, “shakes so my single state of man” (1.3.137, 139). These thoughts indicate that he is in a state of fixed imagination that he believes will ultimately result in criminal action, an unnatural state for such a loyal servant to the king. The scene closes after a series of asides from Macbeth interspersed between the movement and dialogue of Banquo, Ross and Angus. To those who are watching him, Macbeth appears immovable in these moments. Once again, Banquo observes, “Look how our partner’s rapt” (1.3.142). As if shaken from a trance, and as though he has taken note of Banquo’s observation, Macbeth then offers a succinct antithetical aside: “If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me without my stir” (1.3.143). The audience overhears his desire to let his ascension to the throne to occur on its own, resigning his fate to chance, a power beyond his control. Yet, as many scholars argue, Macbeth has already suggested that his thoughts tend to murder. The events of this scene beg the question of whether Macbeth, or every individual, is the master of his own will or if he is subject to the whims of the supernatural forces that encounter him.

In the scene that follows, we learn of an important plot detail that provides Macbeth with the motive to act on his horrid thoughts rather than to wait for fate or time to accomplish his desires. After Cawdor's execution has been fulfilled and King Duncan officially bestows upon Macbeth his newly achieved title, the king praises him so effusively that Macbeth may have believed this to be the moment when the king might confer upon him the right to the throne, even over his own son. Duncan's words, spoken to one who has just been hailed as the man "that shalt be king hereafter" (1.3.48), confirm a similar intention. First, he states to Macbeth, "I have begun to plant thee, and will labour / To make thee full of growing," which is then followed by his declaration to "Noble Banquo, / That has no less deserved, nor must be known / No less to have done so, let me enfold thee / And hold thee to my heart" (1.4.29-32). Banquo's reply of "There if I grow / The harvest is yours" (1.4.32) borrows the language the king has just used to ensure Macbeth's future success, and no doubt positions him in a place of loyal submission. Perhaps Banquo himself is consciously seeking to make sense of the prophecy, that he will father kings yet not be one himself.

Immediately after the scene of Banquo's murder, the audience witnesses proof that despite his plan, Macbeth is unsuccessful in his attempt to eliminate the threat that Banquo poses. That Banquo's ghost is visible only to Macbeth gives Shakespeare the opportunity to generate suspicion that the supernatural beings in this play, and in general, may be conjurations of the mind. The powerful effects they engender, however, are real. While there is no ambiguity regarding the authenticity of the witches—they appear and speak to both Banquo and Macbeth—this ghost, like the "air-drawn dagger" (3.4.62), is for Macbeth alone. Although Lady Macbeth expresses contempt when she witnesses her

husband's fear of something she and others cannot see, she does not dismiss these occurrences as nonsense. The last time she appears in the play, she has lost all composure and to reassure herself that her fears are not true, she mutters, "Wash your hands, put on your nightgown, look not so pale. I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried. He cannot come out on's grave" (5.1.52-54). Just as the Doctor identifies, her sleepwalking and visions of indelible blood stains upon her hands "reflect a great perturbation in nature" (5.1.8), and even he cannot help but proclaim, "More needs she the divine than the physician" (5.1.64). The appearance of Banquo's ghost has a similar effect on Macbeth as it pushes him over the edge of reason, but instead of collapsing into a state of mental instability, he hardens himself and seeks more destruction: "My strange and self-abuse is the initiate fear that wants hard use. We are yet but young in deed" (3.4.141-143). Banquo's ghost alters the future of Scotland by terrifying a tyrant. Macbeth lets this fear suppress his noble nature, and he becomes even more of a criminal. He is certainly no longer "young in deed" once the play progresses after this pivotal moment. He is so merciless in his thirst for assurance that the crown and the power are his that he turns to murdering innocent women and children and behaving like an arrogant fool who believes he is able to escape death.

Shakespeare's Scotland is a space inhabited by supernatural forces that are unable to stop human cruelty, and Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* is an environment full of miserable people who are spiritually desolate despite the divine nature of their surroundings. In the opening pages of the novel, Lockwood recalls his initial meeting with Heathcliff, and the narrator makes his first mention of something connected to the divine:

This is certainly a beautiful country! In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society. A perfect misanthropist's heaven: and Mr. Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us. (363; ch. 1)

Brontë introduces her readers to an important and paradoxical concept that she will repeatedly convey throughout the various pairings that occur in this fictional world she has created: Misery loves company even though misery does not typically love anyone or anything. Lockwood and Heathcliff hate human beings but together they form a societal paradise—a heaven for sinners. Heathcliff's unpleasant behaviors, noted in the first few sentences through Lockwood's observation of his landlord's suspicious brow and jealous refusal to extend his hand, ironically warms the heart of the narrator and immediately links the two characters in an unconventional and unsettling way.

While the property of Thrushcross Grange is Heathcliff's own— and he is very intentional to make sure that Lockwood knows this—the environment is unmistakably a place that Lockwood feels he can call home primarily because of Heathcliff's presence. After Heathcliff motions for Lockwood to “walk in” to the Heights, the narrator confesses that “even the gate over which he leant manifested no sympathising movement to the words; and I think that circumstance determined me to accept the invitation: I felt interested in a man who seemed more exaggeratedly reserved than myself” (363; ch. 1). Heathcliff is not reserved as in *discreet* or *decorous*; he is hardened and resistant to yield to animate or inanimate objects. He is immovable and obdurate, yet Lockwood is drawn to him and feels compelled to remain on his property because of this trait. Moments later when Lockwood walks through the doors of Heathcliff's home, he appraises the

sturdiness of the building and remarks to himself, “Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones” (363; ch. 1). Through Lockwood’s curious eyes, Brontë presents to us our Gothic villain and his dwelling—they both appear to be fortified to withstand the “atmospheric tumult” that Lockwood rightly perceives granted this place the name of Wuthering Heights. Instantly, Lockwood is able to determine the reason for the building’s structural composition, but discovering the source of his landlord’s sullenness only fuels Lockwood’s continued curiosity. This insatiable desire to know more is an identifiable trait often associated with Gothic fiction, whether it is manifest in the inquisitive nature of the protagonist or the author’s tendency to appeal to the reader’s desire to become engrossed in a tenebrous story.

Lockwood’s incessant prying into the lives and experiences of the inhabitants who share the space with Heathcliff helps us to understand that when Lockwood enters the story, Heathcliff has already undergone the type of “spiritual mutilation” that Kafka believes precedes every criminal act (qtd. in Bradshaw 234). Whether Heathcliff engenders more sympathy than disapproval from the reader, it is not difficult to conclude that at certain points, he behaves like a criminal—notably, in his manipulation and mistreatment of Isabella and the neglect of his own son. However, Heathcliff’s progression toward behaving this way shows us that he is not innately evil—the young Heathcliff is insecure and wounded. Even though he is made a member of the Earnshaw family, Heathcliff never finds complete acceptance or security. Brontë grants us access to her main character’s inner turmoil, which in turn highlights his tragic flaw of allowing

legitimate fear and insecurity—that which naturally plagues any victim—to make him cruel.

Our first exposure to this kind of pattern actually occurs when we witness a similar progression in Lockwood's behavior toward the young girl he sees in a dream. This pivotal moment is what Sedgwick calls the "*locus classicus* of Gothic structure" (97) in the novel, and here, Brontë's storytelling achieves dramatic intensity as Lockwood's dream turns from nightmare into haunting. That Lockwood has been reading Catherine Earnshaw's diary entries, which tell of the physical mistreatment and harsh religious discipline she and young Heathcliff experienced while under the rule of Hindley, his wife, and Joseph, only adds to the psychologically compelling nature of Lockwood's troubled sleep. Brontë skillfully, quickly brings a character who is an outsider into the complicated history of the Earnshaws' dysfunctional ways to show how the act of reading can powerfully affect the imagination and even alter one's state of consciousness. There are elements of Lockwood's dream that are perplexing and seem even to him to be out of the ordinary and defy whatever exists of the logic of dreams.

Lockwood's narration of the most "terrible night" he can recall since his first experience of suffering begins, "I began to dream, almost before I ceased to be sensible of my locality. I thought it was morning; and I had set out on my way home, with Joseph for a guide" (375; ch.3). The structure of the dream takes on a form similar to Catherine's diary entry—which is scribbled in the margins of a print version of Reverend Jabez Branderham's sermon on unpardonable sins—as Lockwood finds himself identifying with Catherine and Heathcliff's roles as subjects forced to listen to religious instruction founded on the unjustified principles of a man's own choosing.

[I]n my dream, Jabez had a full and attentive congregation; and he preached - good God! what a sermon; divided into FOUR HUNDRED AND NINETY parts, each fully equal to an ordinary address from the pulpit, and each discussing a separate sin! Where he searched for them, I cannot tell. He had his private manner of interpreting the phrase, and it seemed necessary the brother should sin different sins on every occasion. They were of the most curious character: odd transgressions that I never imagined previously. (375; ch. 3)

In dreamlike fashion, Lockwood's narration reveals his struggle to discover his purpose in this place. At one point, he finds himself being condemned and punished by others for being such a sinner and in another moment, he is calling down judgment upon the reverend himself, an interesting depiction of the violent struggle that characterizes both Catherine and Heathcliff's behaviors as they grow older, which we learn through Nelly Dean's re-telling of their lives. As adults, they alternate between acting as either victim or criminal, depending on the situation.

While hearing a rapping noise— which he discovers is caused by the tree branch hitting the window outside not the sound of “pilgrim's staves” knocking upon his head— Lockwood realizes that his dream comes one step closer to reality. Though he admits to dozing off again, the next phase of the dream takes place in the very bed where he is sleeping and the sound caused by the fir-tree branch comes from “the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!” (376; ch. 3). Lockwood describes the owner of this hand as having the face of a child. And, in this nightmarish conversation, the girl tells him she has been a waif for twenty years, which means her daughter, the actual young woman Lockwood met earlier that day, is twenty years old and not a child; the image in his nightmare is that

of the child he had just been envisioning as he read young Catherine's diary. Brontë makes this uncanny realization for Lockwood and the reader even more frightening as we witness Lockwood's reaction to the apparition:

Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes: still it wailed, 'Let me in!' and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear. (377; ch.3)

The vision haunting Lockwood here is what he later identifies to Heathcliff as "an impression which personified itself when I had no longer my imagination under control" (377; ch. 3). Just as Lockwood and Heathcliff seem to conclude, she is more than a vision from a nightmare brought on by "bad tea and bad temper" (375; ch. 3). She is a soul that has not found rest for twenty years; she is a ghost that Lockwood's mind was able to conjure without any intention of his own.

The primary characters in Brontë's dramatic tale are all preoccupied with an intense desire to believe in the possibility of supernatural intervention, in spite of their attempts to respond to such belief with skepticism and rationality. When Catherine speaks to Nelly of her decision to marry Edgar Linton even though she *feels* married to Heathcliff in her soul, she explains this internal struggle by telling Nelly about the elusive influence of her own dreams. She tells her, "I've dreamt in my life dreams that have stayed with me ever after, and changed my ideas: they've gone through and through me, like wine through water, and altered the colour of my mind" (408; ch. 9). To Catherine, Nelly speaks words of admonishment: "'Oh! don't, Miss Catherine!' I cried. 'We're dismal enough without conjuring up ghosts and visions to perplex us'" (408; ch. 9).

However, in recounting this incident to Lockwood, Nelly admits, “I was superstitious about dreams then, and am still; and Catherine had an unusual gloom in her aspect, that made me dread something from which I might shape a prophecy, and foresee a fearful catastrophe” (409; ch.9). Nelly’s willingness to admit to Lockwood that her superstitions still exist highlights the fact that the very thing she feared would happen—a catastrophic ending for her original master’s children—is a prophecy fulfilled. At times even Nelly’s longing for supernatural intervention causes her to judge Heathcliff more harshly and to ask herself, “Is he a ghoul or vampire?” (557; ch.34). Nelly does not desire for Heathcliff himself to be a ghoul or a supernatural being; rather, it is her desire to explain away his state of moral depravity as something beyond human control—a circumstance that proves there are preternatural forces at work around us.

The very same image that haunts Lockwood’s dream haunts Heathcliff until he joins Catherine in the grave, and in Catherine’s feverish last moments, she avoids her own reflection for fear it is a ghost haunting her bedroom. When Heathcliff is confessing to Nelly that he can no longer eat or drink and he feels himself being inexplicably drawn away from that which is material, he admits, “In every cloud, in every tree - filling the air at night, and caught by glimpses in every object by day - I am surrounded with her image! The most ordinary faces of men and women - my own features - mock me with a resemblance” (554; ch.34). It is clear that Heathcliff has been longing to be visited by Catherine’s ghost from the moment he learns of her death when he calls out to her in anguish:

Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living; you said I killed you—haunt me, then! The murdered DO haunt their murderers, I believe. I know

that ghosts HAVE wandered on earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad! Only DO not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! (460; ch. 16)

Until Heathcliff is near death, the only person who is visited by Catherine's ghost is Lockwood, and through his eyes, we see clearly that Heathcliff *is* driven mad because he cannot find Catherine's ghost—the supernatural being that he believes will provide his escape from a world that has never been safe to him. Heathcliff and Catherine were securely attached early on in life and losing her is the ultimate wound. The truly tragic aspect of this novel is that the story we read, as told through Lockwood's narration and Nelly's willingness to provide the backstory he needs, is primarily the story of Heathcliff's desire for this supernatural visitation, which is unfulfilled until the very last pages when Nelly senses that Heathcliff is conversing with an "unearthly vision" (558; ch. 34). Like Banquo's ghost who shows himself only to Macbeth and reminds him of the fearful nature of his crimes, Catherine's specter visits Heathcliff at his dinner table, but instead of generating fear in him, her ghost seems to invite him into a more peaceful death. Heathcliff's interaction with young Cathy is of a more gentle nature once he knows he will be joining Catherine in the grave, and his obsessive control over the property lessens; he dies before determining who will inherit the land, and as a result, Hareton and Cathy can peacefully inhabit the Grange once they are married. In this sense, Catherine's ghost intervenes on behalf of her daughter and her nephew, ensuring that the crimes of her youth and Heathcliff's past are redeemed.

Both of these supernatural tragedies end with a sense of right order restored. The Macbeths are dead, and the threat to James's lineage is put down. The playwright

carefully concludes the tragedy with the sense that victory has been won and evil has been defeated. Yet, for the Jacobean spectators, *Macbeth* achieves terrifying significance because their leader believes in supernatural agency, which begs the question: will another Macbeth rise up, spurred on by a prophecy? As readers reach the last paragraphs of Brontë's novel, Heathcliff and Cathy are dead in the ground, and there is comfort in knowing they will no longer hurt each other or other people anymore. Even the impudent Lockwood is unsure, for just as he wonders "how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (564; ch. 34) he also admits that he and the locals are quite frightened by what they suspect are the ghosts of Cathy and Heathcliff still haunting the moors. He is so fearful that he avoids being out in the dark or left alone in "this grim house" (561; ch. 34). However peaceful these endings may appear, the full works themselves are actually quite unsettling, and pose real, potential threats to order that has been re-established, which in turn makes them an important part of the literary tradition we call Gothic.

Conclusion

“Someone asked me if I was intimidated by Shakespeare’s language, and I said, ‘No, it has nothing to do with competing with Shakespeare.’ I had to find my own kind of language that was worthy of the characters.”

Toni Morrison on her stage play, *Desdemona* ¹²¹

Gothic writers claimed Shakespeare as their literary predecessor forging a connection between Shakespearean drama and Gothic fiction, which has persisted throughout centuries. In particular, this relationship between Shakespeare’s plays and the Gothic novel is more complex than many scholars have been willing to consider or able to identify. Gothic appropriations of Shakespearean language, plot, and character cannot be explained simply as an insecure, imitative maneuver. However, when the early Gothic novelists established a pattern of invoking Shakespeare’s imaginative genius as the inspiration and impetus for their own creative decisions, they may have done more damage to the development of the subgenre than they intended. Reviewers and critics, often disturbed and offended by the sensational elements of Gothic works, were not persuaded by defenders of the gothic who chalked up these elements to Shakespeare's influence, for their idea of Shakespeare’s literary value did not seem compatible with the controversial nature of Gothic components.

Several of Shakespeare’s most successful plays reveal that the playwright’s ideas concerning the value of his own productions—as works of art that should be taken seriously even as they seek to amuse and entertain—are rather similar to those of the first novelists writing in the Gothic mode. The four literary topoi that Gothic novelists used

¹²¹ The quotation is from an article in *The New York Times*. Elaine Sciolino describes Morrison’s stage play, *Desdemona* (2011) as a response to Peter Sellars’s production of Shakespeare’s *Othello* (2009). Morrison’s play was directed by Sellars when it opened in Paris at the Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers in October 2011. Sciolino describes Morrison’s piece with the following explanation: “Part play, part concert, it is an interactive narrative of words, music and song about Shakespeare’s doomed heroine, who speaks to the audience from the grave about the traumas of race, class, gender, war — and the transformative power of love.”

to distinguish their works from those being written by the mainstream novelists in their day are also prominent features of several of Shakespeare's dramas, but these are not just similarities that exist by coincidence. Shakespeare and writers of Gothic fictions all use the sepulcher, spectacle, sublime, and the supernatural to express subversive intentions toward authoritative power and as an attempt to protect themselves against the harshness of critics. The four plays and novels discussed in this dissertation all possess the Gothic conventions that I have highlighted. In order to examine how each concept allows the writer to address the anxieties of his moment, it is helpful to compare the use of that concept as it is employed in one play and one novel.

In *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Castle of Otranto*, the locus of the sepulcher reinforces the frightening notion that appointed figures of paternal authority—whether in the social, political, or personal sphere—cannot be trusted as guarantors of individual freedom or protection. In these works, figures of patriarchal authority are either inept or corrupt, and their mistakes lead to the tragic deaths of those characters who unwittingly pose a threat to their plans to maintain power. Both authors use the sepulcher to convey doubt about the uprightness of moral, religious authority by allowing their final death scenes to take place in this symbolic environment, which no longer signifies hopeful resurrection but reinforces fears of death and abandonment.

Titus Andronicus and *The Monk* are examples of the popular appeal and commercial success that can occur when authors use dramatic spectacles of excessive violence and transgressive sexuality to outdo their literary predecessors and establish themselves as artists. Because these two works are often considered to be of poor taste and have very little literary merit, it is all the more important to recognize how these

authors may have used spectacle to criticize the faults of their own culture. For Shakespeare, the violent behavior depicted in *Titus* is the playwright's attempt to challenge the cultural norm in early modern England of using public displays of physical torture to maintain social control and enforce royal and religious authority. Similarly, Lewis's boldness in using similar theatrical, visual techniques in novelistic form grants him the opportunity to give the reading public what they wish to consume and also to launch a subtle attack on the hypocritical authority figures and institutions that seek to punish others while repressing their own morally transgressive behaviors.

By comparing *The Tempest* to *Frankenstein*, we discover that Gothic sublimity has its origins in Shakespeare's play. In both works, the aesthetic of the sublime is an educational process that relies on fear as its primary pedagogical approach. Language and action that frighten subjects into obedience and submission are Prospero's and Victor's primary tools even though they disguise their methods as alchemical or scientific. These characters are agents of Gothic sublimity, just as their authors are. Through Prospero, Shakespeare frightens and teaches his audience that royal authority demands a show of obedience, which allows him to suggest that a playwright should request the same of his spectators. For Shelley, her novel reveals that she considers the process of literary creation a sublime endeavor: it is frightening in that it requires both surrender to and reaction against the constraints of any writer's literary heritage.

Both *Macbeth* and *Wuthering Heights* use supernaturalism as a way to express doubt in sources of divine authority by suggesting that belief in the supernatural leads to acts of terror toward others. In these works, the search for divine intervention is more akin to a form of superstition, which is ultimately fueled by ambitious pride. These

stories are filled with characters who look for signs that will grant them permission to alter their futures and take control of their own fates. These stories conclude with the sense that right order has been restored in order to appease those who hold such positions of power. But, both *Macbeth* and *Wuthering Heights* leave the reader and the spectator with the impression that the authors themselves believe in the dramatic potential of divine intervention—that tales of supernatural force will always cause us to shudder with the fear that these terrors may be all too real.

What this dissertation reveals is that the traditional assumptions regarding achievement or success in the areas of literary production need to be re-examined. By exploring the techniques and literary topoi employed by Shakespeare and the early Gothic novelists, I see a striking similarity in both the form and function of several central elements of their works—they reinforce traditional notions of systems of power while subtly subverting them. On the surface, Shakespeare's plays and Gothic fictions conclude by reinforcing the status quo and quelling any perceived threats to authority. However, the compelling dramatic appeal of these pieces is that they concentrate primarily on the frightening possibility that the very same sources of power are actually quite dangerous and ineffective, especially to those who would dare to oppose them. Another finding this dissertation puts forward is the discovery that those literary critics and scholars who have considered Gothic fictions either distasteful or artistically ineffective have made these judgments because of their dislike for Gothic conventions. Most frequently, their criticisms boil down to a difference in taste—in their opinions, great literature should not be preoccupied with darkness, the unknown, terror, and fear.

Continuing the Tradition

Gothic fiction has transcended the limits of published texts from the eighteenth-century, and now the Gothic aesthetic continues to meet the artistic, creative needs of writers and viewers throughout several areas of contemporary society. Steven Bruhm suggests that we have a “need” for the “contemporary Gothic” by pointing out its popularity in novels and films “since the Second World War” (259). It is true that for much of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we have witnessed the continued popular success and proliferation of Gothic stories, like those written by Daphne du Maurier, Shirley Jackson, Stephen King, Anne Rice, and Toni Morrison, which have all successfully crossed over to film. Much like the infectious elements of the Gothic, Shakespeare’s canon bleeds into contemporary artistic productions as well, and a comparative study of recent productions that employ the four imagistic and characterological Gothic conventions I have discussed reveals our continued fascination with them.

The concluding section of this dissertation briefly examines how Gothic filmic representations, like Gothic fictions, owe a great debt to Shakespeare’s influence. Orson Welles developed his own unique Gothic approach toward filmmaking and acting by allowing Shakespeare’s influence to inform his own stylistic techniques. Since Welles, much of Gothic cinema has also been Shakespearean. Several recent films and television series demonstrate that Shakespeare’s influence in the Gothic literary tradition has continued to exist in this medium. The HBO series *Dexter* (2006- present), the television show *Lost* (2004-2010), Martin Scorsese’s *The Departed* (2006), and Sam Mendes’s *Skyfall* (2012), all contain traces of the four Gothic conventions that provide the

framework for this dissertation. Following the pattern established by Walpole and the many other Gothic writers who have done the same, the writers responsible for these productions incorporate several allusions to Shakespeare's most gothic works and all have admitted that Shakespeare's plays were influential in their writing process. These contemporary Gothic works indicate that the tradition of borrowing from previous writers who have addressed similar issues continues.

Gothic cinema self-consciously adopts the signs that have come to be identified with components of Gothic fiction throughout the years. These elements can be found in all areas of cinematic production: narrative, acting, lighting, cinematography, and *mise en scène*. Misha Kavka claims that we are accustomed to knowing the Gothic when we see it. Kavka asserts that film, a medium "born with the twentieth century, is both a late-comer to and an avid, unashamed plagiarizer of earlier, literary forms of the Gothic" (209). For her, the visual strength of the Gothic tradition makes it well suited to cinematic technology. She suggests that "[t]he fearful effect of the Gothic, at least in its literary forms, depends on our ability to cast certain conventionalized images from the text onto the 'screen' of our mind's eye" (209). But for those who are unfamiliar with the Gothic literary tradition, it is challenging to identify a Gothic convention in an on-screen production. In other words, it is unlikely that viewers would label what they *think* they are seeing as part of a Gothic aesthetic—they may only be able to acknowledge it as an attempt to frighten. An understanding of how authors writing in this mode contributed to the development of these conventions, as well as the subgenre, allows us to see how these same concepts have transferred into contemporary filmic productions.

Like the early Gothic novelists who were experimenting with a new form and new technologies, Orson Welles entered into the world of cinema by drawing from the past. According to Welles, his fascination with Shakespeare began at an early age and remained with him throughout his career as a playwright, filmmaker, director, actor, and cinematic innovator.¹²² The first portion of the proposed title of the dissertation—“something old and dark has got its way”—comes directly from a stage direction that Welles included in a play he had written at the age of eighteen, entitled *Bright Lucifer*. This is the first of Welles’s compositions that owes much of its content to Shakespeare’s influence.

The play contains a character named Eldred, who, James Naremore explains, has “more than a little in common with Shakespeare’s Edmund, the chief villain in one of Welles’s favorite dramas” (5). The stage direction itself is not an indication of any type of action that Welles wanted to occur at this moment in the story. Instead, the remark is evocative of the tone that the young playwright wished to set for his audience—an atmosphere haunted by the past and filled with dark deeds. The series of events that occur just before the notation are reminiscent of both a Gothic romance and a Shakespearean tragedy. A character named Jack points a revolver at Eldred and shoots to kill. While Jack is standing beside Eldred’s dead body, a ghost emerges. But instead of resembling the recently murdered Eldred, the apparition looks exactly like Jack, wearing the monster costume he had just worn in an earlier scene while terrorizing other innocent characters. After Jack runs offstage screaming Eldred’s name to conclude the scene, Welles inserts the stage direction that calls attention to the macabre nature of this scene—perhaps he

¹²² According to legend, his mother taught him to read with a copy of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (France 1).

meant to call attention to the possibility that “something old and dark” got a hold of the burgeoning playwright.

James Naremore, in his book *The Magic World of Orson Welles* (1978), uses this early play of Welles’s to explain the filmmaker’s continued fascination with “old-fashioned Gothic melodrama and psychological realism” (6). Naremore calls *Bright Lucifer* “a curious blend of philosophic argument and Gothic fantasy” (5). Throughout Naremore’s book, he makes subtle references to Shakespeare’s influence in Welles’s filmography, frequently using the modifier *gothic* to describe the aesthetics of Welles’s productions. To clarify what Naremore sees as Welles’s interest in Gothic style and themes, he describes Welles’s fascination with Gothic architecture, his attraction to the role of the anti-hero, his tendency to highlight his characters’ struggles with the “demons of psychoanalysis and the supernatural,” and his preoccupation with Shakespeare (8). If we take Welles’s Shakespearean adaptations, *Macbeth* (1948), *Othello* (1952), and *Chimes at Midnight* (1965), to be an indication of how he visualized Shakespeare’s characters and ideas, then it is clear that in Welles’s imagination, Shakespeare is at his most Gothic.¹²³ Welles’s ability to access Shakespeare’s plays for the inspiration that helped him to create influential art forms suggests that Shakespeare’s influence in the Gothic tradition is not contingent only upon the historical moment during which this trend began. Instead, Welles’s influence continues to promote the tradition of borrowing from both Shakespeare and the Gothic.

¹²³ See John S. O’Connor’s essay “But was it ‘Shakespeare?’: Welles’s *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*,” for a discussion that considers the Wellesian method of adapting Shakespeare’s plays as aesthetically Gothic. Also, in Bridget Gellert Lyons’s introduction to the print version of *Chimes at Midnight*, entitled “The Shakespearean Camera of Orson Welles,” Lyons argues that all three of Welles’s Shakespeare adaptations demonstrate a blend of “melancholy and nostalgia” (5) that is a result of Welles’s childhood fascination and personal obsession with several of Shakespeare’s characters.

Welles's method allows us to consider that the Gothic in cinema may be less identifiable as a genre and better understood as an aesthetic—one that can traverse the boundaries that genre distinctions set in place. To explain the ways in which this movement has happened in the history of cinema, I choose to think of Gothic conventions as being responsible for the development of two film genres that are (in their earliest forms) easier to define: film noir and horror. The Gothic's greatest contribution to these two genres is an overall darker tone and the presence of evil that threatens the normalcy of everyday life. Both genres often rely on similar filmic codes, such as shadows created by chiaroscuro lighting, low or limited light sources, irregular camera angles, and disjointed narrative structures, which can obscure content as well as meaning. Elements of suspense are necessary (but in differing degrees) for films in both of these categories to perform the function that each genre implies through its name. Film noir or *black film* seems to imply a reliance on the fear generated by darkness (absence of knowledge, lack of light), whereas *horror* clearly identifies its intention to shock viewers with a barrage of horrifying conclusions.

Film noir is more closely related to the Gothic works that arose in the Victorian era, those focused on urban settings where criminal activity, transgressive sexuality, and the mysterious Other are the most terrifying elements. Just as Victorian Gothic writers were experiencing the anxieties generated by the rapid changes brought on by industrialization, urbanization, and Imperialism, the early phase of film noir in America occurs immediately following World War II, a time marked by an increase in sociocultural anxieties and widespread fear. Horror films seem to rely more upon the shock factor and the physical threat of the unknown or the incomprehensible: spectral

beings, aliens, death and insanity, and these objects tend to persist as fearful objects in every era. The horror genre can also be traced back to its Gothic predecessor Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) where the monstrous creation of Dr. Frankenstein is both his offspring and his double (the fact that this novel can also be considered responsible in part for the development of the Science Fiction genre must be saved for another day). The threat of the Other pervades both film genres, but the tendency in horror is to treat this Gothic trope as the central and most pervasive threat. In horror films, the Other is not just the anti-hero, he is a monster and while his presence is a threat, often the possibility of becoming like him is also at hand.

Frank McConnell argues that film inherited its primary artistic functions from the literature of the romantic era. This is also the period that first witnessed the entertainment and aesthetic value that Gothic elements offered to the masses. Romanticism's focus on both the individual and the imagination allowed for the continuation and perfection of Gothic tropes such as the potential for heroic ambiguity in the figure of the wandering exile, the sublimity of a treacherous landscape, and the dramatic quality of the supernatural. Our experience when we watch a film parallels in many ways the experience intended for the reader of the lyric poem—the dominant art form of the Romantic period. The persona of the poem, the “I” voice whose words we read, pulls the reader into his or her own experience, whether it is to meditate on the sound of the nightingale or to empathize with the speaker as he contemplates his mortality. Before Coleridge and other Romantic poets began to attribute such artistic significance to the term *imagination*, it was originally used to communicate its most basic meaning: image making. A film is just that: an image made—or rather a series of images that move—for

us to observe, experience, internalize and absorb. The Romantic notion that the Imagination is the “highest power of creative art” imbues filmmaking and film experiencing with a powerful legacy, as well as an important responsibility.

Early Gothic works revisited a medieval past and intentionally exposed readers to dark, mysterious plot lines, supernatural images, and elements of terror and suspense that many critics found excessive, disturbing, and anxiety producing. These stories are in essence “dream texts” in that they contain moments within the narrative that more closely resemble the confusion and ambiguity of a dream instead of capturing the realism that most eighteenth-century novelists sought to represent. In *The History of the Gothic*, Markman Ellis points out that the term *psychoanalysis* was first used by Freud in 1896 and as a result, the eighteenth-century gothic writers—those, like Walpole, who were the first to label their stories as *gothic*—did not have access to the terms or theories of psychoanalysis. Yet, to date, psychoanalytic theory has been one of the primary methods of literary criticism used to examine Gothic texts because of its ability to investigate and unearth meaning that may be hidden or repressed. The very nature of gothic literature, even in its earliest stages, relied upon family secrets, hidden spaces, traumatic experiences, spectral visions, and peculiar, unexplained occurrences. At the end of the nineteenth century, psychoanalysis was a relatively new practice of attempting to *help* individuals process their fears and anxieties by bringing these complex, hidden emotions to the surface. Even though it obtained a title and a profession to put its theories into practice, psychoanalytic elements had already been on display in many of the plays, poems, novels, and short stories produced and consumed in Britain since Walpole’s novel.

The history of Gothic literature reveals that artists attempting to write in this mode underwent great scrutiny for doing so and at times, found themselves arguing for its artistic, aesthetic significance. The same can be said of the history of the early novel and the history of cinema, and it is important to acknowledge that the use of Gothic conventions is not limited to just one art form. The very fact that the Gothic elements early novelists used appear and re-appear in popular art forms (pictorial and textual) that have fascinated us for centuries means that these signifiers are embedded in our collective unconscious. Ellis claims that psychoanalysis has offered ways to “universalize the lessons of the gothic novel,” resulting in the increase of “its [the Gothic novel’s] cultural significance and prestige” (13). Psychoanalytic theories, such as those created by Freud (the uncanny, dream-work, taboo) and Lacan (the mirror-stage, the Other, the unconscious), are often on display in the Gothic fictions we consume. These theories can help us discover the relevance and significance of Gothic conventions and tropes, such as the detailed description of dark, subterranean spaces, physical and psychological captivity, unconscious and conscious human desires and motivations, dream sequences, transgressive versus normative behaviors, doubling, and the variety of emotional responses to scenes of horror and terror.

Cinematic experience (the physical act of watching a narrative told through moving images on the screen) can be like exposure therapy—we witness that which has the potential to frighten us most, but we are potentially able to walk away without the physical damage we really fear. The following examples of recent films and television shows employ conventions that are both Gothic and Shakespearean to achieve this sort of cathartic reaction from the audiences that view them.

Each of the primary writers involved in these productions has commented upon Shakespeare as an influence in some way. When Jeff Lindsay, the author whose series of novels beginning with *Darkly Dreaming Dexter* (2004) became the basis for HBO's television series *Dexter*, was asked in an interview about the influential works that inspired him to become a writer, he mentioned his early interest in theater. After listing several of the writers he loved to read, but admitting he was not certain that they "influenced [him] at all," Dennis added, "When I got interested in theatre, a lot of my reading was in that area. Shakespeare and Wilde and Shaw and Pinter, of course, and Sam Shepard and David Mamet, but I also became totally intrigued with the Jacobians" (Karim). The character Dennis created, Dexter Morgan, is the ultimate anti-hero. He is a forensics specialist at Miami Metro police, where he uses his role to do the work that the legal and justice system is often incapable of completing—he avenges the deaths of innocent victims as a vigilante serial killer of serial killers. In a rather unexpected way, the television series implements the Gothic convention of the supernatural as a trope used to tease out the anxieties related to the human desire for divine intervention. Just as supernaturalism in *Macbeth* and *Wuthering Heights* depicts a struggle that is both an attraction to and a rebellion against the right order of things, Dexter engages in a similar spiritual and psychological battle. Dexter, like all Gothic hero-villains, struggles to maintain a sense of control over his own fate by wreaking havoc on the lives of others. Like *Macbeth*, he looks to the supernatural for signs to help him navigate the chaos. *Dexter* has all the trappings of a contemporary Gothic melodrama, including its indebtedness to Shakespeare's contributions to the Gothic tradition.

The trope of the sepulcher as the site of paternal failure occurs in the television series *Lost*, which is also the best contemporary example of a production that employs the Gothic pedagogy of education by fear. Ancient family tombs are replaced by the setting of a mysterious island, controlled by Jacob, an ageless father figure who is ultimately unable to protect the island's inhabitants from various sources of evil. The underground hatches and the tunnels that connect them offer a contemporary twist on the Gothic sepulcher. Within these claustrophobic spaces, many of the characters struggle to cope with the realization that their fathers have failed or abandoned them, and the show's creators attempt to communicate a humanist moral to their audience after seasons of frightful intrigue and unresolved plot lines.

In a special episode that aired just before the finale, co-writers Carlton Cuse and Damon Lindeloff describe the scope of their show as Shakespearean. Although they do not attempt to point out any specific references to his plays, there are many. In particular, *Lost* resembles *The Tempest*. The primary characters are stranded in a place where supernatural events occur and secrets from the past threaten to alter each individual's future. On the island, several characters discover that the sins of their fathers or husbands led them to this mysterious and terrifying place. One of the more obvious allusions to Shakespeare and the Gothic is the writers' creation of two female characters, Juliet Burke and Penny Widmore. Juliet's ex-husband, appropriately named Edmund Burke, is reminiscent of Victor Frankenstein in his zealous overreaching. Once Burke discovers that Juliet has the scientific knowledge and skill that he lacks, he pursues her romantically and then controls her possessively until his own tragic, accidental death. Ironically, Burke's death allows Juliet to venture to the island, where she eventually dies

in an unfortunate accident. In this moment, Juliet parallels her namesake, as her lover, Sawyer, is unable to save her.

Penny Widmore, like Juliet Burke, is also a Gothic heroine, trapped by unfortunate circumstances and well-meaning but destructive protectors. Just as Shakespeare's Miranda is subject to her father's powerful control, Penny is connected to the characters on the island because her father, Charles Widmore, is one of the masterminds behind certain aspects of the island's magical qualities.¹²⁴ Charles Widmore has similar characteristics of both Prospero and Capulet. He does not approve of his daughter's love interest, Desmond Hume, and through his machinations, Desmond is shipwrecked on the island and estranged from Penny until the show's finale.

Many of the characters on *Lost* have the same names as the significant eighteenth-century philosophers whose writings influenced the development of the mass readership of the early Gothic novels.¹²⁵ While the island is a beautiful environment populated by lush foliage and breathtaking natural scenery, the writers highlight its frightening potential by creating an elaborate backstory with scenes that take place underground in dangerous enclosures tied to panoptic surveillance technologies. The writers themselves seem interested in the relationship between torture and protection, life and death, and the sublime and the beautiful.

The Academy Award winning films, *The Departed* and *Skyfall*, both fit neatly into the category Bruhm identifies as contemporary Gothic even though they can also be said to have all the elements of the film genres that audiences would more easily

¹²⁴ For more on the relationship between *Lost* and Shakespeare's last play, see the article "Lostwatch: Prospero's Books" by James Poniewozik in *Time* magazine, 7 Mar. 2008.

¹²⁵ The following names are used in part or completely: John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, David Hume, and Edmund Burke.

recognize. Both are crime thrillers that also embrace a Gothic aesthetic. Not coincidentally, those involved in the writing process of these works have also identified Shakespeare as a primary influence.

The screenwriter for *The Departed*, William J. Monahan, began “consuming” Shakespeare at a young age and at one point considered teaching Shakespeare while pursuing creative writing as a side job (Allis). *The Departed* is a film known for its use of violent, dramatic spectacle due to its dark and disturbing depiction of the inner workings of a Boston crime ring—the film’s final death count is certainly of tragic proportions. Monahan’s storytelling, aided by Scorsese’s interest in the macabre, allows the narrative to delve into the psychological realm. The emphasis on the physical and moral doubling of characters increases the sense of paranoia for the viewer as it points to the threat of terror from within individuals and institutions.

The most compelling reference to Shakespeare that exists in Monahan’s story is the moment that so closely resembles the fly-killing scene in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* that it cannot be a coincidence. Jack Nicholson’s character, Frank Costello, the Irish mob leader, crushes a fly on the table in a restaurant where he is eating and then licks it off his hand before saying to his young trainee, “You can learn a lot, watching things eat.” In Shakespeare’s play, the fly-killing scene marks Titus’s determination to seek revenge by torturing and murdering the Moor and Tamora. Titus’s rage verges on insanity as he strikes with a knife at a dead “black ill-favoured fly” (3.2.66) while pretending it represents his enemies. The viewer that is familiar with this pivotal scene in Shakespeare’s play cannot help but recognize that Monahan’s characterization of Costello, as one so fully committed to revenge that he has lost his dignity, is reinforced

by this connection to Titus. For both works, these scenes rely on the grotesque to emphasize that despite their allure, these villainous characters cannot be trusted.

Sam Mendes, the director of *Skyfall*, was working on several productions of Shakespeare's plays for the Royal Shakespeare Company while the Bond film was in the editing phase. In an interview with the press, Mendes noted the "strong similarities" between James Bond and several of Shakespeare's characters.¹²⁶ Since the release of the film, fans and critics have been commenting on how *Skyfall* is the most Gothic and British version of Bond in the film series. The film's final scenes are indebted to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and Walpole's *Otranto*. The culminating shootout takes place in a nearly abandoned Scottish mansion named Skyfall, the place where Bond grew up. The home is a fortress, complete with an underground tunnel, which leads to a nearby chapel—as though the screenwriters borrowed the setting directly from Walpole's text.

The villain, Silva, a former agent permanently disfigured because of M's poor leadership, chases M from the mansion to the chapel, and tries to take her life while simultaneously ending his own. The double suicide is thwarted by Bond, who is able to kill Silva before he fires the gun, but not in enough time to save M, who is suffering from an earlier wound and dies tragically in his arms. Although M's death should represent the end of MI6, the film ends with the promise of a new figurehead for the secret service—only this time the role is occupied by a male, suggesting that a new order is in place but not one without its potential faults. Like *Romeo and Juliet* and *Otranto*, *Skyfall* is a

¹²⁶ See Tom Eames's article for *Digital Spy*, "James Bond similar to Shakespeare, says 'Skyfall' director Sam Mendes." The writers who created the screenplay for *Skyfall*—Neal Purvis, Robert Wade, and John Logan—have also claimed that much of their inspiration for the story, naturally, came from Ian Fleming's books. Ironically, in a 1953 interview on CBC/Radio-Canada, Fleming was asked if writing stories for his character of Bond was keeping him from "more serious writing." Fleming's response was, "No. I'm not in the Shakespeare stakes. I've got no ambitions."

Gothic family drama, where past sins do not end in the grave—they often lead to the perpetuation of future ones.

Because of Walpole's "very curious performance," *The Castle of Otranto*, the phenomenon of Gothic fiction received not only a name but also an enduring place in literature.¹²⁷ The modifier *gothic* has maintained a significant place in contemporary society, especially as it relates to literary and artistic representations. As these contemporary works suggest, our fascination with Gothic stories is not limited to a certain period. Rather, the intrigue continues because Gothic works confront issues that seem to plague every generation and the confrontation that occurs generates a reaction from us that is compelling.

¹²⁷ Review of *The Castle of Otranto*, *Critical Review* 19 (January 1765).

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