

I. Introduction to the Writer and the text

The Castle of Otranto, a Gothic story appeared quietly on the print market on Christ mass eve of 1764, a purported translation of a recently discovered medieval Italian text by "William Marshall", a gentleman antiquarian of the Age of Reason. The edition's preface not only lays out the fictional frame narrative about the text's discovery and translation into English but also described the emergent gothic aesthetics. "Never is the reader's attention relaxed", Horace Walpole writes "Terror, the author's principal engine, prevents the story from languishing and it is so often contrasted by pity, that the mind is kept up in a constant vicissitude of interesting passions." The sudden and unexpected shift from contrary sentiments specifically terror and pity- produces delight. A mere four months later, Walpole issued his second edition, in which he praises Shakespeare as a truly original genius and the example of imaginative liberty, as part of a defense of Otranto's design. "The result of all I have said." Walpole concludes in his second preface "is, to shelter my own daring under the canon of the brightest genius this country, at least has produced".

The Castle of Otranto tells the story of Manfred, Prince of Otranto by virtue of his grandfather's usurpation of the rightful owner, and his attempts to secure his lineage. His sickly son is crushed by a gigantic helmet on the day of his wedding to Isabella, daughter of another noble. The helmet comes from the statue of the original owner and, despite the physical impossibility, the Credulous followers of Manfred blame and imprison a young peasant, Theodore, for its miraculous transportation. Ambitious and unscrupulous, as he is, Manfred decides that, though already married, he will have to wed Isabella in order to produce an heir. Repulsed

at his advances, Isabella is saved by the sighing portrait of Manfred's grandfather. She flees from the castle helped by the recently escaped Theodore, through subterranean vaults. The youth, however, is terrified by the sight of a giant in armour and Manfred, jealous of an imagined attachment between Theodore and Isabella, threatens his life. A friar, Jerome, intercedes, and discovers the youth to be his long lost son.

A troop of knights arrive at the castle carrying, a gigantic sword (which matches the helmet) and the courts of Isabella's family, suspicious of Manfred, the knights join the search for her. In the meantime, Theodore is helped to escape by Matilda, Manfred's rejected daughter and flees through the Castle of vaults to counter Isabella among a labyrinth of covers. There, to her horror, he defeats a knight in combat and discovers him to be Isabella's father, Frederic. Back at the Castle, the conjugal problems are still unresolved. Theodore is attacked by Matilda, as is Frederic. At the mention of the amorous interest, blood runs from the nose of Alphonso's statue. Manfred, finding the lovers in the Chapel and believing Matilda to be Isabella, stabs her in a fit of passion. His fault and his forebear's guilt is discovered, Jerome and Theodore are revealed to be true heirs to Otranto and, with a clap of thunder and a ring of ghostly chains, the castle crumbles to ruin. The guilty die or incarcerate themselves in Convents and proper lineage is restored with a warning about human vanities and with the eventual marriage of Theodore and Isabella.

The Castle of Otranto is generally considered to be masterpiece of Horace Walpole. It won different literary awards. It has been revisited by a number of critics on the same set of themes and perspectives.

Most of the critics link it as a family romance. Morcie Frank in his writing Horace Walpole's Family Romance links the major event in the novel the family romance. He shows how a family representation of incest is turned to the genre of romance, thus producing a family romance that is singularly unamenable to Freudian Interpretation.

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* can be reconstructed as an artistic space where gender problems are foregrounded then it is just an important to consider the place of masculinity as it is the place of femininiy. Literacy critic Max Fincher affirms his assessment in his discussion of Homosexual sins and Identity in Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. It is clear cut many points in the text of "*The Castle of Otranto*" that elimination of feminine in male subjectivity and the masculine identity are highlighted. It is interesting that male character Manfred and Theodore represent, a new vision of masculinity that unites the qualities of compassion, pliability and horror.

Kathy Justice Gentle in his article *Sublime Drag* searches for the sublime in the structure of the novel what literacy device or tools have been used to get such concept. As he writes –

"As a fictive or phantasmatic structure, the sublime would seem to be less suitable as a concept for philosophical speculation that as a literacy device, perhaps most memorable represents in Gothic fiction, beginning with *The Castle of Otranto*. [22]

Andrew Smith in his writing *Gothic Literature* highlights *The Castle of Otranto* as an allegory of political decline, in which the restoration of a form of legitimacy does not in itself re-empower the aristocracy. A certain form of in

fighting might have been eradicated, but a future presided over by a melancholy Theodore looks at best an uncertain one.

Whilst the novel illustrates some historically specific concerns relating to the aristocracy, it also introduces some formal elements which later gothic writer would have to contend with, including images of religion, the family, and particular representation of gender. Superficially, it may seem that these elements constitute common narrative props. However, it is important to consider how later narratives use these elements in different ways, illustrating the critically self reflexive nature of the Gothic tradition.

In the first preface the novel purports to be written by Otranto Murato, a Catholic priest from the church of St. Nicholas. During the period an extensive anti- Catholicism was generated within pre dominantly, Protestant Britain, and this becomes reworked within the Gothic of the time through the repeated suggestion that Catholic countries were associated with "superstition, arbitrary, power and passionate extremes." Such countries therefore lacked Protestants self- restraint and were prone to generating fantastical 'Gothic' terror. However, this view is problematised by the second preface, partly because the 'hoax' has been discovered, but in the main because Walpole suggests that we need to read the novel allegorically. Such a reading supports the view that the novel suggests that the aristocracy are tied to the past, a medieval past in which superstitious religious beliefs function as a metaphor for self generated aristocratic decline. The novel represents a fantastical world and although there is a sense of political theological dimensions. Convents and monasteries appear to be places one goes to in order to escape a kind of worldliness, rather than to cultivate spirituality. Therefore, how to

read this 'Catholicism' poses particular problems for the critic because it suggests aristocratic attachments to outmoded beliefs, but its presence in the novel seems to be part of the 'hoax' from the first preface. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that religion in the novel looks like a structural rather than a theological presence, and, as we shall see, later writers address Catholicism in a more direct way.

The novel is also about families, an issue that is central to Manfred's plotting. However, his political manoeuvrings mark him out as the Gothic villain in the novel. At one level his seemingly 'evil' designs destroy the family that he claimed was so important to him. Conventional family relations do not exist for Manfred because they have become politicized, as he tells Isabella on Conrad's death:

"Think no more of him [.....] he was a sickly puny child, and heaven his perhaps taken him away that I might not trust the honours of my house on so frail a foundation' (p. 24). He subsequently attempts to replace Hippolita with Isabella and kiss his daughter. Thus, the destruction of Manfred's family is a consequence of his support for the rather more politically abstract notion of aristocratic lineage. This disjunction between political vision and intimacy becomes a key factor in the later writing of Ann Radcliff, and indeed notions of what constitutes 'normal' family life will pervade the Gothic tradition, and are, as we shall see, central to later Gothic narratives such as *The Haunting of Hill House* (1959) and *Beloved* (1987).

The novel also addresses (perhaps largely unconsciously) the role of gender in construction of power. In *Otranto* aristocratic women are represented as morally

virtuous but lacking social and economic power. The aristocracy is clearly a man's world and this is apparent not just in Manfred's threatened rape of Isabella, and aggressive attempts to manipulate the political situation, but also in the gigantic form of the righteous Alfonso, who, quite literally, towers over everyone else. Alfonso's size suggests the scale of masculine authority, an endorsement of which is also given in Manfred's scathing comments on Conrad's 'puniness'. However, such authority is prone to abuse and even the wronged. Alfonso is associated with a capacity of destruction. Responses to such authority figures illustrate how this power operates. Hippolita, for example whilst struck by the abuses of Manfred, nevertheless sees her role as a complaint one. Whilst this confers a martyr-like dignity upon her, it also highlights the destructive capacities of male authority figures, an issue which will run through the Gothic (it includes such obvious later manifestations as Count Dracula and Hannibal Lecter).

The importance of *Otranto* cannot be underestimated. The second preface is key to understanding both how the Gothic emerged and how it needs to be read. Walpole's representation of the aristocracy, the family, and above all gender played an important part in the very different work of Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, who also addresses and foregrounds the anti-Catholicism implied in Walpole's novel.

II. Gothic Aesthetic

Gothic signifies a writing of excess. It appears in the awful obscurity that haunted eighteenth century rationality and morality. It shadows the despairing ecstasies of Romantic idealism and individualism and the uncanny dualities of Victorian realism and decadence. Gothic atmosphere - gloomy and mysterious - have repeatedly signaled the disturbing return of pasts upon presents and evoked emotions of terror and laughter. In the twentieth century, in diverse and ambiguous way, Gothic figures have continued to shadow the progress of modernity with counter narrative displaying the underside of enlightenment and humanist values. Gothic condenses the many perceived threats to values, threats associates with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious, and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption. If not purely negative term, Gothic writing remains fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic. In a world which, since the eighteenth century, has become increasingly secular, the absence of fixed religious framework as well as changing social and political conditions has meant that Gothic writing, and its reception, has undergone significant transformation. Gothic excesses, none the less, the fascination with transgression and the anxiety over cultural limits and boundaries continue to produce ambivalent emotions and meanings in their tales of darkness, desire and power.

In Gothic Fiction certain stock features provide the principal embodiment and evocation of cultural anxieties. Tortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life – threatening pursuits predominate

in the eighteenth century. Spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits populate Gothic landscape as suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats. This list grew, in the nineteenth century, with the addition of scientists, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminals and the monstrous double signifying duplicity and evil nature. Gothic landscape are desolate alienating and full of menace. In the eighteenth century they were wild and mountainous locations. Later the modern city combined the natural and architectural components of Gothic grandeur and wildness, its dark, labyrinthine streets suggesting the violence and menace of Gothic castle and forest.

Gothic Fiction is hardly gothic. It is entirely post-medieval and even post-Renaissance phenomenon. Even though several long standing literature forms combined in its initial rendering -from ancient prose and verse romances to Shakespearean tragedy and comedy - the first published long after the Middle Ages. Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, printed under a pseudonym in England in 1764 and reissued in 1765 in a second edition with a new preface which openly advocated a "blend of the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the mode," the former "all imagination and improbability" and the latter governed by the "rules of probability" imitated only sporadically over the next few decades, both in prose fiction and theatrical drama. But it exploded in the 1790s (the decade Walpole died) throughout the British Isles, on the continent of Europe, and briefly in the new United States, particularly for a female readership, so much so that it remained a popular, if controversial, literacy mode throughout what we still call the Romantic period in European literature (the 1790s through the early 1830s), now especially well known as the era of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818).

This highly unstable genre then scattered its ingredients into various modes, among them aspects of the more realistic Victorian novel. Yet it is also reasserted itself across the nineteenth century in flamboyant plays and scattered operas, short stories or fantastic tales of magazines and news papers, "sensation" novels for women and the literate working class, portions of poetry or painting, and substantial resurgences of full-fledged Gothic novels- all of which were satirized for their excesses, as they had also been in Romantic times, now that the gothic mode had become relatively familiar. Like the 1790s and 1890s still known today as the *fin de siecle*, then saw a concentrated resurgences of Gothic fiction, particularly in prose narrative, highlighted by such now- classic "Gothic" as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890-91), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "*The Yellow Wallpaper*" (1892), Bram Stoker's original *Dracula* (1897) and Henry James's serialized novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898). The 1900s finally saw the Gothic expand across widest rang in its history, into films, myriad ghost stories, a vast strand of women's romance novels, television shows and serials, romantic and satirical musical (as well as nonmusical) plays, and computerized games and music videos, not to mention ongoing attempts at serious fiction with many Gothic elements. The late twentieth century has even been seen a bourgeoning in the academic study of Gothic fiction at college and university levels and in publications connected to them. There is now no question that the Gothic, particularly in prose or verse narrative, theatre, and film - all of which we here encompass in the phrase "Gothic fiction" - has become a long - lasting and major, albeit widely variable, symbolic realm in modern and even postmodern western culture, however archaic the Gothic label may make it seem.

The objectives here are to explain the reasons for the persistence of Gothic across modern history and how and why so many changes and variations have occurred in this curious mode over 250 years. One difficulty in doing so, of course, is how pliable and malleable this type of fiction - making has proven to be, stemming as it does from an uneasy conflation of genres, styles and conflicted cultural concerns from its outset. Nevertheless, given how relatively constant some of its features are, we can specify some general parameters by which fictions can be identified as primarily or substantially Gothic. Thought not always as obviously as in *The Castle of Otranto* or *Dracula*, a Gothic tale usually takes place (at least some of the time) in an antiquated or seemingly antiquated space - be it a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a vast mansion, a subterranean crypt, a graveyard, a primeval frontier or island, a large old house or theatre, an aging city or urban underworld, a decaying storehouse, factory, laboratory, public building, or some new recreation of an older venue, such as an office with old filing cabinets, an overworked spaceship, or a computer memory. Within this space, or a combination of such places, are hidden some secrets from the past (sometimes the recent past) that haunt the characters, psychologically, physically, or otherwise at the main time of the story.

These hauntings can take many forms, but they frequently assume the features of ghosts, specters or monsters (mixing features from different realms of being, often life and death) that rise from within the antiquated space, or sometimes invade it from alien realms, to manifest unresolved crimes or conflicts that can no longer be successfully buried from view. It is at this level that Gothic fictions generally play with and oscillate between the earthly laws of conventional reality

and the possibilities of the supernatural - at least somewhat as Walpole urged to do - often sliding with one of these over the other in the end, but usually raising the possibility that the boundaries between these may have been crossed, at least psychologically but also physically or both. This oscillation can range across a continuum between what have come to be called the "terror Gothic" on the one hand and the "horror Gothic" on the other. The first of these holds characters and readers mostly in anxious suspense about threats to life, safety, and sanity kept largely out of sight or in shadows or suggestions from a hidden past, while the latter confronts the principal characters with the gross violence of physical or psychological dissolution, explicitly shattering the assumed norms (including the repressions) of everyday life with wildly shocking and even revolting consequences.

The readership or audience of all such Gothic/s began as and remains mostly middle - class and Anglo, though more kinds of audiences (postcolonial, African - American, American Indian and Latin American, for example) have been drawn in over the years. Given that fact, Gothic fictions since Walpole have most often been about aspiring but middling, or sometimes upper middle- class, white people caught between the attractions of terrors of a past once controlled by overwhelming aristocrats or priests (or figures with such aspirations) and forces of change that would reject such a past yet still remain held by aspects of it (including desires for aristocratic or superhuman powers). This tug- of -war affects central characters and readers alike, frequently drawing them toward what is initially "unconscious" in at least two different senses. It can force them, first, to confront what is psychologically buried in individuals or groups, including their fears of the

mental unconscious itself and the desires from the past now buried in that forgotten location. After all, several features of the Gothic, especially as practiced in the mid- nineteenth century by Edgar Allan Poe in America and frenetic novels in France, eventually became a basis for Sigmund Freud's *fin de siècle* sense of the unconscious as a deep repository of very old, infantile, and repressed memories or impulses, the archaic under world of the self.

At the same time, the conflicted positions of central Gothic characters can reveal them as haunted by a second “unconscious” of deep –seated social and historical dilemmas, often many types at once that become more fearsome the more characters and readers attempt to cover them up or reconcile them symbolically without resolving them fundamentally. The title character in the original *Frankenstein*, for example, finds that his sexless fabrication of an artificial character, ultimately his “monster;: form pieces of bodies in Graveyards and charnel houses confronts him with two kinds of unconscious: his own preconscious dreams of reembracing, even as he recoils from the body of his dead mother (his psychic unconscious; Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 85), and the choices simmering at the subliminal levels of his culture (in his political consciousness) between the attractions of old alchemy and modern biochemistry, strictly biological and emergent mechanical reproduction, the centrality and marginality of women, and middle class scientific aims set against the rise of a “monstrous” urban working class upon which bourgeois aspiration is increasingly dependent. It is no wonder that the late twentieth – century effulgence in teaching and writing about Gothic fictions has been dominated either by psychoanalytic readings of such creations or by Marxist, new historians, or cultural studies assessments that find many class-

based, ideological, and even technological conflicts of particular historical times underlying the spectral or monstrous manifestations in Gothic works form several different eras

The gothic has lasted as it has its symbolic mechanisms, particularly its haunting and frightening specters, have permitted us to cast many anomalies in our modern conditions, even as these change, over onto antiquated or at least haunted spaces and highly anomalous creatures. This way our contradictions can be confronted by, yet removed from us into, the seemingly, unreal, the alien, the ancient, and the grotesque. Some Gothic tales, such as *Frankenstein* or *Dracula*, have a lasting resonance of this kind, so much so that we keep telling them over and over again with different elements but certain constant features. Such recasting help us both deal with newly ascendant cultural and psychological contradictions and still provide us with a recurring method of shaping and obscuring our fears and forbidden desires.

The Gothic, in other words, provides the best known example of those strange and ghostly figures that Freud saw as example of “the Uncanny” in his 1919 essay of that name. For him what is quintessentially “uncanny”, as he reveal most of analyzing a German Gothic tale, “The Sandman” by E.T.A Hoffman, is the deeply and internally familiar as is reappears to us in seemingly external, repellent, and unfamiliar forms. What is the most familiar to Freud, to be sure, are strictly psychological, or visceral drives from our earliest existence, such as sheer repetition – compulsions and the castration anxiety born of desiring the mother and thus risking the wrath of the father (which some Gothic tales do indeed include). But the devices in fiction can also be employed, as *Frankenstein*, had revealed for

configuring quite familiar and basic social contradictions engulfing – middle class individuals who must nevertheless define themselves in relation to these anomalies, often using creatures or similarly *othered* beings to incarnate such mixed and irresolvable foundations of being.

Even more striking, though, is the frequent goal of that journey in the Gothic, even for Walpole: the recovery of a lost or hidden material origin by both women and men. In this motif a patriarchal lineage and house turns out to be explicitly dependent on and rooted in the unpredictable possibilities of a forgotten, but finally uncovered womanhood. The confinement of women by patriarchy is a great deal of Gothic.

The greatest horror in the Gothic, however, is not simply the pull of the masculine back towards an overpowering femininity. The deep feminine level, as the Gothic mode has developed, is but one major form of premodial dissolution that can obscure the boundaries between all western oppositions, not just masculine – feminine or the other pairs already noted.

One reason the Gothic as a form symbolizes this process of abjections so well in its cross generic status from the start and its resulting combinations of “high culture” and “low culture” throughout its varied history. When Walpole proposed blending “two kinds of romance”, he was referring in part to his own cross between medieval chivalric romances and neoclassical tragedies oriented towards the old aristocracy, on the one hand, and the newly ascendant bourgeois novel (or so it was later called) directed in its comic elements, and probabilities of common existence towards the increasingly dominant middle classes, on the other. His choice of the Gothic label for this uneasy marriage, while not widely adopted

as rapidly as some have supposed, was therefore as marketing device designed to fix a generic position for an interplay, of what was widely thought to be high cultural writing (epic, verse, romance, tragedy) with what many still regarded as low by comparison (servant – based comedy, superstition, folklore, middle – class prose fiction). The most immediate result was a tortured mixture in Walpole’s text and those of his earliest imitations, such as Clara Reeve in *The Old English Baron*, whereby characters – and thus Readers – were torn between

“traditional sings of identity Based on social rank and blood lines” and the refashioning of themselves, as well as fictions, to suit “the vagaries of exchange value Associated with capitalist – class imperatives and the growing strength of the market economy” (Henderson, “*An Embarrassing Subject*”)

Considered as a serious threat to literary and social values, anything Gothic was also discarded as an idle waste of time. Its images of dark power and mystery evoked fear and anxiety, but their absurdity also provoked ridicule and laughter. The emotions most associated with Gothic Fiction are similarly ambivalent: objects of terror and horror not only provoke repugnance, disgust and recoil, but also engage readers' interest, fascinating and attracting them. Threats are spiced with thrills, terrors with delights, horrors with pleasures. Terror, in its sublime manifestation, is associated with subjective elevation, with the pleasure of imaginatively transcending or overcoming fear and thereby renewing and heightening a sense of self and social vale: threatened with dissolution, the self, like the social limits which define it, reconstitutes its identity against the otherness and loss presented in the moment of terror. The subjective elevation in moments of

terror is thus exciting and pleasurable, uplifting the self by means of emotional expenditure that simultaneously exclude the object of fear. In the process, fear and its darkly obscure object is externalized and limits are reconstituted between inside and outside. While terror and horror are often used synonymously, distinctions can be made between them as countervailing aspects of Gothic's emotional ambivalence. If terror leads to an imaginative expansion of one's sense of self, horror describes the movement of contraction and recoil. Like the dilation of the pupil in moments of excitement and fear, terror marks the uplifting thrill where horror distinguishes a contraction at the imminence and unavoidability of the threat. Terror expels the horror glimpses invasion, reconstituting the boundaries that horror has seen dissolve.

In Gothic fiction certain stock features provide the principal embodiments and evocations of cultural anxieties. Tortuous, fragmented narratives relating mysterious incidents, horrible images and life threatening pursuits predominate in the eighteenth century. Spectres, monsters, demons, corpses, skeletons, evil aristocrats, monks and nuns, fainting heroines and bandits populate Gothic landscapes as suggestive figures of imagined and realistic threats. This list grew, in the nineteenth century, with the addition of scientists, fathers, husbands, madmen, criminals, and the monstrous double signifying duplicity and evil nature. Gothic landscapes are desolate, alienating and full of menace. In the eighteenth century they were wild and mountainous locations. Later the modern city combine the natural and architectural components of Gothic grandeur and wildness, its dark, labyrinthine streets suggesting the violence and menace of Gothic castle and forest.

The major locus of Gothic plots, the castle, was gloomily predominant in early Gothic Fiction. Decaying, bleak and full of hidden passageways, the castle was linked to other medieval edifices - abbeys, churches and graveyards especially - that, in their generally ruinous states, harked back to a feudal past associated with barbarity, superstition and fear. Architecture, particularly medieval in form (although historical accuracy was not a prime concern), signaled the spatial and temporal separation of the past and its values from those of the present. The pleasures of the past and its values from those of the present. The pleasures of horror and terror came from the reappearance of figures long gone. Nonetheless, Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own way to the old house; as both building and family line, it became the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present. These anxieties varied according to diverse changes: political revolution, industrialization, urbanization, shifts in sexual and domestic organization, and scientific discovery.

In Gothic production, imagination and emotional effect exceed reason. Passion, excitement and sensation transgress social properties and moral laws. Ambivalence and uncertainty obscure single meaning. Drawing on the myths, legends and folklore of medieval romances, Gothic conjured up magical worlds and tale of knights, monsters, ghosts and extravagant adventures and terrors. Associated with wildness, Gothic signified and over - abundance of imaginative frenzy untamed by reason and unrestrained by conventional eighteenth - century over - ornamentation of Gothic style were part of a move away from strictly neoclassical aesthetic rules which insisted on clarity and symmetry, on variety

encompassed by unity of people and design. Gothic signified a trend towards an aesthetic based on feeling and emotion and associated primarily with the sublime. Throughout the eighteenth century the sublime constituted a major area of debate among writers and theorists of taste. In contrast to beauty, the proportioned contours of which could be taken in by the eye of beholders, the sublime was associated with grandeur and magnificence. Craggy, mountainous landscape, the Alps in particular, stimulated powerful emotion of terror and wonder in viewer. Their immense scale offered a glimpse of infinity and awful power, intimations of a metaphysical force beyond rational knowledge and human comprehension. In the expansive domain opened up by the sublime all sorts of imaginative objects and fears situated in or beyond nature could proliferate in a marvelous profusion of the supernatural and the ridiculous, the magical and the nightmarish, the fantastic and the absurd.

Linked to poetic and visionary power, the sublime also evoked excessive emotion. Through its presentations of supernatural, sensational and terrifying incidents, imagined or not, Gothic produced emotional effects on its readers rather than developing a rational or properly cultivated response. Exciting rather than informing, it chilled their blood, delighted their superstitious fancies and fed uncultivated appetites for marvelous and strange events, instead of instructing readers with moral lessons that inculcated decent and tasteful attitudes to literature and life. Gothic excesses transgressed the proper limits of aesthetic as well as social order in the overflow of emotions that undermined boundaries of life and fiction, fantasy and reality. Attacked throughout the second half of the eighteenth century for encouraging excessive emotions and invigorating unlicensed passions,

Gothic texts were also seen to be subverting the mores and manners on which good social behaviour rested. The feminization of reading practices and market, linked to concerns about romances throughout the century, were seen to upset domestic sensibilities as well as sexual property. Presenting pasts that the eighteenth century constructed as barbarous or uncivilized, Gothic fictions seemed to promote vice and violence giving free reign to selfish ambitions and sexual desires beyond the prescriptions of law or families of property and reputation while threatening the honour of their wives and orphaned daughters. Illegitimate power and violence is not only put on display but threatens to consume the world of civilized and domestic values. In the skeletons that leap from family closets and the erotic and of the incestuous tendencies of Gothic villains there emerges the awful spectre of complete social disintegration in which virtue cedes to vice, reason to desire, law to tyranny.

Uncertainties about the nature of power, law, society, family and sexuality dominate Gothic fiction. They are linked to wider threats of disintegration manifested most forcefully in political revolution. The decade of the French Revolution was also the period when the Gothic novel was at its most popular. Gothic, too, was a term invoked in many political debates, signifying, for a range of political, revolutionary mobs, enlightened radicals and irrational historical sense, Gothic was associated with the history of the northern, was claimed as an ancient heritages. Opposed to all forms of tyranny and slavery, the warlike, Gothic tribes of northern Europe were popularly believed to have brought down the Roman empire. Roman tyranny was subsequently identified with the Catholic

Church, and the production of Gothic novels in northern European Protestant countries often had anti-Catholic subtext.

The excess of political meaning display the ambivalence of Gothic. In the figures and settings that dominate Gothic narratives this ambivalence is manifested in terms of the genre's affiliations with class. Old castles, knights and malevolent aristocrats seem to fit into an enlightenment patter identifying all things Gothic with the tyranny and barbarity of feudal times. Rational distancing and disavowal of past forms of power, however, is belied by the continued fascination with the architecture, customs and values of the Middle Ages: Gothic novels seem to sustain a nostalgic relish for a lost era of romance and adventure, for a world that, if barbaric, was from the perspective of the last eighteenth century, also ordered. In this respect, Gothic fiction preserves older narratives are dominated by values of family, domesticity and virtuous sentimentalism, values more appropriate to the middle class readership that composed the increasingly large portion of the literacy market in the eighteenth century. Aristocratic, trappings of chivalry, and romance are subsumed by bourgeois values of virtues, merit, propriety and within reason, individualism. The anxieties about the past and its forms of power are projected on to malevolent and villainous aristocrats in order to consolidate the ascendancy of middle class values. In nineteenth-century Gothic fiction the trapping of aristocracy, the castle and counts, give way to narratives whose action centres on urban, domestic, commercial and professional figures and locals. Aristocratic excess, thought still in evidence, is generally replaced by other forms of threat. The highly unstable genre then scattered its ingredients into various modes, among them aspects of the more realistic Victorian novel. Yet it also reasserted itself

across the nineteenth century in flamboyant plays and scattered operas, short stories on fantastic tales for magazines and newspapers, "sensation" novels for women and the literature working class, portions of poetry on painting, and substantial resurgences of full-fledged Gothic novels- all of which were satirized for their excesses, as they had also been in Romantic times, now that the Gothic novel had become relatively familiar.

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III. Hamlet's Hunts *the Castle of Otranto*: Shakespeare's Influence on Walpole

Critics have recognized for some time that the novel relies on Shakespeare for more than aesthetic freedom, for it contains numerous allusions to and echoes of a range of characters and themes from his plays. In this thesis, however Shakespeare represents something more than a patron saint for Walpole; indeed the playwright is the primary hunting Otranto.

The emphasis on novelistic discourse capacity to convey terror to the reader in both its psychological and physical dimensions reveals Otranto's unique relationship to one of Shakespeare's plays in particular: Hamlet, prince of Denmark. Walpole was an avid theatergoer. So it makes sense that he, seeking to write a gothic ghost tale, would find particular inspiration in this play. During the course of the long eighteenth century, Hamlet achieved a unique status concerning its representation on terror, "the period's print market saw an ever-increasing number of texts that dealt broadly with theatrically - histories and memories of the theatre, performance criticism, and acting manuals, to name a few- which promoted Shakespeare's play's unrivaled presentation of terror; in particular, these texts singled out Hamlet's first meeting with his father's Ghost as the play's and indeed, the public stage's purest and most gripping instance of the passion. Thinking about the novel and new gothic aesthetic within this rhetorical context reveals Walpole's interest in expressive bodies and the way in which the period's preoccupation with a speaker's performance of emotion shaped Otranto. The novel marks an important point at which the natural language that governs visible, theatrical bodies is employed to heighten the private experience of the solitary

reader. While it draws heavily on the theatre, Otranto concludes, I argue, by privileging the novel's superior ability to embody emotion persuasively.

Hamlet's encounter with the Ghost becomes for Walpole a template for terror, one that would recall theatrical practice for the reader. He restages this episode no less than three separate times in the novel, complete with some of Shakespeare's dialogue verbatim, which suggests a conscious effort to bring the terror of the stage onto the page. In fact, the words employed in this gothic tale - such as amazement, astonishment, fear, surprise, terror, wonder etc. do much more than simply describes a state of mind: they serve as complex signifiers that evoke a standardized series of somatic poses articulated by performing bodies. Employing these terms provides Walpole a shorthand for conveying very specific physical responses to events in his novel.

Walpole connects the context of his spectral episodes to Hamlet's three encounter's with his father's Ghost: Manfred's encounter with the animated portrait of Ricardo corresponds to the Ghost's initial appearance to Hamlet; Jerome's attempts to inform Theodore of the dangers at the court of Otranto and to call for his son to seek revenge mirror the Ghost's account of his "foul and most unnatural murder" and his injunction to Hamlet to "Remember me" and finally the appearance of the skeletal specter who demands that Frederic remember his oath recall the Ghost's final appearance to Hamlet in Gertude's closet in which he comes "to whet thy (Hamlet's) almost blunted purpose" [28]

These repeated allusions to and echoes of Hamlet undoubtedly serve not only to enhance Walpole's depiction of terror but also to indicate the passion's pervasiveness in the gothic landscape. While Shakespeare concentrates terror's

effect on Hamlet, few, if any, or Walpole's characters are able to escape this menacing passion. Taken together, these restaging suggest his experimentation with novelistic discourse as a medium capable of surpassing the theater's technical limits and providing the reader's private and more intensely terrifying experience. Much like the skilled actor's control over the spectator, the novel takes possession of the reader and makes him or her experience the passions it describes. Thus, the novel achieves a new status for its ability to represent terror.

Midway through chapter one, Walpole provides his first restaging by casting Prince Manfred in the role of Prince Hamlet. At the moment of advances to force himself on Isabella, a portrait of Ricardo, his grandfather, suspended above the couple, inexplicably 'uttered a deep sigh and heaved it breast' [p.81]. With a response clearly intended to evoke the stage Hamlet's famous terrified start. Manfred finds himself unable 'to kept his eyes form the pictures' [p. 81]. The disembodied sigh further frightens Isabella, whose vantage allows her to hear but not to see the animated portrait, and she takes the opportunity of the distraction to flee the room. The portrait then steps out of the frame and into the gallery, and Manfred, like his Danish counterpart, faces a supernatural figure returned from the dead. To further underscore his connection between the two princess, when Manfred breaks his silence, his address to the spectert - "Do I dream? or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak internal spectre!" [p.81] - clearly echoes Hamlet's well - known words to his father's Ghost:

Angels and minstrs of grace defend us!

Be thou a spirit of health, or goblin demned,

Be thy intentions wicked or charitable

Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
 That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,
 King, father, royal Dane. Oh answer me. (I.iv. 39 -45)

In the play, the uncertainty of the Ghost's "questionable shape" raises the prince's curiosity. While Horatio and Marcellus struggle to restrain him from following it, repeatedly warning that grave harm will come from speaking with the dead, he nevertheless resolves to follow the beckoning figure. In contrast, Manfred reads the portrait's origins as unambiguously sinister. He initially addresses it as "internal spectre", one sent by "devils" to cause his ruin. Allowing that the figure might be Ricardo has no noticeable effect on his interpretation for Manfred views it as a disruptive force intending to conspire against him rather than to offer comfort. Both supernatural figures serve a prophetic function and "bode", in the words of Horatio, "some strange eruption to our [respective] state[s]" (I.i.69), but Walpole emphasizes the figure's malevolent potential and thus heightens Manfred's and, ideally, the reader's dread.

Just as Hamlet's Ghost beckons his son to a private colloquy, Ricardo's animated portrait gestures for Manfred to follow him:

"if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou too conspire against thy wretched descendant, why too dearly pays for - Ere he could finish the sentence the vision sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him. Lead on! Cried Manfred: I will follow thee to the gulph of perdition"(p.81).

The specter gestures just at the moment that Manfred attempts to articulate the corrosive effects of the sins committed by the family to gain control of Otranto.

The encounter reverses the characters' roles as Manfred struggles, in effect, to utter Old Hamlet's Ghost's admonition, "Remember for his grandsire's past deeds (I.v.91). Confronted by these hunts that silences the prince and, moreover, preserves the secret of the family' fraudulent claim to Otranto until the novel's end. Manfred follows the portrait to chamber at the hall's end, but before he can enter and learn why it has returned, "the door was clapped - to with violence by an invisible hand," thus ending the encounter (p.81).

While Walpole replaces Old Hamlet's armored Ghost with an animated portrait, a device that would become a standard feature of terror in the gothic novel, Otranto does not lack for character, in the words of Horatio, "[a]rmed at point exactly, cap-a-pe" (I.ii.200). In fact, the novel's principal specter, the massive armored ghost, clearly corresponds to its Shakespearean counterparts. Following the opening episode of the enormous helmet, the novel provides partial glimpses (or accounts of partial glimpses) of the supernatural figure to prevent it from falling out of view: Diego's hair - raising sighting of the armored leg and foot in the great chamber; the giant, inscribed sword brought to Otranto by Frederic; the massive armored hand reported by Bianca; and finally, the rearticulated figure of Alonso that appears in the center of the castle's ruins at the novel's conclusions and proclaims Theodore Otranto's true heir. This gigantic armored ghost, like Ricardo's walking panel, indicates Walpole's attempt to surpass Shakespeare's Ghost and the technical limits to the stage.

Indeed, Walpole uses an instance of misrecognition to further distance the supernatural figures of his novel from Shakespeare's spectral king. As Frederic, Marquis of Vicenza, convalesces and recounts his adventures during his long

absence, Manfred appears, but before he can console his guest, he spies the recently armored Theodore and

starting in an agony of terror and amazement, he cried. Ha! What art thou, thou dreadful spectre! I my hour come? - My dearest, gracious lord, cried Hippolita, clasping him in her arms, what is it you see? Why do you fix your eye - balls thus? - what ! cried Manfred breathless - dost thou see nothing. Hippolita? Is this ghastly phantom sent to me alone - to me, who did not - Fro mercy's sweetest self, my lord, said Hippolita, resume you soul, command your reason. There is none here but we, your friends. -What, is not that Alfonso? cried Manfred: dost thou not see him? Can it be my brain's delirium? - This! my lord, said Hippolita; at this is Theodore, the youth who has been so unfortunate..... Theodore, or a phantom, he has unhinged the soul of Manfred. (pp. 134 - 5)

The prince's encounter with his armored "phantom" begins once again with a terrified start, followed by other familiar somatic responses such as his gaze and breathlessness. By recasting the supernatural figure from Hamlet as a flesh and blood knight, however, Walpole signals a departure from Shakespeare's play. Manfred's terrified mistaking of the newly armed Theodore for Alfonso, the rightful prince come to exact vengeance, underscores his deeping psychic disturbance over his family's illegitimate claim to Otranto. Furthermore, Theodore's uncanny resemblance to the long - dead prince hints at his true lineage, which is revealed in the novel's conclusion. Specters in the gothic landscape no

longer appear in a recognizable human form and thus far exceed found on the public stage.

Jerome's secret meeting with Theodore in which he tries to reveal to his son the deceit and tragedy suffered by their family clearly reworks Hamlet's private meeting with his father's Ghost on the battlements of Elsinore and provides Walpole's second appropriation of the play. While an actual ghost appears in the scene, this private encounter between father and son, their only one in the novel, is, nevertheless, composed of spectral presences. Long believed dead by Theodore, Jerome, the former Count of Falconara, is transformed symbolically into the role of King Hamlet, a ghostly father come to warn his imperiled son of the growing dangers at Court and to call for action. Moreover, they meet in the shadow of their armored forefather, Alfonso, the principal ghost haunting *the Castle of Otranto*. Jerome's order to Theodore, "kneel, head-strong boy, and list, while a father unfolds a tale of horror" (p.145), echoes the Ghost's warning of the terrifying tales he could recount to Hamlet of the "prison house" in which he currently resides:

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
 Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
 Make thy two eyes like stars from their spheres,
 And each particular hair to stand on end
 Like quills upon the fretful porpentine.

(I.v. 14, 15 -20)

Walpole's echoing of this speech, one that includes classic figures of terror's effects on the body - blood freezing in the veins, eyes starting from their sockets, and hair standing on end- provides a subtext of terror of Jerome's address to

Theodore. Unlike the Ghost, who is forbidden from telling these hair-raising tales, however, Jerome is anxious to expound on the long suffering he has endured, a purgatorial existence firmly rooted in the world rather than the afterlife, one of treachery and usurpation committed against their family. He promises Theodore a story "that will expel every sentiment from thy soul, but sensation of sacred vengeance"(p.145)

Before Jerome can disclose the exact nature of the horrors done to their family that necessitate swift revenge, Hippolita, desperate for spiritual guidance, bursts in and disrupts his revelation. Both father and son exhibit, a variety of emotions during their brief private encounter, including anger and embarrassment, but it takes the surprise entrance of a spectator to introduce terror into the scene. Upon discovering them, she confusedly imprinted on each countenance?"(p.145). Her appearance and subsequent questions concerning the circumstances of the meeting strike both men with horror, a response inscribed on their faces in the unambiguous somatic language of terror. Fearful that she has overheard his tirade against Manfred and, more importantly, his cry for revenge, Jerome searchingly replies, "Alas! hast thou seen ought?(p.145). He quickly realizes that while she can recognize their terror, she cannot decipher its true source, and thus he dissembles. Like numerous other scenes in the novel, this encounter underscores the extreme nervousness of those in the gothic landscape.

Walpole's final appropriation of Hamlet depicts his most terrifying vision of the return of the dead, one that draws on but ultimately breaks with Shakespeare's Ghost. After departing from the final banquet designed by Manfred to gain his consent to an incestuous double marriage in which the two patriarchs would swap

daughters, Frederic goes to Hippolita's chamber to determine if she will grant a divorce. In her place he discovers kneeling before an altar, a clerical figure that slowly turns to reveal "the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl"(p.157). Frederic's terrified response to this unambiguously threatening figure, "Angels of grace, protect me!" (p.157), closely approximates Hamlet's famous first line to the similarity of the two exclamations, it seems likely that many readers would connect Frederic's "recoiling" from the skeleton to Hamlet's famous terror-induced start.(p.157)

Unlike Hamlet and the Walpolian Hamlets previously discussed, however, Frederic does not face a recognizable figure returned from the grave but rather a ghastly, reaper like figure of death itself, the unveiling of which drops him to his knees. The skeletal phantom's response to the marquis, "Dost thou not the Ghost and offers yet another revision of its familiar injunction, "Remember me". The questions also provides a bit of gallows humor, given that the figure's lack of any recognizable flesh, a virtual no-body, makes identification exceedingly difficult. Following this question, the skeleton's starting confrontation with Frederick calls to mind the Ghost's third and final appearance to Hamlet in Gertrude's closet. As Hamlet aggressively berates his mother for living "In the rank sweet of an enseamed bed" with Claudius, "A murderer and a villain, / A slave that is not twentieth part of the tithes / Of your precedent lord," the Ghost enters, visible only to the prince (III.iv. 91-8). Seeing it, Hamlet assumes the specter has come to reprimand him and asks,

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,

That lapsed in time and passion lets go by

Th'important acting of your dread command? Oh say! (III.iv.06-8)

The ghost charges him to remember the pledge he made and to focus his energies on revenge: "Do not forget. This visitation / Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose"(III.iv. 109-10). Similarly, the skeletal figure, which Frederic eventually associates with the dying hermit he discovered in the woods, admonishes Frederic, "Remember the wood of Joppa! ----- Wast thou delivered from bondage to pursue carnal delights? Hast thou forgotten the buried saber and the behest of heaven engraven on it?"(p.157). Frederic affirms his task but asks what remains for him to do, to which the specter issues one final injunction before it disappears: of Gertrude and redoubles his efforts to achieve revenge, so, too, does Frederic repudiate his desire for Matilda. Both specters achieve their desired ends.

No longer has a direct echo of Hamlet, the animated skeleton represented a shift to the world of gothic terror. The episode combines all three of Hamlet's spectral encounters and, in so doing, provides Otranto's most terrifying effect. Likewise, Frederic's reaction to the supernatural figure provides the novel's most extreme response. He trembles during his encounter with the skeleton, but when it suddenly vanishes, Walpole writes, his "blood froze in his veins. For some minutes he remained motionless". (p.157). The description recalls king Hamlet's Ghost telling the prince that were he able to tell him of his purgatorial existence, the "lighted word/ terror - blood freezing in one's veins - indicates an interior response that cannot be measured or seen. Walpole's use of it shifts the narrative away from

the exterior, legible body and the familiar language of gesture and symptoms. The blank slate of Frederic's immobilized body no longer signifies an easily recognized state but rather an extreme an unsharable individual experience, one that can only be "read" through novelistic discourse.

Overwhelmed by this frenzy, Frederic falls before the altar and besought the intercession of every saint for pardon. A flood of tears succeeded to this transport; and the image of the beautiful Matilda, rushing in spite of him on his thoughts, he lay on the side of "transport" to describe this overwhelming emotional state connects this moment to the eighteenth century's ongoing state connects this moment to the eighteenth century's ongoing conversation concerning the nature and origins of the sublime. *Peri Hypsion, or On the Sublime*, a treatise known during the period as the work of Dionysius Longinus, served as the fundamental source of discussions of the subject. The sublime according to its author, is a certain eminence or perfection of language not only persuaders, but even throws an audience into transport. The marvelous always works with more surprising force, than that which barely persuades or delights. In most cases, it is wholly in our power, either to resist or yield to persuasion. But the sublime, endured with strength irresistible, strikes home, and triumphs over every hearer. The irresistible power of rhetoric, the crucial medium of this notion of the sublime, ravishes or transports the listener, who is unable to resist, beyond material experience.

The final connection from *Otranto* to Shakespeare lies in the role that the servants play. Like Shakespeare, Walpole aims to create a "mixture of comedy and tragedy" and one of the ways he does so is by using the minor, servant character

Bianca as comic relief. From her introduction into the narrative of chapter two, Bianca is depicted as a foolish and overly fearful character. After "Starting" twice in response to an unfamiliar noise, she insists to Matilda, "This castle is certainly haunted!" Annoyed by this timorousness, Matilda responds, "Peaceand listen! I did think I heard a voice – but it must be fancy; your terror I suppose have infected me". Matilda's response acknowledges of Bianca inoculates her from her servant's response. Bianca nevertheless persists with her reading of the noise and insists it is the product of a supernatural conversation between the ghost of Conrad and his former tutor, a "great astrologer" who drowned himself. After she repeatedly warns her mistress against investigating the sound, Matilda scolds her, "Thou art a very fool".

At the start of last chapter Bianca appears in her familiar role as a prattler. Anxious to know about Isabella's deposition towards Theodore, the prince queries the servant, whose inability to speak to the point becomes a source of increasing frustration. When Bianca finally answers his question, her response not only displays her excessive speech but also confirms Manfred's fears about his rival: Theodore, she responds, "Is as comedy a youth as ever trod on Christmas ground: we are in love with him: there is not a soul in the castle but would have rejoiced to have him for our prince — I mean, when it shall please heaven to call your highness to itself". The encounter, interjects comedy into the narrative.

Bianca, however, quickly turns from comic character to conveyer of terror. Manfred dispatches her to sound Isabella on her feeling while he suggests a possible marriage between Frederic and Matilda. The servant's violent reappearance, however disrupts his planning;" Bianca burst into the room, with a

wildness in her look and gestures that spoke the utmost terror. Oh! My lord, my lord! Cried she, we are all undone! It is come again! it is come again Oh! the hand ! the giant! the hand! — support me! I am terrified out of my senses, cried Bianca: I will not sleep in the castle tonight. Where shall I go? My things may come after tomorrow — Would I had been content to we Francesco! This comes of ambition! Once again the terrified body of servant disrupts the narrative.

IV. Conclusion

The emphasis to convey terror to the reader in *Otranto* reveals unique relationship to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Walpole was a frequent theatergoer. So, it makes sense that he, seeking to write a ghost tale, finds particular inspiration in *Hamlet*.

Hamlet's encounter with the ghost becomes for Walpole a template of terror. Walpole presents a "more fragmented recasting" of the Ghost in *Helmet*, which had served as a representation of the "new unsanctioned, but still popular Catholic view of ghosts as speakers of truth" for Shakespeare. The allusion to *Hamlet's* experience with the Ghost as meant not only as a "template of terror" but also serves to make the reader invoke the feeling of watching the play in self he does so in three separate occasions.

First, Walpole poses Manfred's encounter with the animated portrait of Ricardo as a connecting to the Ghost's initial appearance to Hamlet. Just as *Hamlet's* Ghost beckons his son to private colloquy, Ricardo's animated portrait gestures for Manfred to follow him:

"if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou too conspire against thy wretched descendant, who too dearly pays for - Ere he could finish the sentence the vision signed again and made a sign to Manfred to follow him. Lead on! cried Manfred : I will follow thee to the gulp of perdition."

Second, when Friar Jerome informs Theodore of the dangers to be found in *Otranto* and he calls for him to take out his revenge corresponds to the Ghost's demands to Hamlet to "Remember me".

Third Frederic's encounter with the skeletal apparition parallels the final appearance of the Ghost in *Hamlet*. This final appropriation of *Hamlet* depicts the most terrifying vision of the return of the dead, one that draws on but ultimately breaks with Shakespeare's ghost. The episode combines all three *Hamlet*'s spectral examples and, in doing so, provides Otranto's terrifying effects.

The violent question of bloodiness and succession is one that serves as a key element in many of Shakespeare's plays including *Hamlet* and it is one that is clearly one of the major concerns of Otranto. The link to *Hamlet* is strengthened even more because of the matter of incest that is also Otranto. "In Otranto, the castle and its labyrinths become grounds for interest that signals the dissolution of family blends" which is also a major point of issue in *Hamlet* since *Hamlet*'s mother (Gertude) and his uncle (Claudius) were, in a way, related before the marriage.

The final connection from Otranto to Shakespeare lies in the role that the servants play. Like Shakespeare, Walpole aims to create a "mixture of comedy and tragedy" and one of the ways he does so is by using the minor, servant character Bianca as comic relief.

Walpole in *The Castle of Otranto* as in *Hamlet* introduces many set pieces that the Gothic novel will become famous for. These include mysterious sounds, door opening independently of a person and the feeling of a beautiful heroin form an incestuous male figure. Thus, Walpole's "*The Castle of Otranto*" contains numerous allusions to and echoes of a range of characters and themes from *Hamlet*. Shakespeare represents something more than a patron saint for Walpole, indeed the playwright is the primary spirit haunting Otranto.

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